

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Wigan and Leigh  
Date of visit: 18 October 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

#### Achievement and standards up to 2005

Data from the college performance report 2005 show that for 16-18 year olds overall success, retention and achievement rates for long courses were broadly in line with national averages. Overall success, retention and achievement rates improved between 2003 and 2005, but at a similar rate to the improvement in national averages. For adults, overall success rates for long courses were similar to national averages, retention rates were high and achievement rates were low. The 2005 achievement rate was particularly low for long level 1 courses. Short course success rates for adults were similar to national averages for courses of up to 5 weeks length, and above national averages for courses of 5 weeks and longer.

#### What do the data for 2006 show about outcomes for students?

- At the time of the annual assessment visit the 2006 data on the college management information system was not completely up to date. The available data suggest that for 16-18 year olds success, retention and achievement rates remain similar to the most recent national averages available (2005).
- The available data for 2006 for adults suggest that overall retention rates for long courses continue to be high. As many student achievements had not yet been included in the data, it was not possible to make a judgement about achievement and success rates in 2006.

#### What do the most recent work-based learning (WBL) data show?

- The college uses the recognised software package to calculate its achievement data based on the same data submitted to the LSC via the ILR. These data differ from those shown on the LSC Gateway. It would be expected that there would be some variation, as the gateway QSR has input only up to P12 for 2005/06, whereas the college data includes subsequent input. The differences however are greater than would be expected. Moreover the PPR data for 2004/05, which has been signed off by the national LSC also differ from the college

version. The local LSC agrees with the college version. The gateway version indicates a rising trend converging with, but remaining below, national averages. The college version indicates a rising trend with data above the national average. During inspection preparation inspectors would use data drawn from the LSC gateway therefore college and local LSC and national LSC need to investigate the anomalies.

- Training Works, the college's training arm co-ordinates apprenticeships. NVQ only provision is now catered for in the relevant faculty/division as FE provision. Train to Gain is dealt with by the college's business development unit (BDU). Training Works and the BDU use a common employer data base but as they operate in different industry sectors there is no synergy in the use of assessors etc. An inspection of WBL would need to include the work of both divisions.

## Quality of education and training

What steps have been taken to further improve the quality of teaching and learning?

- The college student survey data show that, overall, students rate staff knowledge and helpfulness as good. The college internal lesson observation process has changed. The college now makes more use of external observers to improve objectivity. College observation data suggest the proportions of good or better, satisfactory and unsatisfactory lessons are similar to those typically found in general further education colleges. Action plans are drawn up to follow up areas for improvement identified through observations. All teachers are required to have, or to work towards, an appropriate teaching qualification. The selection process for new teachers includes an assessment of teaching skills. Staff development to improve the quality of teaching and learning has taken place. This has involved the use of advanced practitioners, staff development days, mechanisms for sharing good practice and external courses. There is now a greater emphasis on managers taking responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning in their own areas. For example, individual staff reviews are carried out following observations and appropriate action to improve teaching and learning agreed if necessary. The ongoing building and refurbishment work has improved the quality of many learning environments. The work is not yet complete, and some aspects of accommodation were unsatisfactory at the time of the annual assessment visit. Additional staff training in the use of information and communications technology (ICT) has taken place and there are more ICT facilities in the new accommodation. There are

plans to install electronic whiteboards. A new virtual learning environment (VLE) has been introduced and teachers are beginning to develop materials for it. Students report that access to computers outside lessons is often difficult.

What curriculum developments have taken place since the last self assessment report?

- The self assessment report identified a lack of full time provision below level 1 as an area for improvement. Some new pre-entry and entry level courses were introduced in 2005. There were increases in student numbers on several of these in 2006. Two new qualifications were also offered in 2006 and both recruited students successfully. The college reports that limited funding for additional learning support (ALS) for students prevents much greater expansion of provision.

How are partnerships/links with local high schools developing?

- Links with local high schools are developing in several ways. The Increased Flexibility Programme has helped to develop effective links with many local high schools. Some of these courses have resulted in good outcomes for students. For example, GCSE engineering had very good results in 2004 and 2005. Local deputy headteachers have been involved actively in revising the college curriculum for 14-16 year olds, and there is now a college 14-16 prospectus for the borough. All courses are accredited. Around 400 students aged 14-16 from local high schools attend college. The college contributes to the local 14-19 strategy. College staff are involved in several local 14-19 groups. The college vice-principal chairs three relevant local groups including one focusing on the new specialist diplomas.

What improvements have been made to tutorial provision for part time students?

- Group tutorial sessions are scheduled for early evenings on three sites' student services. Each session has a particular theme and a general advice section. Alternative contact routes and times are made available to individuals if required. In addition part-time hairdressing and beauty therapy provision is scheduled to start at 1800 hrs to allow for a half hour tutorial beforehand, which is used for portfolio building and target setting. Access courses also have a one hour tutorial session scheduled for each week. Particular topics on the rolling group tutorials have included sexual health and alcohol abuse. Resources for tutorials are uploaded onto the VLE.

What action has been taken to reconcile issues relating to strengths and weaknesses in additional learning support?

- Additional learning support is reported to be under funded for the level provided. The college is moving to a more targeted provision based on the findings at initial assessment. Additional learning needs are

recorded on the learner's individual learning plan (ILP). Support needs are recorded on the additional support plan. With the learners' approval there is then dialogue between themselves and vocational and support tutors. Lesson plans now have a column to record learning support and also record which preferred learning style each planned activity would suit. The new documentation was introduced in May 2006 with appropriate staff training and the use and impact is being monitored through the observation of teaching and learning. It is too early to judge the full impact.

## Leadership and management

How effective have the actions aimed at compliance with college policies by June 2006 been in achieving their objective?

- Business reviews are conducted three times per year. Staff are involved in the setting of targets and feel a greater sense of ownership. Authors review policies and procedures annually with recommendations for improvement. Internal audits planned for 2006/07 include quality assurance documentation and reflection on conformity to quality standards. Professional development for managers has led to greater involvement in change management.

What has been the impact of the high priority given to equality and diversity in the engagement of underrepresented groups and in actions to counter perceived obstacles to any particular group's achievements?

- The college has attempted to engage under-represented groups through targeted marketing. There has been an increase of female learners in construction from 2.7% to 3.8%. The college is involved in a programme to encourage women to join the transport industry. The proportion of people of black and minority ethnic heritage in Wigan is low; however, the college is monitoring the increasing numbers from European Union accession states, particularly those attending English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) programmes. ESOL students have been encouraged to attend taster sessions in the wider college provision. Students with disability and/or difficulty or health issues show better performance than those without – the college attributes this in part to the support given. Relative performance data is produced by gender.