

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Gateshead College  
Date of visit: 26 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

At levels 1 and 2 success rates on long courses for learners aged 16 to 18 and 19+ have improved over the last three years. Has this trend continued in 2006?

- The college has made good progress in maintaining these improving trends. Based upon the data for 2005/06 supplied by the college at the time of the AAV, success rates of learners aged 16 to 18 on long level 1 and 2 courses are expected to be around 5% above the 2004/05 national average for similar colleges. The rates for learners aged 19+ are predicted to be 12% above the 2004/05 national average for similar colleges at level 1 and 24% at level 2.

Success rates on long courses at level 3 improved in 2005 for learners aged 19+ and for those aged 16 to 18. The rate for learners aged 19+ was above the national average but for those aged 16-18 the rate was 10% below. Have these rates continued to improve in 2006?

- Good progress has been made in improving these rates. The college predicts that the 2005/06 success rates at level 3 on long courses for learners aged 16 to 18 will have improved by 5% to around the 2004/05 national average for similar colleges. For learners aged 19+ the rate is predicted to increase to 83% which is 24% above the 2004/05 national average.

Learners aged 19+ are more successful than those aged 16-18. What analysis has the college undertaken in relation to this and what action has been taken to address this issue?

- Detailed analysis to identify high and underperforming courses has been carried out and the results reported to the corporation academic standards committee. A range of appropriate strategies have been put in place to raise standards including: a programme of focussed teaching and learning observations; staff development designed to improve teaching and learning on level 3 courses and the review and

redesign of the curriculum to provide opportunities for accreditation at the end of the first year of two year courses. A team of twelve advanced practitioners are now well-established in their roles. They identify and share good practice and provide support for new teachers. Greater priority has been placed on providing additional support for learners as an integrated part of their main programme and the college promotes a strong culture of celebrating learners' achievements.

How does the college measure the progress learners make?

- The college is aware of the need to analyse and evaluate the progress made by learners at whole course and college level. Processes and systems for the use of individual learning plans (ILPs) are well-developed. Short and long-term targets are used to measure and challenge learner progress. Planned reviews of ILPs take place at individual tutorials, or reviews, where targets are amended as appropriate. Nissan employees have a detailed individual performance chart which is used to track their progress. On apprenticeship programmes employers are involved in progress reviews, which are used to plan future work-based activities.

Overall success rates for advanced apprentices were above national rates in 2004/05. In year data for 2005/06 indicates that whilst this has been maintained, overall success rates for advanced apprentices have declined. What action has the college taken to address this?

- New staff have been appointed to deliver and co-ordinate work-based learning. The curriculum offer has been reviewed and underperforming courses revised or withdrawn. A more detailed individual tracking document has been introduced to more closely monitor learner progress. Employers are now more fully involved in the review process and work-based activities are now more effectively planned to ensure learners can complete all aspects of their course. Key skills are now integrated into the learners programme and assessment takes place early in the programme.

Overall success rates for apprentices are improving and are broadly in line with national rates. This appears to have been maintained in 2005/06. What is the college doing to ensure that this continues?

- There is a strong emphasis on continuous improvement within work-based learning. All staff are set challenging targets, in particular with regard to retention and success rates. A new comprehensive two week induction programme has been introduced for all work-based

learners. New courses such as the first diploma in logistics have been introduced to meet identified learner and employer needs and interests.

Overall success rates for apprentices in construction (construction crafts skills and built environment), developing IT skills, hairdressing declined to 0% in 2004/05. In year data for 2005/06 indicates that success rates in these areas are improving. What has the college done to improve these success rates?

- A thorough review of work-based learning has been undertaken. Quality improvement processes have been reviewed and revised and the outcomes shared with all staff. Underperforming courses have been evaluated and appropriate actions taken to improve provision through the introduction of focussed staff targets, regular team meetings and through the revised quality improvement systems. Effective use has been made of examples of good practice to improve the monitoring and delivery of work based learning. Employers are now more fully involved in all aspects of the learners programme and receive good information on the progress they are making. Learner attendance is now monitored on a daily basis and absences followed up immediately. Persistent lateness is discussed with employers by telephone and at reviews.

Current data for 2005/06 indicates that overall success rates for advanced apprentices in Engineering have declined. Have the college identified this issue? What actions have been put in place to improve these success rates?

- The college is working closely with Nissan to improve the delivery of off-the-job-training. Recent developments include the relocation of Nissan training to the Motor Vehicle Centre of Excellence centre (ACE), enabling Nissan trainers and ACE tutors to work alongside each other to share best practice and improve teaching, learning and industry knowledge. Industry standard equipment is now accessible to all learners at the ACE centre and staff have had good training in the use of this equipment.

## Quality of education and training

How has the college's curriculum offer changed in the last year in response to local and national priorities?

- The college's curriculum offer has been extensively reviewed to ensure that it meets local and national priorities. New provision has been developed to meet the needs of learners aged 16 to 18 and

enrolments have increased over the last three years. The college has exceeded LSC enrolment targets for learners aged 16 to 18. Strong partnerships with a range of agencies have been used to develop new provision for adults. For example, the college is working with parents, carers and voluntary sector partners to provide courses for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities. Vocational courses for around 300 pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools are provided and the college is an active partner in Gateshead's 14 to 19 strategic developments.

## Leadership and management

Two curriculum areas and one cross college aspect of provision have been upgraded in the college self-assessment report (SAR) for 2004 to 2005. What process was used to validate these judgements and what evidence was used to support the process?

- Arrangements for validating and moderating grades awarded and judgments made through the college's self-assessment process are robust. Performance against targets set at course level are reviewed regularly by heads of department. End-of-year course reviews are aggregated into curriculum area reports that form the basis of the self-assessment report. Grades and judgements made are moderated internally between subject sector areas before final submission to a panel made up of external members, senior managers and governors. A good range of evidence is used to support the process including: learners' and employers' feedback; data on retention and achievement; the outcomes from the observation of teaching and reports from external verifiers.

The process for carrying out self-assessment has been reviewed and improved for the completion of the 2005/06 report to ensure that the procedure covers all the aspects of the CIF. What progress has the college made implementing its accommodation strategy?

- The college is making very good progress in the implementation of a major accommodation strategy. Phase 1, the Motor Vehicle Centre of Excellence (ACE) which is in the second year of operation, has continued to develop in partnership with Nissan. Up-to-date industry standard equipment and facilities have been introduced to the benefit of the increased number of learners enrolled on manufacturing courses at the centre. Phase 2, the Sports Academy which opened in the spring of 2006 was developed and is operated in partnership with the local authority and the English Institute of Sport. This development which is located on the site of Gateshead International Stadium provides outstanding facilities including, an indoor sprint track and athletics

training area, a sports science laboratory, a therapy area and extensive fitness and cardiovascular equipment. College learners studying at this centre benefit enormously from excellent links with employers such as Newcastle and Sunderland football clubs and Newcastle Falcons. Phase 3 of the accommodation strategy is a new build scheduled for completion in November 2007. It is located on a site close to the prestigious Gateshead riverside developments. This accommodation will re-house most of the remaining curriculum. The college is now working on plans for phase 4 which aims to provide for a construction academy developed in partnership with the LSC, the local authority and a consortium of training providers.

What arrangements has the college put in place to ensure that it meets the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda?

- A single central register has been created. All human resources staff have had appropriate training. A continuous programme of child protection training has been developed for college staff. An annual report relating to the issues of child protection and staying safe is presented to the governors. A designated governor with responsibility for child protection has been appointed. An ECM SAR has been completed. Plans are in place to integrate the key themes into the full SAR. Work experience checks include health, safety, welfare and equality opportunities. Employers are provided with good information on how to contact the college about any child protection concerns. Many learners receive good information on ECM themes through tutorials and learner services, although this is not consistent across the college. In the best lessons ECM themes are related to the learners' future career goals. Appropriate attention is paid to the specific support needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Arrangements for learners aged 14 to 16 include the appointment of a 14-16 learning mentor and clear, signed agreements with schools.

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:

- During the last year the college has gone through a period of major restructuring in response to changing national priorities and the need to continue to raise standards. The new structure has resulted in significant reductions in the staff budget. A new role of head of

department has placed levels of decision making and accountability closer to the learner. These managers have been well supported in taking on the new roles. Lines of communication are clearer and the new arrangements support the effective sharing of good practice between curriculum areas.