



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

Perth College

A summary of the main report

15 August 2008

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 Perth College, HMIE took the following college context fully into account.

Perth College was established in 1961 and opened the original part of its Crieff Road campus in 1971. The campus now consists of three well-appointed buildings: Brahan, Webster and Goodlyburn. The college also operates from five outreach learning centres in Blairgowrie, Crieff, Kinross and Pitlochry, as well as from the Pathways Centre in Perth. In 1991, the college acquired *Air Services Training (Engineering) Ltd.* The college has since extended the range of aeronautical engineering programmes, some of which are delivered from facilities at Perth airport. The college is an academic partner of the UHI Millennium Institute (UHI).

Through two directorates and thirteen curriculum teams, the college offers programmes from SCQF level 3 up to post-graduate level, in the areas of care, music and creative industries, science and technology, service industries, and social and vocational studies. These programmes are offered through various modes of delivery and attendance, including online learning and work-based learning. Within the college, there is a significant community of international learners, from 57 different countries. The college also provides for large groups of Polish-speaking learners.

The college serves many communities within a large and mostly rural area, and its provision covers a range from vocational activity with school pupils to locally-based degree level and post-graduate higher education. An active partner in local community planning processes, the college is also represented by the principal and senior staff in external groups and partnerships, such as Perth & Kinross Council's Economic Development Team, The Council's Education and Children's Services Department, the Scottish Tourism Forum, NHS Tayside Executive Team and the Chamber of Commerce.

During session 2006-07, the college enrolled over 8,200 learners, of which 5,800 were on funded FE programmes, accounting for around 33,189 weighted student units of measurement (SUMS) of learner activity. The college employs approximately 626 members of staff, of whom 65% are employed on a full-time basis.

The college's revenue budget for 2006-07 was around £16.2 m with grant-in-aid from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) accounting for some 56% of the total.

The review

The review by HMIE took place in two phases in the weeks beginning 3 March 2008 (*review phase one*) and 5 May 2008 (*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.

Art and design
Care
Construction
Engineering
Hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies
Hospitality
Special programmes

These areas, in which the provision ranged from levels 3-6 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 March 2008 and May 2008. 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, overall.**
- **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 four subject areas and *good* in three subject areas reviewed.
- Learner progress and outcomes were *very good* in two subject areas and *good* in five subject areas reviewed.
- The college had consistently made overall improvements to unit attainment on full-time further education (FE) programmes over recent years.
- The principal and senior managers provided purposeful leadership to staff, adopting a clear business focus in their vision for the college.
- The principal and senior staff played a full and active part in local community planning and economic development arrangements, and had developed an extensive range of partnerships to promote access and inclusion effectively within the college.
- The college provided a full range of guidance and support services to learners at all stages of their programmes, and arrangements for guidance and support in the college's outreach centres were well managed.
- The highly effective ICT provision across all areas of the college, and the high quality accommodation in almost all areas, provided very good resources for learning and teaching.
- Staff within the human resources (HR) and training functions had built effective working relationships with key teaching and support staff across the college.
- The college had developed The Perth College Framework, which had been effective in providing support function staff with a clear focus for self-evaluation.
- The college used effective methods to identify and share good practice, including the appointment of advanced practitioners to mentor teaching staff.

2.3 The college should seek to improve:

- target setting and monitoring in the business planning process;
- its arrangements for updating and monitoring policy related to legislative requirements for inclusion and equality;
- evaluation of the impact of staff development on learning and teaching;

- evaluation of the learning and teaching process, including provision of accurate data on learner retention and attainment to programme teams; and
- the clarity of targets for improvement and their allocation to named staff.

2.4 Summary of grades awarded

Subject area	Learning and teaching process	Learner progress and outcomes
Art and design	Good	Good
Care	Very good	Good
Construction	Good	Very good
Engineering	Very good	Very good
Hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies	Good	Good
Hospitality	Very good	Good
Special programmes	Very good	Good

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

- Almost all learners were well motivated and fully engaged, and participated well in the learning process in all subject areas.
- Learners in all subject areas made good use of specialist tools and equipment. In most subject areas, they made effective use of ICT to extend their learning or carry out project tasks.
- In almost all subject areas, learners reflected on their learning through the personal development planning process, feedback from staff, or logbooks.
- Learners in almost all subject areas engaged constructively in groupwork and other activities which encouraged independence in learning, extended learning or improved self-confidence.
- Staff in all subject areas were well qualified and drew on their up-to-date subject knowledge to contextualise learning and enhance the teaching process.
- In most subject areas, teaching staff used an appropriate range of effective teaching approaches to engage learners and develop their skills, workshop practices and wider knowledge and understanding.
- Teaching staff in all subject areas were highly focused on learner needs and made constructive use of feedback to support and encourage learning.
- Constructive working relationships between staff and learners in all subject areas supported learning well.
- Teaching staff planned activities well in almost all subject areas. In construction and in art and design, staff designed project work and live briefs which closely mirrored industry practices.

However:

- In the majority of subject areas reviewed, learner attendance or timekeeping was erratic and impeded effective learning and progress.
- In more than a few of the subject areas reviewed, teaching staff did not use sufficiently varied or challenging teaching approaches to extend learner performance or enhance underpinning knowledge.
- In three of the subject areas reviewed, teaching staff did not use ICT sufficiently to enhance and extend learning and teaching.
- In construction, staff failed to plan for the development of citizenship skills.

3.2 Learner progress and outcomes

HMIE is confident that learners are progressing well and achieving appropriate outcomes, overall.

- Learners made good progress from prior attainment and had improved self-confidence, self-esteem and core skills in most subject areas.
- Most learners gained good levels of vocational skills and skills for employment in all subject areas.
- Retention rates were high for the majority of full-time programmes in four subject areas.
- Attainment rates were high for learners who completed programmes in the majority of full-time programmes in four subject areas.
- Retention and attainment rates on part-time and work-based programmes were high in four subject areas.
- Learners who completed programmes progressed to further study or employment in six subject areas.
- Learners enjoyed success in national competitions in construction and hospitality.

However:

- Learners did not gain skills for citizenship in engineering programmes.
- Programme retention and attainment rates were low in a few full-time programmes in most subject areas. Retention rates were particularly low for full-time programmes in hair, beauty and complementary therapies, care and engineering.
- Attainment rates were particularly low in hospitality and care programmes.
- Unit attainment rates were low in hospitality and care.
- Development of core skills was insufficient in art and design, and care.

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 range of programmes provided by the college met the needs of learners well. The recently completed curriculum review in special programmes had focused on employability and had resulted in the creation of coherent progression pathways into, through and beyond programmes. A range of well-planned community partnerships supported progression from special programmes and helped increase learner motivation and self-esteem. In hospitality, the *Gleneagles Patisserie* programme had enhanced learning through visits and work placements for learners. However, in beauty programmes, insufficient coverage of key practical aspects, citizenship or wider aspects of employability, restricted opportunities for employment or progression. Full-time learners on pre-vocational construction programmes did not have the opportunity to attain a group award.

The standard of accommodation for learning and teaching was high in all areas of the college, with the exception of art and design, where learners were disadvantaged by the poor layout and furnishing of accommodation. A comprehensive range of tools and equipment supported learning activities in all trade areas. Insufficient access to the theatre for special programmes learners to rehearse drama productions adversely affected their confidence when performing.

Almost all hospitality staff kept up to date with industrial practices and almost all part-time staff had current experience in the hospitality industry. Teaching staff in hospitality, construction and care used a range of measures to ensure that learners were well supported, and reviewed their progress effectively in regular guidance sessions. In construction, these measures included joint review of learner progress between teaching and *ConstructionSkills* staff, and a plumbers' lunchtime club which provided additional study support.

There was insufficient analysis of performance indicators to inform action for improvement in care, engineering and hospitality.

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 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 had developed appropriate strategic aims which were clearly related to current Scottish Government priorities and supported achieving the college vision for the future.
- The principal and senior managers provided purposeful leadership, adopting a clear business focus in their vision for the college.
- The recently developed curriculum manager role was generally welcomed and led to most teams feeling empowered.
- Effective links with a range of employers had been further strengthened and developed.
- An increase in effective partnership working with schools and the local education authority had led to growth in more than a few subject areas.
- Retention and programme attainment rates for full-time FE learners were high.

Access and inclusion

- The college's strategic plan articulated a clear vision and range of strategies to promote access and inclusion.
- The Principal and senior staff played a full and active part in local community planning and economic development arrangements and had developed an extensive range of partnerships to promote access and inclusion.
- Key staff were motivated and deployed effectively to promote access and inclusion and they worked well in teams.
- The college had developed an effective range of marketing and publicity strategies and materials to widen participation.

4.2 Learner services, resources and staff

Guidance and support

- The college's vision for guidance was supported by highly motivated staff in key roles, as well as through operational objectives and effective arrangements.
- Highly committed teams, led by the director for learning and teaching and the student services manager, communicated effectively and worked collaboratively to support learners.
- The college had successfully developed partnerships with appropriate external agencies to enhance the range of specialist support services available to learners.

- Teaching staff and student advisers had developed effective approaches to improve guidance and support in respect of citizenship and employability strategies.
- The diagnostic assessment of core skills took place systematically at induction and identified support needs effectively.
- All full-time learners and the majority of learners following part-time programmes made good use of timetabled guidance sessions to reflect on their learning and progress.
- Arrangements to provide guidance and support in the college's outreach centres were well managed and coordinated.

Resources and services to support the learner

- The college had implemented a clear and comprehensive estates strategy which met the developing needs of the curriculum effectively.
- The college's accommodation and resource allocation process was flexible, responsive and effective in meeting the needs of learners and the curriculum.
- The college ICT strategy was comprehensive and provided a clear direction for the development of ICT to support learning and teaching and the needs of functional areas across the college.
- The college learning resource centre on the main campus was modern, attractive and welcoming, and well resourced to meet the needs of a diverse range of learners effectively.
- ICT provision was highly effective throughout all areas of the main college campus.
- The college provided an appropriate range of facilities and services to support learner access.
- College promotional materials and posters on display throughout the college and images used in plasma screen presentations reflected the diverse nature of the learner population.

Staff

- The college supported its strategic aims, and sector and national priorities, by an appropriate and well-communicated CPD programme.
- Staff within the HR and training functions had built effective working relationships with key staff across the college through the Employee Development Forum, which had also fostered effective working relationships across all support functions.
- The college had in place a professional review scheme, which enabled permanent staff and their line managers to identify training and development needs, reflect on and evaluate performance, and produce an individual action plan.
- A detailed college-devised management development and leadership programme was beginning to have a positive impact on the confidence and competence of managers undertaking new roles.

4.3 Quality assurance, improvement and enhancement

- The quality manual contained all key quality assurance policies and procedures, and they gave very clear and detailed implementation guidance to staff.
- The college had developed The Perth College Framework, which had been effective in providing support service staff with a clear focus for self-evaluation.
- The college gave high priority to obtaining learner views and was effective in analysing learner feedback.

- College management and staff were strongly committed to review and action planning and worked well in teams to improve the quality of the learner experience.
- The college used effective methods to identify and share good practice, including the appointment of advanced practitioners to mentor teaching staff.
- All college operational plans contributed to the development of actions for improvement.
- The college had, in recent years, consistently made overall improvements to unit attainment on full-time FE programmes.

5. Main points for action

Educational provision: design, planning and management

- The college should further develop the business planning process to ensure that targets are specific enough to allow progress to be measured and effective monitoring to take place.
- The college should ensure that it fully complies with legislation and policy related to inclusion and equality.

Learner services, resources and staff

- The college should develop its estates strategy to improve accessibility for all learners.
- The college should ensure that all teaching staff who are new to teaching receive a comprehensive introduction to learning and teaching approaches.
- The college should implement arrangements, at individual and college levels, for the systematic evaluation of the impact of staff development activities on learning and teaching.

Quality assurance, improvement and enhancement

- The college should adopt fully effective arrangements to evaluate the learning and teaching process, including the provision of accurate data on learner retention and attainment to programme teams.
- The college should ensure that targets for improvement are expressed specifically and allocated to key staff, in order to enable progress on planned actions to be monitored.

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 600351. 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 and Communications Team, 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.

Juliet Fraser
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.

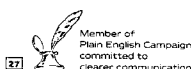
The positioning of SVQs in the table gives an indication of their place in the framework. Work is ongoing to allocate SCQF credits to them.

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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