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The initial training of further education teachers

Findings from 2004/05 inspections of courses leading to national awarding body qualifications

**Better
education
and care**

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Contents

Executive summary	1
Key findings	3
Trainees' achievement	3
Quality of training	3
Management and quality assurance	4
Recommendations	4
Evaluation	5
Trainees' achievement	5
Quality of training	7
Management and quality assurance	12
Notes	14
Annex. List of the 13 higher education institutions and the 30 colleges inspected during 2004/05	15

Executive summary

This report sets out the findings from the inspection of the initial teacher training (ITT) for further education (FE) teachers on courses leading to national awarding body (NAB) qualifications. Almost all of the trainees on such courses are already employed as full-time or part-time FE teachers when they undertake their training; many already have substantial experience of teaching or working in learning support roles. Their ITT courses include a mix of taught and practice elements. The taught element usually involves attending a part-time course for half a day, either at the college where they are employed as teachers or at another local college. The practice element takes place in the college where they are employed as teachers and is commonly referred to as the workplace element because it often takes place in industrial settings, especially in vocational areas such as in construction and catering.

In 2001, new national regulations were introduced requiring FE teachers to obtain a teaching qualification based on National Standards for teaching and supporting learning. Qualifications based on the National Standards are offered by both higher education institutions (HEI) and national awarding bodies.^{1, 2} The evidence on which this report is based is derived from inspections carried out during the academic year 2004/05 by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), together with inspectors from the Adult Learning Inspectorate and additional inspectors. The inspectors evaluated both HEI and NAB provision in 30 colleges. The findings from the inspections of HEI validated courses are published in separate institutional reports. This report brings together the findings from the inspections of the NAB courses.

In 2003, Ofsted published a survey report on FE teacher training.³ It concluded that, while the tuition that trainees received on the taught elements of their courses was generally good, few opportunities were provided for trainees to learn how to teach their specialist subjects and there was a lack of systematic mentoring and support in the workplace. The needs of trainees were not assessed adequately at the start of the training programmes and training was poorly differentiated. As a result, trainees made insufficient progress. The National Standards for teaching and learning, known as the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) standards provided a useful outline of the capabilities required of experienced FE teachers. Nevertheless, they did not clearly define the standards required of new teachers.

In response to the recommendations of the 2003 Ofsted survey, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) launched a major national consultation on the reform of ITT in FE and the wider Learning and Skills Council sector. In 2004, the DfES announced major reforms to the system

¹ The further education teachers' qualifications (England) regulations 2001 (S1 2001 No. 1209).

² *Standards for teaching and supporting learning in further education in England and Wales*, FENTO 1999.

³ *The initial training of further education teachers* (HMI 1762), Ofsted, 2003.

including a new Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills award comparable to Qualified Teacher Status for teachers in schools.⁴ The reforms are to be introduced in full in 2007/08. In the period leading up to 2007, different aspects of the reforms, such as the use of mentoring schemes, are being piloted.

This report shows that, for the colleges seen, the training on national awarding body ITT courses had many of the weaknesses identified in the 2003 Ofsted survey. There is still a striking contrast between the quality of the taught element of ITT courses, which is generally good, and the quality of the practice elements, which is inadequate. The majority of colleges have introduced mentoring schemes so that trainees have the opportunity to improve their specialist teaching skills by working alongside more experienced teachers in their own subject area. However, these schemes are at a very early stage of development and the quality of specialist support given to trainees is uneven. Trainees employed on part-time contracts often receive no mentoring support at all.

Despite these weaknesses, most trainees reach a satisfactory standard in their teaching practice. However, the lack of systematic support from more experienced teachers constrains the progress of capable trainees, who do not achieve their full potential. Although the attention given to assessing the quality of trainees' teaching has improved since the publication of the 2003 Ofsted survey, the procedures for assuring the accuracy of the assessment of trainees' teaching performance still lack rigour. In many colleges, senior managers still give insufficient attention to the quality of ITT provided for their staff, despite the obvious link between the quality of teacher training and the standards of teaching and learning in the colleges they manage.

⁴ *Equipping our teachers for the future: reforming initial teacher training for the Learning and Skills sector*, DfES, 2004.

Key findings

The key findings below are presented under the three main headings of the *Framework for the inspection of the initial training of further education teachers*.⁵

Trainees' achievement

- ❑ Almost all trainees seen by inspectors reach a satisfactory or good level of teaching capability, but the most capable trainees do not achieve their full potential.
- ❑ Trainees have a strong empathy with their students and are successful in motivating students who have a poor record of prior attainment.
- ❑ Their teaching is enlivened through the use of a wide range of teaching methods and their ability to draw upon their industrial experience.
- ❑ None of the trainees observed by inspectors demonstrated very good or outstanding standards of teaching. Their progress is constrained because their knowledge and expertise in teaching their specialist subject/vocational areas are not extended sufficiently.
- ❑ Most trainees do not have the opportunity to gain experience of teaching across the range of courses, and/or types of students, in their subject/vocational area.
- ❑ Insufficient attention is given by trainees to analysing the impact of their teaching on students' progress.

Quality of training

- ❑ Training in taught sessions successfully extends trainees' professional knowledge and expertise.
- ❑ Tutors provide good informal support for trainees. However, individual learning plans that state clear targets for improving teaching are at an early stage of development.
- ❑ Training in developing teaching skills linked to the trainees' subject/vocational areas is underdeveloped.
- ❑ The courses are over-assessed; the assignment load is excessive.
- ❑ The taught and practice elements of the courses are often poorly integrated.

⁵ *Framework for the inspection of the initial training of further education teachers* (HMI 2274), Ofsted 2004

Management and quality assurance

- ❑ The management and quality assurance of the taught courses are generally effective. However, evaluation procedures do not take into account the overall experience of trainees from both the taught and workplace elements of the training.
- ❑ Procedures for the internal moderation of written assignments are robust but for the majority of providers the moderation of the standards that trainees achieve in their teaching is inadequate.
- ❑ The majority of courses have introduced subject mentoring schemes in response to the national agenda for reform. However, support from mentors is usually voluntary and often inadequate.
- ❑ Support for trainees with inadequate study skills is uneven.
- ❑ Monitoring of trainees' progress in developing their teaching and related capabilities in the majority of courses is unsystematic.
- ❑ Senior college managers give insufficient attention to the quality of the initial training at the institutions they manage. They rarely make the connection that improving the quality of ITT will improve the overall standards of teaching and learning as the trainees already teach within their institutions.

Recommendations

Senior managers in FE colleges should:

- increase the attention that they give to improving the quality and standards of ITT for their staff, making the connection between the quality of ITT and the overall standards of teaching and learning within their institutions
- ensure that trainee teachers are given adequate mentoring and other forms of support to develop their specialist teaching skills during their initial training and subsequent professional development
- provide consistent and effective support for trainees with inadequate study skills
- ensure that evaluation procedures take account of the overall experience of trainees from both the taught and the practical elements of the training.

National awarding bodies should:

- develop more robust procedures for moderating the standards that trainees achieve in their teaching
- reduce the amount of in-course assessment demanded of trainees
- work with colleges to strengthen the support that trainees are given from mentors to develop their specialist expertise in teaching their own subject/vocational area.

Evaluation

Trainees' achievement

Progress made by trainees

1. By the end of their training, the great majority of trainees demonstrate satisfactory or good teaching capability. The majority already have experience of teaching, but, as a result of training, they broaden their repertoire of teaching skills and develop a deeper understanding of theory. However, none of the trainees observed by inspectors demonstrated very good standards of teaching. Knowledge of how to teach their subject/vocational area is not extended sufficiently. Progress is constrained because the courses give limited attention to the different levels of knowledge and understanding trainees have when they start their training. They also place insufficient emphasis on developing expertise in teaching specialist areas and fail to push good trainees to achieve excellence. Most trainees do not focus sufficiently on whether their teaching is leading to the learning they expect to take place.

Professional values and practice

2. Almost invariably, trainees adopt a highly professional approach to teaching. They manage their responsibilities effectively, even when struggling with conflicting demands, and provide good role models for their students. They have high expectations and are committed to raising the achievement of all students. The most competent trainees identify challenging and appropriate individual targets, design teaching to cater for the range of learners in each group and draw out students' strengths. Less successful trainees often fail to take sufficient account of the varied needs of their students, and either set them imprecise targets or are unsure how to make the best use of the targets they set to improve students' learning.
3. Most trainees demonstrate the values and approaches of their own occupational or professional field very effectively. In reviewing their teaching, most are constructively critical and look for ways to improve. However, the majority do not carry out enough routine evaluations of lessons. As a consequence, they pay insufficient attention to the impact of their teaching on learning and do not consider the implications for future planning and teaching.

Teaching and learning

4. On entry to training, a very large majority of trainees have relevant vocational qualifications and a suitable range of industrial experience, which they employ to good effect in their teaching. They probe understanding and respond with confidence, draw on relevant up-to-date material and examples and are secure in employing technical materials, such as relevant software packages.

5. In most cases, trainees plan the content of their schemes of work and individual lessons thoroughly. Stronger trainees set very specific learning outcomes, give careful attention to the different learning needs of students and consider the role of learning support assistants. They also use the results of their assessments to adjust teaching and inform future planning. Other trainees neglect some or all of these elements.
6. Most trainees employ a suitable and varied range of teaching methods, resources and forms of classroom organisation. They capture students' interest and engage them in the learning activities, in some cases developing highly imaginative approaches. The most proficient trainees extend students' learning through the careful choice of information and communications technology (ICT), including interactive whiteboards, when they have access to appropriate resources. Most trainees communicate effectively with students. They share learning objectives, make explicit links with previous and future learning and provide articulate explanations.
7. Most trainees develop an effective rapport with the groups they teach. They also develop confidence in dealing with challenging and disruptive responses and employ effective techniques for managing behaviour, such as positive re-enforcement, structured sequences of short purposeful tasks, and the assertive use of voice or body language. However, a minority continue to allow background chatter or lack the self-assurance necessary to implement their authority. Most trainees effect smooth transitions between different episodes within lessons. In managing their classrooms or workshops, most, though not all, trainees give careful attention to health and safety.

Assessment and student support

8. Most trainees have a good grasp of different types of assessment and the assessment specifications for the courses they teach. They devise relevant assessment activities, mark assignments promptly and provide helpful feedback. However, only the most proficient provide clearly defined targets and the detailed guidance necessary to help students make good progress. A few trainees do not have sufficient knowledge of departmental assessment policies.
9. During their teaching, most trainees monitor progress carefully. They check learning through questioning and observing during tasks or by implementing probing reviews at the close of lessons. They intervene to correct errors, explore understanding or provide additional information.
10. Trainees are familiar with the achievements of the groups they teach. Most respond sensitively to students' problems, spending time with those facing difficulties and offering additional tutorial support. The most competent pay particularly close attention to the needs of students with low levels of ability, building up their confidence and self-esteem as well

as helping them to make progress towards achieving national qualifications. They are well informed about college support systems and refer students as appropriate. Occasionally, trainees fail to follow-up non-attenders or those not submitting assignments.

Quality of training

Content and structure

11. The structure and content of training courses reflect the national standards for teaching and supporting learners. Provision gives attention to the principles underlying effective planning, teaching, assessment and evaluation. It also takes account of significant national developments, including those related to the 14–19 curriculum. However, apart from specialist subject courses such as those involving the teaching of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), the development of subject expertise relies on the mentoring trainees receive from more experienced teachers. A few providers offer additional certification opportunities, for instance in ICT, but more usually there are no optional elements to cater for particular needs or circumstances. Improving trainees' key skills, while acknowledged as important, is not always successfully embedded in the training. Support for trainees in developing ICT competence is often constrained by the lack of suitable resources.
12. There is insufficient integration between the taught and practice elements of ITT courses to ensure that background knowledge and theory are applied and consolidated. The majority of mentors are unfamiliar with the overall structure of the courses with the result that trainees themselves have to make the links between theory and practice. Trainees with no prior experience of studying at HE level often struggle with the written assignments, which assume that the trainees can produce work at this level from the outset of the course.
13. Trainees benefit when they are required to gain experience of teaching a wide range of students and courses. In one provider, mentors are responsible for providing a suitable timetable. Trainees log the nature of teaching and group size as well as teaching hours, and tutors check that expectations are appropriate. In another, trainees are expected to undertake a range of teaching experiences later in the course and to observe widely. However, more usually, insufficient attention is given to preparing trainees to teach and assess students across the full range of relevant course specifications. There is limited training on how to teach the increasing number of students aged between 14 and 16. The majority of trainees are confined to a limited contracted timetable and few have experience in any other department within the college or sufficient opportunities to observe teaching relevant to their area of study. A minority of trainees are too stretched by the demands of understaffed departments to undertake any additional activities to broaden their expertise.

14. While assignments link theory to practical teaching and challenge trainees to achieve high standards, the number of assignments trainees are asked to complete is excessive in the majority of courses. As a result, the courses are too assessment-driven and the rate of withdrawals is high. Increasingly, course teams, with encouragement from national awarding bodies, are integrating assignments to reduce the assessment burden. Where this occurs it improves the quality of training.

Effectiveness of training

15. The quality of taught training sessions is almost always at least satisfactory, good in the majority of cases and very good in a small minority. The planning for most sessions exemplifies effective practice. Tutors enjoy good rapport with trainees and know them well. They challenge preconceptions, make close references to further reading and research during sessions and exploit trainees' teaching experience to enhance the quality of the training. The effectiveness of a minority of the training sessions seen was affected adversely by poor accommodation and inadequate resources. Other weaknesses included the limited attention given to learning objectives, lack of challenge, and undirected questioning which allowed a small number of vocal trainees to dominate discussion.
16. Trainees are almost always highly motivated and keen to engage fully with training. They collaborate effectively and support each other well. Trainees recognise the impact of training on their teaching capability and are acutely aware of development needs. Occasionally, tutors expect too little of trainees in terms of independent reading and analysis. While they make good use of the Internet as a resource, a few trainees make insufficient use of the library facilities.
17. Tutors are generally suitably qualified. Occasionally, their effectiveness is undermined by isolation or by insufficient experience of the post-compulsory sector. With only a few exceptions, teams of tutors plan jointly and collaborate effectively. As a result, they have a shared understanding of good teaching practice in further education.
18. Almost all providers are giving attention to enhancing the support that trainees receive through subject mentoring. Experienced FE teachers, for example those with advanced practitioner status, are increasingly being selected for the mentoring role. In the stronger providers, mentors are involved in the assessment of trainees' teaching competence. However, the mentoring role is still new and is often underdeveloped.

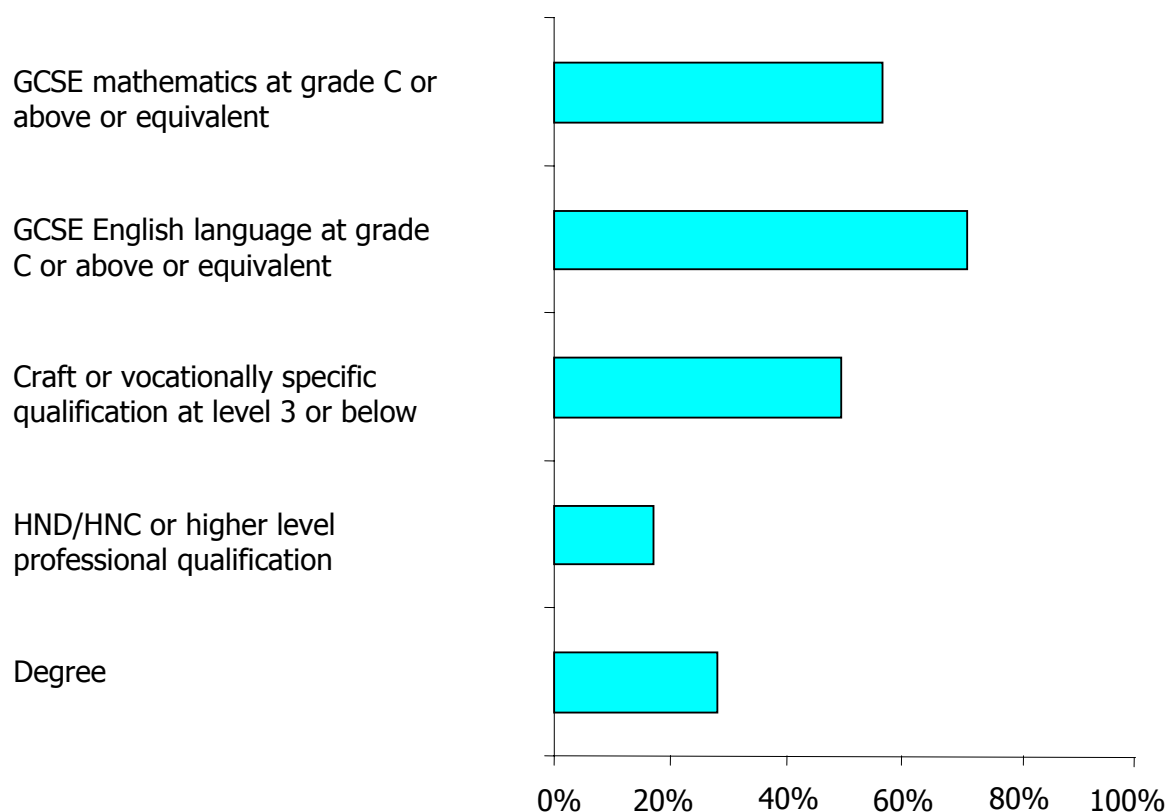
19. Weaknesses in mentoring frequently relate to:
 - lack of clarity in defining the roles, leading to differences in interpretation
 - limited mentor training, with no expectation that all mentors will attend
 - too little contact between mentors and teacher-trainers
 - inconsistent implementation of written guidance.
20. On many courses, mentors make little or no contribution to the course planning or self-assessment processes. In the majority of cases there is no systematic tracking, monitoring, or quality assurance of mentors, as the example below illustrates.

A majority of trainees have experienced mentors who are also highly effective teachers. However, for others, mentors exist in name only. After three months of training, some trainees do not yet have a mentor. Mentors do not share a common understanding of their role and responsibilities and there is considerable inconsistency in their contribution to the overall training programme.

Meeting the needs of trainees

21. At interview, admissions tutors glean sufficient information to guide potential trainees to the most appropriate course. Since most providers offer flexible entry points and run courses at different times of the week, trainees are also able to match the timing of training to their individual circumstances.

Figure 1. Entry qualifications of trainees included in the 2004/05 ITT (FE) inspections of FE colleges (percentage of trainees with qualification).



Notes:

1. The percentages in the bottom three categories do not add up to 100 as individual trainees could hold more than one qualification (or none at all) covered by these three categories.
2. Equivalent such as GCE O level or discrete vocational qualification in numeracy or literacy at level 2 or key skills communication or application of number at level 2 or above.

22. Trainees possess a very wide range of qualifications before commencing their training (see Figure 1). A small minority of providers give trainees credit for prior learning and/or experience with the result that trainees often have to repeat areas of the curriculum with which they are already familiar. Insufficient attention is given to checking and extending trainees' subject/vocational expertise. The extent and adequacy of support for trainees in improving personal skills is often more substantial for trainees who are members of the college staff than for others.
23. With a few exceptions, the arrangements for ensuring that trainees receive appropriate support to develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are not effective. While trainees' literacy skills are often assessed prior to their course, their numeracy and ICT skills are rarely evaluated. Often, evaluations are cursory and based on a sample of written work. Support which is diagnosed as being required is often offered on a voluntary basis, with little monitoring of the trainee's progress or attendance at specified sessions. The admission of trainees onto courses is rarely influenced by literacy, numeracy, or ICT evaluations. However,

there are a few examples where recruitment procedures have been improved and the admission of applicants who do not meet the requirements is postponed until they have received prescribed support and reached the required standards

24. Many colleges are introducing improvements to literacy and numeracy support for trainees although trainees are not always made aware of the support which is available. A few colleges have developed specific additional taught sessions to help with assignments and written work.
25. Trainees are encouraged to take responsibility for their own professional development, but they are not given the help they need to extend competence to the highest levels. The relatively recent introduction of individual learning plans is designed to counter these weaknesses and encourage more efficient action planning and tracking of overall progress. However, individual learning plans are not yet embedded into most training programmes. Frequently, procedures for systematically checking progress lack rigour and there is an over-reliance on informal support from personal tutors.
26. Trainees generally benefit from constructive feedback on their written work. The marking of assignments is helpful and thorough. Annotations on draft assignments give productive guidance on how trainees can improve their work. Feedback from mentors is of more variable quality, and sometimes lacks sharpness or fails to set clear targets. The effectiveness of feedback on teaching is often undermined by an over-reliance on a tick-list approach with little use of more detailed professional comment.

The assessment of trainees

27. In undertaking assignments, most trainees are supported by detailed briefs, clear criteria, helpful guidance during taught sessions, and opportunities to submit early drafts for further advice. Assignments are generally researched carefully, presented well and involve reflection on the trainees' current teaching. Most providers ensure consistently secure judgements when marking assignments by using second markers and strong moderation procedures.
28. Internal moderation arrangements are more effective for assignments than for assessing teaching skills. Only a small minority of providers insist on joint observations between assessor and mentor to confirm judgments of teaching competence. The most robust moderation of the assessment of teaching includes focused discussion between mentor and assessor both before and after observation, but this is uncommon. More usually, there is no conversation between tutor and mentor about trainees' achievements, as exemplified below.

The mentor system does not yet have clear documentation or quality assurance systems. Some mentors are confused as to their role in helping trainees develop their teaching of their subject/vocational area. There is little development of subject specialist materials or other support systems.

Management and quality assurance

Procedures for selecting trainees

29. Trainees are provided with comprehensive documentation which makes clear the demands and expectations of the training courses. Guidance is usually comprehensive and trainees have opportunities to discuss their needs and ensure they are on the right course. Teachers who carry out interviews are familiar with, and usually teach on, ITT courses. In the large majority of cases, specialists in human resources (HR) are involved in interviewing and selection.
30. In a few cases, trainees are unclear what the admission criteria are, and interview processes are cursory or erratic with little attempt to apply criteria evenly. A small number of trainees are not interviewed at all. In a few instances, new staff do not receive sufficient support prior to enrolling on ITT courses.
31. Overall, the extent to which teacher training courses are linked to HR management within institutions has improved significantly since the 2003 Ofsted survey, but it is still very variable. The large majority of colleges have close links which facilitate good communications between ITT course tutors and staff with wider responsibilities for managing HR. Teacher trainers are involved from the first stages of trainees' induction and human resources specialists often teach on ITT courses, as in the example below.

ITT is very well integrated within the management of human resources and professional development. The Employee Development Policy makes these links transparent and offers a highly supportive approach for all employees involved in teaching and learning. All new staff are well informed about what is required of them regarding ITT and their enrolment on courses is followed up rigorously. Personnel software is used effectively to track this information.

32. In a small minority of colleges these links do not exist or are poorly developed. There is no formal forum for teacher trainers to meet or discuss an individual's progress with college HR staff. Human resources managers are therefore not sufficiently aware of the training needs of employees, and teacher trainers are not familiar with college developmental priorities or strategy.

33. Equality of opportunity usually has a high profile in the content of ITT courses, and most trainees benefit from specialist contributions in this area. However, the targeted promotion of teacher training courses to under-represented and ethnic groups is generally underdeveloped. One inspector noted that:

Insufficient consideration is given to the marketing of teacher training programmes to minority ethnic groups. No monitoring of the equal opportunities policy with regard to the selection and recruitment process takes place. There is little monitoring by the course team of gender, age and qualifications of the trainees.

Management of training

34. The management of the training courses is generally effective. Typically, course teams work well together. Most have well-defined roles and responsibilities which are understood by trainees. In a small minority of colleges, course teams are very small with little contingency. For example, there are colleges where one person is responsible for leading a course and undertakes most of the teaching on it. Often, teacher trainers do not have the subject-specific knowledge to comment usefully on trainees' lessons.
35. Few senior college managers devote time and attention to evaluating the quality and standard of the initial teacher training of their staff. They rarely recognise that improving the quality of teacher education would improve the standards of teaching and learning within their colleges, given that the trainees are already teaching in the colleges.

Quality assurance

36. The systems used by course teams to monitor the quality of provision are generally thorough. Teams usually assess their courses realistically, although in the majority of cases they are insufficiently critical of their own practice. Course reviews are detailed and usually evaluate strengths and weaknesses accurately. However, few evaluation procedures monitor the quality of support that trainees receive from mentors and other colleagues. The reporting is limited to assessing the taught elements of the courses rather than the total experience of initial training.
37. The use of data by course teams, though good in a few instances, is generally underdeveloped. Colleges monitor recruitment and achievement by gender and ethnicity. Most course teams have this information but fail to use it in planning provision. Recruitment, retention and achievement targets are set or monitored in only a few cases. The participation and achievement of under-represented groups are not systematically evaluated. Action plans and self-assessments rarely address issues of imbalance in recruitment.

38. National awarding bodies are aware of the need for external moderators to give more attention to checking the standards of trainees' teaching, for example by attending assessed teaching observations and meeting with trainees. However, in practice, the attention external moderators give to this critical element of trainees' achievements varies significantly. Inspectors found several examples of colleges where moderators had focused entirely on checking trainees' portfolios and written work, without checking the standards of teaching.

Notes

39. The focus of this report is on the general teaching qualifications that are endorsed by Standards Verification UK, formerly FENTO. These qualifications must meet the 2001 statutory requirement for teachers in FE to gain an endorsed teaching qualification, based upon the National Standards for teaching and supporting learning in FE. In almost all cases the trainees on these courses were studying on a part-time and in-service basis, whilst working as full or part-time teachers. The vast majority were also taking the qualification up to intermediate level and then progressing onto Cert. Ed. or PGCE courses. Three qualifications were encountered during the inspections: the City & Guilds certificate in further education teaching (C & G 7407, stages 1 and 2); the Cambridge Certificate in Further Education Teaching and Certificate for English for Speakers of Other Languages (Cert ESOL); and the Oxford and Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts (OCR) certificate in FE teaching. Over 90% of the trainees enrolled on the courses that were inspected were taking the City & Guilds certificate in FE teaching.
40. In accordance with the procedures outlined in the *Framework for the inspection of the initial training of further education teachers*, the findings on HEI qualifications are published in separate institutional reports based upon the lead HEI. The findings in this report are based upon an evaluation of the evidence gathered from inspecting national awarding body qualifications.

Annex. List of the 13 higher education institutions and the 30 colleges inspected during 2004/05

HEI & colleges
University of Huddersfield
Craven College
Calderdale College
Harrogate College (now part of Leeds Metropolitan University)
Keighley College
Wakefield College
Sheffield Hallam
Dearne Valley College
Barnsley College
Open University
New College, Durham
Newcastle College
Middlesbrough College
University of Central Lancashire
Blackburn College
Burnley College
Runshaw College
Southport College
De Montfort University
Broxtowe College
Leicester College
University of Bradford
Bradford College
University College, Northampton

Northampton College
Peterborough Regional College
University of East London
Barking College
University of Bath
Wiltshire College
University of Wolverhampton
Dudley College of Technology
Solihull College
Walsall College of Arts and Technology
University of Westminster
Harrow College
University of Birmingham
Matthew Boulton College of Further and Higher Education
Bolton Institute of Higher Education
Salford College
Bolton Community College
Hackney Community College
Greenwich Community College

N.B. reports on the qualifications validated by HEIs are published in separate institutional reports.