



# **Annual Report on Institution-Led Review of Quality 2014-2015**

## 1. Summary of Outcomes of Principal Quality Improvement and Enhancement Activities

1.1 Newbattle Abbey College's annual cycle of self-evaluation activities involves the Senior Management Team, Board of Directors, all college teams and committees, students and a range of external stakeholders. The cycle for 2014-2015 is included in Appendix 1. In addition, the college was involved in external verification visits from SQA in relation to the following in 2014-15:

- HNC Social Sciences
- Systems Verification
- NC Celtic Studies
- Celtic Studies Access to HE

All of the above enhanced the college's focus on quality. The key elements of our quality programme for 2014-15 have been detailed below.

1.2 2014-15 was a period of significant expansion in the college's portfolio of course. We offered 6 full-time courses and 1 part-time course, as detailed below:

- 1 year full-time Access to Higher Education: Arts & Humanities
- 1 year full-time Access to HE/NC Celtic Studies
- 1 year full-time HNC Social Sciences - Associate Student Programme with Queen Margaret University (QMU)
- 1 year full-time NC Rural Skills
- 6 month full-time Preparation for FE Course
- 16 week full-time NC Rural Skills, in partnership with Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)
- 1 year part-time NC Rural Skills

In addition, the college offered short courses in Gaelic language at Newbattle and in Edinburgh, in partnership with City of Edinburgh Council. The evaluation of these courses involved students, college staff and partner organisations. In particular, the planning and delivery of the HNC Social Sciences course extended the college's self-evaluation procedures in partnership with QMU. The evaluation of this course was extremely positive. This collaborative approach to quality improvement also provided a valuable CPD opportunity for Newbattle staff.

1.3 Two cross-college Quality Days were held in October 2014 and March 2015. These events involved staff in all college teams. The October 2014 programme included: reviewing progress with the College Outcome Agreement and Operational Plan; preparing a progress report related to the Education Scotland Review; preparing for curriculum developments; updating staff on equality and diversity legislation; reviewing self-evaluation action plans; responding to the additional support needs of our students. The March 2015 programme included: updating staff on the Education Scotland Annual Engagement Visit Report; reviewing the 2014-15 Operational Plan; reviewing self-evaluation; reviewing student attendance in all courses and

preparing an action plan; revising the 2015 induction programme, updating staff on the 2015 Education Scotland Review. Reports of both events were issued to staff. Team Leaders reviewed action plans, which were overseen by the Depute Principal.

- 1.4 An additional Quality Day was arranged in June 2015 for the Learning and Teaching and Admin Teams. This focused on the Annual Course Review and preparing for new course delivery in 2015-16. All teams were involved in evaluating progress in relation to the Operational Plan and Outcome Agreement.
- 1.5 Throughout 2014-15, self-evaluation was extended across the college, as noted below:
  - All college short courses were evaluated with students and partners.
  - All aspects of the Rural Skills Programme were evaluated with students and partners: 'taster' courses; f/t Rural Skills; p/t NC Rural Skills
  - Major college events, including the launch of the Adult Achievement Awards in May 2015 and 'Christmas at Newbattle' in November 2014, were evaluated.
  - Client evaluation of training, conference and commercial activities was undertaken and related action plans produced. The positive evaluation of the college's International Summer School run by OSCARS, led to the development of additional off season courses at Newbattle.
  - A joint review of the Preparation for FE Course, delivered in partnership with Midlothian Council, was undertaken. The result in course restructuring and improved options for students. The majority of students progressed to the full-time Access to HE: Arts and Humanities Course.
  - Newbattle reviewed all aspects of its marketing of the curriculum and commercial activities. Students were involved in evaluating course publicity. The use of social media extended as a result in 2014-15.
- 1.6 In consultation with the Equality Committee, the SMT continued to involve a consultant to assist in conducting Impact Assessments of a range of college policies relating to equality and diversity. This resulted in the enhanced promotion of equality and diversity in the curriculum, in several policies and in cross-college practices. The involvement of students in this process was extended in February 2015 in class-based activities. In addition, the college website, all course information and all promotional material were reviewed and updated in line with equality legislation.
- 1.7 The Learning and Teaching Team continued to make progress in 2014-15 in enhancing the quality and impact of self-evaluation procedures:
  - Admissions and recruitment procedures were further refined, in consultation with students and stakeholders. The Student Induction programme for 2015 was also amended in response to student evaluation. Student interview packs and forms were reviewed. This improved consistency, enhanced early identification of additional support needs, extended flexibility for learners and augmented pre course support. This resulted in earlier diagnosis of

student issues, additional support in core skills and an external counselling service. Additional Taster Weekends were introduced to improve recruitment and retention. In addition, earlier intervention in relation to student attendance and disciplinary issues was established to improve student retention and attainment. This had a positive impact in all courses. Despite this, several students on the Arts & Humanities Course experienced significant difficulties relating to mental health, financial issues and family problems and could not complete the programme.

- Mid Unit Evaluations and Student Focus Groups for all courses were arranged in November 2014. This resulted in effective action plans, monitored by students and staff. While this was valuable, the Learning & Teaching Team agreed to start this process from September 2015, with earlier student evaluation of learning & teaching.
  - Formal feedback sessions were held in January 2015 with all students to report on progress made in relation to the issues students had raised about their college experience. In September 2013, a state of the art ICT system was established at Newbattle. This has enhanced the quality of provision for all students, staff and corporate clients. Teaching staff have also benefitted from training in the use of Smartboards and interactive technology. Some issues remained in 2014-2015, however, in relation to ICT services. The college has responded to these by recruiting an ICT Support Co-ordinator, based at Newbattle. Despite this, technical problems with the use and accessibility of ICT continued in 2014-15 and affected learning & teaching and admin systems.
  - Staff participated in professional development sessions led by Education Scotland on Curriculum for Excellence, raising attainment and equalities. Additional ESOL support was also provided for students throughout 2014-15.
  - The Learning & Teaching Team Action Plans focused on PIs, case study analysis of student progress and sharing good practice within the outwith college. This resulted in additional support for students in language, ICT and Maths at an earlier stage in the first semester. The team also extended support in relation to mental health issues and Mindfulness for students and staff.
  - All students studying the NC Rural Skills Courses were involved in evaluation throughout 2014-15. This proved generally very positive. Rural Skills students studying short courses were also involved in evaluation. This included two formal presentations by students to Midlothian Social Work Department, which supports a Rural Skills course for adult offenders. Following evaluation from students in all courses, the Student Common Room was refurbished and improved facilities established for non-residential students. The Rural Skills Base was also refurbished.
- 1.8 Newbattle chairs the Midlothian Adult Learning Partnership (MALP) and was involved with partners in evaluating its progress, as attached at 2.5 below.

## 2. Good Practice

2.1 In response to the 2005 Gaelic Language Act, the college has extended the role of Gaelic language and culture in the curriculum and in the life of the college. With additional funding from the Gaelic Language Act Implementation Fund (GLAIF), Newbattle is developing a Gaelic Plan, which has extended Gaelic in the college website, publicity and correspondence. Newbattle also strengthened partnerships at national and local level in 2014-15. The college is represented on the National Gaelic Education Strategy Group and on City of Edinburgh Council's Gaelic Implementation Group. This has resulted in additional courses for parents of children in Gaelic Medium Education in Edinburgh. The evaluation of these courses has been positive. The college also runs workplace learning Gaelic classes for Newbattle staff and students. Partnership with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig also resulted in residential courses in Skye for our Celtic Studies students to enhance their Gaelic language. This was offered in response to requests from new Gaelic language learners.

2.2 In June 2015, a Board Development Day was arranged to consider:

- the 2014-16 Strategic Plan
- the 'Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges' and its implications for the college Board of Directors
- opportunities for developing the college estate
- the respective roles of the Trustees and the Board in achieving these aspirations
- national pay bargaining proposals

An action plan was produced following this successful event.

2.3 Newbattle continued to offer individual and group guidance support to all students, despite the increasing complexities of the timetable. Student issues were identified early and sustained support was offered. This included 1:1 mentoring for vulnerable students, Mindfulness, counselling and group support. In 2014-15, several students had extensive needs, including mental health issues.

2.4 In 2014-15, Newbattle continued to play a major role in developing a national strategy for adult learning. Newbattle is an active member of the National Strategic Forum for Adult Learning and was asked by Education Scotland and SCQF to develop National Adult Achievement Awards, which were submitted to Edinburgh Napier University in December 2014. Newbattle is the national accreditation body for this award and is now running 11 pilots across Scotland. The credit-rating process enhanced the college's quality procedure. Through the delivery of an extensive training programme for the awards. The college also received valuable feedback on the quality of this national development.

2.5 MALP agreed a development plan for 2014-15 with SMART targets. These were evaluated by MALP colleagues. All were achieved. Among them were developing curriculum partnership for adult learners and improving local guidance information.

### **3 Role and Nature of Student Involvement**

- 3.1 Throughout 2014-15, all college teams involved students in the evaluation of all aspects of college life. This reflects the community approach to self-evaluation adopted by Newbattle. As well as evaluating Induction, students were also involved in Mid Unit, End of Unit and End of Course evaluations.
- 3.2 The Academic Team completed an audit of all learning and teaching resources and produced a related action plan in response to student suggestions. Learning and teaching issues, raised by students during Mid Unit Evaluations and in Focus Groups, were dealt with rapidly and progress was reported to all students in January 2015.
- Admin, Facilities and Housekeeping Teams conducted 360 degree evaluations of their services. This involved students, staff and external stakeholders and resulted in improved menus and enhanced facilities in the student residency.
  - The SRC played an active role in co-ordinating student views on a range of college issues and monitoring progress. This resulted in improving catering services, residency facilities, the Student Common Room and the Rural Skills Base.
  - To enhance student induction and promote equality and diversity, the college organised an International Evening in September 2014. This included cuisine from across the world. Students were involved in planning the event and participating in activities, which featured music, song and literature.
  - Students were represented on the Board of Directors, the Learning and Teaching Committee, the Health and Safety Committee and the Equalities Committee.
  - Students were involved in the launch of the Adult Achievement Awards in May 2015 at which the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning gave the keynote address.

### **4 Reflective Overview: Key Findings of the December 2014 Education Scotland Annual Engagement Visit (AEV)**

The report of the December 2014 AEV endorsed the progress made by the college but noted the need for the Learning & Teaching Team to continue to monitor attainment, achievement and student retention in all courses. These themes were discussed in the March 2015 Quality Day and related action plans were produced.

### **5 Plans for 2015-16**

Newbattle's Quality Programme for 2015-16 will be extended to include:

- a detailed analysis by the Learning & Teaching Team of the attainment and achievement of students in all courses and an action plan in response to issues identified
- extended opportunities for professional development in areas including co-operative learning and the use of interactive technology across the curriculum, supporting students with mental health issues and deaf awareness.
- greater involvement of partners and stakeholders in the evaluation of Newbattle's Outcome Agreement.

**Appendix 1**  
**Self-Evaluation Activities for Quality Assurance, Improvement and Enhancement**  
**Cycle of Self-Evaluation Activities 2014-2015**

