

The Inspection Process

Information for Managers and the Governing Body

INSPECTIONS OF COLLEGES OF FURTHER EDUCATION

WHY IS THE FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGE BEING INSPECTED?

All further education colleges are inspected regularly by the Education and Training Inspectorate. The purpose of inspection visits is to ensure the highest possible standards of training and learning throughout the supplier organisations in Northern Ireland. Inspections inform all those who need to know, such as the Governing Body, the learners, parents, employers, the general public, the Department for Employment and Learning (the Department), and the Northern Ireland Assembly, how good the further education colleges in Northern Ireland are and what needs to be changed so that they can improve.

WHO INSPECTS?

The further education colleges are inspected by Inspectors working on behalf of the Department. They have experience and qualifications in education and training and many have worked in business and industry. The inspection team may also have Associate Assessors drawn from the wider education and training sectors. The team is led by the Reporting Inspector (RI) who is in charge of the inspection and responsible for the report of the findings.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING AN INSPECTION?

During the inspection, the inspectors:

- > observe how the teaching and learning is carried out and talk to the teaching staff and management;
- > talk to the learners;
- > scrutinise learners' individual learning plans;
- > where appropriate, visit and observe learners in the workplace and talk to employers;
- > examine portfolios of learners' work; and
- > scrutinise a range of documentation provided by the further education college.

They assess:

- > how well learners develop and achieve;
- > the effectiveness of the teaching, training and learning and assessment;
- > how well the learning experiences, programmes and activities meet the needs of the learners and the wider community;
- > how well learners are cared for, guided and supported; and
- > the effectiveness of the leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting learners.

An inspector will want to talk informally to some groups of learners, without a member of staff being present about:

- > learners' reasons for choosing a particular area of learning;
- > how learners were introduced and inducted to the college;
- > the help available in the further education college if learners have any personal difficulties;
- > careers information, advice and guidance;
- > access to learning resources;
- > the complaints and grievance procedures;
- > learners' experiences in the college, for example; timetabling, accommodation, facilities and disciplinary issues; and
- > the college's policies on matters such as safeguarding, inclusion and diversity.

Further details about the inspection activities and the processes involved are outlined in the inspection framework for further education 'Improving Quality: Raising Standards', which can be accessed on our website www.etini.gov.uk.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER AN INSPECTION?

At the end of the inspection, the RI and members of the inspection team will provide detailed oral feedback to the college's senior management and representative(s) from the Governing body and the Department. They will also provide the college with a short written summary of the main findings. At this meeting the Inspectors will outline the overall effectiveness outcome and performance levels allocated to the areas inspected, clarify any aspects of the findings, and note any issues raised by staff, managers and the Governing Body.

Following the report back, the further education college should begin work on any area(s) for improvement identified. If the overall effectiveness of the college is evaluated as needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement or below; or an area of learning has important area(s) for improvement or below, then the Education and Training Inspectorate will undertake follow-up inspection activities within a 12 or 18 month period. The full detail of the post-inspection process is outlined in the Education and Training Inspectorate publication 'What Happens After an Inspection: Further education, Work-based Learning and Employment Programmes', which can also be accessed on our website www.etini.gov.uk.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will publish a written report on the further education college, which can be accessed, around two months after the inspection, at www.etini.gov.uk. We use the following overall effectiveness outcomes in reports:

Overall effectiveness outcome
High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement
Needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement

HOW CAN I BE INVOLVED IN THE INSPECTION PROCESS?

Use the inspection process to give your views on how well the further education college is doing by:

- > discussing any views you have about the college with an Inspector if they visit you;
- > e-mailing the RI prior to or during the inspection at inspectionsservices@deni.gov.uk;
- > contacting Inspection Services Branch prior to, or during the inspection (by e-mail to: inspectionsservices@deni.gov.uk or telephone to: 028 9127 9726) to arrange a discussion with the RI or a member of the Inspection team.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Managing Inspector for Further Education, The Reporting Inspector or Inspection Services Branch may be contacted:

By e-mail: inspectionsservices@deni.gov.uk
By telephone: 028 9127 9726

In writing: The Department of Education,
Rathgael House, 43 Balloo Road, BANGOR, Co Down BT19 7PR