

26 March 2024

Ms Audrey Cumberford  
Principal  
Edinburgh college

Dear Ms Cumberford

A team of HM Inspectors from Education Scotland visited Edinburgh college in January 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 overall rates of learner successful completion for full-time further and higher education (FE and HE) are above the sector norms. Provisional data for academic year 2022-23 indicates an improvement in successful completion rates for full-time and part-time HE and FE programmes. Effective support is in place to assist care-experienced learners, and joint working between Action for Children and Learner Development Tutors (LDT) has been successful in improving retention and success rates. The majority of class groups benefit from effective support provided by LDTs. LDTs collaborate effectively with teaching staff, offering pastoral support and identifying areas for support. Most curriculum teams are using the Pro-Monitor system well to review the progress and support needs of learners. Support staff and curriculum teams are working well together to ensure that appropriate adjustments and interventions are put in place to support learners.

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

College managers have aligned the college's "Our Strategy, Our Future" strategy to the college's priorities, which is helping staff to contribute more fully to enhancing provision and services. The How Good Is Our Learning and Teaching (HGIOLT) arrangements have been revised to make them more practical and easier to work with. These adjustments have been well-received by staff, who have demonstrated effective management of the arrangements. Staff receive helpful support to produce balanced evaluations and identify appropriate interventions for improvement. Effective strategies for enhancing professional development to teaching staff is encouraging more creative approaches to curriculum design and delivery. Curriculum teams are supported well to utilise data and feedback from learners and staff to identify areas of the curriculum that need improvement or revision. Teams are drawing productively on this process to provide learners with a more personalised and flexible learning experience.

Most curriculum areas make effective use of learning and teaching resources to expand learning opportunities and develop learners' skills and experiences. They use a variety of online learning platforms to ensure learners engage with a range of digital learning

environments. Curriculum staff are encouraged and supported well to plan learning and teaching creatively, and increased opportunities for curriculum teams to share experiences are helping to highlight examples of best practice.

## **Learner Engagement**

Edinburgh College's Students' Association (SA) is well-represented on college committees and the office bearers feel their views are valued. The SA has improved the recruitment of class representatives and new representatives are offered a range of training opportunities. All learners report feeling well-supported by academic staff and speak highly of their lecturers. Almost all learners report high satisfaction rates with their college experience. Curriculum teams are proactive in seeking feedback from learners and involving them to improve the delivery of the curriculum. Learners are given good opportunities to provide feedback to influence approaches to learning, teaching, and assessment. The majority of curriculum areas have used learner feedback to enhance learning, teaching, and assessment approaches. This has included redesigning the curriculum to introduce or increase project-based learning and applying creative approaches to the delivery of both theory and practical subjects.

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

- Successful completion rates for learners from ethnic minority backgrounds are below the sector norms.
- Although learner support needs identified at an early stage in a programme are dealt with timeously, at the later stages of programmes referrals are not always dealt with promptly.
- Staff do not analyse additional support needs data sufficiently well to enable evaluation of the timing and impact of support services on learner outcomes.
- Overall, learner representation at course team meetings varies across the college.
- Many learners feel the SA is not visible enough and are not aware of its role and function.
- Self-evaluation approaches in support service teams are not sufficiently systematic or robust. This limits the ability of support teams to fully evaluate the impact of services, harness new ideas, and capture progress made on improving services
- Learners are not contributing productively to arrangements for enhancing learning and teaching across all curriculum areas.

## **Main points for action**

- College managers should continue to develop strategies to improve collaboration between curriculum and support services, including further development of joint approaches to self-evaluation.

- College staff and managers should continue to focus on reducing withdrawal rates for learners on part-time FE programmes and improving overall successful completion rates.
- College managers and the SA should work together to increase learners' awareness of the role of the SA and its function in representing the views of learners

### 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.

Barbara Nelson  
HM Inspector