

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Canterbury College
Date of visit: 7 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 well do learners achieve?

- Success rates in 2004/05, for both learners aged 16-18 and for adults, improved to be in line with national averages. Success rates for 16-18 at level 3 and for adults at level 2 are slightly below the national average.
- Since the last AAV visit the college has improved overall retention, achievement and success rates, however, within the different areas of learning there is still a marked variance. For instance, success rates on engineering, construction, hospitality and catering courses are well below the national average, whereas ICT is well above for adults but for 16-18 success rates on engineering, construction, hospitality and catering as well as ICT courses are well below.
- College data for 2005-06 indicates an improving picture at levels 1 and 2 in learner performance.
- Pass rates on level 1 courses for 16-18 year olds are now 84% and success rates are well above the national average. At level 2 for 16-18 year olds, GCSE and NVQ pass rates have improved.
- Retention and pass rates for adults at level 2 have improved.
- Success rates on level 3 for 16-18 year olds is now 64% and retention has been sustained at 79%. However, pass rates have declined slightly to 81%. Retention on several National Diplomas was low; however, students' progression for year 1 to year 2 on National Diplomas in 2006/07 indicates a significant improvement in retention.
- Achievement on key skills has improved for 16-18 from 74% to 89%. Retention has improved for those aged 19 or over from 82% to 98%, but achievement has declined from 82% to 78%.
- Pass rates on short courses (5-24 weeks) for learners aged 16-18 has improved to 93%.
- Work based learning success rates are improving at 62% in 2005/06, 12% above the National Overall Success rate of 50%.

Quality of education and training

How effective are the college's strategies for raising success rates, and in particular, retention on level two courses and in different sector qualifications?

- The college's successful deployment of Curriculum Support Assistants to support students on level 2 courses has resulted in increased success rates. Student Attendance and Support Advisors are deployed on level 3 diploma courses in public services and performing arts to track student attendance using electronic data. This has contributed to improved levels of achievement and retention. These support staff also offer study skills and assistance with action planning and research for assignments. The college set value added targets for A2 and AS level courses and national diplomas based on the learner achievement tracker (LAT) in 2005-06. An increased scrutiny of students' performance, through improved use of data using the LAT tracker by managers and teachers, has resulted in more effective tracking of students' progress. The college recognises however, that there is an uneven use of this process across the subject areas as is the monitoring of student attendance. For instance, in one course annual review the action listed is to postpone electronic attendance monitoring until academic year 2007-08, despite the course tutor identifying that attendance and punctuality needs improving.

Have enrolment, induction and meeting students' learning support needs improved in 2005-06?

- Initial assessment of students' basic and key skills has greatly improved through centralisation of the procedures and implementation of initial screening during induction. The presence of all support staff during enrolment has facilitated referrals for students needing learning support. The rate of transfers of students between courses has reduced by one third this year. ,
- Students reported that this academic year induction and enrolment were more organised. The college has evaluated the short additional qualifications delivered during induction and found a high percentage of satisfaction. Pass rates on the courses are high, for instance, a very large proportion of students entered for the Certificate in Diversity and Equality and of these 92% completed successfully.

How effective are the Individual Learning Plans in place and has the quality of the tutorial process improved?

- ILPs across the areas still indicate inconsistencies in terms of the reporting of students' progress, and the setting of precise targets and actions. The same is the case with progress reviews in tutorials. In one review a student had identified that he had not been given adequate opportunities to extend his knowledge and skills, but the tutor had not identified appropriate SMART targets or actions to help the student. Since the last AAV visit, through greater emphasis by staff on subject specific assessment criteria, students now have better awareness of these and report greater satisfaction with marking and feedback on course work and assignments.

How much progress has the college made in improving its engineering provision following the re-inspection judgement of "unsatisfactory"?

- The college has made some changes to its engineering provision following the last AAV visit. A new faculty manager has recently taken up the post and has a clear agenda for improvement. Course reviews are satisfactory overall but a few lack detailed actions for improvement. The curriculum action plan lacks clear monitoring responsibilities, target outcomes and deadlines for review.
- The delay in recruiting section leaders and lecturers is having an adverse impact on provision.
- Overall, engineering attendance rates fell between 2004/05 and 2005/06. A system of closer monitoring is now in place by both teachers and managers, but it is too early to assess its impact.
- Observation of teaching by external consultants are overgenerous in some cases and 'areas for improvement' are not systematically monitored by managers.
- Based upon college un-validated 2005-6 data, success rates for full-time long courses have much improved and are at national average.

Work based learning

- Success rates in engineering have much improved. Apprenticeship success rates are well above national average. Advanced apprenticeship success rates are below national average, although achievement of the NVQ component of the framework is very good. Students' achievement in key skills is unsatisfactory. The tracking of learner progress is not sufficiently robust.

Leadership and management

How well has the college integrated the use of support staff into the subject areas?

- Since the last visit the college has put in place new arrangements that require lesson plans to reflect specifically the roles and activities of learning support staff within a classroom session. In addition, a new meetings structure has been developed to enable support staff and teachers to work more closely together and monitor their students' learning and achievement. These initiatives have been implemented inconsistently across the curriculum with more positive impact in some areas than in others. All support staff have been observed. Curriculum Support Assistants and Student Attendance and Support Advisers are undergoing the level 2 Adult Learner Support qualification. The successful integration of these support staff is much valued by teachers and benefits students in their learning, attendance and achievement.

How successful has the college been in addressing the issue of creating greater consistency in quality across the curriculum areas?

- The college has restructured its management and established a monitoring system to ensure greater rigour in processes and procedures for quality. Section managers have reduced their teaching hours and this successfully enables many to monitor the course reviews and development plans more closely. The re-structuring is not yet complete and the monitoring process is not fully operational. The impact is not evidenced, in particular, in those key areas that have been identified by the college as underachieving. However, the new management structures which have led to improved communication within the faculties, are much valued by teachers and managers and have enabled greater sharing of good practice in teaching and learning.

How effective are the annual course reviews, curriculum SARs and the college SAR?

- The format of the college SAR 2005-06 is insufficiently clear and the college is aware that it needs to present the 2006-07 in a more accessible format that reflects the structural changes. The college is currently standardising the development plans for underperforming courses, where pass rates and retention are low or declining. It is implementing a new format for annual course reviews in November

2006, to enable comparison of targets to college and national averages. Currently there is still too much variability in the quality of annual reviews. Actions in some are too general and do not draw together coherently all the points identified by course tutors. Actions that should meet students' needs, lack precision, for instance, "*better implementation of key skills – key skills remains a priority asap*".

- Actions to address underperforming courses have been insufficiently timely and robust during the previous year and the college recognises that they need now to increase both pace and rigour.

How effective is the observation process in leading to improvements in teaching and learning?

- Within teaching and learning observation records, the areas of improvement and actions to raise standards are not sufficiently robust or consistent across the curriculum. There is clear description and evaluation of the teaching and learning in many cases and, good alignment of grades with text. There still remains a significant minority of observations, where grades do not match the evaluation of the teaching observed. There is insufficient attention to monitoring of the actions that result from the observations of additional learning support staff.

Since last visit how much progress has been made with the new build to provide more appropriate resources?

- Students have reported that the new build has resulted in better resources in some classes, but in some areas, classrooms are too small for the number of students and students have insufficient access to computers.