

New College Lanarkshire

29 May 2015

**A report by HM Inspectors
on behalf of the
Scottish Funding Council**

Full report



The external review process

HM Inspectors undertake an independent review of the quality of provision in Scotland's colleges on behalf of the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council (SFC) under a service level agreement between the council and Education Scotland. External review teams include HM Inspectors, associate assessors and a student team member.

During external reviews, members of the review teams observe learning and teaching and hold discussions with learners, staff and stakeholders. They consider information on learner attainment and evaluate learner progress and outcomes. They meet with members of the Board of Management and obtain feedback from community groups, partners and employers who work with the college.

The purpose of this report is to convey the main outcomes arising from the external review, to acknowledge the college's strengths and to provide a clear agenda for future action to improve and enhance quality.

This external review results in judgements of **effective** or **limited effectiveness** or **not effective** that express the external review team's overall evaluation of *high quality learning, learner engagement and quality culture*.

The report also uses the following terms to describe numbers and proportions:	
almost all	over 90%
most	75-90%
majority	50-74%
less than half	15-49%
few	up to 15%

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Fax: 01603 723000

E-mail: hmsolicensing@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

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1. Introduction

The external review

The external review by Education Scotland took place during the week beginning 23 March 2015.

We examined learning and teaching and other important activities that impact on the quality of the learner experience. We evaluated these against the three key principles of *high quality learning*, *learner engagement* and *quality culture*, using the 13 reference quality indicators (QI) outlined in *External quality arrangements for Scotland's colleges, updated August 2013*. We also included QIs 2.2 and 6.3 to support our evaluations. We used information from previous visits to the college to decide the scope of the review.

We found two examples of excellence which we describe in this report on page 18.

The external review team talked with learners, staff at all levels in the college, members of the Board of Management, employers, external agencies and other users of the college.

2. The college and its context

In carrying out the external review of New College Lanarkshire, Education Scotland took the following college context fully into account.

New College Lanarkshire came into being on the 1 November 2013 when the former colleges of Cumbernauld and Motherwell came together to form New College Lanarkshire. Further merger took place when Coatbridge College joined New College Lanarkshire in April 2014. It now operates over nine campuses working across the areas of North and South Lanarkshire and East Dunbartonshire. It has main campuses in Coatbridge, Cumbernauld, Kirkintilloch and Motherwell.

New College Lanarkshire is a significant provider of further education (FE) and higher education (HE) in Lanarkshire, with over 1,100 staff supporting 23,000 learners. In session 2014-15 the college will deliver approximately 173,000 weighted student units of measurement (wSUM) of activity. In the current year, New College Lanarkshire, as the regional college, will contribute to the regional outcome targeted wSUMs delivery of 18.3% of learners from the 10% most deprived postcode areas in Scotland.

The college delivers programmes in a wide range of subjects and levels on the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) (SCQF levels 1-10) and its curriculum serves a wide range of employers in and beyond the regional boundaries. Subject areas in which there is a steady demand for employment include engineering, manufacturing, health care, construction, retail and administration. In addition, there are niche areas of demand in subjects such as hospitality, dental nursing, financial services, business and transport.

The college works closely with the Education Departments in North Lanarkshire Council, South Lanarkshire Council, and East Dunbartonshire Council. It provides an extensive programme of school link activity delivered both within schools and the college. In addition, the college works collaboratively with a range of strategic partners including, National Health Service Lanarkshire, The State Hospital at Carstairs, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), Amey, Routes to Work and various universities.

The college's revenue budget for the financial year is £53.7 million, with grant-in-aid from the SFC accounting for around 55% of the total. In 2014-15, the college is 'Parallel Running' the new SFC funding arrangements, which is calculated by the number of credits rather than wSUMs.

3. Outcomes of External Review

Judgement of *Effectiveness*

Section A: Overarching judgement

New College Lanarkshire has in place **effective** arrangements to maintain and enhance the quality of its provision and outcomes for learners and other stakeholders.

This judgement means that, in relation to quality assurance and enhancement, the college is led well, has sufficiently robust arrangements to address any identified minor weaknesses, and is likely to continue to improve the quality of its services for learners and other stakeholders.

Section B: Supporting statements

Learner progress and outcomes

College programmes are well aligned to meet the diverse needs of the college's learners and its communities. Most learners progress well to further study, employment or apprenticeships. The design and delivery of programmes includes activities which enhance programmes and learners' employability skills. Almost all learners develop a good understanding of the broader skills required by industry through a wide range of activities within their programmes. They are well prepared for transitions to further learning or employment. Many learners make effective use of progression pathways available within the college to articulate to Higher National and degree-level programmes. However, early and further withdrawal rates for all modes of study are higher than national sector performance levels. In full-time programmes, successful completion rates for learners are not sufficiently high.

Learning and teaching processes

Curriculum teams across different campuses review curriculum content effectively in a range of programmes. This has focused on the standardisation of programmes which are designed appropriately to meet the needs of learners from a wide range of backgrounds and circumstances. Relationships between staff and learners are particularly effective. Learners use a range of resources effectively and safely showing a high level of competence, supported by well-qualified and knowledgeable teaching staff. Curriculum teams make good use of dedicated time to provide learners with valuable support and guidance. Where under-performing programmes are identified, teaching staff have been successful in making changes to delivery that are beginning to have a positive impact. However, actions identified for improvement are not always sufficiently detailed to allow progress to be monitored effectively.

Learner engagement

Learners have considerable scope to personalise and exercise choice in their own learning. Learners take part in charity events and competitions, many achieving international success that considerably enhances the reputation of the college. Where learners express concerns about issues, staff respond quickly and appropriately. Class representatives are in place for almost all full-time programmes and they work well to convey learners' views to staff. Class representatives are supported well by the *learner engagement team*. However, the class representative system has still to establish procedures for appointing new representatives in-year, and for frequent meetings that permit meaningful discussion. Learners are represented appropriately on key college committees and the college is supportive of the Students' Association (SA). However, the SA has a low profile with learners and is not yet fully effective.

Leadership and Quality Culture

Senior managers provide open, supportive and inclusive leadership and are highly visible to staff. They have taken effective and prompt action to establish college-wide systems to achieve strategic aims. Staff share a commitment and responsibility to ensure learners have a positive and successful learning experience. Leadership roles for learning and teaching are identified clearly across teaching and support functions and distributed across the college. Support functions work well with teaching departments to analyse jointly causes of low performance and to arrange targeted actions to improve outcomes for learners. There is a strong quality culture within the college and the annual curriculum evaluation (ACE) tool is providing a helpful system for staff to evaluate and plan for improvements. However, some evaluations and actions are not sufficiently specific or measurable. The college's clear strategic commitment to partnership working has resulted in highly valued and effective collaborations with key local partners. Senior managers have led effectively the arrangements to manage change during the merger transition period.

Section C: Areas of positive practice

- Most successful full-time learners progress to further learning, apprenticeships or employment.
- The college offers an extensive range of programmes (SCQF levels 1-10) which are well aligned to meet the diverse needs of the college's learners and its communities.
- Almost all learners enjoy attending college, value their learning experience and develop good team working skills and skills that enable them to think creatively and independently.
- Almost all staff plan their teaching sessions effectively and incorporate a range of activities which helps to engage learners.
- Guest speakers from industry and business contribute effectively to many college programmes and help to inspire learners to be ambitious about employment opportunities.

- Almost all FE learners complete individual learning plans which support them in setting and reflecting on goals. They meet regularly with staff for helpful discussions and to review their progress.
- Curriculum teams use learner and staff feedback effectively to evaluate performance at programme level to support self-evaluation and inform quality improvement activities.
- Most class representatives convey learners' views confidently to staff, frequently resulting in positive changes in learning and teaching.
- Learners share a pride in the college and engage enthusiastically in activities to promote the work and life of the college to others.
- The *Positive Change Team* is providing an effective catalyst for staff to identify, assess and respond to the impact of new and emerging college processes on learners and staff.
- Key strategic partners are enthusiastic about working with the college and value the commitment of the principal and the senior management team to working proactively together for the benefit of the region.
- The principal and senior managers provide open, supportive and inclusive leadership and are highly visible to staff. They provide clear strategic direction and leadership for the curriculum and enhancement of learning and teaching.
- Teaching staff are motivated and enthused by the arrangements to involve them in the improvement and enhancement of learning and teaching activities.
- There is a strong quality culture within the college. Staff share commitment and responsibility to ensure learners have a positive and successful learning experience.

Section D: Areas for development

- Early and further withdrawal rates for all modes of study are above the national sector performance levels.
- In full-time FE and HE programmes, the percentage of learners completing their programmes successfully are below the national sector performance levels.
- Actions for improvement in under-performing programmes are not always sufficiently detailed to allow progress to be monitored effectively.
- The SA is not sufficiently effective and has a low profile with college learners. Learners do not have a clear understanding of its role in the college and the part it plays in college governance.

Section E: Main point for action

- **The college should improve withdrawal and attainment rates, particularly on full-time programmes.**
- **The college should work with the SA to improve its effectiveness.**

4. How well are learners progressing and achieving relevant, high quality outcomes?

How effective is the college at achieving and maintaining high levels of retention, attainment and progression?

As the college merged in April 2014, there is no historical data on which to base any trend analysis. However, for the purposes of this report the combined 2013-14 data for the three legacy colleges has been considered as a baseline.

Early and further withdrawal rates for all modes of study are higher than the national sector performance levels. In full-time FE programmes, 63% of learners complete their programmes successfully, which is three percentage points below the national sector performance level, with a further 10% completing with partial success. In full-time HE programmes, 67% of learners complete their programmes successfully which is four percentage points below the national sector performance level, with a further 13% completing with partial success.

In part-time FE programmes, 79% of learners complete their programmes successfully which is one percentage point above the national sector performance level, with a further 9% completing with partial success. In part-time HE programmes, 72% of learners complete their programmes successfully, which is six percentage points below the national sector performance level, with a further 13% completing with partial success.

Eighty-six per cent of successful full-time HE learners progress to further learning or employment. Similarly, most FE learners progress to further study, apprenticeships or employment.

How well do programmes and services meet learner needs?

The college offers an extensive range of programmes (SCQF levels 1-10) which are well aligned to meet the diverse needs of the college's learners and its communities. Learning progression pathways are well promoted and clearly signposted using SCQF levels. Employability Fund programmes form an important feature of college provision, targeted at supporting young people to prepare for and sustain employment.

A comprehensive curriculum review, informed by the views of key stakeholders, is being undertaken to ensure the college portfolio of programmes reflects the existing and emerging future needs of region and its learners. The review takes good account of *Developing Scotland's Workforce* priorities and *Regional Skills Assessment* information. The design and delivery of programmes include activities which enhance programmes and learners' employability. These activities include work experience, industrial visits, visiting speakers from industry, use of real-life projects and the inclusion of additional industry-recognised certification. Almost all learners are satisfied with their programmes and their overall experience of the college.

How well do learners make progress, attain qualifications and achieve more widely?

Most learners on part-time FE programmes make good progress and attain the qualifications they set out to achieve. In part-time HE programmes in hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies and part-time FE hospitality and tourism programmes, the levels of learner success are amongst the best in the sector. However, performance is poor in a number of full-time FE programmes, including art and design, care and construction and full-time HE programmes, including art and design and social subjects. Within these programmes, too many learners leave early or do not attain the programme award. Almost all learners undertaking core skill units in communication, information and communication technology (ICT), numeracy, working with others and problem solving are successful.

Most learners build on prior learning and skills. Many make effective use of progression pathways available within the college, particularly routes through SCQF levels 4-8. Learners also make good use of the range of articulation pathways available from Higher National Certificate and Diploma programmes to access degree-level provision.

Many learners across a diverse range of subject areas achieve success in skills competitions at local regional, national and international levels. These successes make a significant contribution to learner motivation and raise learner confidence, expectations and aspirations. They also reinforce high standards and the value of skills for employment. College learners have achieved very high degrees of success in *Worldskills* competitions at all levels.

5. How effective are the college's learning and teaching processes?

How well does the college design and deliver programmes and services to meet the needs of learners from all backgrounds and circumstances?

Most teaching staff ensure that equality and diversity is actively promoted where it is relevant and support learners in developing their awareness and understanding of these issues. The recent *All Equal, All Individual* campaign was successful in raising awareness across all campuses.

Many curriculum teams have been effective in reviewing curriculum content across a range of programmes in the different campuses. Learners are now experiencing the same content in campuses where there is more than one location where a programme is available. College programmes are designed appropriately to meet the needs of learners from a range of backgrounds, are inclusive and have good levels of personal support for individuals with different levels of ability.

Learners with complex needs have well-designed programmes to cater for their needs. For example, *Student Advisors* provide effective and discreet support for learners who are care leavers. The college is building on good practice established in one of the legacy colleges that achieved the *Buttle Trust* quality standard. The college is proactive in providing access for learners who have few or no qualifications or have other barriers to learning.

How well do learners learn?

Almost all learners enjoy attending college and value their learning experience. The atmosphere during almost all classroom and workshop sessions is positive and purposeful. Almost all learners use a range of resources, including computer software, specialist equipment and well-designed workbooks effectively and safely showing a high level of competence. In practical classes, curriculum areas are well resourced with tools and equipment required for the development of appropriate vocational skills. Many learners make good use of the college's virtual learning environment (VLE) in class, or in their own time, for additional learning, revision or remediation.

Almost all learners work effectively independently or in groups. In some classes, learners support each other well and share their knowledge and understanding to good effect. In many curriculum areas such as art, learners actively critique the work of others and benefit from this feedback which enhances their learning. Most learners progress well in most subjects. They build on their previous learning and further develop appropriate vocational skills with a significant focus in many classes on skills for employability. They develop good team working skills through group activities, and develop skills that allow them to think creatively and independently, responding well to issues that arise during tasks.

How well do planning, teaching and the use of resources ensure effective learning?

Almost all staff plan their teaching sessions effectively and most incorporate a range of activities which engage learners. Staff use interesting and relevant examples from industry to reinforce professional standards and expectations. Lesson planning incorporates links to opportunities to develop and reinforce learners' core skills. Staff helpfully emphasise to learners where opportunities for the development of core skills exist in vocational subjects. In a few subject areas, specialist core skills staff work closely with curriculum teams to contextualise core skills delivery and identify integrated assessment opportunities.

Guest speakers contribute to many college programmes and help to inspire learners to be ambitious about employment opportunities. Local companies provide work experience placement opportunities for many learners, which often helps them to secure apprenticeships, permanent employment or further develop their vocational or employability skills.

Classrooms and workshop areas are generally of a high quality and provide a suitable climate for effective learning. Faculties are reviewing the delivery patterns in some subject areas and making local arrangements to adjust sessions to suit learners better.

How well is assessment used to promote effective learning?

Almost all learners are well prepared for assessments and encouraged to participate in assessment planning and scheduling to avoid multiple deadlines for submissions. Where written assessments are submitted via the VLE, learners feel assessment feedback is provided particularly timeously.

Almost all teaching staff provide helpful oral feedback, on a continuous basis, to further improve the standard of learners' work and to promote reflection on their skills development. Most teaching staff give learners detailed and helpful written and oral feedback on assessments which supports learners to reflect on their progress and further improve their standard of work. In some areas, useful feedback is given to learners using *Mahara* and *Moodle* to encourage reflection.

Learners with additional support needs have access to and use a range of services to support their assessment arrangements. All learners are aware of how they can negotiate additional time, scribes or alternative formats.

How well are potential and current learners provided with information, advice and support?

Potential and current learners are provided with clear information on the requirements of programmes from the college website, from staff and at interview. Almost all learners benefit from a useful and informative induction programme when they begin their studies. Almost all FE learners complete individual learning plans which support them in setting and reflecting on goals. Learners generally meet regularly with staff for helpful discussions and to review their progress. They value this opportunity and the positive relationships between staff and learners help to support useful goal-setting. Most curriculum teams make good use of allocated time to provide learners with curriculum

support and guidance. Additionally some learners make use of SDS careers coaches to help inform their progression pathways. Many *course tutors* also provide helpful guidance and support on progression pathways for learners.

Almost all learners are aware of where and how to access services to support learning. Learners also know how to access additional support where this is required. The college has effective arrangements for supporting the specific needs of individual learners. For example, hearing impaired learners integrate into classes well with the support of a language signer.

How well does the college sustain continuous enhancement of learning and teaching through self-evaluation and internal review activities?

Across the college, staff and learners engage effectively in quality processes, including self-evaluation, and learners play a significant role in these internal review and feedback activities. Learner and staff feedback are used effectively to evaluate performance at programme level and help to support quality enhancement activities within faculties. Staff have recently reviewed and revised their entry requirements and interview arrangements for potential learners in many curriculum areas, based on analysis of attainment and withdrawal rates from previous years within the legacy colleges. Their aim is to ensure that learners are recruited to the programme that best suits their needs and aspirations.

Where actions for improvement in under-performing programmes are identified, teaching staff have been successful in making changes that are beginning to have some impact. However, actions identified for improvement are not always sufficiently specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) to allow progress to be monitored effectively. Often, programme evaluations do not reflect sufficiently on learning and teaching and its impact on outcomes for learners.

Managers have identified as a priority the implementation of a college-wide approach to reviewing learning and teaching as a tool for more systematic evaluation of professional practice. This new approach is currently being developed by a working group, building on what worked well in the legacy colleges to give staff choice in the implementation of a suite of revised arrangements.

6. How well are learners engaged in enhancing their own learning and the work and life of the college?

How well do learners engage in enhancing their own learning?

Relationships between almost all teaching staff and learners are productive and based on mutual respect. All learners value highly these relationships with teaching staff and their confidence and self-esteem has grown as a result. Almost all learners are motivated by teaching staff to do well and achieve. Learners have considerable scope to personalise their own learning. Many are involved in planning aspects of their learning jointly with teaching staff, including topic work, learning resources and learning activities. In many subject areas, learners enjoy autonomy within projects and assignments and exercise choice in how and when they are assessed. Learners are widely consulted on the delivery of their programmes and in a few programmes, learners have contributed to the redesign of class timetables.

Learners work together confidently with staff and other learners to influence issues that affect their learning. Learners contribute their views on learning and teaching to inform the evaluation of programmes. For example, learners on the Higher National Certificate (HNC) Sound Production use 'padlets' (electronic post-its) within their area of the VLE, to feedback what works well for them and what could be improved. Teaching staff use these to support reflective practice and planning of learning activities. Where learners express concerns about aspects of their programmes, most staff respond quickly to deal with the issues or implement changes that will benefit future classes. However, a few learners are unclear about actions taken in response to learner feedback, particularly feedback from previous cohorts.

The college has class representation in place for almost all full-time programmes. Most class representatives convey learners' views confidently to staff, frequently resulting in positive changes in learning and teaching. However, class representatives meet infrequently and opportunities for meaningful discussion are limited. Class representatives are appointed early in the college year and there is no formal process for re-appointment where representatives have left their programme or have proved ineffective. College-employed *learner engagement officers* support class representatives well and organise training for them, with support and input from Student Participation in Quality Scotland (*sparqs*). The majority of class representatives have now received training and understand their role more fully. The *learner engagement officers* have been particularly effective in supporting learners on special programmes to develop effective representation. With assistance from *sparqs*, class representatives from special programmes have received training tailored to their needs.

How well do learners engage in enhancing the work and life of the college?

The college's learner engagement strategy, which gives a clear direction for future development, was developed in close collaboration with the legacy SA. Learners are represented very well on key college committees. The SA president and vice-president contribute to senior management meetings in which they provide valuable views and clarification. For example, senior managers recently discussed learner withdrawal rates and the SA provided input on relevant issues, such as student poverty. The college has established a *learner engagement team* with representation from support staff, faculty

staff, learner representatives and the SA. This group has already generated many ideas for wider engagement that will be shared across and piloted within faculties.

Learners share a pride in the college and engage enthusiastically in activities to promote the work and life of the college to others. Many learners take part in charity events and other activities promoting diversity and health and wellbeing. These events enhance the college's reputation in its communities and help learners develop employability and citizenship skills. The majority of learners engage with their classes or with the SA in volunteering activities or to raise funds for charities. For example, HNC Care and Administrative Practice learners manage, promote and deliver a twice-weekly drop-in health clinic open to all learners and staff.

The College Board, Regional Chair and senior managers support the new SA well. The college has recently appointed a coordinator to support the SA, recognising that a high level of support is necessary to enable it to achieve its full potential. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this post. The SA officers delivered a continuing professional development (CPD) session to inform staff about the work of the SA and to secure their support. This successfully raised the profile of the SA with staff.

The SA is a visible presence on each of the college's main campuses. Several learners have voluntarily taken on specialist roles and where possible, these are replicated in each campus. The SA has promoted the Stop Student Poverty campaign and recently introduced a food bank to support fellow learners who require assistance. The SA collects donations from learners and staff and distributes provisions across the three main campuses to those learners who need it. Although the SA communicates with learners in a variety of ways, it is not sufficiently effective and has a low profile with college learners. Learners do not have a clear understanding of its role in the college and the part it plays in college governance.

7. How well does the college recognise and respond to changes in its environments?

The Regional Board and college senior managers continue to work effectively to lead and manage significant change for learners and staff during this period of transition following the merger of the three legacy colleges. A key driver underpinning this process of change has been making learners the focus of all change processes, to ensure that the outcome of any process enhances the experience for all learners. The *Positive Change Team*, chaired by the principal, is the overarching group which oversees and steers change. It is providing an effective catalyst for support and teaching staff to identify, assess and respond to the impact of new and emerging college processes on learners and staff. This team is working well and is engendering a shared vision and purpose to remove barriers and build systems and arrangements which work well across the full range of functions and college sites.

A number of teams have been formed to take forward specific aspects of change in areas such as: learning and teaching; learner engagement; quality enhancement and audit; and corporate parenting. Staff from all areas and levels of the college form the membership of these teams and, where appropriate, learners are members. Although still in the early stages of their work, the teams are beginning to prioritise and develop new college-wide approaches to policy and practice. Staff at all levels have welcomed this consultative approach to managing change. Managers stress the importance of doing things in the correct fashion rather than doing things quickly. The college's well-considered transitional planning has resulted in new policies and procedures being incrementally developed and implemented to support college priorities. This is a key characteristic of the approach taken by the college to manage and support change and is contributing effectively to on-going improvements. College managers have taken good account of the wider operating environment, skills investment plans and regional assessment plans to align staff structures, curriculum and resources with identified needs.

Staff and key external partners value the information they have received over the period of merger and value the communication from the principal and senior managers about the vision for the future of the college. The merger is recognised by most staff to be an opportunity to enhance standards by diversifying the curriculum and sharing good practice. Curriculum teams value the wider range of staff and partner skills now available in the new college as a consequence of merger. This has enhanced the opportunities to share effective practice and develop further initiatives. Different curriculum areas, brought together in the new college, are exploring potential synergies to enhance the curriculum offer and skills development. For example, staff from the dental nursing section and computer-aided design (CAD) section are working with a local dental practice. They are developing training to support the use of CAD and computer-aided manufacture (CAM) in the design and creation of dental prostheses.

Senior managers maintain and review a detailed risk register which assesses risks associated with the new college. The risk management group reports regularly to the Board of Management Audit Committee to inform Board accountability. For example, inability to improve retention and attainment has been ranked as the 14th greatest risk by the risk management group, and this is reviewed regularly by the Audit Committee. This ensures Board members are aware of risks associated with low attainment and retention.

8. How extensive and effective are college partnerships with communities, other learning providers, employers and agencies?

Key strategic partners are enthusiastic about working with the new college and value the commitment of the principal and the senior management team to working proactively together for the benefit of the region, its people and its industries. The college is a proactive and well-respected member of the community planning partnerships serving its communities. It has highly valued and very effective working relationships with North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire and East Dunbartonshire Councils and an extensive range of community partners, including Prince's Trust, NHS Lanarkshire, Routes to Work and employers. These collaborations result in a broad range of provision which directly benefits those furthest from the labour market by developing their skills for employment.

A strong shared vision between the principal and local authority directors of education services is driving the future direction of school college partnerships. This ensures partnership working is aligned with the needs of the area and pupils and delivers the recommendations of *Developing the Young Workforce*. Arrangements are resulting in enriched curriculum choices for senior phase pupils. The college has very strong links and shared strategic commitment with SDS which enhances opportunities for school leavers and the unemployed. The college engages effectively with a wide range of employers and responds well and flexibly to their training and skills needs.

The college has comprehensive formal articulation arrangements in place which allow access to degree-level qualifications across most subject areas. The college, in partnership with several universities, also offers degree-level provision taught by college staff.

9. How well is the college led and how well is it enhancing the quality of its services for learners and other stakeholders?

The Regional Board, principal and senior managers work together well to provide a clear vision and mission for the college *'to provide innovative, high quality, relevant learning for careers, life and success, supporting the people, business, economy and sustainable development of Scotland'*. Three strategic priorities provide a framework within the transitional strategy (2014-16) to develop associated strategic objectives. The college's vision, extrapolated from each of the legacy colleges, places people at the heart of its work through *'supporting and empowering learners and staff; and, respecting and valuing the needs, aspirations, and experiences of others'*.

Strategic objectives are aligned well to relevant national and regional priorities. They include partnership working with local businesses, public and voluntary organisations to contribute to local and regional growth through education and training. Faculty and support area operational plans are linked clearly to strategic objectives. College managers are well informed about college priorities and sectoral and national developments, including regional skills requirements and *Developing the Young Workforce*. They align provision effectively to identified current and projected industry needs. Managers collaborate productively to share approaches and ideas for responding to new initiatives. A corporate parenting strategy is being developed to take account of the large numbers of young people aged 16-26 on mainstream programmes who have experience of the care system.

The principal and senior managers provide open, supportive and inclusive leadership and are highly visible to staff. Staff are listened to by managers and supported to bring forward ideas which impact positively on the learner experience and life and work of the college. College managers and staff teams work together diligently and effectively to achieve college aims and objectives. The college utilises the targets in the Regional Outcome Agreement (ROA) to measure and assess performance effectively. The Transitional Strategic Plan includes a clear focus on evaluating provision to promote learner success both in terms of attainment and transitions and progression, including transitions ultimately into employment.

There is a strong culture across the college of learning and teaching being at central to the organisation. The principal and senior managers provide clear strategic direction and leadership for the curriculum and enhancement of learning and teaching. The college's clear commitment to high quality learning and teaching is articulated well through stated strategic outcomes to ensure learners experience the highest quality of provision and achieve successful outcomes. Leadership roles for learning and teaching are identified clearly across teaching and support functions and distributed across the college. Heads and assistant heads of faculty and curriculum and quality leaders (CQL) are empowered and supported well to lead and manage curriculum areas. They are working well together to increase consistency and collaboration across campuses and curriculum areas.

Relevant committees and working groups are providing a strong foundation for future planning. Collectively, these groups are working well together to reduce learner withdrawal and increase learner success. All programme teams are introducing measures in their curriculum areas to address issues of high withdrawal rates and low attainment based on best practice from the three legacy colleges. However, recently introduced measures in curriculum areas to address issues of high withdrawal rates and low attainment are at too early a stage to measure their impact.

Teaching staff are motivated and enthused by the arrangements to involve them in the improvement and enhancement of learning and teaching. They are aware of key college developments and are engaging well in team and cross-campus activities to collaborate with peers to share and adopt effective learning and teaching approaches. The recently produced transitional learning and teaching strategy, based on the best practice of the three legacy colleges, has been consulted on within the college. There are good arrangements for teaching staff to enhance and extend their professional and industrial skills. Newly-appointed teaching staff who do not hold a teaching qualification are provided with opportunity to undertake initial training and are well supported by mentors to undertake Professional Development Awards (PDA) and the Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE).

Senior managers have developed support staff roles which takes good account of learner needs and college priorities. Managers use learner feedback and analysis of learner profiles to plan provision which meet specific needs well. For example, the development of services to support young people who have experience of the care system. There are clear plans for harmonising services fully across all campuses once the restructuring of support roles is fully operational. Staff in support functions work well with teaching staff to analyse jointly causes of low performance and to arrange targeted actions to improve outcomes for learners. Support teams make good use of on-line operational planning software to review services and plan for improvement. The college has established good links with a wide range of external support agencies to provide learners with access to additional, specialist support services when required.

There is a strong quality culture within the college. Staff share commitment and responsibility to ensure learners have a positive and successful learning experience. The open and supportive leadership of senior staff has resulted in staff engaging enthusiastically in developing arrangements for self-evaluation, reflection and planning for improvement. Across the college, staff teams involve learners in providing formal and informal feedback to shape college services and provision. Staff are making good use of team meetings and evaluative activities to plan for improvement. Teaching teams are drawing on effective practice across college campuses to plan consistent approaches to programme design and delivery.

The management team places high priority on engaging staff at all levels in identifying and implementing strategies which will improve attendance, withdrawal and attainment rates on programmes where they are low. The college has well-considered systems in place to monitor and improve withdrawal and attainment rates at programme and college level. The senior management team has carried out a thorough analysis of learner performance across all programme areas. They have drawn on this process to identify areas for development at college, department and programme levels. This process has focussed on addressing performance indicators (PI) in areas and programmes which indicate outcomes below the targets identified in the ROA. The

ACE tool provides a very helpful system for capturing evaluation and quality improvement planning. However, the full potential is not yet fully realised across the merged college as some faculties or curriculum areas have yet to develop fully their expertise in being more evaluative and analytical in their reporting. In some instances, actions plans for improvement are not sufficiently specific or measurable to allow managers to monitor progress easily.

10. Signposting excellent practice

During the Education Scotland external review, the college submitted examples of what it considered to be excellent practice and the review team also identified examples worthy of dissemination.

10.1 Excellent practice in Enhancing Learning through Motorsport

FE learners on automotive engineering programmes participate in a project in conjunction with a local motorsport company, to run a college-branded *Legend Race* car in the Scottish Legends Championship. Learners form the mechanics team, and apply their mechanical skills gained in college during trials to make quick and critical decisions in the pits area of a national racing circuit at Knockhill.

At the track, the college car team usually consists of six learners who each work on specific fine tuning tasks and make team decisions liaising closely with the driver. Learners take it in turn at the track side and share different responsibilities. They experience first-hand, the importance of a whole-team approach to decision-making and problem-solving in a challenging and exciting, controlled environment. They develop their communication skills with other team members and build on their confidence to communicate with the driver and understand their needs in and out of the race car. When learners see their hard work reflected in race and championship wins, it strengthens their understanding of the role they play in a larger team and how important they are to the success of that team. The race car project enables learners, staff and stakeholders to interact with each other at the race track in a relaxed and enjoyable environment. Staff encourage learners to continue volunteering once they have left the college, by moving to work on other team cars.

10.2 Excellent practice in Partnership Working through *Project Search*

Project Search Lanarkshire is a targeted programme, supported by Big Lottery 'Life Transitions' funding, which provides employment training and support for people with learning disabilities aged 18-24 years. The project is delivered by a partnership between the North Lanarkshire Council, NHS Lanarkshire, an international service company and the college. The project has been running since 2010 and provides education in the workplace across three hospitals accommodating six learners at each site. Learners are supported by college teaching staff, job coaches and employer mentors.

The model runs over one academic year providing learners with three work placements between September and June. Learners start each day in an allocated classroom at each site with their tutor, covering skills training and developing social and communication skills. They then spend the day working in a number of areas, including portering, catering, cleaning and administration, and return later as a group to reflect on the day and spend time with their job coach.

Learners are selected through a robust application and interview process involving all stakeholders, including families and carers. This open and transparent selection process is to help ensure that learners have the ability and desire to engage in the workplace programme. High retention and achievement figures reflect this. Throughout the year learners gain practical experience in three service areas which helps them

make an informed choice about their future in employment. Almost all learners complete the programme successfully and half of them continue to be in employment in a number of service positions in the hospitals. Learners increase their independence, gain confidence and improve employability skills. They also experience improved health and wellbeing and in turn this has a positive effect on families and carers.

11. What is an overarching judgement?

Education Scotland uses an overarching judgement of *Effectiveness* to express the findings of the review team. The judgement of effectiveness takes into account all the evidence gathered through the external review. Such judgements express outcomes as:

effective;
limited effectiveness; or
not effective.

This judgement is further detailed by supporting statements which substantiate the judgement of effectiveness. Education Scotland evaluates and reports according to the three key principles. In this report, the principles and supporting statements relate to:

Key principle 1 – High quality learning (supporting statements numbers 1 and 2).

Key principle 2 – Learner engagement (supporting statement number 3).

Key principle 3 – Quality culture (supporting statement number 4).

Judgements of effectiveness and supporting statements provide stakeholders with assurances, or otherwise, about the quality of a college's provision. These judgements are based on trends and track record of a college, the findings at the time of the external review, and the college's capacity to continue improving.

A judgement of *effective* indicates that the college has in place **effective** arrangements to maintain and enhance the quality of its provision and outcomes for learners and other stakeholders. This judgement means that, in relation to quality assurance and enhancement, the college is led well, has sufficiently robust arrangements to address any minor weakness, and is likely to continue to improve the quality of its services for learners and other stakeholders.

A judgement of *limited effectiveness* indicates that the effectiveness of the college's arrangements to maintain and enhance the quality of its provision and outcomes for learners and other stakeholders is **limited**. This judgement means that there are some strengths in the college's arrangements for quality enhancement. However, there are weaknesses in arrangements for *high quality learning* and/or *learner engagement* and/or *quality culture*. If not addressed, the importance of these weaknesses will continue to **limit the effectiveness** of the college's arrangements.

A judgement of *not effective* indicates that the college's arrangements to maintain and enhance the quality of its provision and outcomes for learners and other stakeholders are **not effective**. This judgement means that there are significant weaknesses in the arrangements for *high quality learning* and/or *learner engagement* and/or *quality culture*. There is a high probability that, without significant and comprehensive action, with external monitoring and support, the college will fail to improve current low-quality provision and outcomes to an acceptable level. Education Scotland does not have evidence that the college has the capacity and commitment to identify and implement effective and comprehensive action.

Scottish Funding Council response to judgements

If the overarching judgement is **effective**, the Council will expect the college to engage with Education Scotland in follow-up activity, as appropriate, and, one year after the publication of the review reports, to provide a report, endorsed by its governing body (see *Council guidance to colleges on quality from August 2012*, paragraphs 62-66 [SFC/13/2012](#) setting out its response to the review).

If the overarching judgement is of **limited effectiveness** or is **not effective**, the Council will require the institution to prepare and fulfil an action plan to address the shortcomings identified (see paragraph 67 of guidance). Education Scotland will provide advice to SFC on the adequacy of the action plan and on how it is being implemented. SFC, taking into account any advice from Education Scotland, will normally require a formal follow-up review at an appropriate time, usually within no more than two years.

12. What happens next?

Education Scotland will continue to monitor progress during annual engagement visits to the college.

There will be feedback to the learners at the college.

One year on from this report, the college will produce a report setting out what it has done to address the main points for action and/or areas for development in the report and other quality assurance and enhancement activities. There will be a link to this report from Education Scotland's website.

Dr John Bowditch
HM Inspector

13. Further information

The review and judgements relate to the college as a whole and do not provide information about individual programmes of study or subjects. For further information on these or any other queries, contact the college or look on its website www.nclanarkshire.ac.uk.

For further information about Education Scotland, the external review methodologies, or other information about reviews, see www.educationscotland.gov.uk.

For further information about the Scottish Funding Council, see www.sfc.ac.uk.

14. How can you contact us?

This report has been produced as a web-only publication and is available on our website at:

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/othersectors/collegereviews/NewCollegeLanarkshire.asp>. If you would like to receive this report in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on 01506 600381.

If you want to give us feedback or make a complaint about our work, please contact us by telephone on 0141 282 5000, or e-mail: complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us addressing your letter to The Complaints Manager, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Livingston, EH54 6GA.

Text phone users can contact us on 01506 600236. This is a service for deaf users. Please do not use this number for voice calls as the line will not connect you to a member of staff.

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Appendix 1

Glossary of terms

ACE	Annual Curriculum Evaluation
CAD	Computer-aided Design
CAM	Computer-aided Manufacture
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CQL	Curriculum and Quality Leader
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HNC	Higher National Certificate
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
NHS	National Health Service
PDA	Professional Development Award
PI	Performance Indicator
QI	Quality Indicator
ROA	Regional Outcome Agreement
SA	Students' Association
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SDS	Skills Development Scotland
SFC	Scottish Funding Council
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound
Sparqs	Student Participation in Quality Scotland
TQFE	Teaching Qualification in Further Education
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment
wSUM	Weighted Student Units of Measurement

Appendix 2

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF Levels	SQA Qualifications			Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	Scottish Vocational Qualifications
12				DOCTORAL DEGREE	
11				INTEGRATED MASTERS DEGREE / MASTERS DEGREE POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA POST GRADUATE CERTIFICATE	SVQ5
10				HONOURS DEGREE GRADUATE DIPLOMA GRADUATE CERTIFICATE	
9			PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AWARD	BACHELORS / ORDINARY DEGREE GRADUATE DIPLOMA GRADUATE CERTIFICATE	SVQ4
8		HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA		DIPLOMA OF HIGHER EDUCATION	
7	ADVANCED HIGHER	HIGHER NATIONAL CERTIFICATE		CERTIFICATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION	SVQ3
6	HIGHER				
5	INTERMEDIATE 2 CREDIT STANDARD GRADE				SVQ2
4	INTERMEDIATE 1 GENERAL STANDARD GRADE	NATIONAL CERTIFICATE	NATIONAL PROGRESSION AWARD		SVQ1
3	ACCESS 3 FOUNDATION STANDARD GRADE				
2	ACCESS 2				
1	ACCESS 1				

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework brings together all Scottish mainstream qualifications into a single unified framework. The framework includes: degree provision, HNC and HND, SQA National Qualifications, and SVQs. There are 12 levels ranging from Access 1 at SCQF level 1 to Doctoral degree at SCQF level 12. Each qualification whether a unit, group of units or larger group award has also been allocated a number of SCQF credits. Each credit represents 10 notional hours of required learning. Doctoral degrees based on a thesis are an exception to this.

Other learning may be credit rated and included in the framework provided it leads to a clear set of learning outcomes and has quality-assured learner assessment. All of Scotland's colleges were awarded SCQF Credit Rating powers in January 2007.