

Perth College UHI

22 January 2016

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

Full report



The external review process

HM Inspectors undertake an independent review of the quality of provision in Scotland's colleges on behalf of the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council (SFC) under a service level agreement between the council and Education Scotland. External review teams include HM Inspectors, associate assessors and a student team member.

The review took place in accordance with the protocol on quality assurance of University of the Highland and Islands Millennium Institute (UHIMI) and the SFC-funded colleges which are academic partners of UHIMI (March 2009). Under this protocol, which was agreed by SFC, Education Scotland and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), the review focused solely on Further Education (FE) provision.

During external reviews, members of the review teams observe learning and teaching and hold discussions with learners, staff and stakeholders. They consider 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 who work with the college.

The purpose of this report is to convey the main outcomes arising from the external review, to acknowledge the college's strengths and to provide a clear agenda for future action to improve and enhance quality.

This external review results in judgements of **effective** or **limited effectiveness** or **not effective** that express the external review team's overall evaluation of *high quality learning, learner engagement and quality culture*.

| | |
|---|-----------|
| The report also uses the following terms to describe numbers and proportions: | |
| almost all | over 90% |
| most | 75-90% |
| majority | 50-74% |
| less than half | 15-49% |
| few | up to 15% |

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1. Introduction

The external review

The external review by Education Scotland took place during the week beginning 23 November 2015. The review focused solely on FE provision.

We examined learning and teaching and other important activities that impact on the quality of the learner experience. We evaluated these against the three key principles of *high quality learning*, *learner engagement* and *quality culture*, using the 13 reference quality indicators outlined in *External quality arrangements for Scotland's colleges, updated August 2013*. We also included QIs 1.3 *Adherence to statutory principles* and 2.2 *Relevance of programmes and services to learner needs*, to support our evaluations. We used information from previous visits to the college to decide the scope of the review.

We found examples of excellence which we describe in this report on page 17.

The external review team talked with FE learners, staff at all levels in the college, members of the Board of Management, employers, external agencies and other users of the college.

2. The college and its context

In carrying out the external review of Perth College UHI, Education Scotland took the following college context fully into account.

Located on the outskirts of Perth, the college has modern facilities including bespoke accommodation for teaching, student residences, and a nursery. The college's wholly-owned subsidiary, *Air Service Training (Engineering) Ltd* is approved to deliver programmes and examinations under the European Aviation Safety Agency regulations, attracting a wide range of international learners. In August 2015, the college embarked on a project to build an *Academy for Sport and Wellbeing*. The project will provide modern, industry-standard facilities for learners on Sport and Fitness, Health, Beauty Therapy and Hairdressing programmes.

The economy of Tayside remains largely focused on tourism-related industries, retail, arts and entertainment. Small businesses predominate and whilst employment remains high, much of this is within the public and low-wage sectors. Although the population of Tayside is predicted to continue to increase slowly over the next decade with a higher share of the older population, the population of Perth and Kinross is planned to grow significantly. A high proportion of Perth and Kinross residents hold only basic qualifications at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels 1-4.

Perth College UHI is one of the largest partners in the University of the Highlands and Islands. Since academic year 2011-12, the college has been a key partner in the Highlands and Islands Region FE/HE Outcome Agreement delivering a significant proportion of the combined FE target wSUMs. As part of the implementation of the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act, in August 2014, the governance arrangements for Perth College UHI changed when the UHI assumed the status of Regional Strategic

Body and appointed its first Regional Chair. FE activities are represented within the university structure by the Vice Principal (Further Education) and by the FE Regional Board.

Perth College UHI delivers a wide range of programmes at the main campus on Crieff Road, Perth, in Perth city centre itself (*Pathways Centre*), and at learning centres in rural communities including Blairgowrie, Crieff and Kinross. A broad curriculum base provides access to study at SCQF levels 2-12. Subjects are grouped into five curriculum areas (Business, Management, Computing and Leisure; Creative Industries; Engineering, Science and Technology; Health, Education and Social Sciences; Skills for Life, Learning and Employment). The college also delivers a range of Modern Apprenticeship programmes supported by Skills Development Scotland (SDS). School-college partnership provision includes new Foundation Apprenticeships in Care and Engineering.

In academic year 2014-15, Perth College UHI enrolled 3,630 FE learners on SFC-funded programmes with 67.5% studying part-time and accounting for 18% of wSUM activity. In academic year 2015-16, through the Highlands and Islands Regional Outcome Agreement (ROA), the college is contracted to deliver a target of 23,781 credits, which is 21.43% of the regional target. Currently, Perth College UHI employs a total of 499 members of staff. Total SFC grant income represents 55% of the college's total income.

3. Outcomes of External Review

Judgement of *Effectiveness*

Section A: Overarching judgement

Perth College UHI has in place **effective** arrangements to maintain and enhance the quality of its provision and outcomes for learners and other stakeholders.

This judgement means that, in relation to quality assurance and enhancement, the college is led well, has sufficiently robust arrangements to address any identified minor weaknesses, and is likely to continue to improve the quality of its services for learners and other stakeholders.

Section B: Supporting statements

Learner progress and outcomes

Successful outcome rates in full-time FE programmes are significantly above the national sector performance level and have improved over a three year period. However, in part-time FE programmes, rates of successful outcomes are below the national sector performance level. Most learners who complete their programme attain nationally recognised certificated awards. Most learners on SDS Modern Apprenticeship programmes also achieve their qualifications. The college has robust procedures in place for safeguarding young people and vulnerable groups and is responding well to recent legislation relating to PREVENT and Corporate Parenting. The college offers a wide range of appropriate full and part-time FE programmes, which meet the needs of learners from different backgrounds well. It has maintained its wide range of part-time FE programmes over the past few years, whilst simultaneously increasing the cohort of full-time FE learners. The college has responded very well to the *Developing the Young Workforce* initiative. Over the past two years, it has increased the number and range of school-based programmes. Many learners develop employability skills by engaging in work experience and volunteering opportunities as part of their programmes. Many also gain additional industry-recognised certification which enhances their employment prospects.

Learning and teaching processes

Almost all learners engage well in activities aimed at developing their skills for learning, life and work. Programmes are designed well to embed the principles of Curriculum for Excellence. Many learners use a range of resources well to support independent learning and the college virtual learning environment (VLE) is used well in some programme areas. Learners and staff have strong and respectful relationships, and all learners value and benefit from the high levels of individual attention and support given to them by staff. In a few curriculum areas, the learning spaces, although generally fit for purpose, occasionally limit the range of learning

and teaching activities that can take place. Learners are given prompt and helpful feedback from their class work and assignments. The personal development planning (PDP) arrangements supported by the personal academic tutors (PATs) are highly effective in helping learners chart their progress and identify areas for improvement. The *BRAG* (Blue, Red, Amber, and Green) system helps ensure timely and helpful interventions where learners have issues with absence or progress. *Course Annual Review* processes are effective in providing helpful and evaluative analysis of programmes. Clear actions are planned and implemented from this review activity.

Learner engagement

Learners raise issues and are confident that these are acted upon and resolved speedily by curriculum teams. Good account of learners' views by curriculum teams also ensures that they help to influence the review and on-going development of programmes. The majority of FE classes have a class representative and the majority of them have attended training to support their formal roles. Almost all relationships between learners and teaching staff are positive and productive. All learners develop good levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. Most learners contribute to enhancing the work and life of the college with enthusiasm, through promoting the attributes and ethos of the college in charitable events and working with community partners and local enterprises. The college is committed to developing an autonomous and effective Students' Association for learners, and this is supported well by senior managers. However, awareness of the Students' Association and their activities by the current FE learner population varies significantly.

Leadership and Quality Culture

Partnership working is strong. The college has effective links with a wide range of employers, community organisations and other agencies which enhance the opportunities for learners to develop vocational and employability skills. The college has integrated the Regional Outcome Agreement appropriately into college plans to ensure it contributes fully to the outcomes of the region as a whole. Leadership for learning and teaching is clear and effective, underpinned by careful curriculum planning to ensure that the college and future FE curriculum is fit for purpose. Staff are motivated and teamwork is strong. The college supports all staff well in continuous professional development (CPD) in a wide variety of forms. Support and curriculum teams work well together to ensure that the support that learners receive is effective. The quality culture in the college is strong. All staff have a clear commitment to improving the college experience for learners, supported by clear leadership for enhancing quality. Self-evaluation processes are integrated to good effect with other planning processes in the college.

Section C: Areas of positive practice

- The success rates in full-time FE (72%) remain significantly above the national sector performance level and have improved over a three year period.
- The college has undertaken a clear *Curriculum Strategy Review* which sets out how it is responding to *Developing the Young Workforce*.
- Many FE programmes incorporate industry qualifications in their design and a large number include work placement, industry visits, guest speakers from industry or live projects.
- In almost all classes, learners are interested and motivated. They actively engage well with teaching staff and benefit from active learning. The professional and industry knowledge of staff is used well to ensure learning is delivered in a motivating and helpful way.
- Staff and learners have a strong and respectful relationship. All learners value and benefit from the high levels of individual attention and support given to them by teaching staff.
- PDP arrangements supported by PATs are highly effective in helping learners chart their progress and identify areas for improvement. The BRAG system used by the guidance staff helps ensure timely and helpful interventions where learners may have issues with absence or progress.
- Almost all class representatives liaise well with PATs to provide valuable feedback for the evaluation of programmes and services.
- In almost all practical classes, learners support each other well in extending and enhancing their learning by participating in peer review of practical assignments.
- Heads of Curriculum work closely with their teams to ensure that the current and future FE curriculum is fit for purpose. Clear and effective intelligence about emerging trends in the labour market and key government initiatives underpins the college developments in particular curriculum areas.
- The Principal is supported well by a small team of senior managers and directors. Together, they provide clear and effective leadership for learning and teaching and other important college functions within an overall culture of distributed leadership which works very well.
- The college's strong commitment to CPD for staff and the support they have to advance their professional or academic qualifications is highly valued. All new teaching staff undertake an introduction to learning and teaching through the college's own *Teaching @ Perth* programme and progress to the Teaching Qualification in FE qualification within an appropriate timescale.
- The quality culture in the college is strong. All staff have a clear commitment to improving quality and the college experience for learners.
- Partnership working is extensive and effective. The college has strong links with a wide range of employers and voluntary organisations providing work experience opportunities for learners, visiting speakers and industry visits.

Section D: Areas for development

- In part-time FE, 74% of learners successfully completed their programme, which is below the national sector performance level. A further 22% completed with partial success.

- Whilst there are some curriculum areas with performance indicators (PIs) that are in line with the top performing colleges in full-time provision, a small number of curriculum areas also have low PIs.
- A few staff do not use an appropriate range of learning and teaching approaches. Some teaching staff miss opportunities to raise awareness of equality and diversity.
- Awareness of the Students' Association and their activities by the general learner population varies significantly. There is limited planning between the Students' Association Executive and college *Student Engagement* staff.

Section E: Main points for action:

- the college should continue to implement strategies to improve PIs on programmes where they are low;
- the college should continue to support action to ensure that the Students' Association develops and contributes effectively to the work and life of the college.

4. How well are learners progressing and achieving relevant, high quality outcomes?

How effective is the college at achieving and maintaining high levels of retention, attainment and progression?

College performance indicators have been evaluated against the national sector performance level for academic year 2013-14. This is the latest available published data from the SFC at the time of the external review.

Rates of early withdrawal for learners on full-time FE programmes are in line with the national sector performance in 2013-14 and improved slightly over the last three years. College internal figures indicate that they improved further in 2015-16. Rates of further withdrawal for learners on full-time FE programmes are better than the national sector performance level and have been for the last three years. Early withdrawal rates for learners on part-time FE programmes are around the national sector performance level and have declined over the last three years. Rates of further withdrawal for part-time FE learners have improved and are now better than national sector performance.

The number of full-time FE learners who successfully complete their programmes remains significantly above the national sector performance level at 72% for 2014-15 and has improved over a three year period. A further 7% of full-time FE learners completed their programme with partial success. However, on part-time FE programmes the number of learners who successfully completed their programme is below the national sector performance level. A further 22% completed with partial success. Almost all learners whose destinations are known to the college, progress to further study, apprenticeships or employment.

How well does the college adhere to its statutory principles?

College procedures for safeguarding young people and vulnerable groups are clear and robust. College staff, in partnership with a number of key partner agencies, have developed a framework of appropriate policies. Staff have good awareness of safeguarding procedures and most have undergone training to update their knowledge of this area. Staff are kept informed about adjustments to relevant college policies and are well supported to keep up-to-date with new legislative developments. Almost all staff have completed Protection of Vulnerable Groups scheme membership or are on track to do so. The college has taken appropriate steps to ensure that learners are safe online and are currently updating the *e-safety policy* in partnership with the Students' Association.

The college is responding appropriately to PREVENT legislation and is currently developing policies, procedures and clear guidelines for staff. Board of Management and college staff awareness of the PREVENT agenda is high. Several staff have undergone training led by Police Scotland and there are robust plans in place to cascade this training to all staff by the end of the academic year. Plans are in place to develop and deliver appropriate training for learners. The college is making good progress in meeting its obligations with regard to Corporate Parenting and is considering ways of informing staff, as appropriate, about learner backgrounds to enable suitable support to be made available to learners.

The college has a strong track record for its work on equality and diversity. Its *Equalities Mainstreaming Report* provides clear and comprehensive information about what is being done to ensure the delivery of five *Equality Outcomes*. Equality and diversity is promoted well and is highly visible in all college documentation

How well do programmes and services meet learner needs?

The college offers a wide range of appropriate full and part-time FE programmes which meet the needs of learners from different backgrounds well. Learners are able to access programmes at a level which meets their needs and abilities. The *New Opportunities* team provides a well-considered range of provision to meet the needs of learners who face barriers to learning or employment. FE level programmes offer clear progression pathways to higher education either within the college, across the UHI network, or at other institutions. Levels of progression from further to higher education programmes are very high within the college.

The college has maintained a wide range of part-time FE programmes over the past few years while simultaneously increasing the cohort of full-time FE learners. Part-time programmes are often delivered in local learning centres. This eases access for learners in remote communities who wish to enhance their career prospects or develop skills for employment or further study. An increasing number of community-based programmes lead to a nationally recognised qualification, which supports progression into further study. The college is widening access to further learning by maintaining its large number of part-time programmes at SCQF levels 5 and 6. These programmes are made available to learners through a range of delivery modes including distance learning or online study.

The college's *Curriculum Strategy Review* sets out how it is responding to *Developing the Young Workforce*. Over the past two years, the college has enhanced and increased the number and range of school-based programmes, particularly in Perth city. Opportunities for young learners to undertake vocational learning are further increased through Foundation Apprenticeships in Engineering and Care. There are plans in place to further extend learning opportunities to young people from rural schools within the region.

How well do learners make progress, attain qualifications and achieve more widely?

The college has a strong focus on the development of skills through its *Skills for Learning, Life and Work Framework*. Staff use the matrix well to ensure that these skills are incorporated into all programme plans and align with the principles of Curriculum for Excellence. Curriculum staff make good use of their extensive employer links to enhance learning. Many FE programmes incorporate industry qualifications and a large number of programmes include opportunities to develop skills for employment such as work placements, industry visits, guest speakers from industry, or live projects. Many

learners welcome the opportunity to experience the world of work to prepare for future employment. Learner satisfaction with college programmes and support services is high.

Most learners who complete their programme attain nationally recognised awards. In some programme areas, learners gain additional certification which enhances their employment prospects. Successful completion rates for learners in some subject areas are high and in line with the best in the sector. These include business, management and administration; hospitality and tourism; languages, and English for speakers of other languages. However, rates of successful completion in a number of curriculum areas are low. These include computing and information and communications technology (ICT); hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies; media; performing arts; and social subjects.

Most learners who undertake a Modern Apprenticeship programme improve their skills and achieve industry relevant qualifications. The majority of school-based learners who undertake *Skills for Work* programmes achieve their qualification. Overall, rates of successful completion of SCQF level 5 and 6 programmes are low, with high levels of learners partially completing their programme.

Learners in some subject areas have the opportunity to undertake industry recognised qualifications. Learners gain skills and enhance their employment prospects as a result and many learners compete successfully in national and international competitions. Many learners develop employability skills by engaging in work experience and volunteering opportunities as part of their programme, including college-based placements. A majority of learners work towards and achieve core skills according to their level of ability. However, core skills attainment rates at SCQF level 4 in communication and ICT are low. Learners develop useful skills for working with others and citizenship skills through engaging in charitable and fund raising activities.

5. How effective are the college's learning and teaching processes?

How well does the college design and deliver programmes and services to meet the needs of learners from all backgrounds and circumstances?

In almost all curriculum areas, lessons are well planned and take good account of equality and diversity. Learners from other European countries are integrated effectively within class groups and enjoy their learning as a result. In curriculum areas where equality, diversity and discrimination are an explicit element of programmes, learners have a good understanding of these matters. However, in a few classes teaching staff do not always take opportunities to promote more general awareness of equality and diversity within lesson planning.

Almost all learners engage well in activities aimed at developing skills for life, learning, and work. Staff design programmes appropriately to embed the principles of Curriculum for Excellence. All learners are encouraged to identify any additional needs they have or support they feel would be helpful. Recruitment and induction processes provide several opportunities for most learners to highlight particular barriers to learning and access support to overcome them. Where learners indicate support needs, it is provided promptly and effectively, and teaching staff are given clear guidance on how to help learners with additional support needs.

How well do learners learn?

In almost all classes, learners are interested and motivated. They engage well with teaching staff and benefit from active learning. Many learners use a range of resources well to support independent learning. In some curriculum areas, the virtual learning environment (VLE) is used effectively by learners as an interactive resource or as a repository for class notes. However, on occasion, a few learners experience difficulties in accessing online resources due to connectivity or ICT problems. This reduces the quality of the learning experience and can inhibit learning. Learners in almost all classes develop useful learning skills. Research activities or homework assignments are used well by learners to further develop skills, build confidence and increase understanding. Almost all learners are making good progress in their studies and are developing a range of useful skills for learning and employment.

How well do planning, teaching and the use of resources ensure effective learning?

Overall, lessons are planned well by staff to ensure a range of vocational skills are developed. Teaching staff provide good opportunities for learners to influence their own learning. Many learners provide useful feedback to staff which influences their learning activities and learners often choose project briefs or topics which align with their personal interests. Most staff use their professional and industry knowledge well to ensure learning is delivered in a motivating and helpful way. However, in a few lessons staff do not use a sufficiently broad range of learning and teaching approaches. In a few curriculum areas, classroom and workshop accommodation constrains the range of learning and teaching approaches.

Staff and learners work well together to establish positive and respectful relationships. All learners value and benefit from the high levels of individual attention and support

given to them by teaching staff. All learners feel well supported by staff and are confident about asking for clarification around things they do not understand. Staff have high expectations of learners. They support learners well to define clear targets and goals to achieve these expectations.

How well is assessment used to promote effective learning?

Curriculum teams plan assessments well and take appropriate action to schedule assessments to minimise the workload for learners. Teaching staff prepare learners well for tests and exams using a range of approaches. These include incorporating effective revision sessions in class and providing prompt and useful feedback to learners, on a regular basis, on class work and assignments.

In most classes, questioning techniques are used well by teaching staff to test understanding and to reinforce learning. Assessment arrangements for learners with additional support needs are dealt with promptly and communicated appropriately to teaching staff.

How well are potential and current learners provided with information, advice and support?

Potential learners have good access to an appropriate range of information about college programmes through a college prospectus and helpful website. PATs use PDP arrangements well to help learners review and monitor their progress and identify areas for improvement.

Where learners indicate issues in relation to attendance or progress, a traffic light system (*BRAG*) is used well by guidance staff to ensure timely and helpful interventions. Staff provide useful support to learners to help plan and prepare for progress to further study or to seek employment. Almost all learners are confident about using the services to support learning. However, at peak times the study space within the library is insufficient to meet the needs of all learners who require to access it.

How well does the college sustain continuous enhancement of learning and teaching through self-evaluation and internal review activities?

Many learners provide constructive and helpful feedback to staff through class representatives, focus groups, questionnaires and surveys. Staff use this feedback well to help to inform actions to support quality improvement. Most staff engage well with *Course Annual Review* processes and analyse programme performance effectively. Action plans for improving the learner experience are clear and implemented on an on-going basis. Staff review and discuss learning and teaching further, through the use of a constructive programme of peer observation which all staff engage with over a three year cycle. This helps to inform individual actions to improve learning and teaching and supports ongoing development of the college-wide CPD programme.

Teaching staff and *Subject Leaders* take responsibility for ensuring that actions for improvement are monitored. Managers engage well in review meetings and reflect with staff on whether actions are appropriate. Almost all actions are implemented quickly and lead to improvements to the learner experience.

6. How well are learners engaged in enhancing their own learning and the work and life of the college?

How well do learners engage in enhancing their own learning?

The recently-revised *Student Engagement Strategy* outlines clearly the role of the Students' Association at Perth College UHI and the college's ambitions to improve learner engagement. The college aims to increase learners' awareness of the Students' Association, increase learner representation, introduce more clubs and societies, and make officers more accessible to learners. The majority of FE classes have a class representative. The majority of class representatives have attended training to support their formal role.

Almost all class representatives liaise well with PATs to provide valuable feedback for the evaluation of programmes and services. Where class representatives have not been appointed, staff use informal communication methods well to ensure that learners are sufficiently confident to raise issues. Where issues are raised with staff, overall they are resolved quickly. Most class representatives attend course team meetings to provide helpful information about emerging issues or opportunities to improve the learning experience. All curriculum teams take good account of the views of learners as they develop or refine programmes.

Staff take good account of learner views gathered through learner surveys, feedback from class representatives and learner contributions in focus groups. Staff use learner feedback effectively to identify actions to improve programmes and services. The Students' Association meets with class representatives regularly to highlight specific or college-wide issues in need of improvement. Issues are also discussed with senior managers where appropriate.

Almost all relationships between learners and teaching staff are positive and productive, which helps learners develop good levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. In a few programmes, learners contribute to personalising or enhancing their own learning experience through their involvement in the choice of learning projects. In almost all practical classes, learners support each other well in extending and enhancing their learning by participating in peer review of practical assignments.

Staff use both informal and formal college mechanisms such as *you said, we did* to convey actions taken as a result of learner feedback. Almost all staff provide regular feedback to learners regarding progress on the actions they have taken to respond to suggestions from learners.

How well do learners engage in enhancing the work and life of the college?

The Students' Association President and Vice-Presidents are highly-committed and work well with a range of college staff. Student representation on the Board of Management is effective and learners regularly raise issues at meetings. Many learners contribute well to college life by participating in Students' Association organised clubs and societies, community projects, fund-raising and volunteering activities. The Students' Association promotes these opportunities well. Across a range of curriculum areas, learners participate in additional activities to enhance their employability. These

experiences are valued by learners and they learn to appreciate how their work can contribute to the wider community.

Many learners contribute to enhancing the work and life of the college with enthusiasm. They promote the attributes and ethos of the college through participating in charitable events and working with community partners and local enterprises. However, awareness of the Students' Association and its activities varies significantly amongst learners. Arrangements to support regular and effective planning between the Students' Association Executive and *Student Engagement* staff are not fully effective. As a result, additional opportunities to collaborate to improve learner engagement in enhancing the work and life of the college, are missed.

7. How well is the college led and how well is it enhancing the quality of its services for learners and other stakeholders?

The Board of Management liaises closely with the UHI FE Regional Board, through the college Chair's membership, to ensure that strategic planning for the college complements the broader regional vision for FE development. Through particularly well-integrated planning processes, the college senior team identify clear strategic objectives which take good account of government priorities. The five priorities for 2013-16 are articulated well in a strategic plan, underpinned by the college's vision, mission and values. The requirements of the ROA are integrated well into college plans. This ensures that it contributes fully to the outcomes of the region as a whole.

The college aligns its activity to the Perth and Kinross Single Outcome Agreement and is a key contributor within the Perth and Kinross Community Planning Partnership and the Perth City Development Board. College plans take good account of the the Regional Skills Assessment Plan for Tayside, alongside the Highlands and Islands Skills Investment Plan and those of other adjoining regions. These plans are used well to inform curriculum planning and partnership working.

All college teams have developed helpful operational plans to support their work for each academic year. These plans align well with the strategic plan. The relationship between the strategic and operational plans is clearly identified by managers to staff and this ensures that staff understand and share a commitment to the college's educational aims, objectives and targets. The College Board of Management maintains an appropriate overview of college activity through a range of standing committees including the *Academic Affairs* and *Engagement* committees.

Heads of Curriculum work closely with their teams to ensure that the current and future FE curriculum is fit for purpose. They use intelligence about emerging trends in the labour market and key government initiatives well to support college development across the curriculum. Progression pathways for learners are clearly identified and curriculum staff work directly with local employers in a variety of ways to enhance programme design and delivery. Some course committees have employer representation which provides curriculum teams with further insight into the relevance of the skills learners are developing.

The Principal is supported well by a small team of senior managers and directors. Together, the senior team provides clear and effective leadership for learning and teaching and other important college functions. A distributed leadership approach works very well and managers and staff value the opportunity to lead initiatives and feel well-supported by the senior team. Management of curriculum teams is effective and teamwork is strong. Overall, college staff are highly motivated and have the learner experience at the heart of what they do. The college's strong commitment to CPD for staff and the support they have to advance their professional or academic qualifications is highly valued. All new teaching staff undertake an introduction to learning and teaching through the college's own *Teaching @ Perth* programme and many progress to the initial teaching qualifications within an appropriate timescale. Some staff undertake useful research in their subject areas or in relation to learning and teaching which provides benefits to the FE curriculum.

The *Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy* outlines key principles to assist staff in improving their practice each year. A useful supplementary *enabling plan* is developed to identify current priorities and key activities for the year. Staff engage well in conferences, held three times each year which support engagement between curriculum and support areas well. Self-evaluation processes and related activities are integrated well with operational planning at particular points in the calendar.

Services to support learners are very effective and are managed well. Learners benefit from effective support early in the application and admissions stage and throughout their college programme. Team working is strong within student support areas. Overall, staff across the college are working hard to accommodate the needs of an increased number of learners, with more demanding needs. Strong partnership working with appropriate external support agencies is assisting in providing some learners with access to specialist support. Support and curriculum teams work well together to ensure that the support learners receive is effective. Senior managers are providing clear direction for staff in response to recent safeguarding legislation in relation to PREVENT and corporate parenting.

There is a strong quality culture in the college. All staff have a clear commitment to improving quality and the experience for learners. The college begins the cycle of self-evaluation in November each year through a staff conference which helps to develop shared ownership of the process and the integrated operational planning which flows from this. The college BRAG system of robust reporting on attainment and attendance is supplemented by *progression boards* which are held at the end of each semester. Staff monitor attainment and plan actions quickly to support individual learners to get back on track where required.

Many learners participate in regular formal surveys to gather views. Learners also contribute effectively to self-evaluation and review through the class representative system. Generally, learners have strong and supportive relationships with staff and individual learners are sufficiently confident to share concerns or issues directly with college staff. As a result, learners do not always feel the need to rely on formal representation,

Staff engage regularly in evaluating learning and teaching and use the college *Peer Review Policy* arrangements well. New staff are supported further through reviews undertaken as part of probation, capability processes and the completion of teaching qualifications. Outcomes of peer reviews are collated and used well to inform CPD and learning and teaching activities the following year.

8. How extensive and effective are college partnerships with communities, other learning providers, employers and agencies?

Partnership working is extensive and effective. The college has productive links with a wide range of employers and voluntary organisations. Staff work well with external partners to provide work experience opportunities for learners, incorporate presentations from visiting speakers and arrange industry visits. The college responds well and flexibly to the training and skills needs of employers. Staff are working with a wide range of community partners including NHS Tayside, to provide a variety of flexible programmes delivered either in college or in partner premises. There are purposeful links and a shared vision and direction with Perth and Kinross Council. These partnerships result in a broad range of programmes which provide useful skills for learning, life and work, particularly for learners who are furthest from the labour market.

The college has effective links and a shared strategic commitment with SDS which enhances opportunities for school leavers and hard to reach learner groups. The college is working in partnership to develop a career guidance and support project to further enhance opportunities for young people into employment. The college runs a range of effective programmes under the employability fund and Modern Apprenticeship programmes.

The college has developed effective links with schools to provide a range of programmes to support *Developing the Young Workforce* and extend curriculum choice in the senior phase. Pilot foundation apprenticeship programmes at level 5 in care and in engineering began this year. The college is aware that there is more to be done in developing sufficient provision for local, rural secondary schools.

9. Signposting excellent practice

During the Education Scotland external review, the college submitted examples of what it considered to be excellent practice worthy of dissemination.

9.1 **BRAG: enhancing student retention and attainment through the BRAG monitoring procedure**

Rates of attendance and progress of all learners are monitored using a colour coded *heat map* for each class group. This is coordinated by the *Student Records Team*, maintained by the class PAT and involves whole team discussion during team meetings. This approach includes performance data from the previous three years allowing comparison of performance, encouraging team ownership and enabling simple monitoring of learner progress and attainment.

Each learner is assessed against attendance and progress on a weekly basis using *Green* (no issues), *Amber* (may give cause for concern), *Red* (at risk of withdrawal or lack of success), *Blue* (all input has failed and learner has been withdrawn). This provides the PAT with a quick reference tool to support their guidance activity for a group or on an individual basis, enabling early intervention where a learner is identified as being at risk of withdrawal or lack of attainment.

Since the introduction of this BRAG monitoring, student early retention and student success has improved. Teaching staff find this procedure to be supportive and helpful, whilst the *Student Services Team* use the BRAG process to help target learners who may require support in their learning. College managers use the process well to monitor programme progress and to target resources as appropriate to support learning. The monitoring tool is being further refined to enable PATs to filter out information specific to an individual learner to be used as a visual tool during guidance discussions with the learner.

9.2 **Golden Tickets: a sporting approach to employer engagement**

The *Sport, Fitness and Outdoor Activities Team* use a variety of activities to engage with employers to enhance the learning experience and to develop employability skills of learners.

Golden Tickets are used by course teams to reward learners who have demonstrated particular progress or involvement. The *Golden Ticket* gives the learner a reward such as a book, rucksack, industry specific course, sweatshirt or other appropriate items. Most of these rewards have been sponsored or donated by local employers. All of these activities inspire learners to attend and make progress, to attain qualifications and to develop wider skills for employment. Through volunteering, many build skills and networks for future employment. Curriculum teams benefit from all of this employer engagement in its many forms to influence curriculum direction and ensure content is industry relevant.

A *Career, Placement, and Volunteering Fair* held twice a year enables learners to network with employers, to become involved in volunteering activities to enhance their skills and to build experience to support their future employment opportunities. Often they may secure employment, through local employers who enthusiastically participate

and find it a valuable source of recruitment. Additionally, guest speakers from local and national employers provide input to programmes to support learning and ensure industry relevance of the curriculum. From these contacts, further opportunities for learners to become involved in volunteering or specific events have arisen including involvement in national competitions and potential involvement with professional bodies. *National Governing Bodies* (NGB) deliver technical workshops for staff and learners, often as a result of learner involvement in volunteering activities. Learners support local and national events run by NGBs as event helpers, competitors or judges.

9.3 *Step Up to the Plate: a recipe for improving retention rates*

These initiatives present learners with additional opportunities to increase their motivation and improve their attendance and success rates. The hospitality curriculum programmes already include industry qualifications such as food hygiene and staff licencing awards, designed to further enhance employability skills for learners and to encourage retention on programmes. All learners on all programmes are given the same opportunities and encouragement to participate in the full range of enhancement activities. Participation in a variety of in-house, local and national competitions motivates many learners to engage in their learning and to further develop their craft skills.

A *Takeover Event* at a local hotel, involves up to 14 learners. The learners work alongside hotel staff who mentor them for work experience and provide opportunities to work in all hotel departments including shadowing managers throughout their shifts. This enables learners to consolidate skills and to consider areas of the industry which may not otherwise have been considered. Additionally, there are opportunities to overtake assessments during the work experience.

Networking opportunities, during which learners participate in a *speed dating* style event with industry representatives, are particularly successful at introducing learners to potential employers. Learners can apply for current and projected job vacancies with a range of local employers. The employers post their vacancies, the learners submit their Curriculum Vitae and the college staff and employers match the two. This can lead to a *Dragons' Den* style of bidding by employers for potential employees from the learner group.

These approaches have resulted in an approximately 10% reduction in early withdrawals over a three year period.

10. What is an overarching judgement?

Education Scotland uses an overarching judgement of *Effectiveness* to express the findings of the review team. The judgement of effectiveness takes into account all the evidence gathered through the external review. Such judgements express outcomes as:

effective;
limited effectiveness; or
not effective.

This judgement is further detailed by supporting statements which substantiate the judgement of effectiveness. Education Scotland evaluates and reports according to the three key principles. In this report, the principles and supporting statements relate to:

Key principle 1 – High quality learning (supporting statements numbers 1 and 2)

Key principle 2 – Learner engagement (supporting statement number 3)

Key principle 3 – Quality culture (supporting statement number 4)

Judgements of effectiveness and supporting statements provide stakeholders with assurances, or otherwise, about the quality of a college's provision. These judgements are based on trends and track record of a college, the findings at the time of the external review, and the college's capacity to continue improving.

A judgement of *effective* indicates that the college has in place **effective** arrangements to maintain and enhance the quality of its provision and outcomes for learners and other stakeholders. This judgement means that, in relation to quality assurance and enhancement, the college is led well, has sufficiently robust arrangements to address any minor weakness, and is likely to continue to improve the quality of its services for learners and other stakeholders.

A judgement of *limited effectiveness* indicates that the effectiveness of the college's arrangements to maintain and enhance the quality of its provision and outcomes for learners and other stakeholders is **limited**. This judgement means that there are some strengths in the college's arrangements for quality enhancement. However, there are weaknesses in arrangements for *high quality learning* and/or *learner engagement* and/or *quality culture*. If not addressed, the importance of these weaknesses will continue to **limit the effectiveness** of the college's arrangements.

A judgement of *not effective* indicates that the college's arrangements to maintain and enhance the quality of its provision and outcomes for learners and other stakeholders are **not effective**. This judgement means that there are significant weaknesses in the arrangements for *high quality learning* and/or *learner engagement* and/or *quality culture*. There is a high probability that, without significant and comprehensive action, with external monitoring and support, the college will fail to improve current low-quality provision and outcomes to an acceptable level. Education Scotland does not have evidence that the college has the capacity and commitment to identify and implement effective and comprehensive action.

Scottish Funding Council response to judgements

If the overarching judgement is **effective**, the Council will expect the college to engage with Education Scotland in follow-up activity, as appropriate, and, one year after the publication of the review reports, to provide a report, endorsed by its governing body (see *Council guidance to colleges on quality from August 2012*, paragraphs 62-66 [SFC/13/2012](#) setting out its response to the review).

If the overarching judgement is of **limited effectiveness** or is **not effective**, the Council will require the institution to prepare and fulfil an action plan to address the shortcomings identified (see paragraph 67 of guidance). Education Scotland will provide advice to SFC on the adequacy of the action plan and on how it is being implemented. SFC, taking into account any advice from Education Scotland, will normally require a formal follow-up review at an appropriate time, usually within no more than two years.

11. What happens next?

Education Scotland will continue to monitor progress during annual engagement visits to the college.

There will be feedback to the learners at the college.

One year on from this report, the college will produce a report setting out what it has done to address the main points for action and/or areas for development in the report and other quality assurance and enhancement activities. There will be a link to this report from Education Scotland's website.

Janet Gardner
HM Inspector

12. Further information

The review and judgements relate to the college as a whole and do not provide information about individual programmes of study or subjects. For further information on these or any other queries, contact the college or look on its website - <https://www.perth.uhi.ac.uk/>

For further information about Education Scotland, the external review methodologies, or other information about reviews, see www.educationscotland.gov.uk

For further information about the Scottish Funding Council, see – www.sfc.ac.uk

13. How can you contact us?

This report has been produced as a web-only publication and is available on our website at

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/othersectors/collegereviews/PerthCollege.asp>. If you would like to receive this report in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on 0131 244 5684.

If you want to give us feedback or make a complaint about our work, please contact us by telephone on 0131 244 4330, or e-mail: complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us addressing your letter to The Complaints Manager, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Livingston, EH54 6GA.

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Appendix 1

Glossary of terms

| | |
|-------|--|
| BRAG | Blue, Red, Amber, Green |
| CPD | Continuing Professional Development |
| FE | Further Education |
| HE | Higher Education |
| HM | Her Majesty's |
| ICT | Information and Communications Technology |
| NGB | National Governing Body |
| NHS | National Health Service |
| PAT | Personal Academic Tutor |
| PDP | Personal Development Planning |
| PI | Performance Indicator |
| QAA | Quality Assurance Agency |
| QI | Quality Indicator |
| ROA | Regional Outcome Agreement |
| SCQF | Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework |
| SDS | Skills Development Scotland |
| SFC | Scottish Funding Council |
| UHIMI | University of the Highlands and Islands Millennium Institute |
| VLE | Virtual Learning Environment |
| wSUM | weighted Student Unit of Measurement |

Appendix 2

THE SCOTTISH CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

This Framework diagram has been produced to show the mainstream Scottish qualifications already credit rated by SQA and HEIs. However, there are a diverse number of learning programmes on the Framework, which, due to the limitations of this format, cannot be represented here. For more information, please visit the SCQF website at www.scqf.org.uk to view the interactive version of the Framework or search the Database.



| SCQF Levels | SQA Qualifications | | Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions | SVQs/MAs |
|-------------|--|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 12 | Some SQA qualifications are changing between 2013-2016. See www.sqa.org.uk/readyreckoner | | | Professional Apprenticeship |
| 11 | | | | Professional Apprenticeship SVQ 5 |
| 10 | | | | Professional Apprenticeship |
| 9 | | | Professional Development Award | Technical Apprenticeship SVQ 4 |
| 8 | Higher National Diploma | | Diploma Of Higher Education | Technical Apprenticeship SVQ 4 |
| 7 | Advanced Higher Scottish Baccalaureate | Higher National Certificate | | Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 3 |
| 6 | Higher | | | Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 3 |
| 5 | National 5 Intermediate 2 | | | Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 2 |
| 4 | National 4 Intermediate 1 | National Certificate | National Progression Award | SVQ 1 |
| 3 | National 3 Access 3 | | | |
| 2 | National 2 Access 2 | | | |
| 1 | National 1 Access 1 | | | |