

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Godalming College
Date of visit: 1 December 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

What were the 2006 outcomes for success, retention and achievements and what improvements have been achieved?

- In 2006, overall success rates remained high, 6 percentage points above national average for students aged 16 to 18 and adult students.
- Overall retention rates also continue to be above national averages. Students aged 16 to 18 had retention rates around 93% (3 percentage points above the national average) and adult students around 65% (6 percentage points above the average). Retention is best on GCE A and AS level courses for students aged 16 to 18, which constitute the bulk of the college provision.
- Pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 at AS level were 93% (5 percentage points above national average) and pass rates at A level were 98.6% (around 3 percentage points above the average). The proportion of high grades at both GCE A and AS level was well above national averages. Advanced vocational courses, although a small proportion of the total entry, also showed very good pass rates. GCSE pass rates at A*-C grades were 52.5%. However, some subjects had significantly lower pass rates than others.
- Students aged 14 to 16, who attend the college part-time, achieved good results in 2006 with most courses showing 100% pass rates.
- Following considerable review and development, the timely NVQ completion rates for adult students studying health and social care have improved markedly. Level 1 long course completions have risen sharply to 58%, level 2 to 59% and level 3 to 56%.

What pattern of recruitment took place this year and what trends are anticipated?

- Recruitment continues to be very strong following the successful inspection report. Each year the college closes recruitment early in the new year. The college grew by about 3% in line with

predictions. New Train2Gain initiatives locally may well have an impact of the numbers of adult learners recruited to NVQ qualifications in health and social care.

Key skills achievements have been good in the past, what outcomes were there in 2006 following the proposed change to a total skills strategy?

- Key skills pass rates also continue to be above national averages, although the college is actively considering reducing the number of students taking key skills by introducing a Total Skills Strategy.

Quality of education and training

The lesson observation system has been developed to include more staff as observers and to focus more on staff development. What progress has been made, have there been improvements and, as a result, better focus on individual staff development?

- The lesson observation team now comprises 15 members of staff from across the college. Training is taking place to ensure consistency and rigour of judgements. Paired observations are used to moderate evaluations. The lesson observation scheme is being used to provide further stimulus to staff development. This year observation grades are not being focused upon in order to allow the observer and observed to concentrate on follow-up professional development. Overall, the recent observations have identified that teaching and learning for level 2 students needs some development and curriculum teams need time to further develop their ICT skills.

What curriculum developments are taking place? Have progression routes at level 2 been changed?

- The major curriculum development has been in changes to the provision for the Access to level 3. BTEC first certificates in media, sport, business and travel and tourism have been introduced to replace some GCSE provision. In addition, at level 2, GCSEs in English, mathematics, science, photography and sociology are offered. BTEC first certificates in performing arts and art and design are planned for next year along with BTEC national courses in sport and business. The AS programme has been increased by offering history of art and performing arts as an option for drama students.

Has lesson time allocation for level 3 courses been changed? If so, what are the outcomes for the students and what are the views of teaching staff?

- Eight curriculum teams have been piloting the '4 + 1' scheme this year. This initiative has freed up teams to use the fifth lesson in any timetable block to put in place more student centred activities. The time has been spent in a variety of different ways and other departments joined the scheme before the pilot ended. One to one tutorials, use of ILT, workshops and extension work for more able students have all been trialled. Outcomes are being tracked through discussions with participating teams and staff are very positive about this development. The approaches were presented to teaching staff at professional development days. One of the positive outcomes of this work has been the promotion of a vigorous debate about teaching and learning across the college.

Leadership and management

What strategies are in place to improve outcomes for those courses with poor retention and achievement?

- Curriculum developments at level 2 are addressing the poor performance of some courses. Some GCSEs have been discontinued and GNVQ intermediate has been discontinued. The new suite of BTEC first courses in conjunction with GCSEs now offer a positive ladder to level 3 study for students with modest prior attainment. Peer review and lesson observation outcomes also provide a mechanism for improvement and development.
- Around 60% of the Access to level 3 students progress on to level 3 courses each year. At present their progress is monitored along with all the other students starting level 3 courses. The college does not monitor specifically the group progressing from level 2 studies in order to inform managers of successes and to provide encouragement to current level 2 students.

How is the college managing and improving outcomes for adult students?

- It is clear that considerable work and development has taken place in business training services. The CPD programme for assessors has been extended to include greater emphasis on the management of end dates; the virtual learning environment has been further developed; a paper free approach has been put in

place and Skills for Life provision has been improved. Achievements have improved significantly since last year and this area is managed efficiently and effectively.

What changes have been made to the college accommodation and what plans are there for further developments?

- The information learning centre has opened recently and is a modern and striking building. The facilities are of high quality and are well used by the students. The college now has over 1,000 PCs on campus for student use. Not only is there much more study space but also eight new classrooms have eased congestion in the main building. In addition, a new sports complex has been completed and provides modern changing facilities, a multi-purpose sports hall and a well equipped fitness suite. The next phase of the £9m building programme is underway. The site for a new performing arts centre has been cleared and the building is due for completion in January 2008. Other projected developments include refurbishment of the main building and reconfiguration of the science accommodation.

How is the key skills/total skills strategy being developed?

- The college is debating the future of its key skills provision. Information Technology at level 2 is seen as a worthwhile provision but all the other areas are being discussed under the auspices of a total skills strategy.

With what 14-19 developments is the college involved?

- Around 60 pupils from local schools come to the college on a part-time basis to study courses either in business at level 2 or child care at level 1. As mentioned previously achievements are good. In addition there are some work based learning placements in sport and recreation and hairdressing. A further 80 pupils have signed up to take the Godalming Enrichment modules whilst in year 11.