

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Leeds College of Art and Design

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

How is the college using data to help improve the proportion of high grades?

- Good progress is being made in identifying and monitoring high grade performance across the college. An analysis of reasons for why learners on some courses achieve higher than their expected grades, particularly at GCE A level, has been undertaken. As a result, progress tutorials which involve setting learners targets have been brought forward to the autumn term. In addition, aspects of the curriculum are being reviewed to ensure they continue to meet learners' needs. From this academic year all course reviews include a breakdown of grade achievement and broad, generic course targets for improved high grades have been included within course development plans. Distance-travelled and value-added measures are now considered and monitored regularly at strategic level, although specific whole college targets by which to measure progress have yet to be defined.

### Quality of education and training

How is the college developing and promoting the relevance of key skills for this academic year?

- The college has developed or enhanced a number of actions to improve key skills. Key skills have been re-branded and are now closely linked to the professional and personal development unit. A well designed project brief clearly links key skills to the learners' main qualification. Learners produce a wide range of key skills portfolio evidence that has direct relevance to their future progression. They value the flexible and responsive learning support now provided in the studio. Additional individual support is provided for learners who have specific learning support needs. It is, however, too soon to judge the impact of these actions on overall key skills achievements.

- Since September 2006 the poor key skills attendance patterns show signs of improvement. The academic support teams' use of the disciplinary procedure for non attendance is prompt and effective.

How well is the college taking forward the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda?

- The overall approach to ECM by the college remains good as does its promotion of inclusion. Learners speak highly of the vibrant and stimulating work ethos that enables them to develop their communication and presentation skills effectively. A culture of mutual respect has been fostered by staff and learners, giving many learners the confidence to work on their own initiative. The draft 2005/06 self-assessment report (SAR) provides a range of evidence to support its work against the five themes for young people and this is echoed within course reviews. However, specific judgments about how well the college is pursuing the ECM outcomes are not clear and lack sharp evaluation. Opportunities are missed to celebrate the wide range of work undertaken by the college.

## Leadership and management

At the last inspection a few areas of quality assurance were underdeveloped, including the sharing of good teaching practice. How is the college ensuring that all quality assurance is equally rigorous and that good practice is effectively shared?

- The college has introduced a wide number of changes that have direct relevance to improvements in the quality of provision. The observation of teaching and learning programme has been reviewed and clarified. The process is linked explicitly to appraisal and observation grades inform the frequency of future observations. Developments have been informed by internal and external feedback and a range of well attended staff training events. Evaluation of the lesson observation process generated a rich base of ideas for further improvement. The college is in the process of developing more staff to work as observers using a balance of external coaching and internal peer mentoring. Work to enhance sharing of good practice through, for example, peer observations is integral to these developments but it is too soon to judge the impact of this.
- At the last inspection, weaknesses in the completion of tutorial records were noted. Action points were not always specific enough. This has improved. Tutorial records are now linked to specific assessment criteria for the unit under review. Learners have a clear record of which aspects of the unit have been met satisfactorily and which need further work. Some tutors provide helpful feedback about the further improvement of work that just

meets the minimum unit requirements. The observation of teaching and learning programme does not currently include tutorials.

- Evaluation of the impact of student support has begun. Student numbers are relatively small, but early data on this indicates that support improves performance. For example, five of the seven advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) learners receiving additional learning support improved their predicted grade. All 11 of the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) learners who received additional learning support passed the qualification. Seven of them achieved a merit or distinction. These achievements compare well with GNVQ learners who did not receive additional learning support.
- The college has enhanced the collection of feedback from learners through the use of student focus groups. A strategic development day was followed up by an external academic who reviewed the learner experience using a well structured questionnaire. Interviews with current and past learners produced detailed qualitative data on the student perspective about what the college does well and what could be improved.
- The internal verification process has been completely revised and standardised. Internal verification meetings are used to check that documents are fully completed.
- The college is in the process of developing a new approach to lesson planning. The revised lesson plan intends to reduce duplication of activity from the planning process and improve the thoroughness of completion by providing helpful guidance, for example about differentiation and lesson evaluation. The new lesson plan is currently at pilot stage before a full evaluation and college-wide implementation.

At what stage is the college's own self-assessment report (SAR) for 2005/06 and what improvements, if any, have been made to the self-assessment process?

- A more user-friendly and focused document has been drafted for 2005/06 which draws on a range of full- and part-time course evaluations. Course reviews now embrace the evaluation of learners' high grades and reflect on ECM themes. Clear targets are set for retention, achievement, success and attendance.
- Overall quality assurance procedures continue to be comprehensive. The draft quality improvement plan which accompanies the SAR identifies a range of direct actions to address areas for improvement. Specific outcomes by

which to measure progress against these actions are in the process of being quantified.

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

- Investment in accommodation and resources across the college continues. Work on the impressive new college building at Blenheim Walk is virtually complete and plans to ensure learners have access from January 2007 are on schedule. Careful consideration has been given in the buildings planning stages to ensure the most appropriate studio and workshop space meets all learners' needs.
- A wide range of high quality specialist art and design resources are available to learners. Further work is underway across the college's sites in accordance with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, such as improving signage. Toilets at the Vernon Street building have undergone major refurbishment, gaining a smart and contemporary design.