

25 April 2023

Dr Margaret Cook
Principal and Chief Executive
UHI Perth

Dear Dr Cook,

A team of HM Inspectors from Education Scotland visited UHI Perth in January 2023 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.

Recruitment

Almost all learners are satisfied with the information they receive during recruitment. They feel well informed about their options and choices. On entry to programmes, curriculum staff ensure that the existing core skill levels of all further education (FE) learners are assessed. This helps curriculum teams to ensure that individual learners receive the right level of support from the start of their programme. Staff in all curriculum teams have autonomy to develop the most appropriate recruitment strategies to suit the needs of their potential learners. The use of contextualised arrangements in each curriculum team is helping to maintain recruitment levels that are in line with college targets. College staff work well with local secondary schools to offer taster sessions and open days. Curriculum staff gain useful insight and understanding of industry needs through employer events, labour market Intelligence (LMI) reports and feedback from awarding bodies.

Retention

All Personal Academic Tutors (PATs) use well developed induction arrangements to provide helpful guidance and support for learners at the beginning of their programme. Early identification of learner support needs allows PATs to create individualised interventions to support learner retention. The college funding team supports learners proactively who are at risk of leaving their programme early due to financial challenges. Staff in most curriculum areas collaborate constructively with a range of external partners to provide placement opportunities for young people. Options for health and wellbeing support are highly visible to learners and encourage learners to seek help when needed.

All teaching staff track learner progress efficiently and identify those at risk of withdrawal during fortnightly meetings. The overall rate of withdrawal for full-time FE programmes is 2% lower than the sector norm.

Attainment

All curriculum teams work collaboratively with learners to discuss and agree how programmes are delivered including the use of hybrid delivery approaches. Staff in all curriculum areas make adjustment to assessment delivery to meet individual learner needs and circumstances and support attainment. All college managers and staff systematically and continuously review their curriculum provision. Curriculum directors maintain oversight of self-evaluation arrangements to support improvement in programme performance. This standardised approach shares positive practice across all curriculum staff. The overall rate of full-time FE learner attainment is high and is 2% above the sector norm.

Progression

Senior managers encourage all staff in curriculum teams to use autonomy to develop their programmes and plan effectively for future developments. Almost all teaching staff make good use of opportunities to enhance their learning and teaching practice. Staff in all curriculum areas have good partnership arrangements with employers, schools, and the local authority. They design the curriculum carefully to provide learners with suitable progression pathways. Meta skills are embedded across most curriculum areas. Development of these skills encourages learners to develop their employability skills and increase employment opportunities.

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

- Most returning learners would welcome a more bespoke induction programme that is tailored to their needs.
- Information and support for learners regarding how to access digital devices prior to the start of their programme is not yet consistent.
- The overall withdrawal rate for part-time FE programmes has increased and is 2% higher than the sector norm.
- The majority of learners describe receiving too many college emails.
- Around one third of programmes do not have a course representative in place and the majority of course representatives have not received sufficient training.
- The number of full-time FE learners entering a positive destination has declined.

Main points for action

No main points for action were identified.

What happens next?

We are confident that the college has the capacity to continue to improve. We will continue to monitor progress through ongoing engagement with the college link HM Inspector.

Joe Mulholland
HM Inspector