

23 May 2023

Professor Wayne Powell
Principal and Chief Executive
SRUC

Dear Professor Powell

On the 16 March 2023, a team of HM Inspectors from Education Scotland visited SRUC to undertake an Annual Engagement Visit looking at the further education (FE) provision in SRUC. 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 your work.

Recruitment

Staff are committed to building supportive relationships with prospective learners. 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. Curriculum teams offer a range of helpful activities to support learners prior to starting their programme, and these activities help to develop sense of community. The activities include taster days, campus visits and opportunities to meet curriculum staff. Social media platforms are used well to promote and celebrate student achievements and raise the profile of the college experience. Library staff have developed an e-learning module to support learners coming to college with the development of IT skills.

Retention

Withdrawal rates for full-time and part-time FE programmes have been consistently low over the last three years and are below the sector norm. Staff work well to provide flexible learning opportunities to allow a significant number of learners to complete their qualifications on a flexible delivery model. This is helping to address the number of learners leaving for work or working longer hours. Staff use of the Sustainability, Enterprise, Equality and Diversity through Active and Blended Learning (SEEDABLE) curriculum review process which is beginning to have an impact on the evaluation and revision of the curriculum offer. This has encouraged the development of updated or new programmes such as the National Progression Award (NPA) for land-based subjects being offered to senior phase learners in schools. Staff use the updated withdrawal arrangements effectively to rigorously examine the options for learners before they leave a programme. This enables them to offer part-time or flexible delivery options that help potential leavers complete their qualifications.

Attainment

Rates of learner successful completion for FE provision have been above the sector average for the last three years. Teaching staff value having FE learners learning on campus and recognise to the benefit in identifying concerns or support needs at an earlier stage. They have made some useful adjustments such as the teaching of theory in workshops to give learners a more engaging learning experience. Useful resources are provided by staff via the

college Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to support learners who may be absent, or who may need to revise elements of the programme through flexible learning. Staff and learners confirm that support needs are identified prior to or at the start of a programme. Staff respond promptly where a pastoral or academic issue arises. For example, learners experience a quick response should they raise concerns about wellbeing or have a need for counselling.

Progression

Learner progression to a positive destination is high, with almost all learners entering a positive destination on leaving college. The vocational nature of the teaching on programmes ensures learners develop useful employability skills. Curriculum teams work well with external partners and employers to provide additional curriculum experiences including participation in competitions. This ensures they are well prepared to enter the world of work. Learners on most programmes engage in helpful work placements. They acquire useful practical skills and develop their own professional networks that assist them in gaining employment. Staff and placement providers regularly signpost employment opportunities to learners. The learning facilities and technology used within most programmes ensures learners are well prepared to progress to further study or employment.

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

- The range of learner ethnic backgrounds across the institution that does not fully reflect the wider Scottish community and a number of programmes there is a significant gender imbalance.
- Overall, learners lack awareness of the role and contribution of SRUC Students Association (SRUCSA). This is limiting the effectiveness of SRUCSA to fully represent the views of learners.

What happens next?

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

Dr John Laird
HM Inspector