



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**University of Wales, Newport
Lodge Road
Caerleon
Newport
NP18 3QT**

Date of inspection: March 2013

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the provider's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with section 77 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

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Publication date: 27/06/2013

Context

The University of Wales Newport provides higher education programmes for a wide range of learners residing in the greater Gwent area, throughout Wales and the UK and also for international learners. As part of its commitment to the local community, the university has provided over many years a further education provision to support members of the community with learning opportunities that can lead to entry on to undergraduate programmes. The university currently offers two programmes: a foundation Art and Design Programme and an Access to Higher Education programme. The further education provision at the university currently has a total of over 150 learners on programmes. There are around 100 learners on the Foundation Art and design (FAD) and around 50 on Access to Higher Education (AHE) programmes. The programmes run at the university's Caerleon campus provide progression routes to higher education programmes at the university or further afield.

The city of Newport and the eastern valleys include areas with high levels of social and economic deprivation and poor educational achievement. Improving access to higher education is central to the university's strategic central aims, as is playing a leading role in the local, regional and national economy. The university's Welsh Government funded programmes contribute to both these areas of activity.

The further education provision represents a very small proportion of the university's operation, with only around 150 learners on the programmes compared with 4,479 full-time learners enrolled at the university. At the time of the inspection the university had a total of 9,414 live enrolments.

At the time of the inspection the university was in the final stages of merger with the University of Glamorgan to form the University of South Wales. (The University of South Wales came into existence in April 2013).

Summary

The provider's current performance	Adequate
The provider's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

The current performance of the further education programmes of the university is adequate because:

- the overall rates at which learners on further education programmes complete and attain their qualifications have improved significantly and are now around the rates for other providers in Wales;
- the overall rate at which learners complete their programmes now shows significant improvement;
- there is now an effective initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy skills, which is repeated mid-year and at the end of the year;
- there is now effective diagnostic testing of learners' specific learning needs that informs an effective individual learning plan;
- learners' assessment and overall standards of learners' work are now well tracked as they progress through their programme;
- tutorial support is now effective and provides learners with good help and guidance needed to prevent them leaving their programme early;
- teachers now encourage and promote learners' knowledge and understanding of Wales;
- the quality processes are now effective in bringing about improvements in quality and standards; and
- leaders have developed a clear vision of what the provider now needs to do to improve programme delivery.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement for further education programmes at the university are good because:

- almost all the issues identified in the recommendations from the last inspection have been successfully addressed;
- there has been a significant improvement in the performance trends over the last year with unverified information showing this improvement continuing;
- arrangements for improving quality and standards are effective and improving; and
- the leadership of FE programmes and the university are now well focussed on what needs to be done to bring about change and strive for continuous improvement and excellence.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the rate at which learners complete and attain their qualifications
- R2 Ensure that the current activities of the further education group continue to improve the operations of the further education programmes, with the active support of senior leaders, for the benefit of learners
- R3 Improve further the partnerships with the further education sector
- R4 Ensure that peer observations and performance appraisals systematically address improvement in teaching and learning
- R5 Develop the quality systems to provide secure evidence for accurate self-assessment and monitor effectively the completion of all action plans
- R6 Better promote the advantages to learners of developing some bilingual competencies for working and living in a bilingual Wales where Welsh and English have equal status

What happens next?

The university's further education provision has been removed from a formal Estyn monitoring category. The university's link inspector will continue to follow-up on the recommendations stated in this report.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

Overall, the rates at which learners on further education programmes at the university complete and attain their qualifications are around the average rates for other providers in Wales. The trend in the rates since the last inspection has seen significant improvement. Unverified data for the most recent year shows that this trend has resulted in further significant improvement to a rate that is above the most recent average rate for other providers in Wales.

The rates at which learners on the FAD programme complete and attain their qualifications are consistently at the rates for other providers in Wales. Unverified data for the most recent year shows that there has been a significant improvement in the rate at which learners complete and attain their qualifications to a rate that is above the most recent average rate of other providers in Wales.

The rates at which learners on the AHE programmes complete and attain their qualifications are below the rates for other providers in Wales. Unverified data for the most recent year show that there has been a significant improvement in the rate at which learners complete and attain their qualification to a rate that is above the most recent average rate for other providers in Wales.

Learners' retention rate on all further education programmes has significantly improved since the last inspection.

Learners on the AHE programme undertake and successfully complete compulsory modules in mathematics, English and information and communication technology (ICT) to at least level 2. Learners that wish to, can continue to level 3, particularly if it prepares them for their targeted higher education programme.

On the FAD programme learners undertake and successfully complete similar work in literacy, numeracy and IT embedded into their programme, with a level 3 being the target level.

Most learners remain on programme and make good and, in a few cases, excellent progress developing their skills and knowledge in practical and academic courses. The quality of work produced is good and in some cases it is excellent. Learners' work is typically the result of considerable research and detailed planning.

Aspects of Welsh culture are firmly embedded into all programmes. Learners confirm that Wales is discussed when it is relevant. In the sociology course learners discuss Welsh social policy; in history Welsh history is studied and in art the work of Welsh artists is an important element. There is very little use of the Welsh language in the classes observed, not even incidental Welsh.

Wellbeing: Good

The university has a range of support services and multi-agency partnerships to support its overall strategy for health and wellbeing. Learners are very clear about where they can seek information, help and support, and whom to contact if they need help. Most learners get this help from their personal tutors at the frequent tutorial sessions. Personal health and wellbeing are promoted well and a minority of learners use the sport facilities and represent the university in sporting events. Learners fully understand their responsibility to follow correctly the health and safety requirement of their work.

Learners benefit from the good support they receive from teachers and other university staff. Learners engage very well with their teachers, who are always prepared to pay particular attention to learners' emotional and physical wellbeing. Further education learners are treated the same as their fellow higher education learners and as such are able to avail themselves of all of the university's professional support services including the full-time counselling services.

Learners enjoy their studies and look forward to coming to the university despite the fact that some travel a long way to attend. In particular, they enjoy the relaxed but professional ethos of their classes and are very interested in their chosen subjects. The planning and completion of projects to demanding timelines are popular but challenging. Learners behave well and treat each other and the teaching and support staff with personal and professional respect. They work well when working alone or in groups as part of a team. They talk about their work freely and with enthusiasm.

Learners are fully aware of how they can be involved in planning their own learning and can talk freely to teachers about improvements to the programmes. The majority of learners participate in learner questionnaires and group discussions.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The university delivers two further education programmes at level 3. These consist of the FAD course and an AHE course. These programmes offer a broad range of study pathways and options. They introduce learners to new experiences and allow them to pursue topics and subjects in which they are interested and which support their future aspirations.

The programmes give learners who may not have appropriate educational qualifications, or the specialist skills required, the opportunity to improve the standard of their academic and practical work and to prepare for study at level 4. Learners have good opportunities to progress to the next level of study both within the university, at other higher education institutions or into full-time employment.

The university identifies the levels of learners' literacy and numeracy skills well. Learners have initial and diagnostic assessments at the start of their programmes to identify their skill level and areas where they have weaknesses. Teachers make

good use of this information to support their teaching and to identify appropriate teaching strategies and support mechanisms that match learners' needs. Teachers re-assess learners at regular intervals with a retesting in January to measure their progress in improving their functional skills.

FAD learners also complete an 'initial profiling' questionnaire, which identifies any study skills weaknesses and specific learning difficulties that they may have. This helps teachers to identify very early on what they need to do to help learners to overcome personal and academic barriers to learning. However, it is too soon to assess the full impact of this on learners' outcomes.

Learners have good opportunities to improve their essential and wider key skills. All learners study the essential skills of communication, application of number and ICT, together with wider key skills appropriate to their course. Teachers contextualise and integrate these skills well within learners' specialist subjects. In a minority of cases, teachers do not do enough to challenge more able learners, or those working at level 2 or above, to develop their skills to a level higher than that required for their qualifications.

Teachers promote learners' understanding of Wales and Welsh culture effectively. Learners have very good opportunities to develop a broad understanding of the Welsh dimension through their specialist subjects.

Teachers are starting to address issues relating to the promotion of Welsh. Elements of the course handbooks and areas of 'Moodle' are bilingual and learners can complete student surveys and a few assessments in Welsh. However, teachers do not do enough to promote the Welsh language.

Learners have good opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding of sustainability and global citizenship.

Teaching: Good

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. In the best sessions, teachers set a good pace for teaching and assessment activities. In these sessions, teachers have high expectations of learners and challenge them well to achieve higher grades in their assessments. However, in a very few sessions, teachers do not challenge learners well enough so that they achieve to the best of their ability or give them clear timescales for the completion of tasks.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise. They prepare their lessons well and have detailed lesson plans and schemes of work that identify opportunities for learners to develop their essential skills, and understanding of sustainability and citizenship issues.

Teachers structure lessons well and set clear aims and objectives that they share with learners at the start of their lessons. Teachers provide a good balance of theoretical and practical work. They use a good range of appropriate teaching and learning strategies in their lessons, including whole-class activities, and individual and group work.

Nearly all teachers use good verbal questioning techniques that are directed to individual learners and to the whole class to assess their progress and understanding as well as their subject knowledge. They challenge learners' responses appropriately.

All teachers provide good support and advice to learners. They know their learners well and plan their lessons to meet learners' individual needs effectively. This enables learners to participate successfully on their course of study.

Teachers support their learners well to develop their oral and literacy skills. They give learners good opportunities to develop their independent thinking and learning skills. In a few sessions teaching is too teacher-centred and does not give learners enough opportunities to participate.

In the majority of classes, assessment is well organised and learning outcomes are effectively used for planning future learning. Most teachers assess learners' work regularly and give good verbal feedback. Generally, teachers' written feedback is helpful and constructive and sets clear targets for improvement. In the majority of classes, learners are fully aware of what they need to do to improve and to gain their qualifications. However, in a few cases, written feedback is not always detailed enough to help learners improve all areas of their work. Most teachers keep effective learner tracking records and use these well to ensure that learners understand their progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The university supports learners well. It has a very comprehensive range of learner support services that include personal and welfare support, careers advice, counselling, a chaplaincy service and a study advice service.

Teachers and personal tutors are flexible with their time and readily available to learners, and support them effectively. Learners speak highly of the support that they receive.

The university has good arrangements for promoting health and wellbeing. The Student Services team, Students Union, Medical Centre and Sports Centre organise many events and activities to help learners improve their understanding of wellbeing and take responsibility for their health. The university is also involved in various Welsh Government initiatives such as Health Challenge Wales.

Teachers give prospective learners appropriate advice and guidance before they start their course. Potential learners have an interview and initial assessment to test their suitability for their chosen programme and to identify any specific support needs that they may have. This thorough process is helping to reduce the number of learners who leave their course early. So far this academic year very few learners have left their courses early.

All learners have a useful and informative induction that introduces them to the university, the range of services available to them and the details of their programme.

All learners have a personal tutor who supports them with their personal and academic needs. Personal tutors signpost specialist support when necessary so that learners have quick and effective help to assist them to overcome study and personal difficulties that may adversely affect their learning. An increasing number of learners take up the specialist support that the university offers them when it is needed.

All learners benefit from a structured, timetabled tutorial, which includes weekly group and one-to-one support sessions with their personal tutors. Tutors use tutorials effectively to monitor learners' performance and progress and to discuss with learners strategies that will help them to succeed in their studies. All learners have individual learning plans that they discuss and update regularly with their personal tutors. Learners, together with their tutors, set and review their own personal, academic and skills targets for improvement.

Teachers encourage learners to disclose any learning, physical or sensory disability at the start of their programmes of study. This allows specialist and learning support services to be put in place as soon as possible.

The university has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The university promotes a positive ethos of equality and diversity. It provides an inclusive environment for all its further education learners, who feel very much a part of the institution. Further education learners come from a range of ethnic groups, ages and disabilities, and they show good levels of respect for their peers and tutors.

The university has a comprehensive range of policies and procedures relating to equality of opportunity and diversity. However, they do not always contain specific detailed written information on how learners can access all of the wide range of university support processes.

Learners generally work in good quality learning environments. AHE learners are based in a number of general teaching rooms across the university campus. These teaching rooms are very plain and have minimal visual stimulation. The rooms lack any subject specific displays which would improve the experience for learners. There is no recognisable 'home' for the AHE programme, as there is with the FAD programme. Classrooms and teaching areas are well resourced. There is enough ICT equipment for teachers and learners to gain access to subject specific and other information.

Recreational and communal areas across the university are of a good quality, being both attractive and functional, and are respected and used well by learners. Learners have access to a wide range of leisure and recreational facilities.

The university provides a good environment for learning in the library, which is very well resourced. There is a 24 hour electronic library resource available, which is well utilised by AHE learners. All learners are also able to take advantage of good central IT facilities and the comprehensive student/learner support networks.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?
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Adequate

Leadership: Good

There has been significant improvement in quality of leadership and management of the university's further education provision since the last inspection. Leaders used the findings and recommendations from the previous inspection to develop clear key priorities for improvement. Leaders undertook a detailed and well considered review of its further education provision that involved the active participation of teaching staff, programme leaders, senior curriculum staff and senior university leaders. The university formalised these activities and established the FE group under the leadership of the Deputy vice-Chancellor. A member of the governing body was responsible for overseeing and challenging the activities of the group and the implementation of the developing action plan. Regular reports directly from the group to university leadership and governors ensured that they were kept well informed of actions being taken and the progress of improvement.

During this period, the university appointed a new programme leader for AHE from the further education sector to work very closely with the existing programme leader for FAD. The programme leaders work very well together and share good practice and a vision for improvement of their programmes. They are very well supported and challenged by the rest of the FE group.

The FE group has made good progress in delivering the actions designed to bring about change. The FE group and university leaders have brought about significant improvement in learners' successful outcomes and progression onto higher level programmes and/or employment. They have also brought about a cultural change in the university's understanding and delivery of its further education provision. This includes putting in place a robust structure for the on-going improvement of its delivery of the further education programmes. Initially, the FE group was seen as a task and finish group. However, given the success of the work to date, including re-enforcing of its work with other local organisations and further education colleges to meet both local and national priorities, the group will continue in operation as a strategic and operational group for improving further education provision in the university and sharing good practice throughout the university.

Improving quality: Adequate

Following from the recommendations and findings of the last inspection report the university carried out a comprehensive review of further education standards and provision. Good progress has been made by the university in addressing the recommendations from the last inspection report. There is an increased awareness and understanding of quality systems and processes amongst teachers and support staff at all levels. This has supported the good improvements in leaders' standards and provision including support for learning. It has also brought about improved leadership at operational and strategic level. In particular, the impact of the university's FE group has been good at programme level.

The self-assessment report (SAR) contains useful and detailed information on both whole-university and further education specific aspects of provision. The use of data

for benchmarking course performance with national comparators is good. However, the SAR is too descriptive in some sections rather than evaluative. In a few cases, judgements have been made from a too narrow evidence base.

Action planning is a good feature of quality improvement throughout the further education programmes. In a few cases, actions are not always specific or measurable enough to identify progress being made. Classroom observations often contain useful information of what the teacher needs to do to improve. Comments on learners' progress, including their skills development, have been developed, but in a few cases are too general and variable. Performance appraisals are adequate. However, in a minority of cases there is too much variation in the standards of monitoring plans to secure real improvement in teaching and learning.

The university has good systems in place to gather the views of further education learners. Learner satisfaction surveys and focus groups are used well to systematically improve the learners' experience. At programme level, learner issues that have been raised are dealt with well and timely. However, learners are not always aware of wider initiatives such as the 'u said we did' campaign.

Partnerships with further education colleges and Colegau Cymru are re-developing. The University has recently established constructive joint staff development with a local further education college as part of a wider staff development programme for further education based teaching staff. This has had good impact on improving the standards of teaching and learning.

Partnership working: Good

The University's UK Partnership Strategy (2012-2015) sets out an overarching strategy to continuously improve its partnership working to help achieve its mission statement of maximising participation and providing access and progression pathways that equip individuals with higher level skills. This involves the university in good partnership working with further education colleges in Wales, secondary schools, employers and other organisations.

Partners in the further education sector sign up to a written partnership agreement with the university to provide progression routes through to higher education. A part of the strategy includes its involvement with the University of the Heads of the Valleys Institute (UHOVI) and other further education institutions in their delivery of further education provision in the area. The university is also the lead organisation for the quality, work, employability, skills and training (QWEST) programme. This is a European funded project providing opportunities for people who are seeking to return to work. The level of training delivered is mainly levels 1-3 but there is now an opportunity to deliver to level 4. This involves the university working in partnerships with further education colleges, employers and other organisations, including in the voluntary sector.

The university has developed over the years good partnership arrangements with the local authority. It continues to work well through the Centre for Community Learning, which acts as a contact point for the promotion of the Welsh Government's education agenda.

The university has re-developed good working relationships with the further education sector, including the local further education college and Colegau Cymru. The university and the local further education college have a developing staff development programme specifically for the further education provision.

The university is actively involved with the 14-19 networks in providing taster modules to schools and further education colleges in Newport and Torfaen. It has developed a strategic partnership document for the development of its staff, which includes continuous professional development (CPD), staff development opportunities, conferences and the recognition of further education values and expectations.

The imminent merger with the University of Glamorgan to form the University of South Wales will provide more opportunities to enhance its partnership working including its further education provision. This will contribute significantly to the Welsh Government's "For our Future" strategy to ensure Social Justice and a buoyant economy for this part of Wales.

Resource management: Adequate

Overall, teaching and support staff are deployed effectively. Staff are well qualified and experienced with many having significant industry experience. Support staff are used well to support learners. In mathematics, staff are deployed strategically on the basis of learners' diagnostic assessment results. They make a considerable positive impact on learners' attainment and progress.

All new teaching and support staff are required to follow a comprehensive induction process, which equips them with a sound insight into the university's procedures, roles and responsibilities and support processes.

The university provides a useful range of continuous professional development activities for all staff. The university, through its links with further education colleges and other agencies, provides good opportunities for further education based CPD. A majority of staff have benefitted from recent CPD focussing on developing a range of teaching and learning strategies, which has impacted positively on the learner experience.

Appraisals with teaching and learning staff are conducted on a regular basis and a new approach to observation has been introduced, with the support of its local further education college partner. As a result of an existing university-wide union agreement, the teaching observations are not judged or graded, which can hamper, at times, the effectiveness of target setting for teaching and learning.

The university's accommodation is generally good. The specialist accommodation for FAD is good and enables learners to work well when undertaking individual and group project work. There is plenty of scope to display their work. In a few instances, at busy times, there is too much unnecessary disruption as learners move between areas. Learners on the AHE programme do not benefit from having specialist accommodation where they can display their work and create an appropriate environment. Learners attend sessions in a number of the university's buildings. The classrooms they use are of a general nature and sometimes austere.

The university manages its finances well. Leaders use an effective structured approach to the financial allocation of capital and consumable budgets. This means that resources are available when required and meet the needs of further education learners and teaching and support staff.

Overall, the way that the university's further education provision manages its resources is adequate because the standards achieved by further education learners are adequate. The university provides adequate value for money for its further education learners.

Appendix 1

Learner satisfaction

Around 80 learners from the current cohort completed the questionnaire. Of these, 93% strongly agreed or agreed with the positive statements contained within the questionnaire. Of the 6% who disagreed with the statements, mostly relate to the access to good work placements and learning helping to become more involved with the learners' communities. Overall, learners indicate that they enjoy their programme, are well supported and receive good learning opportunities.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

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