

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Xaverian
Date of visit: 27 March 2007

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

Learners' achievements 2005/06

- The overall success rate for long courses in 2005/06 remained well above the national average for 2004/05. The success rates on level 3 courses for 16 to 18 year olds, where the vast majority of students are, have been above national averages for the last three years and reached 81% in 2005/06. The success rate on level 2 courses for 16 to 18 year olds is just above the 2004/05 national average and that for level 1 is well above the 2004/05 national average. Overall success rates for the very small numbers of adult students are high.
- Achievement rates at all levels have been well above average for the last three years. Retention rates have improved in 2005/06 and are now only below national averages at level 2. They are average at level 1 and above average at level 3.
- Value added analysis shows that students make very good progress when compared to their qualifications on entry. There has been a rising trend in added value since 1995 and current analysis places the college very highly when compared to other institutions.

At the last annual assessment visit it was noted that developments in the curriculum and enrolment process were beginning to have a positive impact on retention rates during 2005/06. What was the impact over the whole of that year and what progress has been made in 2006/07?

- There was an overall improvement in retention in 2005/06 and this has continued in 2006/07. In 2005/06 retention rates improved by 5 percentage points at level 2, 2 percentage points at level 3 and remained around the average at level 1. Current data for 2006/07 show further marked improvements at all levels, with retention at level 2 being 7 percentage points above the national average for 2004/05.

- Retention is very closely monitored and accurate information is available to all staff, so that they can pinpoint any potential problem areas and develop effective action plans to address them before they become major issues. There has been a continuing focus on ensuring students are placed on the most appropriate course, known as 'coursing with integrity', and in developing an effective structure of on-programme support for every individual.

At the last AAV data showed that there was an increasing percentage of students late to lessons from 2003/04 onwards. What progress has been made in this addressing this issue?

- There are clear guidelines for reporting and following up punctuality issues which are well understood by staff and students. Attendance and punctuality information is available to staff and students on-line, with a traffic lighting system highlighting any issues. Staff can discuss any problems with individuals and put in appropriate support where necessary. Students know that if they are persistently late, without adequate reasons, then sanctions will be applied. Figures to date for this year show that punctuality has improved.

Quality of education and training

A key area for improvement in the quality improvement plan is 'Learning Support'. What progress has been made in this area and what is its impact on the student learning experience?

- Learning support has a very high profile in the college and is embedded in all aspects of provision. All students spend one hour a week in the learning support centre, in their tutor group, where there is a wide ranging support programme that is tailored to meet individual needs. All subject areas have timetabled support to which students can be referred and its effectiveness is monitored.
- Students who have been identified as having specific needs, such as dyslexia, receive support from specialist tutors. There are also learning mentors and full time learning support assistants, who are used effectively to support individuals. In addition to identification of need by staff, students can self refer, be assessed and then be provided with an appropriate support programme.

- Recent changes have been put in place to support ESOL students by giving them the option of different qualifications to choose from to support their development of English language skills.
- The centralising of support within a students' learning experience, and geographically within the college campus, has taken place over the last three years and has contributed to the improvements seen in retention over the same period. Feedback from students in relation to support is positive and its impact can also be seen from the increased number of self referrals.

Development of on-line learning is a key area for improvement in the quality improvement plan. What progress has been made in this area and how is its impact measured and evaluated?

- The system used within the college has been developed as a bespoke package to support the needs of students and staff. It is designed to cover specific information for a student, such as their individual learning plan (ILP), as well as course and general college information. There is a wealth of information relating to their courses that students can access, ranging from the current weeks' activities to presentations, exam papers and TV programmes.
- Reviews of students' progress are carried out on-line which means relevant data is accessible to staff and students so they can get a clear picture of progress in all areas. This has created a climate of openness and enabled more effective advice to be given and relevant targets set.
- The impact of initiatives in this area is measured in a variety of ways, including monitoring the number of hits, access by individual accounts and surveys of users.

Leadership and management

In considering the summary of self assessment grades in the 2005/06 SAR, curriculum grades range from satisfactory to outstanding. What strategies are being employed to assist areas in moving up and in supporting those already with top grades in maintaining them?

- There is a culture of continuous improvement in all areas with a clear emphasis on monitoring performance and using the readily available information to highlight both areas of good practice, so they can be shared, and areas for improvement, so they can be addressed. Highly

focused reviews concentrate on key issues and are well linked to management structures.

- Action plans are drawn up as a result of reviews and there are regular progress checks on them. If problems do arise these are seen as learning experiences and analysed to see what went wrong, why, and how the situation can be improved.

In the self assessment report for 2006/06 the college refers to aspects of the self assessment as key strengths but has the rigour of some cross-college self assessment as an area for improvement. What progress has been made in ensuring all areas self assess with the same rigour?

- The review system for cross college areas was put in place later than that for curriculum areas and so has not had so long to become embedded. Developments have taken place in reviewing and revising internal standards and highlighting links to the evaluative statements in the common inspection framework. Together with regular audits and greater self analysis these initiatives have increased the rigour of the internal system.

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:

- None