ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: City College, Brighton
Date of visit: 13 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

Improving pass rates

- Retention rates are high. Attendance is above average. Attendance and punctuality are tracked and followed up effectively.
- Pass rates to 2004/05 at long levels 1, 2 and 3 have been below the national average. However, college data for 2005/06 show improvement in success rates in long courses at levels 1 and 2. However, an overall success rate at level 3 of 69% is still below the national average and is not satisfactory. The college recognises that it must improve level 3 success rates on long courses for students aged 16-18 years more quickly.
- Some progress has been made to decrease the numbers of learners continuing beyond their planned course end dates but there is still further closure work to be done.
- Appropriate measures are being taken to improve the management and delivery of the lowest performing courses. Several courses which performed poorly over time have now been removed but the data still include these courses.
- Several appropriate actions have been put in place to improve success rates. The main focus of these is on improving teaching and learning, but the overall effect on raising achievement is yet to be seen.

Raising achievement on work-based learning (WBL)

- Achievement of full frameworks in 2005/06 is still poor in some areas, especially business administration at 31%, construction at 44% and retail at 37%. Overall success rates are 21% points below the national average of 55% and are therefore unsatisfactory. Key skills completion rates for WBL have improved. In the current year, 2006 to date, 92% of first year apprentices have achieved key skills and achievements to date of full

apprenticeship frameworks are 61%. Measures to improve attendance and punctuality across the college have also had a positive impact in WBL.

Improving key skills

- College data for 2005/06 show that pass rates in key skills were low for students aged 16-19. Some recent changes made, such as centralising the management of key skills and year-round moderation of portfolios are starting to have a positive impact. In WBL verification of key skills has improved, and there is better communication between college tutors, key skills specialists and employers. However, in non-WBL areas, the college strategy for key skills is not clear enough to ensure a consistent approach and good practice across the college. There is also insufficient monitoring of assessment, on-line testing and observations of key skills delivery.

Quality of education and training

Improving teaching and learning

- There has been significant development to improve teaching and learning at all levels. The appointment of a quality improvement manager, the curriculum restructuring and the provision for improving coordination of internal verification across the college are all helping to improve teaching and learning. The introduction of a cross-college teaching and learning handbook has brought greater coherence and better awareness of effective practices, though some part-time and WBL staff were not aware of it.
- Some appropriate actions taken to improve teaching and learning are:
    - o Introduction of peer assessment
    - o Improved planning through more consistent and up to date schemes of work (SOW)
    - o Greater coherence between SOW and the introduction of more effective lesson plans
    - o Good staff development activities concentrating on improving assessment and behaviour management
    - o Introducing a more rigorous system of observing teaching and learning and closer links between observations and staff development

- - Closer monitoring of curriculum delivery through quality monitoring visits
  - Student schemes of work topics accessible to students via the college intranet

  However, it is too early to assess the impact of these measures.

- Assessment practices are being improved through themed staff development on formative assessment and extra resource put into internal verification support. Students said that feedback is 'regular and helpful'.
- Though students' preferred teaching and learning styles are identified as part of improving learning and teaching, lesson planning does not always take full account of the different needs and abilities of the students.

Consistency of tutorials

- Students confirm that support is good and their individual one to one tutorials are helpful and meaningful. Though the tutorial programme, based on Every Child Matters (ECM), is well planned and coherent, there is still inconsistency in the quality and delivery of group tutorials.
- The college has produced a comprehensive ECM action plan.
- Students spoken to say that there is a culture of respect and effective challenge to any bullying that may occur.

Leadership and management

Management of work-based learning

- The management of WBL has improved as a result of changes made. There have been considerable improvements in the monitoring of student progress, employer liaison, data management and key skills delivery. There is now good liaison between assessors and college staff, and improved employer awareness of programme requirements. The involvement of senior management in monitoring of WBL progress is effective. Communications are now good between assessors, employers and college tutors, and there is an improved process for review monitoring and verifying reviews and assessments. Tracking of student progress and identification of support needs is better and regular monthly monitoring has improved.

Changes in curriculum management

- The changes in curriculum management, particularly the introduction of the sector area manager (SAM) role are having a positive effect on improving curriculum management and teaching and learning. The changes have ensured that student issues receive prompt attention. There is more clarity in roles and responsibilities. However some staff are still not clear about the names being used.
- Access to student data has improved, particularly for programme area leaders (PALs) and SAMs. The student data are used well in the one to one reviews with students.
- Changes in construction are starting to have a positive effect on management in this area, though it is too early to assess fully the impact on raising standards and achievement.

High numbers of students in the unclassified category for ethnic data

- The number of students whose ethnic origin was unclassified in 2004/05 was high. The college is planning further staff training and a review of how data are collected.

Any themes from the pre-visit analysis not explored during the visit:
- All themes were followed up, including progress from last AAV.

Any other observations from the visit not identified in the pre-visit analysis:
- The SAR review summary is helpful and evaluative, though the judgements of good made on page 5 are optimistic in view of the current data.