

24 January 2023

David Patterson
Principal and Chief Executive
Moray College UHI

Dear Mr Patterson,

A team of HM Inspectors from Education Scotland visited Moray College UHI 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

Staff across the college worked successfully to address under recruitment for full-time (FT) programmes at the start of academic year 2022/23. Continued development of the curriculum, including the expansion of Foundation Apprenticeship programmes, have increased the range of options for learners to access further education (FE) level provision. Potential learners who apply for a college programme receive a high level of individual support. This includes help with application documentation onsite or online.

Retention

Overall rates of learner retention are consistently better than the sector average for both FT FE and part-time (PT) FE. The support provided by Learning Development Workers (LDWs) within FT programmes is valued highly by both staff and learners. Their interventions are particularly helpful in relation to monitoring attendance and engagement and supporting learner progression. College managers have encouraged staff to engage in professional reflection and evaluation to improve outcomes for learners. Increased opportunities for curriculum teams to share experiences are helping teaching staff to capture what is working well and adopt effective practice.

Attainment

Rates of FE learner attainment are above the latest published sector average. Curriculum staff have continued to make well-considered adjustments to programme delivery and assessment arrangements. There are many examples of curriculum staff re-designing programmes to ensure that learners experience early success in assessments. Support staff work proactively to promote awareness of mental health issues to learners. They have developed helpful professional learning opportunities to ensure staff are aware of mental health risks. Teaching staff are supported well to develop skills in evaluating the quality of learning, teaching and assessment.

Progression

The college offers a wide range of options for learners to progress from FE level programmes to higher level study, including post-graduate programmes across the UHI partnership. The college works well with partners both locally and regionally to offer curriculum that meets the needs of local employers. This is helping to address the current and projected challenges in the region and address skills gaps and shortages. Learners make good use of their discussions with teaching staff and LDWs to identify and explore their progression options.

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

- Limited access to curriculum staff with specialist subject knowledge can affect the ability of admissions and guidance staff to fully support new applicants to make informed choices.
- Although plans have progressed to implement a more thorough system for evaluating learning and teaching, the new arrangements are not yet fully understood or applied by all curriculum staff.
- The overall number of class representatives is low. This is impacting on arrangements to gather and analyse class feedback to inform improvement.
- Rates of successful completion for both FE programmes declined in 2020/21, and in a few subject areas, rates of FT FE learner attainment are low.

The following main point for action was identified:

- The college should ensure that guidance and admissions staff have appropriate support from curriculum teams to help new applicants to make informed choices.
- The college should continue to address low rates of learner attainment.
- HISA and the college should work together to improve levels of class representation and arrangements to gather and analyse learner feedback.
- The college should ensure that staff evaluate learning and teaching consistently in all areas of the curriculum.

What happens next?

HM Inspectors recognise the progress made by the college towards most aspects for improvement identified during previous visits, however further progress is required in a number of areas. We therefore require a report on progress on the agreed areas for improvement within six months of the AEV visit. HM Inspectors will take account of the progress report when in determining whether further engagement with the college is required.

Barbara Nelson
HM Inspector

cc Chair of College Board, SFC Outcome Agreement Manager