

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Leeds College of Building
Date of visit: 1 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

Has the college maintained its improving success rates, particularly at level 1?

- Level 1 success rates improved for all ranges between 2004/05 and 2005/06, rising from 63% to 74% for 16 -18 year olds and from 73% to 80% for adults. Level 1 success rates are significantly above the national averages.

What has happened to the 2005/06 success rates across level 2 and 3 programmes?

- Level 2 and 3 success rates declined across all age ranges in 2005/06 by around 12% compared to the previous three year trend of improvement. Level 2 success rates for adults and level 3 success rates for 16-18 year olds are now below the national averages.

Have apprenticeship success rates improved to match advanced apprenticeship success rates?

- Overall success rates on advanced apprenticeships are improving and are now satisfactory. Advanced apprenticeship success rates have increased by 37% since 2003/04 to the current level of 56% which is 12% above the national rate. Success rates on apprenticeship programmes are improving but are low. Apprenticeship success rates have increased by 31% since 2003/04 to the current level of 44% but remain 9% below the national rate.
- Success rates on building services programmes are significantly above success rates on craft programmes. Timely success rates on all frameworks have increased significantly and are now well above national timely success rates.
- College data indicates that the current in-year retention rates for all apprentices starting in 2006-07 is 97%. Similarly, college data indicates that the potential advanced apprenticeship success rate for 2006/07 is

76% and the potential apprenticeship success rate for 2006/07 is 73% based on New Measures of Success.

Has the college high key skill achievement rates been maintained?

- Key skill success rates for 16-18 year declined slightly from 55% in 04/05 to 52% overall in 05/06. Adult key skills success rates also dropped slightly from 57% to 56% over the same period.

Quality of education and training

Teaching and learning was judged to be good at the last inspection – has the college developed any new arrangements. In particular, the development of teaching skills to ensure that learners with differing ability levels are sufficiently engaged and challenged?

- The college observation of teaching and learning grades for 2005/06 are broadly in line with grades awarded during 2004/05. They show that the college is maintaining much good or better teaching. A significant number of new and unqualified teaching staff have been appointed since the recent inspection and the college continues to provide good support in the development of teaching skills and qualifications through mentored supervision and shared good practice. The college has organised staff events to share good teaching practice across the college and is developing new ways of integrating ILT into the curriculum to enhance learning.

Progress reviews and action plans often lack clear targets – what improvements have been made to these arrangements?

- Some staff development has taken place to improve the quality of target setting and action planning at reviews. Review paperwork is now audited by managers to ensure targets are meaningful and focus on improving performance.
- Most reviews now contain clear qualification progression targets with well defined outcomes that match their qualification, NVQ or assignment requirements. However, there are insufficient targets for key skills and personal targets are often not set, even where improvement in attendance, punctuality or attainment of practical assessments have been identified as an issue within the review. Additional staff training is planned to further improve target setting.

The promotion of equality and diversity was often missing during reviews – what has the college done to improve these practices?

- All staff have undertaken equality and diversity training and updating with respect to equality legislation. Since the inspection the college has amended its full-time review format to align with the review arrangements for work-based learners which includes space for comments to be recorded around issues with bullying or harassment, discrimination, disability and learning difficulties. However, discussion at work-based learning reviews on equality and diversity issues is not well documented and focuses more on monitoring whether issues exist in the workplace rather than extending or challenging learners' awareness and understanding of equality and diversity issues. On some review forms inspected during the visit, this section of the review form was left blank. The college acknowledges that more work needs to be done in this area.

The college has very effective management of its resources – how have the expansion and redevelopment plans matched growth and capacity?

- The Leeds strategic area review for further education is still under way and a moratorium exists regarding any new build projects. The college has plans to relocate to a new campus in the City. However, to meet its immediate and planned growth in enrolments the college is looking to lease an additional site near the City centre. Other developments include a refurbishment plan for the library, a review of flexible working arrangements and staff room accommodation for full time staff and the development of an enterprise centre through the college's recent additional joint CoVE for enterprise.

Have the arrangements to promote enrichment and assess the very good support interventions provided to 'at risk' learners been improved?

- Support interventions are now more closely scrutinised to evaluate their effectiveness. Support staff meet with all full time learners at least once and they continue to meet and review the support programme for all learners receiving support or identified through a range of indicators as being 'at risk'. Attendance is now more closely monitored by staff and in year college retention rate data shows a significant improvement over the previous year. Enrichment activities have been extended to include opportunities for women. Staff have been encouraged to promote

enrichment through reviews and tutorials and a new staff enrichment handbook has been produced. While there are still some issues around timetabling to allow access to some enrichment activities, participation rates in cross college enrichment has improved by around 25% since last year.

Leadership and management

How effective have strategies been to improve retention rates?

- In year college retention data suggests that the decline in retention rates across most programmes seen in 2005/06 has significantly improved. The college recognises a number of actions that have had most impact on these improvements. These include, a broader range of entry level programmes, better target setting and management reports at course level showing in year retention trends, closer monitoring of learner attendance, the increased use of learning support assistants working alongside teachers in workshops and the establishment of service level agreements with employers that better clarify their role in learning and assessment.

Has the college improved its use of data and other forms of information to identify trends in retention, value for money indicators and variable performance between programmes?

- The college has improved its use of data and management information. A portfolio of reports are now produced on retention and success rates at college sector subject area level, course level and exception reports listing courses with retention rates below 95%. These reports are discussed at course team and management meetings and progress is monitored by the governors' quality sub-committee and by the senior management team. Faculty managers meet with the deputy principal each month to discuss the reports for their faculty. The improved information has helped staff and managers monitor retention and more clearly identify variations in retention rates across different programmes.

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

- The success rates for literacy and numeracy courses were not discussed.
- Value for money judgement was not discussed.

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

- It was noted during the visit that the college is using construction national averages derived from pro-achieve software to compare its annual success, retention and achievement performance rates across all programmes. It was also noted that due to the more even balance of construction and other sector subject areas [50%/50% split] the college may want to consider using GFE national averages to make future comparisons in performance.