

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Holy Cross College  
Date of visit: 28 November 2006

This feedback contains brief findings from the annual assessment visit. It focuses on the themes explored during the visit and does not attempt to give a comprehensive overview of the college's performance.

### Achievement and standards

*(NB data from kite-marked software but currently un-validated)*

#### Learners' achievements in 2005/06

- Achievement and standards in 2005/06 continued to show an improving trend. The overall long course success rate increased from 90% in 2004/05 to 93% in 2005/06. The average points score per learner on GCE AS/A and VCE courses, where there are most learners, increased from 355 in 2004/05 to 375 in 2005/06. The average points score per entry also increased from 79 in 2004/05 to 83.2 in 2005/06. Pass rates and the proportion of learners gaining high grades on level 3 courses also continued to show rising trends. The percentage of learners gaining grades A and B has risen from 41% in 2002/03 to 54% in 2005/06. Overall success rates for both learners aged 16-18 and adults on level two courses in 2005/06 were above the national averages for 2004/05. Retention rates for both groups of learners were high in 2005/06 and above the national rates for 2004/05.

Has the improvement in the value added profile seen at last year's annual assessment visit (AAV) been sustained and built on, and what progress has made in improving value added scores in those few departments where they were low?

- Value added scores in 2005/06 continued to show a pattern of improvement, which now extends over 4 years. On AS courses learners make better progress than that expected, based on their entry attainment, and many make very high levels of progress. On A level courses learners' overall value added score is better than average and this demonstrates that most learners make at least the progress expected of them. There are now very few subjects that have low value added scores. Of the 13 subjects identified as having low value added scores in 2004/05 there is now only one where learners do not

make the progress expected, and comprehensive plans are in place to resolve this issue.

## Quality of education and training

The quality of student support was judged outstanding in the last inspection and in the 2004/05 self-assessment report (SAR). What actions are being taken to ensure it remains at this level and how has the college monitored progress in this area?

- The college gives student services a very high priority and highly experienced staff are employed as senior tutors. The pastoral log, an electronic means of monitoring all aspects of learners' progress, is well used and constantly being evolved to help in target setting and improving learners' achievements. The service is responsive to learner feedback, for example upgrading the access for learners to counselling services, and continually reviewing its practice to see where improvements can be made. Recently this has led to a link with the local primary care trust to provide sessions on a range of health issues for learners. The college also places a strong emphasis on parental involvement and attendance levels at parental events are very high. Parents are supplied with detailed information to show what will be expected of their child and the progress their child is making.
- Progress in the area of student support is monitored by a variety of means. A thorough evaluation of any issues which have arisen is carried out at the end of every year. Tutorials are observed as part of the teaching and learning observation process. Learners are surveyed at the end of induction and at the end of the year to get their feedback and there are also learner focus groups. In addition to these measures pastoral services also carry out effective regular monitoring and reviewing procedures as part of the overall quality assurance and self-assessment framework of the college.

Additional learning support is judged to be good in the 2004/05 SAR, whereas the majority of cross-college areas are judged outstanding. What strategies are being used to bring it up to the same high level as other areas?

- Additional learning support staff have analysed performance and implemented focussed strategies to address the few areas where it was felt there needed to be improvements. The college has extended the initial diagnostic assessments for learners to cover free-writing, which has helped to more accurately identify those learners who need literacy support, and has increased staff expertise in numeracy support, to better assist those learners with needs in this area.
- The service has promoted its image as an area of support for all, and broadened its offer, and there are now more learner self referrals. Criteria for monitoring attendance have been strengthened and learners have an initial interview to discuss their specific support needs to ensure each individual programme provides exactly what is needed. Early indications are that these measures are having a positive effect.

## Leadership and management

In considering the summary of self-assessment grades in the 2004/05 SAR, curriculum grades range from satisfactory to outstanding. What strategies are being employed to assist areas in moving up and in supporting those already with top grades in maintaining them?

- There is a rigorous self-assessment process, with a wide range of evidence used to support judgements. Curriculum leaders are highly skilled at analysing their areas and identifying particular aspects that need improvement. Specific strategies are then put in place to effectively address the issues. Examples of these are, increasing work with feeder schools to give prospective learners a clearer idea of the demands of subjects, developing resources to support aspects of courses where learners are having difficulties, and the more targeted use of support.

- Across the college there is a very strong focus on innovation and all areas are working to improve provision, with developments in teaching and learning seen as key. There are regular weekly meetings on teaching and learning and these are seen as very helpful in sharing good practice and discussing learner progress issues. The piloting of the online markbook is assisting in the focus on learner progress and its roll-out to learners is planned for the beginning of 2007. The wide range of support available to learners and the effective communication between academic and pastoral areas are highlighted as important factors in the improving learner and departmental progress and achievement.

Any themes from the pre-visit analysis not explored during the visit:

- None

Any other observations from the visit not identified in the pre-visit analysis:

- The college has made further progress in developing its accommodation and new catering facilities and student social areas have been developed since the last annual assessment visit.