

## REVIEW OF SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES

### WORKING GROUP: STAFFING, LEARNERS & LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

#### LEARNING AND TEACHING METHODS

##### Purpose

1. One of the tasks of Working Group is to examine opportunities for the further modernisation and improvement of learning and teaching methods. This paper provides members with an outline of the current and future activities which are taking place within the sector.

##### Evidence Base

2. In February 2006 HMIE published a report entitled '*Improving Scottish Education*'<sup>1</sup> which commented on the quality of provision across all sectors. The report stated that within most college environments, the use of a wide range of stimulating learning and teaching approaches fosters and maintains the interest of learners. It also points out that most teaching staff take appropriate account of learners' prior learning and experience in adapting the pace and level of learning to meet learner needs. However while there is a selection of learning and teaching practice worthy of dissemination throughout the sector, the report also mentioned some areas of learning and teaching which require further improvement. These areas are very similar to weaknesses highlighted in the *Reviews of Quality and Standards in Further Education: An Overview: Academic Years 2000/01 to 2003/04*<sup>2</sup>, which are outlined later in this paper.

3. The *Reviews of Quality and Standards in Further Education: An Overview: Academic Years 2000/01 to 2003/04* was published in February 2005. Over the four years covered by this report, HMIE identified many strengths and a few weaknesses in college provision. One section of the report focused on the two subject review quality elements which HMIE state arguably provide the most direct evidence of the quality of the learner experience. These are **the teaching and learning process** and student achievement.

4. The report identified a number of particular strengths in the learning and teaching process. These included:

- the use of a wide range of stimulating learning and teaching approaches have fostered and maintained the interest of learners;
- staff links with external agencies and individuals which incorporated within curriculum delivery many innovative externally-based activities such as placements which give learners valuable insights into real-world situations;
- skilful questioning techniques and other effective methods of interaction that have helped to encourage learners to be active participants, take

<sup>1</sup> HMIE – Improving Scottish Education, February 2006 <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/hmieise.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> 'Reviews of Quality and Standards in Further Education: An Overview: Academic Years 2000/01 to 2003/04' <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/HMIE%20Reviews%20of%20Q&S%20in%20FE%202000-01%20to%20%202003-04.pdf>

responsibility for their own learning and obtain regular feedback on their progress; and

- imaginative use of ICT and other modern learning aids which have enhanced learning opportunities, extended the scope of student activity, and helped to develop investigative and employability skills.

5. The report identified a number of particular strengths in student achievement. These included:

- building on helpful initial guidance and sensitive support, allowing many initially hesitant learners to gain in self-confidence, acquire essential core skills, and develop self-esteem;
- in most instances, learners progressing well within class and through coursework; and
- on many programmes, most or almost all learners obtaining the named award associated with their chosen course of study.

6. The review process also identified some weaknesses in the learning and teaching process. The weaknesses included the use of a narrow range of learning and teaching approaches, which limited learners' horizons and reduced their capacity to develop their full potential. These weaknesses were believed to contribute to drop out rates from programmes or to learners' low success rates in the award-bearing programmes on which they were enrolled.

7. Members may wish to note that the recent published Funding Council Performance Indicators<sup>3</sup> show that the overall retention completion and achievement rates have all edged up from the levels achieved in 2003-04.

8. Other key factors identified in the review as contributing to weaknesses in the teaching and learning process and student achievement were:

- poor accommodation and outdated or insufficient equipment which provided a serious disincentive to learners;
- excessive or inappropriate assessment practices that obstructed rather than aided learning and teaching, burdened students unnecessarily and demotivated staff; and
- insufficient staff development and ineffective career review processes that left subject staff not well-enough equipped to provide learners with the help and support needed for a relevant and rewarding education and training experience.

9. In February 2005, HMIE also published an Analysis of HMIE Reviews of Quality and Standards in Further Education Academic Year 2003/04<sup>4</sup>. This report highlighted six good practice examples in the teaching and learning process in subject reviews. These comprised of:

- use of different classroom strategies to promote effective debate and discussion;

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<sup>3</sup> Scottish Funding Council - Performance Indicators 2004/05 - <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/library/06854fc203db2fbd0000010d64642887/>

<sup>4</sup>Analysis of HMIE Reviews of Quality and Standards in Further Education Academic Year 2003/04, <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/Analysis%20of%20HMIE%20Reviews%20S&Q%20FE%200304.pdf>

- working imaginatively with other staff in curriculum areas and employers to enhance the learner experience;
  - utilising a blended learning approach to deliver communication units;
  - developing core skills in mixed ability information technology classes;
  - providing catering students with effective work experience in local school kitchens; and
  - using mind-mapping software in lessons to enhance the learning experience.
10. The main points for action in the document were that colleges should:
- evaluate learning and teaching systematically and ensure staff make more appropriate use of ICT in learning and teaching; and
  - promote structured mechanisms for sharing best practice, particularly in learning and teaching.
11. HMIE also published an Analysis of Reviews of Quality and Standards in Further Education: Academic Years 2004/05<sup>5</sup>. The review model introduced in 2004/05 took into account the progress made by colleges in taking forward quality assurance arrangements during the period 2000-01 to 2003-04. For example, reviewers no longer grade the individual lessons that they observe, but award only overall grades for learning and teaching in each of the subject areas being reviewed.
12. In the report HMIE expressed confidence in all seven colleges reviewed in 2004/05 in relation to *learning and teaching process*. In one college, HMIE further commented that processes were very effective. In all other colleges, *learning and teaching process* was deemed effective or effective overall. In one college, the statement of confidence was qualified by identification of the college's need to address weaknesses in a specific subject area.
13. From the strengths identified for the Framework's section on Learning and teaching process (A5) the main themes that emerged were as follows.
- Learners displayed high levels of motivation and engagement. Colleges were successfully motivating their students to be involved in classroom activities and adopt positive attitudes to their studies.
  - Colleges had planned and deployed effective and appropriate learning and teaching approaches. This contributed significantly to fostering and maintaining learners' interest, and generally enriching the learning experience.
  - Staff were well qualified and generally kept their subject knowledge up to date. Most staff combined an appropriate level of subject knowledge with an understanding of current sector practice to provide students with a good-quality learning experience.
14. From the weaknesses identified for A5: *Learning and teaching process*, a main theme was the inadequate use by staff of ICT resources to support learning. This theme accounted for 19% of all recorded weaknesses across subject review

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<sup>5</sup> Analysis of Reviews of Quality and Standards in Further Education: Academic Years 2004/05, <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/Analysis%20of%20HMIE%20Reviews%20of%20QSInFE.pdf>

and was the main weakness reported for A5 in three out of the seven colleges reviewed.

15. Examples of good practice contained in the report included:

- a) Business, management and administration - Angus College. The *Angus Gold* project was designed to help volunteer students work in the local community as information technology tutors to over one hundred learners. The volunteers developed their own interpersonal and employability skills, gained experience in working with others from their local community and enhanced their self-esteem and self-confidence levels.
- b) Computing and ICT - Dundee College. Blended learning in HNC Computing and ICT helped improve retention and achievement rates. Based upon extensive bespoke and interactive course materials, effective online materials with support from web tutors helped learners reflect upon their progress and interact with other learners and staff. These activities were underpinned by comprehensive evaluation procedures involving learners.

### **National Review Of Occupational Standards**

16. In November 2002 the then Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning, Iain Gray, announced a review of the occupational standards for college lecturers. These are the standards that underpin both the Professional Development Units and Awards (PDUs/PDAs) that lecturers can undertake for their ongoing training and development needs and the full Teaching Qualification (Further Education) [TQ(FE)]. Further information about the review can be found at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/06/13164029/0>

17. During the review it was noted that while there was an increase in the use of the PDAs that had been developed for Initial Teacher Training (ITT), there was very little provision for Continuing Professional Development (CPD). The then Enterprise, Lifelong Learning Department (ELLD) was particularly keen to ensure that longer serving lecturers who had received their professional training a number of years ago had opportunities to update their knowledge and learn new skills. One of the main aims of the review was therefore to develop a range of provision that could be used for CPD purposes.

18. The second main aim of the review was to update the content of the standards to take account of developments in teaching methods and wider policy and legislative changes. The most important of these changes were:

- The recommendations in the report by the Advisory Committee on Post-school Education and Training for Young People, usually referred to as the Beattie Committee, on the training of teaching staff.
- The introduction of new diversity legislation such as the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2000 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.
- Developments in the use of information and communications technology (ICT) for learning and teaching purposes.

- Changes in the roles and responsibilities of college lecturers which meant that some now had roles as curriculum team leaders.

19. Five expert working groups were established in 2004 to take forward the revision of the standards, and this work culminated in June 2006 with the publication of new Professional Standards for Lecturer's in Scotland's Colleges<sup>6</sup>. Prior to this, work had already begun on the creation and validation of new PDUs and PDAs based on the new standards. The standards had also been passed to the three universities (Aberdeen, Dundee and Stirling) which provide TQ(FE) in order that they could update their programmes in time for the coming academic session.

20. At the time of writing, the three new TQ(FE) programmes have all undergone the first phase of their formal assessment for approval. Conditions have been attached to their approval and it is expected that these conditions will be met within timescale. The approval process is being overseen by ETLLD in conjunction with HMIE and the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS).

21. In addition, three new awards for lecturers have been validated as follows:

- The Advanced Diploma: Teaching in Further Education: An Introduction – a two unit award which provides a basic grounding in teaching methods.
- The Advanced Diploma: Teaching in Further Education – a five unit award which will count towards a full TQ(FE).
- The Advanced Diploma: Teaching Children and Young People – a two unit CPD award which will provide training for college lecturers who teach school pupils.

22. Steps are being taken to procure teaching materials for these awards and it is expected that these will be available to colleges by the New Year. In the meantime, colleges have been invited to apply to deliver the new awards. (The process was streamlined for those already approved to deliver existing provision). It is also planned to use the new professional standards to develop further PDUs/PDAs in the following fields:

- The use of ICT for Learning and Teaching;
- Diversity (including race relations and disability); and
- The Leadership and Management of Curriculum Teams.

23. The plan is that these new units/awards – which are all for CPD purposes - will be available for delivery from the start of AY 2007-08. Again, teaching materials will be centrally procured by ETLLD.

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<sup>6</sup> Published on the SE website at: [link to follow](#).

## **Examples of current learning and teaching methods.**

### E-Learning

24. The Scottish Funding Council developed a strategy for e-learning which identified the need to promote 'transformation' in the use which is made of e-learning by colleges and universities. Transformation refers to the process by which innovation can be embedded in mainstream practice, as opposed to special initiatives. One important aspect of this is achieving economies of scale, which reduce the costs of developing new approaches. The fact that colleges share a common set of (SQA) programmes, and hence can develop and use common learning materials, offers great potential here. A second key aspect is to demonstrate that e-learning innovation can generate benefits (such as improved efficiency of delivery, improved learner outcomes) which can then ensure that institutions will be motivated to find the resources to maintain such innovations as part of their normal operation.

25. To test this model, SFC funded six projects, at around £1m each, to operate between 2005 and 2007. Each project involves large consortia, and in many cases these include both colleges and universities. Some projects focus on specific curriculum areas (eg construction, life sciences); some are developing novel ways of supporting students (eg e-portfolios) and some are focusing on 'culture change' within institutions.

26. The projects are all being externally evaluated and final outcomes will be available in the autumn of 2007.

27. One such project is BlendEd. This project is a collaborative project, led by Reid Kerr College, which aims to demonstrate that blended learning will enhance the student learning experience whilst introducing benefits such as flexibility and efficiency. The model is currently being developed and implemented within HNC Social Care and HND Business. The emphasis will be on producing a practical working model which clearly demonstrates the benefits for institutions and their students. The outputs from BlendEd will include:

- Proven implementation and delivery methodology;
- Advice and mentoring service from the consortium;
- Standards and tools which reflect the sector's requirements;
- Fully developed and tested Learning Plans for several mainstream courses;
- Identification of best practice, issues and potential barriers;
- National recognition of the innovative and progressive nature of the sector;
- Quality assured resources to support the delivery model;
- Robust staff development programmes to support the process;
- The adoption by Colleges Open Learning Exchange Group (COLEG\_ of a new instructional design model to support the sector ; and
- Availability and demonstration of methodologies for content discovery and reuse.

28. Further information about this and other projects is available at :

[http://www.sfc.ac.uk/information/information\\_learning/transformational\\_change.html](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/information/information_learning/transformational_change.html)

### Action Learning Sets

29. The SEFU is currently inviting applications of interest to participate in the Action Learning Sets. These Sets will involve small groups of individuals (6-8) who will support one another in learning and development in an area where they have an interest and want to increase their expertise. The SFEU will act as 'facilitators' for the Action Learning Sets, manage the processes involved in this collaboration and develop a framework that meets the needs of individual and groups aims.

30. The overarching theme of these Action Learning Sets is "*to identify and implement strategies to achieve transformation in learning and teaching through the use of ICLT and blended learning*".

31. Action Learning Sets are intended to support participants in:

- Learning from each other and engaging in shared learning;
- Reflecting on the successful approaches identified through the eMerge programme;
- Learning more about other institutions and institutional practices;
- Reflecting on current practice - but encouraging action;
- Highlighting challenges / areas where they have special interest, strength or weakness;
- Dealing with the kind of challenges that cannot be easily resolved through lectures / seminars;
- Building up strong relationships and networks; and
- Writing action plans for implementing within their colleges.

32. Action Learning Sets have been successfully used in the SFEU Leadership and Management programme and are seen to be effective as a professional development activity. They are a mechanism of securing change through external mentoring, peer support and provision of any necessary specialist assistance. Participants not only achieve change but their understanding of the change process is enhanced and their capability as change agents is increased. To identify and implement strategies to achieve transformation in learning and teaching through the use of ICLT and blended learning within colleges, it is intended to use the Action Learning Set methodology with a range of college staff that can influence this agenda within their college. Further information about Action Learning Sets can be found on the SFEU website at

<http://www.sfeu.ac.uk/defaultpage131bcd0.aspx?pageID=1679>

### Quality and Equality of Learning and Teaching Materials (QELTM)

33. In March 2004 the SFEFC approved the QELTM project. The aim of the project is to raise the capacity of the sector to integrate quality and equality, in terms of inclusiveness, accessibility and diversity, to support educational practitioners in their front line role.

34. Under the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Race Relations Amendment Act (RRAA) legislation all colleges in Scotland are required to be proactive to ensure accessibility and diversity in teaching and learning materials to meet high quality standards.

35. The project team includes representatives from Stevenson College Edinburgh, Universities Scotland, Edinburgh's Telford College, BRITE, SQA, The Adam Smith College, Anniesland College, Glasgow Colleges Group, University of Stirling and the SFEU.

36. The project recently had a conference in August 2006 to announce the project's outcomes. These were:

- i. Report – action research was carried out into the broad range of material and resources used in both traditional and non-traditional course delivery in a number of representative and specific curricular areas, in terms of the guiding principles of accessibility, inclusiveness, promotion of equality, avoidance of bias and quality of production. This research was undertaken collaboratively across College partners to ensure that the findings had the benefit of input from subject specialists from a range of different institutions.
- ii. Guidelines, procedures and templates for the equality, inclusiveness, accessibility and quality of learning and teaching materials: translating the legislation into practical and achievable structures and guidelines.
- iii. Exemplar learning and teaching materials.
- iv. Implementation plan for individual college's integration of guidelines and procedures.
- v. Programme of staff development opportunities to assist lecturing staff in applying the guidelines.

37. Further information about this project is available at <http://www.stevenson.ac.uk/QELTM/index.html>

## **Discussion**

38. Members are asked to consider :

- (i) whether it would be useful to ask the Project Mangers of any of the projects highlighted above to deliver a presentation to the Group;
- (ii) what could be done to highlight some of the innovative outcomes which have been identified by some of these projects; and
- (iii) whether there are any other learning and teaching areas which require modernisation or improvement?

**Reviews Team  
September 2006**