

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Herefordshire College of Art and Design  
Date of visit: 13 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

#### Success rates on long courses

- Success rates have generally improved between 2002 and 2005. Rates for learners aged 16 to 18 are well above the national average. For learners aged 19+ rates improved significantly to well above the national average in 2003/04 but in 2004/05 the overall rate was closer to average. Early indications from data for 2005/06 suggest that overall performance will be similar to 2004/05. However, data show, at course level, a decline in success rates for eight main courses, resulting in three falling below the national rate. This decline is mainly as a result of low retention, an area where the college recognises it needs to intensify its efforts to ensure learners complete their courses. Current retention rates for two year courses due to complete in 2006/07 generally show improvement, especially at level 3.
- The college does not currently analyse the performance of different groups of learners, although it plans to do so in this academic year. The number of learners from minority ethnic groups is less than twenty, a very small percentage of total learner numbers. Up to 2003/04 there has been little difference between the performance of male and female learners but in 2004/05 male learners aged 19+ performed less well than females.
- Targets set for success rates in 2005/06 have proved to be over optimistic. In most cases the college has not met these but is shortly to set targets for 2006/07 based on a more complex but more reasonable rationale.

#### Development of the use of value added data

- The college is still at a very early stage in its use and evaluation of value added data. Several key staff have attended training and some dissemination has taken place. The college collects a considerable amount of data about each learner on entry to the college but as yet does not use this to predict a minimum grade or measure performance against potential.

### Success rates on key skills qualifications

- The overall success rate for key skills is above the national average and has been so for several years. This success rate is mainly attributable to high levels of success in wider key skills at level 3. For other key skill subjects performance is more mixed, with very few passes in application of number. Success rates vary widely between programme areas. In performing arts, success in communications at level 3 is lower than average but on the art and design foundation diploma course nearly half of the learners achieve this qualification.

### Attendance levels and punctuality

- Attendance and punctuality are much improved as a result of successful actions taken across the college. The level of attendance in 2005/06 was 88% compared to 80% in the previous year. Punctuality has also improved markedly, partly as a result of the introduction of a 15 minute registration period at the start of each day.

### Quality of education and training

#### Improvements to key skills provision

- The college's policy for key skills provision has yet to be formalised resulting in inconsistency in approach across teaching teams. Most focus is placed on achieving wider key skills, where success rates are above average. However, ensuring that all learners improve their basic skills, where a need is identified through initial assessment, is not yet a strong feature of the college's work. Support can be accessed on a voluntary basis through the college's learning support team and the college has aligned timetables with those of the adjacent sixth form college to allow learners to retake GCSEs in mathematics or English.

#### Educational and social inclusion

- The college now evaluates this aspect of its work through self assessment and provisionally grades this as good. There is plenty of evidence of the college's work to widen participation and it has established provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Since the last inspection, access to teaching areas for learners with limited mobility has improved significantly. An implementation plan for the college's race equality policy exists but monitoring arrangements are not yet formalised or recorded.

## Leadership and management

### Actions to support learners 'at risk'

- There are a range of measures in place to support learners at risk of underperformance or withdrawal. Many of these are becoming more effective as demonstrated by improved 'in-year' retention rates in 2006/07 and positive feedback from learners. However, retention rates remain an area for improvement.

### Quality assurance of teaching and learning

- A newly introduced scheme for annual observations of all teachers is not yet producing a robust measure of the quality of lessons. It lacks a moderation process and procedures to support and develop teachers following observation remain too informal. Plans are in hand to make the much needed improvements to this scheme in the current academic year. A department review procedure is still used in addition to the scheme and produces a detailed evidence base including an assessment of the quality of teaching and learning but does not happen for all departments on an annual basis.

### Progress with 2005/06 self assessment report (SAR)

- A draft SAR was produced in November 2006 and will be presented to the senior managers and the governors for approval in December. Much of the draft report is too descriptive. Provisional grades and judgements are often insufficiently supported by evidence and often imprecise or overstated in terms of strengths.

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

- The college has worked hard to meet the requirements of the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda and now evaluates its progress as part of self assessment. Learners show a good awareness of provision made by the college to encourage them to adopt the ECM themes.