

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Herefordshire College of Technology  
Date of visit: 27 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 in 2005/06 for long courses, key skills and work-based learning

- College data for learners' results in 2005/06 are very nearly complete and some detailed analysis has taken place to inform the college's self assessment.
- Success rates for learners aged 16 – 18 have improved at level 1 and level 3, but remain a little below the 2004/05 national averages. Success rates in 2005/06 at level 2 are similar to the previous year and are well above the national average. Pass rates have all improved and are good. Retention rates at level 1 and level 2 have declined slightly. These rates are in line with the national average at level 1 and above at level 2. At level 3, the retention rate has improved a little but remains below the national average.
- For learners aged 19+, success rates at all levels have declined. At level 1, the rate is now below the national average. Pass rates are broadly similar to the previous year, except at level 1 where the rate has fallen by 10 %. Retention rates have fallen compared to the previous year and are just below national averages.
- Careful analysis by the college of the factors that influenced the decline in retention show that several courses in SSA 6 and SSA 14 were set up inappropriately over too long a timescale and had very low success rates. In addition, in some areas, the curriculum was not well matched to learners' needs resulting in learners starting on inappropriate courses and failing to complete them. The college has improved its course set up arrangements considerably and has reviewed and amended the curriculum in the areas of concern. In addition, the college has reviewed the advice, guidance and information it gives to learners before they begin their courses.
- Performance on work-based learning courses shows much improvement by all measures. Data show a steady increase in overall framework success rates for apprenticeships and a significant improvement in timely success rates.
- Achievement of key skills qualifications is improving and some results for 2005/06 are very good. The approach taken by the college is working well and nearly all learners aged 16-18 gain accredited key skills qualifications.

However, most success is at level 1 and level 2 and very few learners gain level 3 skills, despite over a third of learners studying on level 3 courses.

#### Value added/distance travelled data

- Value added data for 2005/06 show scores that are generally in line with average, although several qualifications show negative scores. The score for national diplomas based on 41 achievers is negative, but not significantly so, mainly due to below average performance on the leisure and tourism diploma. The value added score on the national award in farriery is significantly above the national average based on 16 achievers.
- Training in the New Measures of Success (NMoS) is planned for senior managers and team leaders in February 2007, to focus appropriately on interpretation of data. Too little use is made of the information gathered about learners on entry, such as their average GCSE point score and initial assessment of their vocational ability, to measure the progress they make in relation to their potential.

#### Quality of education and training

##### Progress with the Skills for Life (SfL) strategy

- The strategy for SfL across the college remains under-developed; however, the college has recently appointed a SfL co-ordinator and allocated management responsibility for this area to a senior manager. The policy has not been updated and does not provide a sound basis for implementation. Despite some work to embed SfL into three curriculum areas, implementation across the college as a whole is slow. Plans to develop SfL champions to take this work further are in hand. A higher profile is given to SfL in self-assessment. However, staff have received insufficient guidance to support this initiative and self assessment of this area of work in draft curriculum reports is often insufficiently evaluative.

#### The effectiveness of actions being planned and taken to improve teaching and learning

- Since inspection, greater emphasis through staff development and support is being placed on ensuring that teaching and learning meets all learners' needs. Mandatory staff training in July 2006 focussed on differentiation and other appropriate staff development events are planned. However, it is too early to judge the impact of development work on the quality of lessons.
- Effective action to increase the rigour of procedures for monitoring the quality of lessons has taken place. This includes establishing partnership arrangements with two other colleges for peer observations by specialist staff and using an external consultant in moderation of the results of observations. In addition, observers meet monthly to moderate observation reports. All

observations are now carried out unannounced. The form used to record observations still focuses too much on evidence of teaching rather than learning. The important section for recommendations for improvement is insufficiently prominent.

#### The tutorial process

- The quality of tutorials is improving and becoming more consistent through the use of a guidance manual and reinforcement of the use of standardised paperwork. Learners are well supported at an early stage in their courses by a one-to-one tutorial in the autumn term. A suggested list of topics for group tutorials is used, but is not detailed enough to ensure coverage of healthy and safe lifestyles topics.
- Recent training has taken place on the use of individual learning plans. However improvements to aspects of their use, such as the quality of target setting, remain an area for development. Target setting makes too little use of specific timescales and some over-general targets are used.

#### Leadership and management

##### Self assessment and quality assurance at course level

- Quality assurance at course level has improved and is monitored more systematically. Staff now have a good understanding of the quality assurance procedures used throughout the college. Comprehensive standardised agendas have been introduced for team and curriculum area meetings. The use of quality assurance logs to monitor all aspects of each course is more robust and is part of a year-long process that feeds systematically into the self assessment report (SAR) for each area of learning. Data are used better to analyse trends and set targets for all courses.

##### Progress with meeting the requirements of equality and diversity legislation

- A race equality policy exists with a three year implementation plan from 2006 – 2009 in place. The implementation plan is monitored annually however target dates are not stated for some key actions. Several of these actions, including the analysis of the performance of minority ethnic groups, are in need of prompt completion.