

24 January 2023

Mr Simon Hewitt  
Principal and Chief Executive  
Dundee & Angus College

Dear Mr Hewitt,

A team of HM Inspectors from Education Scotland visited Dundee & Angus College in November 2022 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**

All learners are supported well by staff throughout the application process. This enables their successful progression from application to enrolment and helps learners to remain engaged throughout the period leading up to enrolment. Taster sessions for pupils in local schools across both Dundee and Angus local authorities help learners to understand the demands of college programmes. Engaging in these sessions prior to college recruitment allows learners to make an informed choice and promotes early retention on college programmes. Pre-enrolment initiatives such as 'Prepare me', 'Getting Ready for College' and 'Future Talent' prepare learners well for their studies. They are helping learners to understand fully the requirements of the programme they have applied for.

### **Retention**

The overall rate of learner early withdrawal was 3 percentage points lower than the pre-COVID figure. Staff and learner groups have autonomy to choose the best balance of attendance to meet learners' personal circumstances. This ensures learners are engaged well, while taking account of individual challenges that may affect their ability to attend college. Learners are well informed about the full range of support services available to them through the active involvement of the Student Services team during learner inductions. The further close working of support teams within curriculum areas enables staff to effectively respond to learners' support needs and encourages learner retention. The Student Association actively gathers learner views and responds to learner feedback. The focus on meeting the basic needs of learners has resulted in the provision of free meals, the introduction of learner kitchens in each campus for warming food, and the development of the learner help point to provide answers to everyday questions that learners may have.

### **Attainment**

Almost all learners who remain at college successfully complete their programme. All curriculum areas implement alternative assessment arrangements which are flexible and take account, where possible, of individual circumstances. This approach has supported

high levels of learner attainment. The overall rate of learners completing with partial success is very low at around 1%. In academic year 2020/21, rates of further education learner attainment were high, and higher than the sector norm. All staff have responded well to the three-point college leadership message of: be on campus, focus on learning and teaching and be continuously positive. This has served staff and students well in their transition back to on-campus learning and new ways of working which have had a significant impact on raising attainment. All teaching staff have the opportunity to be supported well in the enhancement of their learning and teaching practice. A lesson observation model is used effectively by teaching staff to plan, deliver and reflect upon their practice and make improvements to the learning experience.

## Progression

Rates of learner progression to a positive destination are high, with almost all learners entering a positive destination on leaving college. The college has mapped curriculum provision with the sustainability goals from the college Climate Emergency Action plan. This helps learners across the college to develop their awareness of sustainability issues and support their employability. Strong links with employers across the college ensure that learners have access to relevant work placement opportunities. These links, along with new links developed through the Business Partnerships Team are helpful in ensuring that learners are supported well in seeking employment. Staff across the college have autonomy to review the future direction of their curriculum and to plan effectively for future developments. A strong industry focus across all provision is ensuring college programmes meet the needs of employers and support progression to further study.

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

- In 2020/21, around a fifth of all learners withdrew from their programme early. The overall rate of learner withdrawal is amongst the highest in the sector.
- In 2020/21 the attainment rate for part-time higher education learners was 76%, 4% lower than the sector norm

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 on-going engagement with the college link HM Inspector.

Peter Connelly/Joe Mulholland  
HM Inspectors

cc Chair of College Board, SFC Outcome Agreement Manager