

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Hull
Date of visit: 2 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

How well have college strategies for improving work-based learning (WBL) achievement rates been implemented? What impact have changes in the tracking and monitoring of progress had?

- Overall success rates are improving in WBL. In 2004/05 full framework achievement for advanced apprentices was 28%, this increased to 48% in 2005/06 and at the time of the AAV was 66% in 2006/07, some 17 percentage points above the national average. In 2004/05 full framework achievement for apprenticeships was 43%; this declined to 39%, 13 percentage points below the national average in 2005/06. At the time of the AAV in 2006/07, overall success rates had increased to 47%, 8 percentage points below the national average. Timely success rates are in line with the national average for advanced apprentices and just below the national average for apprentices. Targets to improve on these success rates have been set for 2007/08 and 2008/09. Work-based learning is now more fully integrated into curriculum areas. Tracking of individual learners has been improved. The management information system is now being used effectively to monitor individual learner progress and this information is now being used by all teachers and work-based learning assessors.

The self assessment report (SAR) identifies that 'retention and pass rates are still poor on a minority of courses' and the quality improvement plan clearly outlines actions to be taken. How effective have these actions been?

- The new quality improvement and student support managers (QuISSMs) are proving effective in monitoring and improving learner progress and success rates across the college. Regular meetings are held with curriculum and work-based learning staff to identify learners who are at risk of withdrawing from programmes and to provide appropriate support. The college has implemented a rigorous review process for underperforming courses, setting challenging improvement targets and withdrawing courses where improvements have not been achieved. Management of the provision at the Goole site has been restructured significantly; curriculum management is

now integrated within the overall college management structure. Overall success rates at this site in 2005/06 improved by 30 percentage points.

- In 2005/06 overall learner success rates on long courses increased from 64% in 2003/04 to 69%. Success rates for adult learners in 2005/06 remained above 2004/05 national averages at levels 1, 2 and 3. Retention rates were all above 2004/05 national averages; particularly at level 1. Achievement rates were above 2004/05 national rates at all levels. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 at levels 1 and 2 for long courses in 2005/06 were above the national rates for 2004/05. They were in line with the 2004/05 national average at level 3. Retention and achievement rates at all levels were above average. In year college data indicates that this trend has been sustained. Achievement of key skills at all levels for learners aged 16 to 18 in 2005/06 was 87%; very significantly above the national average.

Quality of education and training

What progress is the college making in improving the proportion of good or better teaching and learning?

- The college has a well-established quality improvement process with clear links between the observation of teaching and learning, curriculum and staff development. Written plans are in place to develop this process further from September 2007 into a risk-based approach at individual school level against key performance indicators. Moderation of the observation process is managed through each observer having a minimum of one paired observation each year with an external consultant. However, the college does not retain written evidence of change that takes place through this moderation. Current college data for 2006/07 indicates that grades awarded for teaching and learning have improved in comparison with the previous year, with a five percentage point increase in the number of outstanding grades given. At the time of the AAV, the proportion of grades awarded for inadequate teaching was the same as for the previous year. However, with approximately 80 staff still to be observed, the college is confident that they will meet their improvement target to decrease this overall. Quality improvement and student support managers, who have been in post since September 2006, now have a central role in working with school staff to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

What actions have been taken to improve the facilities and resources in some curriculum areas?

- A wide range of actions has been taken to improve the facilities and resources in several curriculum areas identified in the SAR as requiring improvement. There has been a substantial investment in information technology (IT) resources across the college, including a new open-plan IT resource base for the business and computing school. Foundation studies and the learner support school have been provided with new equipment. Accommodation for the independent living skills area has been upgraded and several sessional staff have now been made permanent. Skills for Life programmes have been allocated more suitable rooms on a single site. A new motor vehicle centre now provides purpose built accommodation for this area. A new construction skills centre will open in August 2007 to provide accommodation for higher level courses. This has been built in partnership with local industry. In order to attract more clients, two new hairdressing salons have been developed and the existing salon now opens on a Saturday.

How well is the curriculum, including Skills for Life, meeting the needs of vulnerable learners? How effective is the support?

- The foundation curriculum was revised for September 2006, to ensure clear pathways from pre-entry level within the school vocational areas. Skills for Life tutors now work alongside staff in the foundation programmes. Provision for dyslexia support has increased to five specialist tutors. Learning advisers, most of whom are working towards level 3 qualifications in literacy or numeracy, are deployed across the college to support learners. A wide range of links and partnerships has been established to extend access to literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision. For example, there are several projects targeting vulnerable learners with local schools, community groups, and regeneration centres to provide literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses. In addition, projects have been developed in workplaces to provide literacy and numeracy. There is an extensive range of ESOL provision offered from Monday to Saturday.

Leadership and management

How effective have actions been to ensure that improvement planning is consistent across the college?

- The college has adopted a strategic approach to support improvement planning. This includes continuing professional development to support developments and involvement in national external partnerships such as the

157 group of colleges for benchmarking and peer referencing. In addition, the quality improvement and students' support managers, have a developing role both within the college schools, where they have a specialism, and in supporting greater consistency in the application of self-assessment, improvement planning and quality procedures across the college. They meet monthly as a group to identify cross-college issues and to share good practice. This is then disseminated in curriculum team meetings. It is too early to judge the overall effectiveness of this role.

How effective have college strategies been on improving the consistency in the management and quality assurance of sub-contractors?

- The management and quality assurance of sub-contractors has now been aligned with the college quality assurance arrangements to promote consistency. Sub-contractors are provided with clear targets which are monitored through regular review meetings and through observations of their teaching and learning processes. The quality assurance arrangements ensure that learners have realistic targets and end dates clearly linked to their initial assessment. Sub-contractors have good access to the college intranet and other resources to support teaching and learning and continuous improvement. Where providers are not achieving their targets, appropriate support is provided. Arrangements are in place to support learners to complete their qualification should a contract be withdrawn.

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