

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Tyne Metropolitan College
Date of visit: 17 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

The college Self Assessment Report (SAR) for 2005/06 grades achievement and standards to be good. The headline success rate has improved and in 2005/06 is above the national average. For learners aged 19+ on long courses success rates are improving at all levels. For learners aged 16 to 18 the success rate on long courses at level 1 are improving and above the national average. However, at level 2 and 3 the rates are not improving sufficiently. What has the college done to ensure that success rates are improving at all levels?

- The college has put in place a range of appropriate strategies to improve success rates on courses for learners aged 16 to 18. For example, approaches to induction have been streamlined to help ensure that learners are enrolled on appropriate programmes. A new manager for additional learning support was appointed in September 2006 and arrangements for initial assessment have been strengthened. An online system for setting targets and monitoring learners' progress is being piloted in computing courses and in engineering electronic tracking sheets are used to record learners' progress against the learning objectives in their programmes. Individual tutorial reviews have been introduced but they are inconsistently applied. There is no home work policy.
- Learners' identified to be at risk of underachieving are provided with intensive support from a team of 8 mentors. Initial evaluation suggests that this intervention is having a positive impact.
- The college is placing higher priority on using information from learner satisfaction surveys to improve the quality of teaching and learning and curriculum planning.

- Information and guidance for learners enrolling on GCE AS and A level provision has improved and the structure of the Sixth Form Centre time table has been reorganised to allow the programme to be delivered, where appropriate, over 4 days. More students are being encouraged to undertake four GCE AS subjects in their first year and three GCE A level subjects in their second year.

What does college data show about the progress learners make at the college?

- For the three years to 2004/05 learners aged 16 to 18 achieved the GCE A level grades expected, based on their attainment at GCSE. Analysis shows that in 2005/06 they performed much better than expected. However, the college is having the analysis re-checked since it suspects that some learners' attainment on entry to the college has not been correctly recorded. The college's own preliminary analysis shows that its students continue to do as well as expected.

Quality of education and training

The grades awarded through the college's system for observation of teaching and learning in 2005/06 show a high proportion of unsatisfactory grades. At the time of the last annual assessment visit (AAV) strategies to improve teaching and learning were in the early stages of development. What progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching and learning?

- The college has made good progress in its implementation of actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Since the last AAV a comprehensive programme of observations has been carried out by external consultants as part of an external inspection of the college, and through the college's own internal observation arrangements. Moderation of grades awarded through the college's system is carried out and has eradicated the previous tendency to over-grade. However, the process has not placed sufficient priority on action planning for improvement and some observations do not contain clear enough guidance to help teachers to improve. Where a lesson is judged as unsatisfactory, teachers are provided with support from college managers and advanced skills teachers. Re-observations show that these interventions are having a positive impact. In the future the support will also be targeted at teachers

receiving a grade 3 (satisfactory) in order to increase the proportion of good teaching and learning across the college.

- The college has invested heavily in improving the quality of teaching and learning through weekly team meetings and termly development days. An experienced head of department has been seconded to provide support for managers and individual teachers, and advanced skills teachers and subject learning coaches are now being used more widely to improve practice across the college. Arrangements to share best practice have improved and there is a more open culture of peer support among teachers which is encouraging the use of a wider range of teaching methodologies.

The college is involved in a new work based learning centre which is operated collaboratively by the local authority, further education and work based sectors. How is the provision offered at this centre contributing to regional and national priorities?

- The college is contributing appropriately to the local authority owned and managed training centre (North Tyneside Skills & Enterprise Centre) situated close to the college. It has a place on the advisory committee and provides teachers for the electrical installation technical certificates for the construction apprentices managed by the local authority.
- Currently the college does not manage any apprenticeship work, providing off the job training when required by others. It has made a bid to the Learning and Skills Council to manage work in this area across several vocational areas.

Leadership and management

The college Self Assessment Report (SAR) for 2005/06 states that management information is not sufficiently robust. What progress has been made in addressing this issue?

- The management of and systems for the provision of management information have been strengthened during 2006/07. A new manager has been appointed. A thorough review of the service has been conducted and a wide ranging action plan established. Consultation with service users has been strengthened. Curriculum managers have received

training and they confirm that progress has been made and that the information they receive is now readily accessible, accurate and timely and is used, for example, to monitor attendance and in-year retention and to under-pin self-assessment.

The college has graded capacity to improve as good in the 2005/06 SAR. However, 4 of the 14 grades awarded by the college to curriculum areas have fallen by one grade and one area is now inadequate. Of the other areas only one has improved. What evidence has been used to support these judgements and, how were they moderated and validated?

- The college has strengthened systems for self-assessment to ensure that staff at all levels of the organisation are engaged in the process and that there is time available each term for course teams to monitor and evaluate progress against action plans. Internal moderation of grades awarded through the process is carried out with the support of a critical friend and external consultants. The grades awarded to subject areas in the 2005/06 report are under-pinned by a wider range of more accurate evidence than in the previous report. However, some strengths in the self-assessment report (SAR), for example those relating to improving success rates, are overstated and some key areas of improvement have been missed. In its consideration of the grade for capacity to improve the college has not given sufficient consideration to the weakness, identified in its SAR, concerning the inconsistency of the implementation of improvement processes and the slow progress in establishing arrangements for the performance management of teachers. Nor has it fully recognised the high level of inadequate teaching and the inconsistencies relating to individual reviews of learners' progress and the setting of learning targets.

The SAR states that performance monitoring and quality improvement processes are an area for improvement. What action has been taken to address this issue?

- The college has made satisfactory progress in addressing these issues. However, many developments are in the early stages of implementation and are only beginning to bring the college in line with sector norms. The college's self-assessment report for 2005/06, which is broadly accurate, and the report produced by external consultants in January 2007 are

providing a good agenda upon which the college can move forward. Staff at all levels of the college now have a better understanding of the strengths of the college and the issues it faces.

- Governors receive regular reports on the progress being made in improving the performance of the college, but not all contain sufficient information to enable governors to challenge senior managers effectively. Performance management of senior and other managers is in place but the arrangements for teachers are only in the early stages of implementation.
- The use of accessible and accurate management information has improved significantly. Much has been done to improve the quality of teaching and learning but action planning for improvement following individual lesson observations is underdeveloped.

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:

- The new principal, appointed in October 2006, is setting a clear strategic direction for the college. He is realigning management structures to bring them into line with the government's agendas for 14-19 and adult learning and is placing a high priority on improving the quality of teaching and learning. He is working to develop key partnerships with local colleges, higher education institutions and the local authority. A new accommodation strategy for the college is being developed.