

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: South Devon  
Date of visit: 14 May 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

What progress is being made to improve retention, particularly for learners aged 16 to 18?

- Good progress is being made to improve retention for learners aged 16-18 and adults. In year retention for 2006/07 is currently high at 92%. Overall retention improved in 2005/06 to just above national averages and was better than previous years. The introduction of electronic registration has been successful. Attendance is well monitored and absences are effectively pursued with a good range of appropriate support and follow up strategies. One apt example is the regular college wide celebrations of students' successes that include high attendance. College analysis of students' performance and views shows that information, advice and guidance for adult students on level 2 and 3 courses is still an area for improvement.

How effective have actions been to improve success rates in skills for life and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)?

- The success rates of students on ESOL and skills for life have improved. The restructuring of the area has been effective in ensuring staff are clearer about their roles. There has also been a good staff development programme to improve teaching skills. Action plans are monitored closely and regularly to ensure planned improvements happen. While it is too early to judge the impact of these measures on success rates, current retention rates are high on most of the skills for life courses.
- Recruitment, assessment and delivery of ESOL have improved, following the comprehensive review, and appropriate changes made. Data show that for most programmes, retention rates are improving. The college considers that its approach to increasing accredited courses and reducing

non-accredited courses will also be successful in improving success rates but it is too soon to assess outcomes.

What is being done to improve key skills achievement across the college and what is the impact to date?

- Overall achievement of key skills success has improved over a 3 year period and is now well above the national average. Integration of key skills across the college at all levels is good and involves all staff and employers. Setting key skills into appropriate contexts has been an effective strategy. Coverage of all six key skills is good and well established in the tutorial framework. The key skills champions are effective in supporting staff to produce appropriate assignments, and assess and moderate students' work. The introduction of the tracker system and on-line testing has been successful.

What effect is the college advanced level improvement strategy having on improving achievements and standards (including some low success rates on GCE AS level courses)?

- The GCE A level improvement strategy is having a positive impact on raising achievements as there is better coordination across subjects and good sharing of best practice. GCE A level pass rates at 98% are high but the 75% GCE AS level pass rates are below the national average and still an area for improvement. Some actions have started to have a positive impact. For example, more appropriate entry criteria, better screening to ensure students are enrolled at the right level, and more consistent setting of minimum grades to motivate students.

## Quality of education and training

How effectively is RARPA (recognising and recording progress and achievement) being used to assess achievement (Adult and Community Learning) and improve provision?

- Monitoring of RARPA has been successfully incorporated into the observation of teaching and learning process but this is not always evidenced in schemes of work and lesson plans. As a result of using RARPA the college is able to identify needs of students more effectively and place them on the right level of courses. The results of a recent

student evaluation show that more students are making good or expected progress and feel more confident about their work.

Is lack of consistency in tracking progress of students an issue in individual areas or is it wider across the college?

- Tracking is effective using individual learning plans (ILPs) across the college and monitoring of progress through tutorials is good. ILPs give a clear picture of goals and how students are performing, including attendance. Consistency of reporting varies, as ways to improve are not always set out clearly enough for the students.
- The tracker system for key skills is effective and has brought more consistency to tracking. The tracking of distance travelled in WBL is effective and was recognised with a National Beacon Award for Innovative Curriculum Delivery and commended in a recent Ofsted best practice survey.

How effectively is target setting (including use of value added data) being used in tutorials and to improve performance of learners?

- Target setting is being used effectively and in work-based learning it is satisfactory. In the GCE A level area ALIS (Advanced level information system), chances graphs are now being appropriately used to agree targets and motivate students.
- Tutorial planning using 'improving own learning and performance' as the focus for tutorial activities is good and is a suitable way of linking tutorial and course learning.

What progress has been made since last year's AAV in assessing use of additional learning support (ALS)?

Good progress has been made since last year. There has been an increased uptake of ALS and the range of ALS available has been explained more clearly to students. The college analysis of students receiving ALS in 2006/07 shows that in-year retention for students aged 16-18 is better than the average for the cohort but for adults on level 2 and 3 courses it is below the average. The use of ALS is monitored regularly and further work is being done to assess its impact and ensure earlier take up of support by students.

## Leadership and management

How effective has the performance and progress monitoring by senior management team (SMT) been in raising achievement and performance in WBL?

- The regular review meetings with the senior management have been effective in focussing on performance and ensuring timely and suitable actions are taken. In 2006 the college's WBL provision achieved the Customer First quality mark. A measure of the local learning and skills council's confidence is that it recently awarded to the college an Entry to Employment contract with about 150 learners.
- Good progress has been made in improving the rate of framework completions, which were well above the national average for 2005/06 with both advanced apprenticeships (71%) and apprenticeships (75%) showing a significant increase from the previous year. In 2005/06, the timely success rate of 57% was significantly above the national average.

How well embedded is the college's self-assessment process at different levels?

- The self-assessment process is well established. Students' views are aptly used as the starting point for the process and to make improvements. For example in the ordering of equipment in several areas students views were noted and in the development of students' access to the college intranet system (MOODLE). Staff at all levels are properly involved in contributing to the process which is appropriately monitored by the operational plan. The outcomes of the observation of teaching and learning and data are also used well in the self-assessment process

Any themes from the pre-visit analysis not explored during the visit:

- All were explored.

Any other observations from the visit not identified in the pre-visit analysis:

- The development of Every Child Matters (ECM) in the tutorial programme has been good and the use of themed days to address ECM themes has been successful.

