

23 July 2024

Joanna Campbell
Principal
Dumfries and Galloway College

Dear Ms Campbell

A team of HM Inspectors from Education Scotland visited Dumfries and Galloway college in May 2024 to undertake an Annual Engagement Visit. During our visit, we talked to learners, staff and stakeholders, and worked closely with the senior managers.

The team found the following major strengths in the college's work:

Learner progress and outcomes

The rates of successful completion for learners on all modes of study at the college have significantly increased in AY 2022-2023 with corresponding improvements in rates of learner withdrawal and partial success. Rates of successful completion for key groups of learners including those from a care experienced background and for learners who declare a disability have also increased.

Managers are embedding a Nurture Approach that takes good account of all aspects of the learner experience. Curriculum teams and support services staff work well together to ensure the curriculum is inclusive and takes account of the needs of different learner groups. The college's Pillars of learning strategy and Teaching How2 guidelines are engaging staff well in sharing effective practice to extend and enhance teaching approaches to support learners with increasingly multi complex needs.

Diversity and inclusion are promoted proactively by the students' association (SA) and external partners who host a wide range of events and campaigns which include mental health week, International Women's Day, a carer's day and LGBTQ+.

Approaches to assuring and enhancing the quality of learning and teaching including professional updating.

A college wide professional development plan supports the development of learning and teaching and takes good account of development activities requested by staff. Designated advanced practitioners lead and record observations of learning and teaching. Advanced practitioners draw constructively on common themes identified during lesson observations to coordinate and deliver support that is valued highly by teaching staff.

All teaching staff undertake annual Professional Review and Development (PRD) meetings with their line manager to identify professional learning requirements. Teaching staff use professional development opportunities to meet the criteria for full professional registration with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS).

Teaching staff increasingly use data to inform professional discussions at programme team level and identify areas for improvement through the stop, evaluate and enhance arrangements. There are numerous examples of staff teams making in-year adjustments to improve the structure and content of programmes. These include changing the timing of remediation weeks and improving assessment arrangements.

College managers work productively with the local authority to develop programmes that supports regional needs. For example, provision of professional development awards (PDAs) in early years assist recruitment, retention and professional registration of childcare staff across the region.

Learner Engagement

Responses to the SFC Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES) are higher than sector norms and show high rates of learner satisfaction. Most curriculum teams make significant changes to programmes as a direct result of learner feedback. This includes creating shorter and flexible programmes and by integrating multiple assessments within project-based activities.

All learners feel that their programme prepares them well for the workplace. They appreciate opportunities to attend work placements and simulated work environments. A few curriculum teams make effective use of project-based approaches to contextualise assessments to industry standards and practices. This increases learner motivation and learner ownership of learning.

Learners are encouraged to participate in a wide range of social and sporting activities by the SA and the active campus co-ordinator. Activities include a football team for learners who are refugees.

The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the senior managers:

- There is no consistent approach for learners to record their development of meta-skills. This is limiting the ability of learners to identify and discuss these skills with prospective employers.
- Most learner representatives have not received sufficient training to undertake their role effectively.

Main points for action

None identified.

What happens next?

We are confident that the college has made satisfactory progress and has the capacity to continue to improve. We will continue to monitor progress with regular contact through the link HM Inspector.

Margaret Rose Livingstone
HM Inspector