

9 July 2024

Professor Chris O'Neil
UHI Inverness College

Dear Professor O'Neil

A team of HM Inspectors from Education Scotland visited UHI Inverness College in April 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 rate of successful completion across full time further education programmes has significantly increased in AY 2022-2023 with corresponding improvements in rates of learner withdrawal. The rate of successful completion across part time further education programmes has remained steady in AY 2022-2023 at approximately 85%.

All rates of successful completion for key groups of learners have increased in AY 2022-2023, particularly for those from a care experienced background which has increased by 12%.

A trauma informed approach to curriculum design is improving learner engagement and retention. Curriculum design principles have been adjusted to provide a stronger focus on development of social and meta-skills and alternative success criteria. Managers and staff establish an inclusive culture that promotes equality and diversity themes. Teaching staff and professional services staff collaborate well to ensure the curriculum is inclusive and accommodates the needs of different groups of learners.

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

Senior managers reinforce consistent staff ownership of the quality of learning and teaching. This creates a collaborative culture across teaching departments that is impacting positively on the learner experience. Managers implement quality enhancement arrangements to support staff to reflect on their learning and teaching approaches and prepare for their annual professional development review (PDR). Teaching staff draw on the aims of the college's strategic plan to reflect on their approaches to learning and teaching and plan engagement with professional development activities. Recently appointed curriculum and quality leaders support teaching teams to engage in quality enhancement activities.

A comprehensive quality enhancement tracker tool is used effectively by staff to measure and evaluate improvement, monitor in-year progress, and link actions with college strategies. All staff access comprehensive and reliable information on college systems to record, share and analyse performance indicator (PI) data. They draw effectively on these facilities within formal programme review meetings to evaluate the impact of the curriculum and plan actions

for improvement. Curriculum staff use varied methods to capture the views of learners. Most learners contribute productively to end-of-unit evaluations, learner focus groups and informal feedback initiatives. Feedback from learners is used well by staff to inform improvements to learning and teaching approaches and services to support learning.

Teaching and support staff work well together to support an increasing number of learners who have complex and multiple learning support needs. They encourage learners to become independent and support them well to progress. Staff engage productively with community groups and employers to coordinate and host events that promote college programmes, employment opportunities and future careers. This increases current and potential learners' awareness of the range of employment and further study opportunities.

Effective partnership arrangements with community stakeholders including the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) and His Majesty's Prison Service (HMPS) are encouraging re-engagement in learning. The college's professional development advisors (PDAs) host events for potential learners that provide a welcoming introduction to opportunities that are available at college. Most teaching staff work well with local employers. This has increased Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) numbers at the college with many employers recruiting new staff from learners undertaking other college programmes.

Learner Engagement

HISA engage proactively with learners through fresher's events, induction class visits, applicant days, check-in weekends, pre-arrival emails and newsletters. This helps to convey the college as a welcoming, inclusive and positive environment to learners. HISA is represented well at college board meetings. HISA representatives report regularly on learner views and contribute well to strategic action plans to allow the learner voice to be heard at all college levels.

Learner representatives contribute well to programme team meetings to convey the views of their classmates and engage in evaluation of learning and teaching. Almost all learners report their voice is heard and used well by staff to implement positive change. Their feedback has led to quicker response times for funding support and improvements to induction arrangements. All learners feel that their programme is preparing them well for the workplace and that they are well supported to achieve their qualification.

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

- HISA and college managers should take steps to increase the low number of learner representatives.
- HISA should take steps to ensure all learner representatives receive sufficient training to undertake the role effectively.
- Many learners are unaware of HISA activities and events. HISA should reflect and evaluate how they are engaging with the learner population.

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.

Sarah Halliwell
HM Inspector

cc Chair of College Board, SFC Outcome Agreement Manager