

*Evaluation of
Continuing Professional
Development (CPD)
in Further Education*

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Quantitative terms and Performance levels used by ETI

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

1. Aim and objectives of the evaluation

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) undertook an evaluation of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in further education for the Department for Employment and Learning (Department) in March 2015. The overall aim was to evaluate how effectively the six Northern Ireland (NI) further education colleges (Colleges) implement CPD arrangements for full-time and part-time staff.

The main objectives of the evaluation were to evaluate:

- the effectiveness of the Colleges' strategic approaches to CPD;
- how well the Colleges' CPD strategies align with the priority sectors¹ identified by the Department to rebuild and rebalance the economy;
- the extent to which each of the Colleges' CPD strategies are linked to their internal college development planning processes;
- how effectively the outcomes of the quality improvement and curriculum planning processes are used to inform the Colleges' CPD strategies;
- how well the CPD needs of the Colleges' staff are identified and addressed, including the development of their specialist expertise and/or pedagogical skills;
- the extent to which the needs of local industry and employers are researched and analysed to inform the scope and priorities of the Colleges' CPD activities;
- the range and diversity of the Colleges' CPD activities offered over the last two years including industry placement programmes, such as the Department's Lecturers into Industry scheme²;
- how effectively the learning that has occurred as a result of the Colleges' CPD activities is shared and disseminated amongst staff; and
- to what extent the Colleges have identified and addressed any barriers to implementing key CPD activities.

2. Evaluation methodology

A team of 15 ETI inspectors visited the six Colleges³ and met with key members of each of the Colleges' senior and middle management teams, including representatives of the governing bodies, groups of full-time and part-time staff, and a range of relevant employers. To inform the evaluation, a sample of 65 lessons was observed during the visits. These lessons were selected to exemplify the positive impact of CPD on the relevance and quality

¹ The Department has identified the following priority sectors as economically important: business services (specifically ICT); financial services; manufacturing (including food and drink/agri-food, advanced manufacturing and advanced engineering); and the emerging sectors of life and health sciences and of creative industries and digital media (Circular 18/12)

² Previously known as the Colleges into Industry scheme

³ Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC); Northern Regional College (NRC); North West Regional College (NWR); South Eastern Regional College (SER); Southern Regional College (SRC); and South West College (SWC)

of the teaching, training and learning. Prior to the two-day evaluation visits, each College submitted to the ETI a self-evaluation report on the effectiveness of their CPD arrangements, along with key statistical information relating to CPD. The inspectors examined relevant documentation, including college development plans, curriculum plans, CPD strategies, self-evaluation reports and quality improvement plans, and CPD reviews.

3. Context

The Department's current strategic priorities for the six Colleges are to:

- raise skills and qualification levels in areas that meet the needs of the local economy;
- ensure that curriculum provision in the Colleges is focused on economic and workforce needs;
- provide greater support to employers, for example in the areas of business creation, incubation and product development;
- develop more flexible approaches to learning through the use of technologies and through partnership with other local providers;
- improve their response to local needs including small and medium-sized enterprises; and
- update and ensure the quality of College services is in keeping with international standards of best practice.

To respond effectively to these strategic priorities, including the Department's overarching Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland⁴, CPD for staff is recognised as a critical component of each of the Colleges' development planning processes. Currently, each full-time lecturer is entitled annually to at least five days professional development⁵, which are incorporated into each of the College's CPD strategy to meet the mandatory training needs and the ongoing professional development of its workforce.

Beyond the mandatory training required for each full-time and part-time member of staff, there is universal recognition by the Colleges that continuing development of full-time and part-time lecturers' pedagogical skills and their specialist professional and technical expertise is a key enabler to improve the relevance and quality of the provision for learners and the support provided for employers. In this context, CPD is increasingly important as the Colleges play a pivotal role in supporting the NI Government's priorities⁶ and its economic strategy⁷, particularly in rebuilding and rebalancing the economy. The Department's Skills Strategy sets out the key skills challenges that includes giving a high priority to learners achieving higher level skills, particularly to level 4 and above within the priority sectors. This is further developed in *Securing Our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships*⁸, which provides the future direction of apprenticeships in NI, and sets out the Department's new policy commitments and an implementation plan to ensure their delivery.

⁴ [Success through Skills – Transforming Futures \(2011\)](#)

⁵ Measured in hours with a minimum of 36

⁶ [Programme for Government 2011-2015](#)

⁷ [Economic Strategy: Priorities for sustainable growth and prosperity \(2012\)](#)

⁸ [Securing our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships \(2014\)](#)

Based on the information provided by the six Colleges at the time of the evaluation, they employ a total of 1,295 full-time lecturers and 551 associate lecturers⁹. There were also 1,665 part-time lecturers employed, of whom 653 (39%) were teaching for at least eight hours each week.

⁹ Full-time status lecturers, but teach part-time for at least 12 hours each week

SECTION B: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4. Overall findings

Overall, the quality of the CPD arrangements for staff in the Colleges ranges from good to outstanding. It was evaluated as good in two of the Colleges, very good in two and outstanding in the remaining two.

Going well

- In all of the Colleges, the high priority given by management at all levels to the CPD of full-time staff, with an appropriate focus on the development of their specialist professional and technical skills and knowledge.
- Across the majority of the Colleges, the well-developed strategic and operational planning processes for CPD. These are increasingly aligned to the current and emerging needs of the local and regional economy and NI Government priorities to ensure that key staff are appropriately skilled to deliver and support new curriculum provision.
- The effective use of self-evaluation and quality improvement processes, in most of the Colleges, to inform future staff CPD planning and content.
- The increasing use of lesson observations in most of the Colleges, as part of their internal quality processes, to inform the planning for pedagogical professional development and support for full-time lecturers.
- The increasing range and effective use of local, national and international links and partnerships with other educational providers and employers, by all of the Colleges, to inform curriculum planning and development and the associated CPD.
- In most of the Colleges, the broad and appropriate range of CPD activities provided for the majority of full-time staff to ensure their specialist expertise is current, with an increasing focus on providing a more economically relevant curriculum.
- The increasing capacity within most of the Colleges to improve the quality of teaching, training and learning through the development of the lecturers' pedagogical practice, including the use of innovative and collaborative approaches and the effective use of information and learning technology (ILT).

Going forward

What do the Colleges need to do to improve further the quality of CPD?

- In a minority of the Colleges, strengthen further the links between the strategic planning for CPD and other college planning processes, including curriculum planning and workforce development.
- Develop or improve further an integrated management information system to collate, prioritise and track the full range of the CPD activities staff participate in, and make use of the data to evaluate the impact of CPD to inform related planning.

- In most of the Colleges, implement strategies to increase the participation rates of part-time lecturers in whole-college CPD activities and programmes.
- Continue to increase the capacity and confidence of course teams to reflect on their professional practice, so that they can engage more effectively in self-evaluation and planning to improve the quality of teaching, training and learning.
- Continue to develop and establish suitable networks across the sector to facilitate better sharing and dissemination of best practice in CPD.

SECTION C: SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

5. Strategic planning for CPD

Across all of the Colleges, CPD is considered as a key strategic priority by both the Colleges' senior management teams and the respective governing bodies to ensure that full-time staff have suitable opportunities to develop and update their professional practice and expertise. Consequently, CPD activities are mostly well-resourced and appropriately targeted. In the majority of the Colleges, the CPD programmes have been accredited with a recognised quality standard such as Investors in People, or the Colleges are working towards achieving accreditation. This gives them assurance that their CPD strategy is administered to an appropriate standard. At all levels of management and amongst staff there is a growing commitment to, and an increasing understanding of, the need for all staff to continue to develop their professional practice. There is a particular recognition of the need to continually develop the pedagogical skills of staff and to maintain the currency of their professional and technical expertise so that the Colleges can be responsive to the needs of the priority sectors. It is noteworthy that across the Colleges, CPD is widely recognised as a key enabler to improved agility in responding to the changing needs of learners and the economy.

The quality of the strategic planning processes for CPD, across the Colleges, is variable, ranging from outstanding to satisfactory. While overall it is mostly good or better, there are not always well-defined linkages between the college development planning process and subsequent training needs analysis and planning for CPD. In the best practice identified in two of the Colleges, the governing body and the college management teams jointly have a clear, well-defined understanding of the present and emerging curricular needs relating to the region in which the College operates. This is achieved through well-considered economic engagement strategies, effective collaboration with local, national and international providers of education and training, and regular analysis of labour market trends. Consequently, the college development plan in each of these Colleges is well-informed by research and sets out a clear strategy for curriculum planning and development, aligned appropriately to the priority sectors, underpinned by strategic and detailed operational planning for the updating of staff expertise.

In contrast, in one College, there is a lack of clarity and coherence in the strategic and operational planning processes relating to CPD, this results in limited information being available on how annual CPD programmes are supporting the ongoing development of the curriculum across the College. The weaknesses in the College strategic planning processes for CPD are addressed to some extent by most of the curriculum teams. The key staff members within these teams do undertake important CPD activities to ensure their expertise remains current, and there are some very good examples of this in priority sectors. However, the quality of CPD is variable, and the strategic planning for the development of the lecturers' pedagogical skills is not systematic and pervasive enough.

Effective practice in strategic planning for CPD

The college development plan contains specific sections for developing people, which integrates with detailed curriculum and CPD planning processes. The planning processes are informed well by a thorough understanding of the current and emerging regional educational and training needs. Detailed CPD plans enable staff to develop relevant expertise to meet, in a timely manner, the education and training challenges relating to rebuilding and rebalancing the NI economy.

6. CPD needs analysis

Across most of the Colleges, CPD needs analysis is increasingly evidence-based; the staff appraisal and self-evaluation processes are identifying well skills gaps in professional practice due to, for example, curricular changes, re-deployment, new managerial roles or new approaches to teaching, training and learning. Consequently, in most of the Colleges the processes to inform CPD needs analysis are good or better. In one College, for example, based on reliable quantitative and qualitative information, management are producing a detailed skills audit to enable them to target more effectively and innovatively both the pedagogical and specialist expertise development needs of staff. Importantly, across most of the Colleges, findings from self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes, including lesson observations, learner voice and employer feedback, are being used more effectively to inform the planning for CPD. This is particularly evident where curriculum areas are not meeting the College's learner retention and achievement targets. In such instances, the majority of the Colleges act quickly to provide relevant, targeted and supportive CPD for the appropriate staff.

Across the sector, the use of integrated management information systems to record and monitor CPD activities is mostly underdeveloped. Only one College is making notable progress in the development of a tailored management information system to compile, prioritise, track and monitor the CPD activities of its staff, including part-time staff. This enables the College to quality assure more effectively its CPD strategy and inform future CPD planning and content. Going forward, there is a need for the Colleges to develop and embedded an integrated management information system to support the monitoring and evaluation of CPD, particularly in relation to its impact on improving the quality of the provision.

7. Links and partnerships to inform and support CPD

Across all of the Colleges, there is an increasing range and effective use of links and partnerships to inform and support CPD; these are often in highly-specialised curriculum areas with examples of sector-leading practice. There are excellent opportunities for key staff to benchmark contemporary educational and industry practice through economic engagement activities, links with sectoral bodies, participation in national and international study visits, supporting skills competitions, and collaborating with other national and international further and higher education providers. In the most effective practice, the College's management team and the governing body have a comprehensive and strategic understanding of the College's existing and potential links and partnerships, and of how these can be exploited to up-skill staff to meet better the regional educational needs and support local employers, particularly in the priority sectors.

Effective practice in using links and partnerships

The College has established a range of industry fora, critical expert groups, and international partnerships which are used constantly to inform curriculum design and CPD needs. In the priority sectors, such as advanced engineering, curriculum teams work closely with local employers in the design and delivery of bespoke apprenticeships up to level 4.

8. Barriers and constraints to developing CPD

With the increasing pivotal role of the Colleges in supporting the NI economy through the provision of relevant curricula at levels 1 to 7 and in supporting business development and innovation through knowledge transfer, there are growing financial pressures within the Colleges to be more innovative and efficient in their delivery of CPD. In addition, the scale and diversity of the staffing complement in the Colleges presents a significant challenge to ensure all staff meet their mandatory training requirements and engage fully in regular professional development. This is particularly true for part-time staff with other work commitments, and is frequently compounded when attendance at CPD events is not remunerated. As a result, the majority of the Colleges are developing their virtual learning platforms to accommodate a range of online modules, particularly for mandatory staff training, such as health and safety and safeguarding vulnerable learners. Most of the part-time staff interviewed reported that this approach is effective and more efficient. In one College, the range of online modules is being extended to include pedagogical training which is also available to part-time lecturers. It is envisaged by the College that this approach will increase the participation rate of part-time staff in a greater range of CPD activities.

Traditionally, the effective planning of CPD to support and improve pedagogic skills has been constrained by the limited opportunities for quality teams to carry out lesson observations to inform the nature and content of subsequent CPD activities. In the majority of the Colleges, however, there is notable progress in the development of more evidence-based, tailored and supportive pedagogical centred CPD. This has been achieved through a variety of well-considered strategies by college management, including the provision of teaching and learning coaches, ILT technical support and pedagogy mentors, supportive lesson observations and well-targeted seminars and training programmes on effective teaching, training and learning.

Effective practice in addressing barriers and constraints

The College has a dedicated team of ILT pedagogy mentors who provide both full-time and part-time lecturers with a negotiated range of tailored in-class training activities on how to use more effectively ILT resources to promote and support effective learning. This arrangement is also used to capture and share effective practice through the College's virtual learning platform and webinars, and to inform future CPD content and planning.

All of the Colleges make effective use of their economic engagement processes, involvement in local and international skills events, and growing participation in national and international partnerships to stimulate interest and enthusiasm amongst key staff to engage in extensive and often demanding CPD to meet the challenges of emerging curricular needs. In particular, the industry and business facing teams within the Colleges, dedicated to interact and support employers in innovation projects, are pivotal in driving curriculum development and identifying and supporting associated CPD.

Effective practice in the use of economic engagement to stimulate CPD

The College's development of high-quality innovation and research centres to support economic engagement and curriculum development has been an important stimulus in generating and informing the range and nature of CPD to underpin educational provision in priority sectors, including higher level education courses.

9. Range and diversity of CPD

Historically, across all of the Colleges, the prime priority of CPD activities has been to ensure full-time lecturers maintain their specialist expertise, particularly in areas with rapidly changing technology. Appropriately this remains the case, but with an additional focus on up-skilling lecturers in priority sectors, including building the Colleges' capacity to deliver courses up to level 7. To this end, all of the Colleges have invested in CPD within priority sectors, particularly where they have existing expertise and resources or have secured additional funding streams to support the introduction of new curriculum areas. To underpin ongoing curriculum development in these areas, lecturers have been well-supported in acquiring additional relevant qualifications, on occasions up to level 8, undertaking industry placements and training, and regularly attending professional symposiums. This well-targeted range of CPD activities has enabled some existing staff to diversify confidently into new or emerging curriculum areas where demand is higher. This is particularly true for staff working in professional and technical areas, such as construction and the built environment, where they have been up-skilled to deliver courses relating to contemporary technologies.

Following ETI inspections, the Colleges have responded positively to the identified key areas for improvement, and the subsequent range of CPD activities have been appropriately targeted and to good effect. This is particularly the case in the essential skills provision, where concerted CPD activities have led to sustained improvements, as evidenced in recent ETI follow-up inspections. In one College, this has led to essential skills teams working regularly together to plan and review more effective pedagogical practice.

It is noteworthy that the qualification awarding bodies in a minority of professional and technical areas have an appropriate expectation that lecturers maintain a CPD log in order to meet the requirements of their quality assurance processes. This is particularly well-applied in the professional and technical areas of children's care, learning and development, health and social care, and hairdressing and beauty services. Many of the lecturers interviewed during the evaluation, including part-time lecturers working in these areas, actively engage in relevant work-placements to update their professional and technical expertise. This is often self-managed by the lecturer and is not always recorded by the Colleges. In contrast, in other professional and technical areas, the requirements for CPD work-placements are not as rigorously scrutinised by the awarding bodies or by the Colleges.

The majority of the Colleges are developing relevant leadership and management CPD programmes to enhance the capabilities and capacity of the college management teams. Two Colleges, for example, are providing a bespoke accredited level 5 programme in leadership and management. In one of these College, the middle managers benefit significantly from a well-considered programme, which includes master classes on regional and local government policies relating to education and training, opportunities to become more competent in the use of business management systems, collaborative working and engaging in very relevant leadership projects.

Effective practice in the leadership and management CPD

The College's leadership and management programme includes an excellent opportunity to complete a business improvement project which leads to the design and implementation of more effective business management solutions. This includes an online learner enrolment facility that has also been adopted by another College.

The development of lecturers' competence in the effective use of ILT to enhance and support learning, across the Colleges, is too variable; it ranges from outstanding to satisfactory. In the most effective practice, there are multi-skilled specialist teams of e-technologists¹⁰, software programmers, multi-media technicians and end-users who support lecturers well in their deployment of ILT to enhance and support more effective teaching, training and learning. This is also underpinned by an extensive range of training programmes and strategies to continuously embed the more effective use of ILT and to support the ongoing development of blended-learning approaches.

Effective practice developing the ILT skills of staff

The College has devised a graduated programme to develop lecturers' digital competences, with an appropriate focus on increasing their confidence in preparing and using online learning modules, with a view to increase the College's use of blended-learning.

Over recent years, there has been an increasing focus on providing more structured CPD programmes to enhance full-time lecturers' pedagogical skills, which is developing well in most of the Colleges. While there are very good arrangements to support new full-time¹¹ lecturers acquire core pedagogical skills and knowledge through the mandatory Post-graduate Certificate in Education¹², the college-based arrangements to promote and support continuing reflection and development of professional practice are somewhat variable. The growing use of more evidence-based needs analysis and planning is, however, leading to a more appropriately targeted range of pedagogical CPD activities. These include accredited programmes on teaching thinking skills, seminars by internationally-renowned educational experts, and collaborative teaching and learning approaches.

The college-based CPD provision for part-time staff is mainly satisfactory. In particular, there is insufficient emphasis given by the Colleges to developing part-time lecturers' pedagogical skills. While the use of practising professionals on a part-time basis can greatly enrich the curriculum provision, particularly in highly-specialised areas, it is a concern that based on the data supplied by the Colleges, only 20% of them hold a teaching qualification and 53% hold a level 5 or higher professional or technical qualification. Of those teaching for at least eight hours each week, 24% hold a teaching qualification. The number of part-time lecturers availing of the opportunity to develop their pedagogical skills through the Certificate in Teaching and/or the Post-graduate Certificate in Education is too low. Over the last three years, 31 part-time lecturers have undertaken the Certificate in Teaching, and 21 have undertaken the Post-graduate Certificate in Education. This represents only a small proportion of the current part-time lecturer complement across the sector.

To mitigate the risks associated with deploying part-time lecturing staff without any pedagogical training, the Colleges are beginning to develop and implement action measures, short of attaining relevant teaching qualifications. In most of the Colleges, part-time lecturers are offered mentoring support and induction sessions covering pedagogical approaches in, for example, the effective use of ILT and appropriate assessment practices, to underpin the

¹⁰ These are support staff with specialist ICT skills in supporting and developing ILT

¹¹ Including associate lecturers

¹² Based on information provided by the Colleges, a total 139 full-time lecturers and 21 part-time lecturers have undertaken the Post-graduate Certificate in Education

quality of the teaching, training and learning they provide. In a minority of the Colleges, the part-time lecturers are also becoming more integral to each of the College's quality assurance and self-evaluation processes, and are beginning to benefit from lesson observation feedback. In addition, they have access to whole-college pedagogical CPD events or programmes.

Effective practice in providing pedagogical CPD for part-time lecturers

One College has actively reduced its dependence on part-time lecturers by consolidating part-time teaching hours into full-time posts. In addition, a suite of mandatory online learning modules on effective pedagogy is available to all lecturing staff, including part-time staff. Part-time lecturers also participate in lesson observations to quality assure their practice and inform any further CPD.

Over the last three years, a small number of lecturers, both full-time (51) and part-time (8), have participated in the Department's Lecturers into Industry scheme¹³. The lecturers who participated can identify clearly how the industry placements have benefited their professional practice. This includes greater confidence to offer a more contemporary curriculum, enhanced relationships with local employers, and developing current specialist expertise. In tandem with the Lecturers into Industry scheme, all of the Colleges are facilitating a number of staff spending two or more days on an industry placement. Over the last three years, the number of staff participating in these short placement periods varied significantly across the Colleges, from just over 100 in one College to just one in another. The staff reported, however, that the shorter periods in industry are more manageable and also beneficial, particularly for those where current industry practise is a requirement of their professional sectoral body. Going forward, a minority of the Colleges are considering formalising this approach to ensure all staff can avail of regular industry placements to maintain current specialist expertise and to inform curriculum planning and development.

Effective practice, Lecturers into Industry

In response to inspection findings, key members of the engineering curriculum team undertook Lecturers into Industry placements with local employers to benchmark contemporary industry technology and practices with a view to updating the curriculum provision in the College. The placements led to a revised curriculum, aligned better to employers' needs and refreshed the lecturers' expertise to current industry standards.

The increasing use of national and international study visits, mostly funded through European Union exchange schemes, has become an important dimension of CPD. Through these visits, curriculum managers and staff are able to benchmark contemporary professional practice and develop new approaches to teaching, training and learning. In particular, these study visits have been used well to support the introduction of cross-college initiatives, such as enterprise and entrepreneurship and online learning.

¹³ Funded centrally by the Department and involves at least five days on an industry placement

Effective practice in developing international links

Through a strategic priority to establish an international dimension to the College's provision, the College provided online synchronous teaching to a group of learners in Africa. This has allowed the College to develop and test its ICT capabilities and online teaching approaches for future planning of online delivery, both locally and internationally.

10. Impact and outcomes of CPD

Across all of the Colleges, there is clear evidence of high levels of staff engagement in, and a growing enthusiasm for, relevant CPD. The staff interviewed commented strongly on the need to maintain their professional skills and knowledge through well-planned and appropriately targeted CPD activities. They are fully committed to professional and personal development to support the pivotal role played by the further education sector in supporting the NI economy. In most instances, they considered the College's CPD arrangements enabled them to access appropriate, relevant CPD activities. In one College, the CPD strategy fosters and nurtures the staffs' ambition for excellence, innovation and rewards success. This effective strategy also promotes and accommodates well the College's complementary goals of maintaining high levels of specialist expertise and embedding better pedagogical practice.

Most of the Colleges' management teams, including the governing bodies, are increasingly becoming more adept in generating and building a positive and learning ethos amongst the staff. In the best practice, particularly evident within two Colleges, well-considered curriculum conferences, health and well-being programmes, celebration of success events, international collaborative working, and knowledge transfer projects with local industry do much to enhance staff competence and confidence.

There is evidence, across all of the Colleges that CPD is increasingly underpinning their collective capacity to support the building and rebalancing of the NI economy through the provision of more relevant education and training within the priority sectors. Across the sector, the Colleges are each developing a number of relevant highly-specialised curriculum areas; these include the provision of high-level skills training and development in advanced engineering manufacturing, computer programming and ICT, the creative industries and digital media, food and drink manufacturing, pharmacy services, and renewable and sustainable energy.

While this evaluation has identified clear evidence of a high priority given to the continuing development of lecturers' specialist expertise, the development of lecturers' pedagogical skills is a more recent priority characterised by modest pace and impact. Over recent years, the growing clarity and confidence in the self-evaluation and quality planning processes has led to better-informed strategies to improve the quality of teaching, training and learning. This includes the introduction of more contemporary learning approaches, such as teaching thinking, flipped curriculum, cross-unit project work, blended-learning, peer learning and assessment through digital collaboration. Going forward, there is a need to evaluate more robustly the impact of these strategies on learner outcomes and to inform more effectively the Colleges' future planning for CPD.

Across the majority of the Colleges, the range of ILT CPD activities has not led to significant increases in the delivery of online or blended-learning approaches to meet the needs of learners and employers. Typically, development of this provision is restricted to a small number of professional and technical areas, mainly in higher education, which is not applied consistently across the Colleges.

Across most of the Colleges, there are effective arrangements in place to enable staff to disseminate the learning and development resulting from CPD. This includes integrated curriculum management and performance reviews, whole-college conferences and increasingly, professional reflections through digital media, such as webinars, blogs, and social media to stimulate more professional discussion amongst staff. This should be fostered and used more widely to underpin self-evaluation and to stimulate greater self-determination within curriculum teams to drive CPD in teaching, training and learning.

A feature of effective practice identified in this report is the focus, in a majority of the Colleges, on developing managerial and leadership skills within middle management teams. In the one College where this is well-developed, there is evidence of better designed business management systems, clearer understanding of the opportunities and constraints with the current further education operating environment, a sharper focus on curriculum planning and development, and more confident collaborative working across the sector.

Although the Colleges have developed effective links with other further education colleges outside of NI to inform their CPD activities, there is too little collaboration, at both strategic and operational levels, across the sector within NI to develop or support common and mutually beneficial approaches to CPD.

11. Conclusion

Across the six NI further education colleges, the quality of the continuing professional development provided for staff ranges from good to outstanding. In four of the Colleges there is evidence of very good or outstanding CPD arrangements that are continuously evolving to adapt to the changing needs of college workforce development planning. In these Colleges, CPD has a central role in underpinning the Colleges' strategic curriculum planning and development, with a clear focus on supporting the NI economy. In the two remaining Colleges, work is underway to strengthen further the good CPD provision. Within these two Colleges, CPD needs to be more prominent in curriculum planning. Overall, the sector would benefit from greater collaboration in disseminating and establishing best practice across the sector, particularly in meeting more effectively the CPD needs of part-time staff.

Quantitative terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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