

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College:           Huntingdonshire Regional College  
Date of visit:               19 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

Overall success rates are improving and are now generally at the national average. Retention rates for students of all ages and at all levels have improved.

- Students aged 16-18

Completed data for 2005/06 indicate particularly strong improvement in courses at level 2. Some 83% of the sample of level 2 courses examined demonstrated clear improvement on the 2004/05 success rates. The success rate at level 3 has also improved, partly as a result of the college withdrawing provision in some GCE AS/A-level courses which were underperforming.

- Students aged 19+

In 2004/05, the latest year for which complete achievement data are available, the success rate had improved at a rate which was above the national rate in colleges, and pass rates were close to the national average.

- Key skills

The college has made very good progress in improving the standards which students aged 16-18 reach in the key skills of application of number and communication. However, the success rate in IT at level 1 and level 2 is unsatisfactory. Key skills successes have improved for students aged 19+.

- Work-based learning

The college has made very good progress in improving success rates. In 2005/06, framework completions had risen to well above the national average at 57%.

### Quality of education and training

#### Every Child Matters themes

The college places an appropriate emphasis on developing its response to ECM themes in its current strategic plan (2006-09) and identifies appropriate action points in its operational plan. The college is also intending to produce a separate self-assessment for ECM in its 2005/06 report. At the time of this visit, an audit of activities associated with ECM themes had yet to be

undertaken. The college is aware that the contents of its tutorial programme do not match the ECM themes as well as they could, and is planning a major review of the content and quality of its tutorial provision.

The college has appropriate procedures for assuring the safety of young people. It conducts all of the relevant checks on staff in accordance with the requirements of the Department for Education and Skills but does not as yet produce a single central record of these checks.

### 14-19 curriculum

The college offers a wide range of 14-16 provision. Good links with schools include an Increased Flexibility Programme which benefits some 250 learners. High success rates were achieved in the young apprenticeship in engineering in 2005/06. A project to engage young people who were not in education or employment resulted in the successful progression of the participants to college or work. The college has made good use of its partnerships with local schools to plan for the introduction of specialised diplomas. The college has yet to map progression routes for 14-19 year olds. Some curriculum areas prepare learners thoroughly for progression from one level to the next, but this good practice is not consistent across the college.

## Leadership and management

### Work with employers

The college makes a good response to working with employers. The newly introduced single point for enquiries enables the college to respond promptly to employers. Information about employers' needs are well disseminated and managed appropriately. The services to business manager fully engages curriculum areas in meeting employer needs, offering both skills training in vocationally relevant areas, and work life balance training.

Individual learning plans are now designed to ensure that employers understand clearly how far their learners have progressed through their qualification, and what they need to do to succeed. They are expected to attend progress reviews, and most do. Success rates in work based learning have improved significantly.

The two centres for vocational excellence (CoVEs) in leadership and management and in manufacturing are very active in promoting the college as a centre both to provide good training for local needs, and to meet the recruitment needs of employers. Staff managing the CoVEs maintain strong

links with local employers, sector skill organisations and the chamber of commerce to ensure that they are aware of local strategic priorities.

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:

- College enrolments have continued to improve, particularly for students aged 16-18 where the 30% increase this year comfortably exceeds the college's target.
- The college's prudent management of its finances has led to a much improved financial position. In 2005/06 it produced an operating surplus and built up significant cash reserves.