

West Lothian College

25 March 2016

**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%

This report is Crown Copyright.

You may re-use this publication (not including agency logos) free of charge in any format for research, private study or internal circulation within an organisation. You must re-use it accurately and not use it in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown Copyright and you must give the title of the source document/publication.

For any other use of this material please apply for a Click-Use Licence for core material at: www.hmsso.gov.uk/copyright/licences/click-use-home.htm or by writing to: HMSO Licensing, St Clements House, 2-16 Colegate, Norwich, NR3 1BQ

Fax: 01603 723000

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

Contents	Page
1. Introduction	1
The external review	1
2. The college and its context	2
3. Outcomes of External Review Judgement of <i>Effectiveness</i>	3
Section A: Overarching judgement	3
Section B: Supporting statements	3
Section C: Areas of positive practice	5
Section D: Areas for development	6
Section E: Main points for action	6
4. How well are learners progressing and achieving relevant, high quality outcomes?	7
5. How effective are the college's learning and teaching processes?	10
6. How well are learners engaged in enhancing their own learning and the work and life of the college?	13
7. How well is the college led and how well is it enhancing the quality of its services for learners and other stakeholders?	15
8. How extensive and effective are college partnerships with communities, other learning providers, employers and agencies?	17
9. Signposting excellent practice	18
10. What is an overarching judgement?	19
11. What happens next?	21
12. Further information	21
13. How can you contact us?	22
Appendices	23
Glossary of terms	23
The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework	24

1. Introduction

The external review

The external review by Education Scotland took place during the week beginning 25 January 2016.

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 outlined in *External quality arrangements for Scotland's colleges, updated August 2013*. We also included QIs *1.3 Adherence to statutory principles* and *2.2 Relevance of programmes and services to learner needs*, to support our evaluations. We used information from previous visits to the college to decide the scope of the review.

We found 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 West Lothian College, Education Scotland took the following college context fully into account.

West Lothian College operates from a single campus located in Livingston, West Lothian. The college works closely with a range of partners to meet the needs of learners and the local economy. These include West Lothian Council, National Health Service Lothian, the Chamber of Commerce, Skills Development Scotland, various community and employer organisations, local universities and other colleges. The West Lothian area has a population of approximately 177,200 which is projected to increase by around 20% by 2035.

In response to economic priorities and changes in local demographics, the college, supported by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), has increased provision by around 25% in the last four years. This growth has funded an increase in the number of places for 16-24 year olds. The college is an Early Adopter and Pathfinder for Foundation Apprenticeships and has achieved accreditation for its work in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects.

The college provides a broad curriculum from Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels 2 to 9. This provision is delivered through nine curriculum centres. Almost all provision is delivered from the college campus in Livingston. The college implemented two major capital build projects over 2013-2015 to provide additional construction and engineering facilities to accommodate developments in STEM.

The college works with West Lothian Council and West Lothian Community Planning Partnership (CPP) to plan and deliver provision. West Lothian Council provides a range of shared services for the college. The college delivers services to eleven secondary schools and two special schools in the area.

In academic year 2014-15, West Lothian College enrolled 6,201 learners on SFC-funded programmes, which is an increase of 28% since 2012-13. The overall level of wSUM activity delivered in 2014-15 was 53,997, a rise of 30% since 2012-13. Total SFC grant income represents 69% of the college's total income.

3. Outcomes of External Review

Judgement of Effectiveness

Section A: Overarching judgement

West Lothian 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 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

The college offers a wide range of well-planned programmes which meet the needs of learners, the local community and employers. The college is responding quickly to regional and national priorities including Developing the Young Workforce. Most learners make good progress during their programmes of study and gain useful skills that enable them to progress to employment or further learning. The majority of learners successfully complete and gain nationally recognised awards. In some subject areas, success rates are amongst the best in the sector. However, more than a few programmes are performing well below national sector levels. Many part-time learners who complete their programme do not achieve the full award. In some core skills areas achievement is above national sector performance. College arrangements for safeguarding and the protection of young people and vulnerable groups are comprehensive and well developed.

Learning and teaching processes

Almost all learners participate purposefully in a wide range of learning activities and develop useful personal and vocational skills that assist further study or employment. Most teaching staff plan lessons well, often with an emphasis on developing vocational and employability skills. However, in theory classes more than a few teaching staff do not use a sufficiently wide range of teaching approaches to make lessons interesting and engage learners fully. Teaching staff set high standards and expectations for learners. All programmes incorporate helpful core skills development but it is not always contextualised appropriately. The college provides a high quality learning environment. Learners are very well supported by staff and support services. The views of learners and class representatives are used well by staff to inform programme team meetings and

self-evaluation activities. However, most curriculum teams do not analyse and evaluate learning and teaching systematically.

Learner engagement

College managers are committed to learner engagement. Learners' views on learning and teaching are routinely sought and used by teaching staff to inform the evaluation of programmes. In many curriculum areas learners personalise their learning. However, not all learners are made aware of their opportunity to influence learning and teaching in the classroom. Almost all learners engage positively and constructively with staff and are confident in raising issues. Almost all full-time classes have a class representative, the majority of whom have undertaken training which supports them well in their role. The Students' Association is well supported by the college. The Students' Association officers are represented well on key college committees where their contribution is valued. The Students' Association organises a range of college-wide events and activities which enhance the citizenship and employability skills of those participating. Almost all learners are aware of the existence of the Students' Association. However, learner awareness of its role and of the range of activities it supports is less well developed.

Leadership and Quality Culture

Partnership working is very effective. Leadership for learning and teaching is distributed well across the college through *centre managers* and individual teaching staff. Current strategies for learning and teaching and learner engagement do not provide sufficient direction to teaching staff. However, these are currently being updated. The Principal is supported well by a senior management team with clearly defined and well-linked responsibilities to support effective delivery of the curriculum. The college has a strong commitment to continuing professional development for staff. Services to support learners are effective and managed well. The college has developed strong, effective partnerships with appropriate external agencies to provide learners with access to additional, specialist when required. All college staff are committed to enhancing the quality of provision and services for learners. However, current quality arrangements do not encourage staff to focus sufficiently on particular issues related to learning and teaching and partial success.

Section C: Areas of positive practice

- The college offers a wide range of well-planned and resourced programmes at appropriate levels and modes of delivery. These programmes meet the needs of learners, the local community and employers well.
- The majority of courses include meaningful work-based experiences which help to prepare learners for employment. These include work-placements, input from guest speakers from industry, visits to work places and volunteering opportunities.
- The college works closely with West Lothian Council to develop and provide opportunities for school learners in the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence. This has resulted in an extensive range of provision including Foundation Apprenticeships and Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Higher National Certificates (HNCs).
- Almost all learners participate purposefully in a wide range of learning activities. These activities help learners to develop useful personal and vocational skills that prepare them for further study or employment.
- The college provides a high-quality learning environment. Classrooms and practical areas are bright, well-furnished and equipped with industry-standard resources which motivate and support learners to engage in learning.
- Positive and mutually respectful relationships between learners and staff contribute to a relaxed and purposeful environment for learning and promote learner confidence and self-esteem.
- Almost all full-time programmes have a class representative. Class representatives have benefitted from *sparqs* training to carry out their role and represent learners effectively.
- The Principal provides visible and effective leadership which is highly valued by staff across the college. The senior management team works well together and responsibilities are clearly defined and well-linked to support effective delivery of the curriculum.
- Services to support learners are effective and managed well. Collectively, support services staff have a clear focus on learners and the overall learning experience.
- All college staff are committed to enhancing the quality of provision and services for learners. Overall, centre managers and curriculum teams take good account of feedback from learners, stakeholders and employers to improve programme design and delivery arrangements.
- The college works effectively with its partners. As a result, partnership working is strong and productive. Partnership arrangements with *West Lothian Council* are

very effective. The college has developed very effective working relationships with many local employers.

Section D: Areas for development

- Successful completion rates for part-time programmes in a number of curriculum areas are low. In these areas too many learners complete their programme with partial success and do not achieve the full award.
- Successful completion rates for some full-time programmes are low.
- More than a few teaching staff do not use a sufficiently wide range of teaching approaches to make lessons interesting and engage learners fully.
- In more than a few core skills classes, activities are not sufficiently interesting to engage all learners and not contextualised appropriately to take account of vocational requirements.
- Most curriculum teams do not analyse and evaluate learning and teaching systematically. Action plans for improvement focus on practical or planning issues rather than learning and teaching approaches.
- Almost all learners are aware of the existence of the Students' Association. However, learner awareness of its role and of the range of activities it supports is less well developed.
- Current strategies for learning and teaching and learner engagement do not provide sufficient direction to teaching staff with regard to college priorities. The college recognises this and strategies are currently being updated to ensure they convey expectations of managers and staff more clearly.
- Current quality arrangements do not encourage staff to focus sufficiently on particular issues related to learning and teaching and partial success.

Section E: Main points for action

- **the college should continue to improve successful completion rates for programmes where they are low**
- **college managers should ensure that staff evaluate learning and teaching effectively and systematically to inform improvements in their practice.**
- **college managers should continue to develop quality arrangements which support all staff to focus effectively on planning for improvement.**

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?

Overall, early withdrawal rates are around national performance level and have improved over the last three years. Further withdrawal rates have also improved overall in the last three years and are now three percentage points better than national performance for Higher Education (HE) programmes and part-time Further Education (FE) programmes. However, further withdrawal rates have increased in full-time FE programmes and are now worse than the national performance level.

The number of learners who successfully complete their full-time programme has fluctuated over the last three years and now sits in line with the national performance level for both FE and HE. The number of learners who complete their programme with partial success is in line with national sector performance levels.

The number of learners who successfully complete their part-time programme has fluctuated over the last three years and remains below national sector performance levels. In 2014-15 74% of learners on part-time FE programmes completed their programme successfully which is 2 percentage points below the national sector performance. A further 22% completed with partial success. In part-time HE programmes, 74% of learners completed their programme successfully which is 4 percentage points below the national sector performance level. A further 21% completed with partial success.

Almost all learners whose destinations are known, progress to further study, modern apprenticeships, or employment.

How well does the college adhere to its statutory principles?

College arrangements for safeguarding and the protection of young people and vulnerable groups are comprehensive and well developed. Staff have a good awareness of procedures and understand their responsibilities. Almost all staff have undergone training to update their knowledge of this area. Relevant staff have completed Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme membership or are in the process of undergoing PVG checks. The college *safeguarding team* ensures that the development of arrangements to ensure the college meets its duties in relation to *PREVENT* and Corporate Parenting are managed and implemented well. Membership of the team includes senior managers and staff from key functional areas of the college.

Building on existing safeguarding arrangements, staff are responding appropriately to *PREVENT* legislation. The *safeguarding team* is reviewing and updating relevant policies and arranging staff awareness raising and training activities. This includes a Workshop to Raise Awareness of *PREVENT* (WRAP) training for key staff delivered by Police Scotland. Almost all staff have undergone recent staff development in relation to *PREVENT* and have a good awareness of their responsibilities in this area. Students' Association office bearers have also participated in training.

Staff are making effective use of experience gained through achieving the *Buttle UK Quality Mark* for care leavers to meet its obligations with regard to Corporate Parenting. College managers are working closely with West Lothian Council and other partners to develop the college Corporate Parenting Plan which is due to be in place by April 2016. The college is working with the local authority to review its shared services agreement in relation to Information and Communications Technology (ICT) services to align online safety arrangements in accordance with *PREVENT* guidelines. A programme of staff awareness raising events in relation to Corporate Parenting has commenced.

How well do programmes and services meet learner needs?

The college offers a wide range of well-planned programmes at appropriate levels and modes of delivery. These programmes meet the needs of learners, the local community and employers well. Programmes provide suitable exit points into employment or progression to further study. The college responds quickly to local and national priorities, including the early adoption of the Skills Development Scotland (SDS) Foundation Apprenticeships. Curriculum planning is aligned with West Lothian Community Partnership's Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2023 to improve the regional employment position and positive destinations of young people.

School-college programmes are planned well with local authority partners and take good account of employer and economic need. The *Timetabling and Senior-phase Attainment Raising (TASAR)* group ensures planning for school college provision is effectively aligned with Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), STEM and Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) priorities. College SDS Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programmes are planned and delivered very effectively and rates of successful completion are significantly above the sector average. The college has effective feedback mechanisms in place to ensure MA programmes meet the needs of both apprentices and employers.

The majority of courses include meaningful work-based experiences which help to prepare learners for employment. These include work-placements, input from guest speakers from industry, visits to work places and volunteering opportunities. Almost all learners on care programmes have completed a volunteering placement to develop citizenship and skills for employability. Almost all teaching staff make good use of their strong links with employers to embed skills for employability within programme design. On programmes which include a work experience, *Employment Engagement Officers* take care to match students to suitable work placements.

The college has formal articulation arrangements in place with a number of universities and colleges. These include a partnership agreement with Edinburgh College, Edinburgh Napier University and Queen Margaret University which supports articulation through a guaranteed places scheme and 'associate student' status for college learners. These arrangements encourage and support learners well to progress to degree level study.

Almost all learners are satisfied with the services provided by the college and information they receive prior to starting their programme.

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

Most learners make good progress during their programme of study and gain useful skills that enable them to progress to employment or further learning. The majority of learners successfully complete their programme and gain nationally recognised awards. In some programme areas, learners gain additional industry-relevant certification which enhances their employment prospects.

In some subject areas, successful completion rates of learners are high and in line with the best performing colleges. These include part-time programmes in care, and business, management and administration, and full-time programmes in science and social subjects. However, successful completion rates for some full-time programmes are low, including business management, travel and tourism and social sciences. Successful completion rates for part-time programmes in a number of curriculum areas are low. These include part-time construction, engineering, art and design, and sport and leisure. In these areas too many learners complete their programme with partial success and do not achieve the full award.

Levels of successful attainment in core skills subjects has declined overall in the last three years. In 2014-15, attainment rates in ICT and numeracy at SCQF levels 4 to 6 are above national sector performance levels. However, attainment in communications at SCQF levels 5 and 6 is below national sector performance levels. College managers have recognised the need to improve core skills attainment and have recently reviewed and restructured arrangements for the delivery of core skills provision. It is too early to evaluate the impact of these changes.

In some programme areas learners participate in national and local competitions and are successful in achieving awards. For example, almost all hairdressing and beauty learners participate in competitions, which helps to develop learner confidence. *Centre heads* work closely with *Employer Engagement Officers* to provide opportunities for learners to extend their knowledge of the workplace through employer fairs and projects.

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?

The college offers and delivers a wide range of programmes to meet a diverse range of learner needs. A strong and positive college ethos of inclusion and equality is embedded within most programmes. Most teaching staff manage and facilitate the positive promotion of equality and diversity well within individual lessons. Programme teams take good account of the recommendations contained in Developing the Young Workforce - Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy to ensure employability skills are promoted and enhanced. The college works closely with West Lothian Council to develop and provide opportunities for school learners in the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence. This has resulted in an extensive range of school partnership provision including Foundation Apprenticeships and Scottish Qualifications Authority Higher National Certificates.

Across a number of curriculum areas, work experience and volunteering placements are helping learners to develop wider skills and prepare for employment. However, this is not yet available in all areas. The college promotes volunteering opportunities to the wider learner population and works well with SDS and local employers to promote job opportunities. Teaching and support staff work collaboratively to respond to meeting the additional support needs of learners, particularly for those with learning difficulties. They routinely adjust arrangements and approaches to meet individual learning needs.

How well do learners learn?

Almost all learners participate purposefully in a wide range of learning activities. These activities help learners to develop useful personal and vocational skills that prepare them for further study or employment. Most learners are well motivated and work confidently in groups and support each other well. Many learners contribute constructively to classroom discussions, often relating their work experience to the topic of the lesson.

Most learners use a range of resources including ICT, effectively, safely and with confidence to develop their skills and knowledge. In practical classes, learners use equipment competently and enjoy inter-active learning activities. However, within more than a few theory classes some learners do not engage fully in lessons. In the majority of curriculum areas, many learners use resources on the virtual learning environment (VLE) independently at times which are convenient to their personal circumstances.

The majority of learners draw on class activities and independent study to reflect on their progress and identify actions to enhance attainment. In many classes, learners make good use of peer learning to assess progress and evaluate individual or group performance. Learners make good progress, producing high quality work and develop a range of appropriate academic and vocational skills. The majority of learners improve confidence through working at their own pace to develop and apply new skills.

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

Almost all programmes are well-planned and well-resourced. Most teaching staff plan lessons well and incorporate an emphasis on developing vocational and employability skills. They take good account of individual learner needs and prior learning achievements. Most staff draw on their own experience and input from industry representatives and former learners to promote industry standards and professionalism. Staff regularly convey their experience of industry and examples from the workplace to make lessons more meaningful and engaging for learners. Learners value these approaches to prepare for employment or further learning.

All programmes incorporate development of core skills. In some core skills classes, learners engage well in learning activities. However, in more than a few classes, activities are not sufficiently interesting to engage all learners and not contextualised appropriately to take account of vocational requirements. In theory classes, more than a few teaching staff do not use a sufficiently wide range of teaching approaches to make lessons interesting and engage learners fully. Although ICT is available in almost all classrooms, many teaching staff do not make sufficient use of technology and the VLE to enhance and support learning.

The college provides a high-quality learning environment. Classrooms and practical areas are bright, well-furnished and equipped with industry-standard resources which motivate and support learners to engage in learning. Positive and mutually respectful relationships between learners and staff contribute to a relaxed and purposeful environment for learning and promote learner confidence and self-esteem. Teaching staff set high standards and expectations for learners and encourage them to continue their learning independently outwith classes.

How well is assessment used to promote effective learning?

Most teaching staff plan assessment schedules well and negotiate the timing of assessments flexibly to support learners. They ensure learners are well informed about assessment criteria and requirements. Most teaching staff give learners constructive and helpful written and oral feedback on assessments. They encourage learners to use feedback to reflect on their progress and further improve the standard of work.

Teaching staff make good use of assessment to promote learning during class activities. In the majority of classes, teaching staff use questioning techniques effectively to check learner understanding and provide instant feedback on what they have to do to improve or extend their knowledge. Teaching staff provide feedback regularly to individual learners and groups to encourage learners and affirm achievements. In a few classes, staff use “voting buttons” to check learners’ knowledge and identify gaps, prior to formal final assessment. Learners in hairdressing use mobile devices well to create portfolios of evidence for assessment. They also use “before and after” pictures effectively to help them to reflect on their learning. There are suitable arrangements in place to support learners with additional support needs to engage in assessment processes and these work well overall.

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

Potential learners are provided with access to a good range of pre-entry information and advice available through the college website, prospectus, information days and guidance staff. Programme guides and case studies provide useful information on progression routes.

Central support services are accessible and provide a comprehensive range of effective and valued support for learners. Learners benefit from being able to access support when required, and know where and how to access the services available. Appointment and referral arrangements ensure learners receive helpful information and access to support. Course teams alert support services staff of learners who are at risk of leaving or partially completing. Support staff draw on this to engage with learners and arrange additional support where required. Learning support staff provide helpful assistance to individual learners within class groups and their contribution impacts positively on class activities. Overall, learners are well-supported throughout their college programmes.

Learners value the support and responsiveness of *Lead Tutors* and other staff in considering their learning and personal needs. Most learners have regular progress meetings with programme tutors to review individual progress and access curriculum and pastoral support. Staff use a range of activities to engage learners in setting goals and monitoring development of skills and wider achievement. However, arrangements for supporting learners to reflect on their progress and record wider achievement are not applied consistently by staff.

A number of *Homework Clubs* have been established across the college which provide useful support for learners in completing work and developing study skills. Summer schools have recently been introduced to provide pre-entry support in subjects such as mathematics. It is too early to assess the impact of these initiatives.

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

The views of learners and class representatives are used well by staff to inform programme team meetings and self-evaluation activities. These arrangements provide good opportunities for learners to influence and enhance the quality of the learning experience. In some programme teams, the views of employers are sought by staff to inform curriculum content.

Programme teams use a range of evidence within the *Annual Course Review* process to analyse and evaluate the quality of programme provision. However, most curriculum teams do not analyse and evaluate learning and teaching systematically. Action plans for improvement focus on practical or planning issues rather than learning and teaching approaches. Staff engage in informal discussions within and across programme teams to reflect on programme or learner performance. However, the outcomes of these discussions are not recorded systematically or linked appropriately to college self-evaluation reporting arrangements. As a result, action planning for improvement does not focus sufficiently on learning and teaching practice.

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?

The college's commitment to learner engagement is reflected within strategic plans. Current *Learning and Teaching, Learner Engagement and Quality Assurance and Enhancement* strategies are being reviewed to support staff to further develop opportunities for learners to enhance their own learning. In many curriculum areas learners personalise their learning through selecting topics for projects, participating in external visits and engaging in other learning activities. Many learners undertake optional units, for example food hygiene and first aid certification, to improve employment prospects. In addition to their main programmes of study, some learners on engineering and business programmes undertake a National Progression Award (NPA) in food and drink to widen their career options. These opportunities encourage and enable many learners to take responsibility for their own learning.

Class representatives communicate the views of their peers effectively and staff take positive action to address issues raised. Learners' views are sought routinely and used well by teaching staff to inform the evaluation of programmes. In many programmes this leads to improvements in the delivery of programmes, for example, in the scheduling of units and assessments and provision of additional resources. In a few programmes, learners have the opportunity to influence and shape learning and teaching approaches, including the use of the VLE, to enhance learning within and outwith formal class times. However, not all learners are made aware of opportunities to influence learning and teaching in the classroom. Almost all learners engage positively and constructively with staff and are confident in raising issues.

The majority of learners are supported well by staff to engage in personal development planning (PDP) activities to set learning goals, reflect on their progress and plan their next steps. Most learners value these opportunities to discuss their progress with staff.

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

The Students' Association is supported well by the college. The Students' Association Development Officer works well with the Student President and provides useful guidance which is helping to develop the college's approach to learner engagement. The Students' Association officers are represented well on key college committees including the Board, Learning and Teaching committee and a number of cross-college operational committees. They represent learners well and their contribution is valued and is influencing college strategy and operational activities. Almost all learners are aware of the Students' Association. However, learner awareness of its role and of the range of activities it supports is less well developed.

Almost all full-time programmes have a class representative, the majority of whom have undertaken training based on the work of Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (*sparqs*) and delivered by the Students' Association. Class representatives have benefitted from this training to carry out their role and represent learners effectively. They engage well at course team meetings and college-wide class representatives' meetings to influence improvements to college services and programmes. Learners

contribute their views through a variety of methods including learner surveys and involvement in quality processes. Actions taken by staff in response to issues raised are conveyed effectively to learners well through '*You Said We Delivered*' posters, displayed throughout the college.

The Students' Association organises a range of college-wide events and activities which support learners to enhance their citizenship and employability skills. Most learners make good use of work placements and volunteering opportunities to develop confidence and skills for learning, life and work. The *Volunteer Project Officer* is working well with the Students' Association to further promote national and international volunteering opportunities for learners. Many learners achieve more widely through participation in fund-raising events and community employment-related projects. There are many examples of learners promoting and raising awareness of the work of the college through participating in external and community-related projects. For example, learners on hospitality programmes assisted at a parliamentary dinner at Holyrood and the West Lothian Highland Games. Motor vehicle learners provide maintenance services to *FoodTrain*, a local social enterprise which seeks to enable older people to live independently.

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

The Principal and senior team work well together to align the college's strategic direction with national priorities. The Regional Outcome Agreement (ROA) 2014-17 contains clear objectives and targets for the college. Senior managers work well in partnership with *West Lothian Council* to align provision with the *West Lothian Single Outcome Agreement*. Over the past four years, through additional SFC funding, the college has increased its level of provision by around 25%. This growth has been focused on curriculum areas where there has been identified demand to increase the capacity of the college to meet local needs. The senior team has responded flexibly and quickly to manage and coordinate the increase in provision.

Working with a broad network of partners, the college responds well to government priorities for Post-16 education. Across the college staff engage well with initiatives related to DYW, *STEM* accreditation and developments to engage with employers in the planning and enhancement of programmes. Arrangements for curriculum planning are thorough and well-informed by labour market information. College managers are knowledgeable about targets within the *ROA* and draw productively on this to ensure targets for curriculum areas are well-linked to college targets.

The *Board of Governors* maintains an appropriate overview of college activity through a range of standing committees including the *Learning and Teaching* committee. Board members engage frequently with senior managers through involvement in college events and activities. The college works productively with *West Lothian Council* to operate a range of shared services including payroll, HR Systems and ICT maintenance.

In 2014, senior managers undertook a comprehensive review of college provision and delivery arrangements which resulted in the production of *Fit for 14/15 Delivery Plan*. College managers have built on the outcomes of *Fit for 14/15 Delivery Plan* to ensure policies and procedures place the interests of learners at the centre of college arrangements and developments. A subsequent restructuring exercise has helped to strengthen the leadership capacity for learning and teaching.

The increase in the number of curriculum centres from four to nine has resulted in increased collaboration and improved sharing of effective practice. Leadership for learning and teaching is distributed well across the college through enthusiastic and well-motivated *centre managers* and individual teaching staff. However, current strategies for learning and teaching and learner engagement do not provide sufficient direction to teaching staff with regard to college priorities. The college recognises this and strategies are currently being updated to ensure they convey expectations of managers and staff more clearly.

The Principal provides visible and effective leadership which is highly valued by staff across the college. The senior management team works well together and responsibilities are clearly defined and well-linked to support effective delivery of the curriculum. Staff engage well with senior managers and value the openness and support they provide. Communication is effective and all staff feel well-informed.

Staff enjoy their work in the college. The college's strong commitment to support staff to engage in continuing professional development (CPD) is valued highly by staff. New teaching staff undertake a programme of introduction to learning and teaching soon after joining the college and many progress to initial teaching qualifications within an appropriate timescale. New staff are supported well through informal buddying and mentoring approaches.

Services to support learners are effective and managed well. Collectively, support services staff have a clear focus on learners and the overall learning experience. Recent adjustments to the location and facilities for central support services have benefitted learners and increased the profile of support services across the college. Support services staff work well together and team working and collaboration with curriculum teams is developing well across the expanded number of *curriculum centres*.

The college has developed strong, effective partnerships with appropriate external agencies to provide learners with access to additional, specialist support when required. Recently introduced arrangements to support learners who have mental health issues have been particularly welcomed by learners. Support staff make good use of the annual review process to identify and discuss training and development needs. Many staff value the CPD opportunities they receive to further develop their skills within the college and externally.

All college staff are committed to enhancing the quality of provision and services for learners. Overall, *centre managers* and curriculum teams take good account of feedback from learners, stakeholders and employers to improve programme design and delivery arrangements. Curriculum teams work proactively to resolve issues and make improvements which benefit learners and enhance the college experience. Staff are engaging increasingly in self-evaluation activities. However, most curriculum teams do not analyse performance indicator data sufficiently to focus attention on key issues such as partial success. Overall, self-evaluation reports are not sufficiently evaluative and most do not identify clear actions for improvement. This limits the impact of self-evaluation on improving the learner experience and outcomes of learning.

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

The college works effectively with its partners. As a result, partnership working is strong and productive. Partnership arrangements with *West Lothian Council* are very effective and have led to a range of shared services. The college works productively with local secondary schools to provide opportunities for school-age learners. College managers participate actively in the local authority led *TASAR* initiative involving senior school staff and local authority representatives. Within this forum college staff work collaboratively to develop and plan curriculum opportunities for senior phase pupils in the area. The college works productively with *SDS* and other external stakeholders to take forward national priorities, particularly in relation to *DYW*, *STEM* initiatives and workforce development. The college works with *West Lothian Council* and *West Lothian Community Planning Partnership (CPP)* to plan and deliver provision and is an important contributor to education and training, economic development and community planning.

The college has developed very effective working relationships with many local employers. Employers engage well with the college and enhance the learning experience through providing work placements, contributing to projects and competitions and hosting visits to industry and workplaces. A joint venture with the local *Chamber of Commerce* enabled around thirty learners to take part in an initiative, *#getajob*, to gain wider experience of the world of work. Employers frequently visit the college to deliver presentations to learners on industry practices and employment opportunities. These partnership initiatives and arrangements are supporting learners well to develop skills for learning, life and work.

9. 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.

9.1 'Ways to Work': Improving outcomes for learners

In 2014/15, college staff identified that existing delivery models for the SDS *Employability Fund* programme were not providing a positive learning experience or supporting progression for many learners. Staff reviewed and revised the approach to learning and teaching, including timetabling and introduced '*Ways to Work*' as a rolling programme. Learners can join the programme at the start of any week and follow an 8 week course which incorporates a work placement. A *Placement Liaison Officer* was appointed to provide learners with access to comprehensive support services. Arrangements were made to involve employers more fully in the recruitment and selection of learners for work placements which commenced from the start of the course. Employers also provided feedback to learners about their progress in the workplace. Learners experience a variety of learning and teaching approaches including 'master classes' and practical sessions within a variety of curriculum areas. On successful completion, learners achieve the *Certificate of Work Readiness*. As a result of the changes made to the delivery model, there has been a significant increase in the number of learners successfully completing and progressing to a positive destination.

9.2 Internationalisation: Promoting Outbound Mobility For Students and Staff in Further Education

West Lothian College has developed a comprehensive programme of opportunities designed to enable learners and staff to participate in a range of learning projects within Europe and beyond. These projects are all designed to advance equality within the college whilst raising aspirations and broadening horizons.

The college identified opportunities and secured funding support from a range of providers including a local 'twinning' association. The college used the funding to establish partnerships with European schools and colleges. For example, the '*Lifting Barriers*' project enables staff to visit Morocco and share skills for employability and workforce development with Moroccan partners.

The experiences are supporting learners and staff to travel, learn, and research in an overseas environment and to develop an awareness of other nations and cultures. This year, 72 learners, most of whom come from the most deprived SIMD data zones will undertake a two week study opportunity in a range of European countries through *Erasmus*

10. 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.

11. 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.

Scott Anderson
HM Inspector

12. 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 -

<http://www.west-lothian.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

13. 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/WestLothianCollege.asp> . If you would like to receive this report in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on 0131 244 5684.

If you want to give us feedback or make a complaint about our work, please contact us by telephone on 0131 244 4330, 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.

[Readability Survey](#)

Alternatively if you are reading this report in hard copy please type the following address into your web browser.

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/FEReadabilitysurvey130612_tcm4-719342.doc

Crown Copyright 2016.
Education Scotland

Appendix 1

Glossary of terms

CfE	Curriculum for Excellence
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPP	Community Planning Partnership
DYW	Developing the Young Workforce
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HNC	Higher National Certificate
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
MA	Modern Apprenticeship
NPA	National Progression Award
PDP	Personal Development Planning
PVG	Protection of Vulnerable Groups
ROA	Regional Outcome Agreement
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SDS	Skills Development Scotland
SFC	Scottish Funding Council
sparqs	Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TASAR	Timetabling and Senior-phase Attainment
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment
WRAP	Workshop to Raise Awareness of <i>PREVENT</i>
wSUM	weighted Student Unit of Measurement

Appendix 2

THE SCOTTISH CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

This Framework diagram has been produced to show the mainstream Scottish qualifications already credit rated by SQA and HEIs. However, there are a diverse number of learning programmes on the Framework, which, due to the limitations of this format, cannot be represented here. For more information, please visit the SCQF website at www.sqf.org.uk to view the interactive version of the Framework or search the Database.



SCQF Levels	SQA Qualifications		Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	SVQs/MAs	
12	Some SQA qualifications are changing between 2013-2016. See www.sqa.org.uk/readyreckoner			Professional Apprenticeship	
11				Masters Degree, Integrated Masters Degree, Post Graduate Diploma, Post Graduate Certificate	Professional Apprenticeship SVQ 5
10				Honours Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Professional Apprenticeship
9			Professional Development Award	Bachelors / Ordinary Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Technical Apprenticeship SVQ 4
8		Higher National Diploma		Technical Apprenticeship SVQ 4	
7	Advanced Higher Scottish Baccalaureate	Higher National Certificate		Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 3	
6	Higher			Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 3	
5	National 5 Intermediate 2			Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 2	
4	National 4 Intermediate 1	National Certificate	National Progression Award	SVQ 1	
3	National 3 Access 3				
2	National 2 Access 2				
1	National 1 Access 1				