

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Gloucestershire College
Date of visit: 5 July 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 action is the college taking to continue to address retention for learners aged 16 to 18?

- The college has a clear understanding of the need to improve retention for students aged 16 to 18 across all levels and in particular, level 3. The college has amended the interview and selection processes for prospective students across all levels. There are clear referrals procedures in place to ensure students are placed on the correct course. Those wishing to progress to level 3 are now more thoroughly checked for suitability. The college has amended the performance monitoring procedures. Students are clearly tracked throughout their programme. Attendance monitoring is more rigorous. Incentives are given to encourage good attendance. Courses that perform poorly are thoroughly investigated and prompt action is taken to ensure improvements are made.

What analysis has the college carried out so far of the 2006/07 academic year?

- Retention data provided by the college indicates that the 2006/07 college retention has improved. However, measures to improve retention have yet to fully impact at level 3 and managers are well aware of the need to continue work in this area.

What changes has the college put in place to bring about the significant improvements in work-based learning indicated by the college?

- The overall proportion of apprentices who complete their frameworks has shown considerable improvement over the last year although is still low in some vocational areas. The college has taken appropriate action to improve framework completions, including the appointment of a new key skills tutor for work-based learning which has started to have some impact on achievements. The college

has improved communications between curriculum staff, learners and training co-ordinators. Training co-ordinators now have laptop computers to enable them to work more effectively with learners in the workplace. Employers are kept well informed of learners' progress and attendance, and more thorough review processes are now in place.

Quality of education and training

What work has the college undertaken during the course of the 2006/07 academic year to assess internally the quality of teaching and learning across the college, and what does this analysis show?

- A small team of teaching improvement managers oversee the college's comprehensive system of internal lesson observation. The observation scheme is moderated through a federation of colleges in Gloucestershire. All staff receive detailed verbal and written feedback to support them in their continuous professional development. During the course of the academic year 240 observations have been carried out, covering virtually all substantive staff within the college. The grade profile for 2006/07 compares favourably with the previous year. This suggests that the college is maintaining the quality of teaching and learning, and taking action to coach the small number of staff who are identified as requiring support.

What actions has the college taken to address any issues that have arisen as a result of the findings from this work?

- The lesson observation team is managed through Human Resources to ensure there is a close link between continuous professional development and performance management. The college has a comprehensive network of coaching and mentoring in place to support trainee and newly qualified teachers, staff new to the college, and those who have been identified through the lesson observation scheme as requiring additional support. The college also has a team of advanced practitioners whose task is to innovate and promote good practice. There are systems in place to identify and disseminate good practice more widely.

What does the college perceive to be the most significant areas of decline and growth in the curriculum?

- The college has a clear understanding of its areas for growth and decline. The recent move to new accommodation in Gloucester, along with local needs and the Government's agenda for change, has initiated well developed plans for the

future of the college and the community it serves. The college has acknowledged the importance of continual growth and expansion in the recent appointment of a director of curriculum innovation. Developments in local engineering and the need for highly skilled construction skills have meant that the college has plans to expand its provision in these areas. For example, the college is developing provision in plastering along with courses in specialist heritage and conservation skills. Other areas for growth are in media, computing, sport, travel and tourism, and spa therapies. Full cost courses for overseas students have also been expanding. The college sees its work in adult and community learning as an area of decline along with courses in languages and some aspects of creative arts.

What is the college's approach to additionally, including the delivery of key skills?

- The college has recognised the need to improve its induction to key skills and has made some significant changes in this area. Key skills tutors are also now present at open days and parents evenings and college data indicates improved participation and results. Enrichment activities are encouraged both across the college and in curriculum areas. For example, in hair and beauty one week is dedicated to outside speakers who are booked to come and speak to students or give presentation of products and services.

Leadership and management

What areas have the college identified as the headline strengths and weaknesses, in the 2006/07 academic year?

- The college has a self-critical approach to assessing its performance. It has identified a number of key strengths including good and improving success rates on most courses, effective curriculum management, increased progression with improved progression opportunities, broader, more appropriate curriculum, better enrichment opportunities, and significant improvements to the quality of accommodation and resources at the Gloucester campus. It has clear strategies in place to address the identified weaknesses, including retention for learners aged 16 to 18, particularly at level 3, punctuality, implementation of assessment strategies, collection of destination data, and the capture and analysis of equality and diversity data.

How far advanced is the college in completing the 2006/07 self assessment report?

- The college is well advanced with its course review and self assessment cycle. By early October 2007 the college is scheduled to complete and moderate its self

assessment report and have an action plan in place early in the new academic year.

How has the college ensured that the transition to its new campus in Gloucester has minimised any adverse impact on staff and learners?

- At the time of the monitoring visit (July) the college was just beginning the process of moving to its new campus in Gloucester. The timing of the move will ensure minimal adverse impact to students and staff. The college is making good progress to ensure that the campus will be fully functioning by the beginning of the autumn term.

How effective is the college at managing financial aspects of this substantial capital development?

- The budget for development of the new campus at Gloucester is £35m. The college indicates that cash flow has been carefully controlled and anticipates coming in just under budget for the project. The project has been carefully managed by a highly experienced seconded senior manager from the college. In addition, progress on the project has been monitored by a special committee of governors incorporating construction, financial and planning expertise. The Principal indicates a very high level of confidence in the management, logistical and financial control and successful outcome of the project.

What does the college perceive as the key opportunities in Gloucester as the city's regeneration strategy develops?

- The college is very well positioned to play a key role in the regeneration of Gloucester. The high-profile new campus is located close to the city centre. It has been designed to ensure the highest level of facilities. The Principal plays a key role in the local community as chairman of the local regeneration board. In addition the membership of the corporation is designed to enable the college to be well connected and well positioned within the city's profile. The college has recently rebranded to strengthen its status in the region and reflect completion of the second major rebuild in the last five years. The college has undertaken a careful review of provision and has identified key areas to extend, and to reduce. In particular it is exploring strategies to extend the range of higher education provision in the city.