

English for speakers of other languages in Scotland's colleges

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**A subject-based aspect report on provision in
Scotland's colleges by Education Scotland on
behalf of the Scottish Funding Council**

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Introduction

Education Scotland's publication, *External quality arrangements for Scotland's colleges, updated August 2013*, specifies that HM Inspectors (HMI) will produce a number of subject aspect reports over the four-year period 2012-16.

Colleges should act on the recommendations contained in these reports. College inspectors will monitor action towards implementation of recommendations as part of their normal dialogue with colleges. They will wish to discuss issues arising from subject aspect reports during annual engagement visits.

This aspect report evaluates current practice and identifies important areas for discussion and further development amongst practitioners. It identifies effective practice found by inspectors and sets out recommendations for improvement.

In preparing this report, inspectors surveyed colleges in the sector and visited three colleges listed in Appendix 1, drew on the findings of published HMIE and Education Scotland external reviews of colleges, and examined other relevant publications and reports. They consulted with key stakeholders, including the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and other professional bodies.

This report evaluates college programmes intended for teaching English to speakers of other languages (ESOL). Programmes covered by this report are offered through a variety of modes of delivery at levels 2 to 6 of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The report does not evaluate programmes for teachers of ESOL.

Methodology

Each college in the sample was visited twice during the fieldwork. Inspectors observed learning and teaching and discussed relevant issues with managers, teaching staff and learners. The views of stakeholders were obtained through face-to-face interviews and through telephone contact. The initial visits to colleges helped to focus the discussion and areas of interest for the subsequent visits. This enabled a more detailed examination of current practice, and allowed a number of themes to be explored. For example, following the initial visits it was clear that partnership working was important in the delivery of ESOL programmes so it was important to gain a deeper understanding of this on subsequent visits. Also, the significance of effective guidance and support was raised by many learners so it was useful to explore this further during second visits.

Questionnaires were sent out to 22 colleges delivering ESOL programmes. Fourteen colleges responded and these responses were used to provide qualitative data and also shape themes that were followed within second visits to colleges.

Inspectors carried out a desk analysis of relevant documents relating to ESOL. This included a review of performance indicator (PI) information, programme information and other external reports. In addition to the evidence obtained from the three colleges that participated in the fieldwork, reviewers also drew on evaluations contained in Education Scotland college external review reports published between September 2010 and May 2013.



Summary of key findings

Areas of strength:

- Colleges respond well to Scotland's Adult ESOL strategy and provide an ESOL curriculum that supports the *inclusion, participation and progress* of those for whom English is not a first language.
- Colleges provide a range of full-time and part-time ESOL programmes at times that suit learners' needs and circumstances well. Where the range of levels offered is restricted because of learner numbers, suitable differentiation in class enables learners at different levels of ability to be taught together effectively.
- ESOL teaching staff in colleges are appropriately qualified and use their professional skills and knowledge effectively to support and develop learners.
- Colleges work constructively in partnership with Community Learning and Development services within local authorities in order to ensure learner needs are met whilst reducing duplication.
- Colleges assess learners' prior learning and languages skills well, ensuring that they are placed in programmes at a level that is appropriate for their needs.
- ESOL learners develop valuable skills for citizenship and acquire an understanding of Scottish life and culture through meaningful activities within and outwith college.
- Learners develop useful employability skills through developing English language skills and learning how to apply these effectively in work and social situations.
- Learners are very well engaged in enhancing their own learning. They are highly motivated and participate well in class activities. All learners report positive relationships with the teaching staff and regularly contribute feedback on learning and teaching.
- The majority of ESOL learners achieve their qualifications and make good progress into further learning or employment. Within full-time ESOL programmes, the learner success rate is significantly higher than the national sector performance level for full-time further education (FE).

Areas for further development:

- Colleges have not made constructive use of their credit rating powers in designing bespoke programmes and units to meet the needs of learners and other stakeholders.
- The titles of ESOL programmes are not standard and often levels are inconsistently labelled across the sector, making it difficult making it difficult for learners and other ESOL providers to understand provision and identify progression routes.
- Access to ESOL classes for most learners at lower SCQF levels is restricted to two or three hours a week which fails to meet their needs adequately.
- A few colleges are unaware of the ESOL provision made by other bodies and make limited use of partnership working.
- Colleges track learner progress within the college and often into employment but restrict this to destination rather than learner success, denying colleges feedback that could be used to improve selection procedures and programme planning.
- Many part-time ESOL learners have limited engagement with the wider college and only a few learners are aware of their college's student associations.
- Colleges have limited engagement with employers who employ large numbers of non-English speakers.
- Within part-time programmes, learner success rates are considerably below those of full-time learners. The success rates are also below the national sector level of further education (FE) programmes and early and further learner withdrawal rates are higher.
- The relatively low recruitment and success rates for ESOL learners with dyslexia indicate that the needs of these learners are not being met effectively by colleges.
- The success rates for ESOL learners in non-white ethnic groups are considerably below the success rates for ESOL learners of white European origin.

Background and context

ESOL programmes are a key factor in enabling inclusion, participation and progress for those for whom English is not a first language. In March 2007, the Scottish Government published *The Adult ESOL Strategy for Scotland*. This strategy is being refreshed and will be published in autumn 2014. The vision of the 2007 strategy states:

That all Scottish residents for whom English is not a first language have the opportunity to access high quality English language provision so that they can acquire the language skills to enable them to participate in Scottish life: in the workplace, through further study, within the family, the local community, Scottish society and the economy. These language skills are central to giving people a democratic voice and supporting them to contribute to the society in which they live.

ESOL is delivered by a range of providers including voluntary organisations, many of whom work in partnership with local authorities, for example the Workers' Educational Association (WEA). However, the main providers are colleges and Community Learning and Development (CLD) teams within local authorities. The majority of learners undertake programmes provided by colleges although the volume of college provision has declined over a three-year period due to reductions in college funding.

ESOL learners are a very diverse group and range from proficient speakers of English to those whose English is at a very introductory level. Learners may be in or seeking employment; they may be recent migrants or members of a more settled immigrant community. There are also asylum seekers who learn English in order to adapt better to their circumstances. Learners may be from within or outwith the European Economic Area (EEA). Those outwith the EEA may be subject to UK immigration regulations and requirements.

A great number of factors influence both the delivery and success of ESOL programmes, not least of which is the diversity of needs and characteristics of learners. For example, learners have different educational experiences and a few may have poor literacy skills in their own language; some learners have limited opportunities to practise and develop their language skills; and reasons for learning vary considerably from one learner to another. For example, parents who wish to communicate with teachers about their children who attend school in Scotland may be learning English alongside learners who are highly vocationally skilled but require English to achieve employment at an appropriate level.

Within this task, inspectors considered how colleges deliver their ESOL programmes and meet the challenges of a diverse learner cohort within programme design and delivery. Inspectors also evaluated the extent to which Scotland's colleges are preparing those for whom English is a second or other language for inclusion and participation in employment and their communities. Inspectors investigated how well colleges are preparing ESOL learners for employment or further study in the context of the current and prospective economy of Scotland.

Programmes in ESOL

1. Range of provision

Most colleges provide ESOL programmes within their mainstream portfolio. Colleges offer various modes of attendance in order to meet the diverse needs of their learners. Programmes are both full-time and part-time, with part-time programmes available through the day as well as in the evening. A few colleges also provide summer school programmes. Part-time programmes are a significant part of mainstream ESOL provision and 84% of the enrolments in 2012-13 were on part-time programmes, including those programmes not leading to a recognised qualification. Only 16% of ESOL learners study full time.

The majority of part-time programmes are composed of ESOL units accredited and certificated by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). Almost all full-time programmes are designed around national ESOL courses, with other units providing essential skills such as information and communications technology (ICT) and adding breadth to the curriculum through units such as *Local Investigations*. In 2013-14, a few colleges are piloting the new National Qualifications at levels 3, 4, 5.

Around a quarter of part-time programmes do not lead to recognised qualifications. A few colleges offer ESOL on a commercial, full cost recovery basis, including preparing learners for external examinations offered by such awarding bodies as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Trinity College London or the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (Cambridge English). Several colleges use the Common European Framework for Reference for Languages: learning, teaching and assessment (CEFR) to describe programme levels. The CEFR has high international recognition by learners from within the EEA, employers and education providers. Colleges also provide short programmes that prepare learners for the new citizenship requirements, including the *Life in the UK test*.

Just under half the colleges provide programmes that do not lead to recognised qualifications. These are often bespoke programmes devised to meet a particular purpose, such as prepare learners for Cambridge English examinations or to meet the needs of a particular employer, for example, *ESOL – Scottish Power*. However, colleges have not made use of such opportunities to use their SCQF credit rating powers in order to give these programmes wider recognition and formally recognise the achievements of learners.

Colleges offer ESOL programmes ranging from SCQF level 2, basic introductory level, to SCQF level 6, advanced level. Almost all colleges offer two or more levels. However, not all colleges offer all levels and this is particularly true for colleges serving smaller or more dispersed populations. Because of this, the range of English language skills amongst learners varies considerably within the levels offered. Colleges deal with this effectively in most classes through knowing their learners well and through differentiation in teaching. A few colleges make effective use of blended learning approaches with online delivery as appropriate. However, the titles of programmes are not standard and often levels are inconsistently labelled across the sector. It is not always apparent at which SCQF level a programme is placed, nor is it always clear when colleges are using CEFR levels to describe programmes.

This makes it difficult for learners and other ESOL providers to understand provision and identify progression routes.

Around half of colleges recognise that they are failing to meet demand for places. This is notably the case in Glasgow where the regional colleges report considerable waiting lists. However, the true position regarding demand for ESOL is unclear due to several factors. For instance, colleges promote their programmes well to relevant stakeholders such as Job Centres but do not promote well to communities, partly because they recognise they are unable to meet the demand. Most learners find out about provision through word of mouth and most would prefer to study more hours than are available. Colleges which recognise unmet demand maintain waiting lists and offer places when these are available. A few colleges notify external bodies about the unmet demand, specifically the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the relevant Community Planning Partnerships (CPP).

Funding for ESOL learners varies with the mode of delivery. Full-time ESOL learners are eligible to apply for the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) or college bursaries. Those seeking to study part-time can apply for a fee-waiver from the college, or can fund their study through an Individual Learning Account (ILA), or they can pay their own fees. Obtaining funding for part-time study can be particularly challenging, especially for learners with little or no English. This factor may also be obscuring the true level of unmet demand.

Introductory levels of ESOL, those at SCQF levels 2 and 3 particularly, are generally delivered in part-time programmes. Nationally, 20% of enrolments on Access level programmes (SCQF levels 1, 2 and 3) are full-time while in ESOL, only 13% of enrolments are full-time. At SCQF level 6, 28% of ESOL enrolments in 2012-13 were full-time. Thus funding and teaching resources are appropriately linked to higher level programmes where there are clear progression routes into employment or further study and learners are likely to make significant progress over a shorter period. However, this fails to meet the needs of learners at lower levels who have less opportunity to access full-time ESOL programmes and their learning may be restricted to two or three hours a week. In addition, ESOL learners from outwith the EEA wishing to study on full-time programmes may be unable to do so because of UK immigration requirements.

2. Meeting learner needs

ESOL programmes have evolved in order to address the needs of learners in different areas of their lives. The basic units that comprise ESOL programmes reflect this with titles such as *ESOL: speaking for employability* and *ESOL: everyday communication*. The SQA also developed the National Certificate (NC) *ESOL for Employability* at SCQF levels 5 and 6. These full-time awards are designed for learners who wish to progress to other NC qualifications. In response to the demands of the economy, the sector has developed with the SQA a range of work-related ESOL units from SCQF level 2 to SCQF level 5 and two customised awards in *ESOL for Work*. These awards were developed specifically with employment in mind and have been promoted by SQA to employers, particularly those who employ large numbers of employees whose first language is not English. Colleges report that a few employers have made limited use of this provision.

Some employers offered the awards to their workers in conjunction with CLD or college providers when external funding was available. However, this was not sustained once funding ceased.

The ESOL learner populations within colleges reflect this economic driver. Half of the colleges who responded identified economic migrants from Eastern Europe as their largest group of ESOL learners. One college described the situation thus:

(The largest groups of learners is) Eastern Europeans who arrived in the UK as migrant workers but have now settled here and are working and raising families. (Their main motivations are) integration and helping their children with school work. Many wish to gain better employment. Many want to improve their qualifications.

However, not all learners are young economic migrants and their families. Within the Glasgow colleges particularly, there are significant learner populations of asylum seekers and refugees, as well as more settled migrant populations. Often their needs are very different and programmes reflect this well. For example, in order to meet learner needs for participation and inclusion in their communities, one Glasgow college offers a full-time Access 2 (SCQF level 2) programme with a focus on English literacies, basic transactions and citizenship.



Young learners on Glasgow Clyde's 16+ programme

Excellent practice in programme planning: Glasgow Clyde College 16+ ESOL Programme

Since the early 2000s, Glasgow has become home to a large number of asylum-seekers, who have arrived in the UK from various countries around the world as a result of wars, political unrest and other events that can cause considerable trauma to the individual. A number of these new arrivals to the country are unaccompanied young people who have experienced disrupted or limited access to education. For these learners, the college provides the *16+ ESOL* programme which has a different focus from programmes provided for adult ESOL learners.

The programme is full-time and includes content that is both interesting and useful to young adult learners, covering topics such as sport and fitness, expressive arts and personal and social development. In addition to SQA-accredited ESOL units, learners complete other certificated short courses. The programme is also heavily underpinned by guidance provision. Teaching staff provide guidance but also refer learners to counselling services provided by the Freedom from Torture charity and the mental health service COMPASS. The level of support helps learners to address the many problems they experience in their everyday lives, allowing them to make progress and achieve on the course.

The *16+* programme is currently running at three levels: *Literacies, Elementary and Pre-Intermediate*. On completion of a *16+* programme, most learners progress to ESOL programmes for adults or to other college NC programmes.

The effectiveness of the *16+* programme is enhanced by the range of partners that the college works with, such as Glasgow Refugee Asylum and Migration Network, Glasgow Social Work Department and the Red Cross. These organisations refer learners and provide additional support. The college also works with organisations such as the Citizens Theatre to provide workshops and events that enrich the curriculum.

Excellent practice in programme planning: North East Scotland College

North East Scotland College plans its ESOL provision well to meet the needs of a large population of economic migrants and their families, drawn to the north-east because of the employment opportunities. The college works very well in partnership with local CLD staff who assess and provide basic ESOL. CLD staff refer learners to the college when they achieve the appropriate level for further study. In order to meet demand more effectively, the college limits learners to one year full-time ESOL study. Following this, learners progress to a vocational programme with ESOL support through learner services. This action has resulted in increased learner progression to vocational programmes.

The college restricts its provision to two levels, *pre-intermediate* (SCQF level 4) and *intermediate* (SCQF level 5), assessing all full-time learners before allocating them to a level. The college has designed its full-time programmes well around a blend of SQA units and *scaffolding units* that support the assessed units effectively, providing learners with a one-year intensive but successful programme. In key vocational areas such as travel and tourism, and business, management and administration, the college provides full-time *plus ESOL* programmes at NC level, substituting ESOL units for the communications units in the programme framework. Most learners achieve well and progress onto a mainstream vocational programme or employment. The success rate for ESOL learners is among the highest in the sector.

In both these examples, the capacity to offer such programmes which meet the needs of distinct groups is sustained by large numbers of learners with common requirements. Colleges in regions with fewer ESOL learners have found ways of addressing a diversity of needs within single programmes. For example, South Lanarkshire College recognises the difficulties of meeting the needs of a relatively small number of learners whose English language skills may vary considerably. The college provides flexibility within classes to ensure that all participants have a quality learning experience that meets their individual needs, whether that is simply to improve their English language skills to enable them to become better integrated into community life, or to progress into employment and seek certification. Careful lesson planning takes account of the wide range of language skills within the same group of learners and the diversity of their goals. Teaching staff are very adaptable and flexible in meeting learner needs.



Colleges have also responded well to the cultural and social needs of their learners. Some colleges have made good use of community premises to provide ESOL classes to learners with family responsibilities. A few have provided classes within local mosques to allow Moslem women to attend in comfort and safety.

3. Partnership working

The demand for ESOL provision arises wherever those whose first language is not English settle in Scotland. This often results from local employment opportunities and can mean a sudden large influx of people. Through the SFC, the Scottish Government has provided additional funding for ESOL that is intended to provide flexibility in the system and enables providers to meet fluctuating learner demand. This additional funding has diminished over the past three years although overall demand has increased. In 2012-13, the Scottish Government changed the distribution of this funding to encourage greater partnership working among providers in order to target provision more effectively and avoid duplication. As a consequence, providers work more closely through the local CPP to decide on need and submit funding bids for each area.

Approaches vary but in many geographical areas, colleges and other providers have established good working relationships that ensure delivery of ESOL meets the needs and aspirations of learners. In these areas, provision is characterised by a central point for referrals, a consistent approach to initial assessment and referral to appropriate programmes. In a few areas, effective partnership working is further distinguished by joint evaluation of provision. For example, in Moray, the college has a strong link with Moray Council that has resulted in effective collaborative arrangements for learners. Learners can transfer between the two organisations depending on the level of their language abilities. The Moray Council ESOL tutor teaches English to learners at Access levels and these learners complete their assessments with an ESOL tutor at the college. Those with higher levels of English language skills are directed to the college. This enables Moray Council to provide for the majority of its ESOL learners. Forth Valley College, which works with three

local authorities, carries out initial assessment of learners and directs them to appropriate provision. In this way, the college is assured that the needs of most learners in the area are met.

In most areas, local authorities provide beginner-level provision and this is generally delivered through CLD services. Most of this provision is uncertificated and does not offer nationally recognised qualifications. Colleges tend to be the main providers of programmes with nationally recognised qualifications at SCQF level 3 and above, and around half offer certificated programmes at SCQF level 2.

One effective use of additional funding has been to increase capacity in the sector through providing tutor training to volunteers and paid staff. For instance, colleges have successfully delivered the SQA Professional Development Award (PDA) *Introduction to Tutoring ESOL*.

Colleges are not always represented on CPPs at a strategic level although most are represented on thematic groups that address the needs of specific groups within communities. ESOL learners form one such group. Around a third of colleges work in effective partnerships with local authority services and voluntary organisations¹. A few work extensively with other bodies such as the police, NHS and Citizens Advice in the delivery of their provision and in supporting learners. However, a few colleges are unaware of the ESOL provision made by other bodies and make limited use of partnership working. There are clear inconsistencies within the planning model to be addressed by the new college Regional Boards.

Glasgow Kelvin College describes partnership working with other non-college providers as 'invaluable'. Partnership working is currently being developed city-wide in an ESOL mapping project. Glasgow Kelvin College is partnered with other organisations in the Glasgow ESOL Network Project. Partners include City of Glasgow College, Glasgow Life, Glasgow ESOL Forum, the WEA and other small community-based providers. This partnership has resulted in the creation of a website for ESOL learners <http://www.learnesolglasgow.com/> and a new ESOL map is under production. Ideally, all partners will be able to direct learners who cannot be allocated a place within their local or preferred organisation to a partner organisation where places may be available.

¹ Colleges and Community Planning Partnerships, Education Scotland, 2013

Learning and Teaching

1. Learning and teaching

Overall, learning and teaching within ESOL programmes is good and provides learners with a varied range of positive learning experiences. Learners engage well with their learning and teaching staff and learners make good use of ICT to enhance their learning. However, not all learners are competent users of ICT and older learners particularly find themselves disadvantaged.

Within more introductory levels, teaching approaches tend to be *transactional* and focus on equipping learners with the language to accomplish specific tasks such as making purchases and setting up appointments. However, much learning is also *interactional* where the focus is on making and maintaining relationships. Interactional learning often takes place at a less formal level and many colleges enable this through providing wider learning opportunities that bring learners together in more social settings. Teaching staff facilitate this well through groupwork in class, making sure that learners mix with each other and giving them opportunities to practise their English. Teaching staff also use project work effectively, making certain that this brings learners in to contact with English speakers in a range of settings.



ESOL learners tree planting at Forth Valley College

Teaching staff are well qualified, generally to degree level with post graduate or additional qualifications in teaching English as a foreign language or teaching English to speakers of other languages². They use their professional knowledge well to engage and support learners in their learning. Most colleges have a small cohort of well-qualified and experienced staff, augmented appropriately by part-time and often temporary staff. These staff are often also deployed to teach in outreach settings and evening classes. They form an important part of college resources and provide the flexibility to respond effectively to changes in demand. In most instances, these staff are qualified to a suitable level and often they bring additional experiences that are beneficial to learners, such as an understanding of adult literacies.

A very small percentage of ESOL learners have disabilities and a few have learning difficulties that present barriers to their learning. Most colleges have appropriate arrangements in place to meet learners' needs for support, and examination bodies approve appropriate arrangements for assessment. However, the assessment of learning needs is generally language-based so diagnosing learning difficulties can be challenging. Staff can occasionally confuse learning difficulties with literacy needs. The recognition of learning needs is dependent on skilled staff who are experienced in working with ESOL learners and who can exercise their professional judgement well. Overall, colleges assess learner needs appropriately. However, the relatively low success rates for ESOL learners with dyslexia indicate that the needs of these learners are not always being met effectively.

ICT is widely used by colleges in ESOL programmes, mostly to good effect. In particular, it is used to support and enhance learning in more rural areas. Colleges of the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) have developed packages to support remote ESOL learners. However, this restricts college provision to those learners who are competent ICT users. For a few learners, this disadvantages them in learning. This is compounded by the difficulties learners may confront in applying for programmes and college services as ICT is often the medium by which learners access these.

2. Guidance and support

All colleges carry out an initial assessment of learners in order to determine their prior learning and levels of English language skills. The majority of colleges make effective use of the *Initial Assessment Guide* produced by the Scottish government in 2010³. A few colleges use online testing packages. Initial assessment is often carried out on behalf of the CPP and it is effective in identifying learning goals at an early stage.

Almost all colleges recognise that the needs that ESOL learners have for advice and support go beyond support for learning. Accordingly, they make appropriate provision. Where this is most successful, colleges have a clearly identified member

² A framework was developed by the Scottish government in order to display qualification routes in continuing professional development for those working in ESOL: http://www.esolscotland.com/pdfp_framework.cfm

³ <http://www.esolscotland.com/initialassessmentguide.cfm>

of staff, either a teacher or member of support staff, who is a single point of contact who can signpost learners to other services.

Excellent practice in learner support:

Forth Valley College

At Forth Valley College, the *Learner Development Worker* (LDW) provides an important reference point for full-time ESOL learners. The LDW is a key figure in the college's induction programme and meets with learners on a weekly basis in an *employment development workshop*. The LDW has responsibility for providing learners with advice and guidance in employability, including assisting with the production of curriculum vitae (CV). The LDW also addresses health and wellbeing, sustainability and citizenship themes. Regular contact with the ESOL learners ensures that their needs for support can be met quickly and effectively. Learners value this role and regard it as a significant contribution in enhancing their learning.

North East Scotland College

At North East Scotland College, ESOL learners are supported well by the *Guidance Tutor* who ensures that the college induction programme is effective for learners. This member of staff meets with learners as a group and individually at key points throughout the year to discuss progress. Learners can also approach the guidance tutor voluntarily if they require additional support. Learners are very aware of this role and value greatly this support. The guidance tutor engages learners in activities within the wider college, such as a range of employability activities, including notifying learners of job opportunities, participating in a photography competition and exploring old Aberdeen. The guidance tutor also promotes external events such as the *language exchange* run for learners through a local pub.

3. Learner engagement

Overall, learners are very well engaged in enhancing their own learning. They are highly motivated and participate well in class activities. In the majority of colleges, full-time learners use personal learning plans to discuss and record their progress and learning goals. However, this is less likely to happen with part-time learners and a few colleges choose not to use personal learning plans at all, finding the approach too cumbersome for effective learner engagement.

All learners report positive relationships with the teaching staff and regularly contribute feedback on learning and teaching. Almost all full-time classes have class representatives elected by learners. They take their responsibilities seriously and participate well in programme review activities. Learners are very positive about their experiences and value the support they receive from staff. Often learners single out individual members of staff as particularly helpful in providing advice and support.

However, many ESOL learners have limited engagement with the wider college. This is particularly the case for learners who attend the college part-time. Only a few of these learners are aware of their college's student associations or have limited contact with them.

Excellent practice in learner engagement: Glasgow Clyde College

Glasgow Clyde College is taking positive and effective steps to develop and promote the role of the Student Association to ESOL learners. With college support, the Student Association is delivering information more effectively on college-wide activities to ESOL learners. The Student Association identifies opportunities such as international days that enable ESOL learners to share their experiences with other learners. The Student Association has established groups such as *Enhance Your Experience* and *Inclusion, Diversity, Equality and Access* in order to involve learners from all departments. The college also ensures that learners are informed during induction of extra-curricular activities available to learners, such as using the gym, developing IT skills and cooking.

4. Employability

For most ESOL learners, employment or improved employment prospects are the main goals that underpin development of their English language skills. Many are already in employment and in some geographical areas, this is true of almost all ESOL learners. All ESOL programmes develop the learner's employability skills by developing their communication skills and enabling them to operate effectively within the workplace⁴. There is a considerable number of part-time ESOL learners employed in large labour-intensive concerns such as food processing. In such concerns there may be concentrations of workers with little or no English language skills. Developing English language skills enables employers to communicate effectively with their employees and to continue their training and development in the workplace. At a social level, learning English is also a way of ensuring that these employees do not become isolated and consequently vulnerable.

The Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce recently recommended that employers play a greater role in developing the workforce:

...the self-interest of business and industry must be to participate and help achieve the best in the quality of our school and college education and preparing young people for work⁵

Colleges have had some limited success in working with the employers who employ significant numbers of non-English speaking workers. However, this has been difficult to sustain, particularly once funding is no longer in place to support employers to release employees for ESOL classes.

⁴ SQA website – fact sheet for employers

⁵ From recommendation 12 of the Commission for Developing Scotland's young Workforce: Interim report for the Wood Commission 2013

North Highland College has addressed developing employability skills through the use of blended and online learning. The college combines its ESOL programmes with *ESOL + Tourism*, and *ESOL + Business* online programmes. This allows the college ESOL learners to access mainstream vocational education within ESOL programmes. This has given many learners the chance to learn new skills and improve their English at the same time. It also gives them a qualification that employers are familiar with. Because they can access materials and teaching staff online, learners are free to move around with their employment, whilst continuing with their qualifications. This approach also widens access to learners with children and those working shift patterns.

However, a few colleges recognise that there is a need for ESOL providers and professional organisations to work together to develop learning and teaching materials to enable qualified professionals to re-enter their professions in Scotland.



Outcomes and impact

1. Learner withdrawal and attainment (See Appendix 3)

Early withdrawal rates on full-time ESOL programmes are in line with the national sector performance level for all full-time FE programmes. Further withdrawal rates in full-time ESOL programmes are better than the national sector performance level for all full-time FE programmes. However, within part-time ESOL programmes, early and further learner withdrawal rates are higher than the overall national sector performance levels for part-time FE. Within part-time programmes in particular, changing patterns of employment are often cited as reasons for learners withdrawing before the end of their programmes. Also, many ESOL learners confirm that learning English rather than obtaining a qualification is their main goal. Achieving their desired measure of proficiency in the English language before the end of a programme may contribute to higher withdrawal rates. A further explanation is that many ESOL learners in the Glasgow area particularly are asylum seekers and withdraw early from programmes when they are refused permission to remain in the UK. In many part-time programmes, learner attendance is erratic and low and this is also attributed to employment patterns, particularly shift work.

Rates of partial completion in full-time and part-time programmes are lower than the national sector performance levels. Therefore most learners who remain on programmes complete their programme successfully.

The majority of learners succeed and achieve their qualifications. Across full-time ESOL programmes provided in 2012-13, the learner success rate was 74% which compares well with the national sector performance level for full-time FE learners of 65%.

There are considerably more part-time than full-time enrolments. In part-time FE, the success rate of 72% was lower than the national sector performance level of 77% for part-time learners. When the high success rates for non-recognised qualifications are discounted, success rates are significantly lower at 65% for part-time learners than for full-time learners. Overall, there has been a slight improvement in success rates for ESOL learners over a three year period.

2. Equality and diversity factors

The majority of ESOL learners are white and of a European background. Success rates for these learners are significantly higher overall at 69% than for non-white learners at 59%. Learners from a European background have many advantages in that they have a European language with a Roman script as their mother-tongue and generally a high degree of literacy in their own language. Often they have spent more years in school, a strong correlate for learner success. These learners are in sharp contrast to learners from other groups including those from an Asian or African background who frequently have few of these advantages. Nevertheless, the majority of these learners are successful and achieve their qualifications.

Fewer than five per cent of ESOL learners have a disability, compared to the average for the sector of 14%. Success rates for ESOL learners are not adversely affected by disability, with the exception of dyslexia. Although learners with dyslexia represent fewer than one per cent of ESOL learners, nevertheless their success rates are considerably below the success rate for learners with no known disability or FE learners with dyslexia overall.

Age has no discernible impact on learner success in ESOL, with the exception of ESOL learners who are aged 41 and over. In contrast to the national trend for older learners, these older ESOL learners consistently have lower success rates than younger learners. This group represented around one fifth of ESOL learners in 2012-13.

Almost 70% of learners come from the four lowest Scottish Index of Multi Deprivation (SIMD) areas. There is a tendency for learners from less deprived areas to be more successful than those from more deprived areas although the differences are not significant.

There are more than twice as many female learners than male learners undertaking ESOL programmes. This ratio is similar over both full-time and part-time provision. The success rates for female learners are consistently and significantly higher than those for male learners.

3. Wider achievement

Within full-time programmes, many learners undertake additional activities that ensure wider learning. Most learners participate well in project work and other learning activities that take them beyond the classroom into the wider college community and local and national environment. For example, in Forth Valley College, learners visit the Scottish Parliament in order to develop a wider understanding of Scottish institutions. They develop confidence and citizenship skills well through such activities.

Part-time learners are more constrained by time but share their wider experiences in class discussions with other learners, developing their language skills alongside their understanding of life and employment in Scotland. For example, a few learners work in hotels and share this experience with other learners who then learn the specific language required to make a hotel booking. Learners enjoy such sharing of experiences and discussions which develop well learners' wider awareness of such themes as health and wellbeing, sustainability and citizenship including an understanding of rights and responsibilities.

Teaching staff encourage volunteering activities and all learners welcome this as an opportunity to gain work experience and develop their language skills. In a few instances, teaching staff integrate the experiences of ESOL learners into other programmes. For example, Forth Valley College brought together ESOL learners and learners on HNC Working with Communities, in order that the communities learners understood better how to engage with minority or marginalised groups in society. Both set of learners gained a great deal from this experience.

4. Progression to work and further study

Almost all learners from full-time programmes make very good progress into employment or further study. Often, they progress on to mainstream vocational programmes with ESOL support provided as required.

Excellent practice in wider achievement: Dundee and Angus College

The college has developed a cultural syllabus for ESOL learners and this has been a major element of the ESOL programme for several years. One of the main aspects is a series of visits to places of cultural and historical interest and various social events with a Scottish focus. In 2011-12 the college piloted a project to get learners more involved in the planning of activities and with support, a group of 16 learners organised the ESOL ceilidh. Learners were responsible for arranging a venue, a band and catering, preparing a programme which included other learners performing, decorating the hall, and compering the event. Throughout the process they worked towards achieving a core skills unit, *Working with Others*.

The college expanded this in 2012-13 with each ESOL group carrying out a project as part of their programme and inviting other learners to participate. As well as the ESOL ceilidh, there were many other events: an excursion to the Scottish Parliament; a visit to Glamis castle; a curling lesson at Dundee Ice Arena; creating and selling an international recipe book with accompanying DVD; and a Christmas craft sale with proceeds going to local charities.



ESOL learners and staff (Forth Valley College) with Angus MacDonald, MSP

Enhancement through self-evaluation and internal review

In almost all colleges, curriculum teams engage very well in self-evaluation activities. Teaching staff follow the self-evaluation and internal review procedures and practices of the college and place a great deal of emphasis on learner feedback. Almost all learners are aware that their views are valued and considered seriously by teaching teams. They are able to make their views known in a number of ways, including providing feedback directly to teaching staff within class activities. Elected learner representatives engage well in the process of self-evaluation and take this responsibility seriously.

Curriculum teams make constructive use of data such as PI information, learner satisfaction and learner destinations. Colleges track learner progress within the college and often into employment. However, the tracking of learners once they leave the college provides limited information and focuses on destinations rather than learner success. Thus teaching teams are not aware of how well they have prepared learners for higher education in particular. This denies colleges an important source of feedback that could be used effectively to improve selection procedures and plan programmes, in order to better prepare learners for the next step.

Excellent practice in peer evaluation: Forth Valley College

Together with Stirling Council, Forth Valley College has developed an effective approach to self-evaluation in the provision of ESOL services. Together, these bodies have produced a tool for joint evaluation that maps ESOL indicators to *How Good is Our Community Learning and Development* and Education Scotland's quality arrangements for colleges. The CLD ESOL services, voluntary bodies and the college each carry out a self-evaluation exercise then pair up with one of the other partners and engage in professional dialogue around the self-evaluation conclusions.

The process is very supportive and is particularly valuable to smaller voluntary organisations who may not have had experience in self-evaluation. This approach ensures effective sharing of good practice across the region and results in better planning of services for learners.



Recommendations

SFC should:

- Continue to work with colleges and Education Scotland to support delivery of the revised *Adult ESOL Strategy for Scotland* when it is launched in 2014.

Colleges should:

- Continue to monitor and improve the success rates for all learners on part-time ESOL programmes;
- Consider further equality and diversity outcomes within ESOL programmes to ensure that specific groups are not disproportionately disadvantaged within ESOL provision;
- Develop the ICT skills of all ESOL learners, to improve their access to learning;
- Ensure that the tracking of learner progression is systematic and takes account of learner success, in order to better inform and support self-evaluation and improvement;
- Engage more effectively with employers of large numbers of non-English speakers, in order to develop effective models of delivery for these learners; and
- Support student associations to engage more proactively with ESOL learners, including those who study part-time.

Regional Boards should:

- Work proactively and effectively with CPP partners in order to ensure that the needs of ESOL learners are met efficiently and effectively within local authority areas.

Education Scotland should:

- Continue to monitor the progress made by colleges in taking forward the recommendations contained within this report.



Appendix 1

Colleges involved in fieldwork:

Glasgow Clyde College

Forth Valley College

North East Scotland College

Colleges responding to questionnaire:

Ayrshire College

Dundee and Angus College

Edinburgh College

Forth Valley College

Glasgow Kelvin College

Inverness College

Moray College

North Highland College

North East Scotland College (as Banff and Buchan College and as Aberdeen College)

Shetland College

SRUC

South Lanarkshire College

West Highland College

Education Scotland acknowledges with gratitude assistance from:

Equality Challenge Unit

Scottish Qualifications Authority

Appendix 2

Glossary of terms

CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching and assessment
CLD	Community learning and development
CV	curriculum vitae
EEA	European Economic Area
EMA	Educational Maintenance Allowance
ESOL	English for speakers of other languages
FE	Further Education
HNC	Higher National Certificate
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
ILA	Individual learning Account
LDW	Learner Development Worker
NC	National Certificate
PDA	Professional Development Award
PI	Performance Indicators
SFC	Scottish Funding Council
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
WEA	Workers' Educational Association

Appendix 3

Performance indicators

Ethnicity Key

ESOL sector-level performance indicator summary 2010-11 to 2012-13

ESOL enrolments and successful outcomes

by ethnicity

by disability

by age

by SIMD

by gender and mode

Ethnicity Key**Disability Key**

	<i>Scottish</i>	<i>No known disability</i>	
<i>White</i>		Dyslexia	
<i>British</i>	English	Blind/partially sighted	
	Welsh	Deaf/hearing impairment	
	Northern Irish	Mental health difficulties	
	British	Other	Wheelchair user
White other	Gypsy/traveller		Mobility difficulties
	Irish		Personal care support
	Polish		Unseen disability
	Other white		Multiple disabilities
Mixed	Any mixed		Disability not listed
Asian	Indian		Information refused
	Indian Scottish	Unknown	Information unknown
	Indian British		
	Pakistani		
	Pakistani Scottish		
	Pakistani British		
	Bangladeshi		
	Bangladeshi Scottish		
	Bangladeshi British		
	Chinese		
	Chinese Scottish		
	Chinese British		
	Other Asian		
Black	Caribbean		
	Caribbean Scottish		
	Caribbean British		
	African		
	African Scottish		
	African British		
	Other Black		
Other	Other		
Unknown	Information refused		
	Information unknown		

ESOL Sector Level Performance

	Early Withdrawal	Further Withdrawal	Partial Success	Success
2010-11	7%	12%	10%	71%
2011-12	8%	11%	10%	72%
2012-13	7%	10%	10%	73%

Equality Pls

Success Rates by Ethnicity

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
White British	76%	66%	74%
White other	67%	68%	69%
Asian	59%	61%	58%
Black	54%	63%	61%
Mixed	57%	59%	66%
Other Ethnic background	56%	61%	57%
Not known/not disclosed	44%	47%	43%
Total non-British	66%	67%	68%

Success Rates by Disability

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
No known disability	63%	66%	65%
Dyslexia	59%	58%	54%
Blind/partially sighted	56%	44%	100%
Deaf/hearing impairment	50%	65%	64%
Mental health difficulties	60%	62%	67%
Not known/not disclosed	53%	52%	52%
Other	57%	54%	65%
Total with Disability	57%	56%	64%

Success Rates by Age

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Under 16	82%	73%	62%
16 - 19	62%	64%	65%
20 - 25	64%	63%	65%
26 - 40	64%	67%	66%
41 and over	60%	61%	59%

Success Rates by SIMD Decile

SIMD Deprivation Decile	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
1	59%	63%	64%
2	58%	62%	62%
3	62%	64%	64%
4	64%	68%	62%
5	68%	64%	62%
6	65%	65%	75%
7	65%	66%	63%
8	68%	69%	70%
9	67%	70%	76%
10	69%	79%	69%
0	81%	68%	54%

Success Rates by Gender and Mode

Gender	Mode	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Female	FT	75%	75%	77%
Female	PT	65%	67%	67%
Male	FT	57%	60%	62%
Male	PT	57%	58%	56%

Appendix 4

Useful resources

ESOL Scotland provides a suite of useful resources to support those teaching and learning ESOL in Scotland.

<http://www.esolscotland.com/>

The website also provides an initial assessment guide:

<http://www.esolscotland.com/initialassessmentguide.cfm>

and a framework specifically developed by the Scottish Government in order to display qualification routes in continuing professional development for those working in ESOL:

http://www.esolscotland.com/pdfp_framework.cfm

Sparqs has created training materials to support representation from ESOL learners.

<http://www.sparqs.ac.uk/students.php?page=139>

The Equality Challenge Unit has a number of useful publications addressing equality and diversity issues in Scotland's colleges and universities. See:

<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications>

In particular, this report provides a valuable background to understanding the wider college context:

<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/files/equality-in-colleges-in-scotland-statistical-report-2013-print-version.pdf/view>

Appendix 5

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF Levels	SQA Qualifications			Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	Scottish Vocational Qualifications
12				DOCTORAL DEGREE	
11				INTEGRATED MASTERS DEGREE / MASTERS DEGREE POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA POST GRADUATE CERTIFICATE	SVQ5
10				HONOURS DEGREE GRADUATE DIPLOMA GRADUATE CERTIFICATE	
9			PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AWARD	BACHELORS / ORDINARY DEGREE GRADUATE DIPLOMA GRADUATE CERTIFICATE	SVQ4
8		HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA		DIPLOMA OF HIGHER EDUCATION	
7	ADVANCED HIGHER	HIGHER NATIONAL CERTIFICATE		CERTIFICATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION	SVQ3
6	HIGHER				
5	INTERMEDIATE 2 CREDIT STANDARD GRADE				SVQ2
4	INTERMEDIATE 1 GENERAL STANDARD GRADE	NATIONAL CERTIFICATE	NATIONAL PROGRESSION AWARD		SVQ1
3	ACCESS 3 FOUNDATION STANDARD GRADE				
2	ACCESS 2				
1	ACCESS 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 Doctoral degree 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. Doctoral degrees 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. All of Scotland's colleges were awarded SCQF Credit Rating powers in January 2007.

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