

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Ealing, Hammersmith and West London
Date of visit: 3 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

At the time of the inspection in November, achievement and standards were judged to be good, with success rates above the national averages on long courses, which represent 80% of the college's provision.

Is there any indication of improvements in success rates for short courses for adults?

- At the last inspection, the success rates for learners aged 19 and over on short and very short courses were satisfactory. Over the three-year period to 2005/06, success rates have improved to the national average from seven percentage points below in 2003/04 for short courses and from 14 percentage points below for very short courses. Since the inspection, the college has reduced by around 50% its off-site short course provision in information communication technology (ICT) where success rates were low. Overall retention rates have improved for learners aged 19 and over on short and very short courses. According to college data, the retention rate for 2006/07 is 93%, an increase of three percentage points on the previous year. At the time of the visit, many of the pass rates had yet to be confirmed.

Is there any indication of improvements in success rates for work-based learning in construction, where success rates were judged to be satisfactory?

- Overall success rates for work-based learning in 2005/06 were similar to the national average. On apprenticeships, however, where most learners study, they were six percentage points below the national average. According to the provider performance report, overall success rates for construction apprentices in 2005/06 were 13 percentage points below the

national average. Of the 19 learners who left in 2005/06, eight completed the framework. The other 11 left without achieving their NVQ but some completed individual units. According to data for learners due to complete during 2006/07, of the five leavers so far, two have completed the framework. According to the Learning Skills Council (LSC) minimum level of performance report, the college is slightly below the minimum threshold in plumbing. The college has suitable arrangements in place to monitor learners' progress towards timely completion. Progress reviews are monthly. Learners now complete key skills earlier in their course and the technical certificate is delivered in units through block weeks. The college has strengthened its arrangements for on-the-job assessment.

Is there any indication of improvements in key skills, where success rates have been low?

- At the last inspection, success rates for key skills were improving but remained low. Since the inspection, the college has changed its key skills policy. Learners still study three key skills at the appropriate level but select only one key skill for assessment. The college has moved from a centrally coordinated approach to key skills to one where teaching divisions are responsible for delivery. The college has set a target success rate of 50% for 2007/08. According to college data for 2006/07, key skills success rates have improved in most divisions.

Quality of education and training

What has been done to improve support for part-time learners? To what extent have actions led to any improvements within this academic year?

- The recent inspection report judges guidance and support to be good but notes that part-time learners have a less structured tutorial system than full-time students, although they have access to on-line support and group workshops. This is being addressed for the next academic year. Although they do not all have as much one-to-one time with tutors as they would like, the part-time learners who were interviewed speak very highly of the quality of support they receive from teachers and from those who work in the various support services on different sites. They value highly the fact that teachers are responsive to their needs and

recognise that this has been instrumental in motivating them to complete their studies.

How effectively are individual learning plans (ILPs) being used by students and teachers to monitor progress, set targets and raise standards?

- ILPs are being used systematically by students and staff to record progress and targets. The inspection report highlighted inconsistencies in the quality of the ILPs and college managers recognise that ILPs continue to be a 'work in progress'. Managers are enthusiastically working on further improvements for the next academic year. This includes having more of the relevant information on-line, as well as customising the forms to be more relevant to the student and to meet different vocational requirements. Staff have been given guidelines and exemplar reviews and a series of training events are planned, including ones on interviewing and target-setting. The sample of ILPs examined indicates greater consistency in approach and less variation in quality. Those full-time students interviewed report that they find the formal review sessions with their tutor helpful. They recognise the value of negotiating targets in terms of remaining focused on their work.

To what extent have opportunities for work experience been extended?

- At the last inspection, work experience opportunities were highlighted as an area for improvement. The development plan for 2006/07 identifies actions to pilot work experience in divisions, through the use of education business partnerships and to measure the quality of work experience through an end-of-year report. The college has extended its work experience opportunities significantly. In 2006/07, 420 full-time learners undertook work experience organised through the education business partnership. These learners benefited from a wide range of additional work-based services provided through the partnership. A report that evaluates fully the pilot work is to be produced by the end of July. In its strategic plan for 2007/08, the college has set itself the target of achieving effective work experience for all full-time vocational courses and has already identified 1103 work placements for 2007/08. The promotion of work experience opportunities is now an entitlement on all

full-time courses. The college plans to employ a full-time work experience coordinator for 2007/08.

Leadership and management

What actions have been taken to address aspects of inadequate teaching in a few areas?

- Actions continue to be taken to address weak teaching and to increase the percentage of good or better teaching and learning. The quality of teaching and learning was judged to be good at the inspection, with inspectors agreeing with the college's self-assessment on strengths and areas for improvements. The college's internal observation system indicates that over 70% of teaching is good or better and around 4% is unsatisfactory. As well as graded observations, teachers are supported through mentoring, a network of subject learning coaches and a range of development activities. Those whose lessons are graded a 3 or 4 are required to produce an action plan, which is reviewed. Where appropriate, actions are targeted, for example in areas where practical teaching is better than theory teaching. A programme of continuing professional development activities is planned for next year, focusing on the use of information learning technology (ILT) and on literacy, numeracy and language. There are also plans to extend peer support and to pilot the use of non-graded observations, in order to encourage teachers to focus more on the feedback rather than on the grade.

At the time of inspection, the college had been awarded a major contract for Train to Gain. Has this been implemented successfully?

- The college has successfully implemented the Train to Gain contract. In July 2006, the college secured a London-wide Train to Gain contract valued at over £1 million to support learners in health, construction, hospitality, retail and business administration. The college delivers Train to Gain with five other partners. The management of the contract is good. The college has established a comprehensive quality assurance framework and cycle for all partners. Business processes are clear. The steering group, consisting of LSC and partner representatives, meets regularly to review partners' progress in meeting targets and overall marketing initiatives. The college has developed a very good

management information system to track learners' progress. It has achieved its recruitment targets for 2006/07 with over 500 learners from about 60 companies. At the time of the visit, many learners had only been on programme for five months or less. The college is, however, already celebrating the achievements of some learners through an event where it recognises the benefits of Train to Gain for learners and companies. The college plans to increase its Train to Gain target to 730 in 2007/08.

- The college also has a contract to deliver level 3 courses to encourage more female participation in construction, manufacturing and logistics which links closely with its gender equality scheme objectives.

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