

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Fortune Centre of Riding Therapy
Date of visit: 22 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

Are students now able to achieve externally accredited literacy and numeracy qualifications? If not, what standards and criteria are applied to measure students' levels of literacy and numeracy?

- The college has explored possible external accreditation for those learners who are studying at level 1, or who want to carry on to level 1 or above when progressing from the college. Arrangements are being put in place for next academic year. The college uses the national core curriculum as the starting point for assessing learners and augments these findings with practical activities in order to determine their starting points.

What is the college's assessment of how well students achieved in 2005/06, by whatever measure the college comes to such an assessment? Is there now a holistic system to capture students' progress against expected achievements?

- The college judged that students achieved well in 2006/07 and awarded a grade 2 (good) for this aspect. In support of this grade, and in addition to data on the acquisition of external qualifications, graphical data was presented on the progress made by each student at every half term over three years, measured against 31 assessment criteria. The college is considerably refining its system for measuring incremental progress across all areas of the curriculum, from students' point of entry to the college to their departure. This analysis will be complete by the end of July 2007. It is producing a very accessible, clear and comprehensive way of seeing and evaluating progress, highlighting for staff particular areas for development for each student.

The system has yet to be evaluated for its impact, but it is already evident that it is a powerful tool that can signal the efficacy of, for example, particular teaching and learning styles; it also has the capacity to enable staff to develop for students longer-term goals that are better informed by their prior progress. Furthermore, it enables the college to analyse and monitor progress against each criterion by gender, age, ethnicity, behavioural disorder (as assessed and identified at point of entry) and clinical condition. The system also improves the college's capacity to map students' personal and social development to the core curriculum of literacy and numeracy. Occupational therapy and physiotherapy assessments are also developing alongside these core skills assessments, focusing specifically on the progress of conceptual, cognitive and fine motor skills. Much of this cross-referencing analysis has yet to be done, but the inputting of data has made good progress to date.

- Students' individual learning plans are a good basis for monitoring progress but are underdeveloped in some respects. They set individual goals in an informed and effective way, and break these down into incremental learning steps. They do not project or define the necessary next steps for students' development, nor do they set clear, time-based expectations for students. This further enhancement of learning plans is being developed alongside the refinement of the system for measuring progress and achievement outlined above. Students have a high degree of ownership of the learning plans, and the college uses a variety of means to enable them to articulate their own progress, needs and ambitions. The college continues to make good progress towards ensuring that students conduct themselves with independence and confidence during their reviews.

Quality of education and training

How effective is the college's quality assurance system for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning?

- The graded lesson observation scheme is thorough and well established. It is imaginatively applied to a wide range of significant structured encounters between staff and students, so a good range of activities are observed and graded. Findings point to a reduction in 2005/06 of instances of unsatisfactory lessons and an increase of lessons graded

good or outstanding. Some 30 graded questions are used to ensure a consistent approach but the observation team is still being trained and the use of external moderation is in early stages of development. Staff particularly appreciate the strong emphasis put upon reflection and evaluation during their discussions following a graded observation. The college has not analysed the findings of the observation scheme in order to arrive at an evaluative account of what constitutes satisfactory, good or outstanding teaching and learning for its particular profile of students.

Has the internal monitoring of the quality of provision in literacy and numeracy improved?

- The college has improved its arrangements for monitoring literacy and numeracy. Progress in relation to the goals identified in each activity are recorded daily, and the outcomes collated by the literacy and numeracy tutor who sees each learner individually for one session a week. The outcomes are discussed and new goals agreed where appropriate. The teaching and tutorial files are monitored, but records are not kept of the sample used.

Leadership and management

How effectively does the college implement its quality assurance and improvement arrangements?

- The quality and standards committee has been strengthened and is now rigorous in its scrutiny of all facets of the college's performance. The committee includes the principal of a large neighbouring tertiary college. The work of the committee is having a strong positive impact on the focus put upon quality assurance by all parts of the college.

How has the college attempted to develop further its promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity?

- The college seeks to help students engage more fully with the wider community, particularly with those sectors who are under-represented in the student community itself. It increasingly takes them beyond the confines of its own environment on trips, to work experience placements

and in structured life skills sessions. Frequent visitors to the college expose students to people of different age, social and class backgrounds, ethnic heritage and physical ability. The college actively seeks to recruit more students and more staff from minority ethnic heritage and more males, but both the student and the staff populations remain very largely white British female.

How effectively has the college improved the qualifications of its teaching workforce?

- The director provides strong leadership in creating good opportunities for staff to expand and integrate their skills, to share knowledge and information and to trust each other more in their discourse about students. The college embraces the philosophy that all staff are involved in the education and personal growth of students, and works hard to integrate care, education and support functions.
- The college has now developed its staff database and has a record of staff qualifications and training. Outcomes from supervision meetings and observations contribute to the planning of staff development. Progress is being made on improving the qualifications of teachers. Half of the teaching staff currently have, or are working towards, appropriate teaching qualifications, and the college expects all staff to be appropriately qualified by 2010. Those appointed to teaching posts are now expected to have teaching qualifications before starting to work at the college. Almost half of the staff have literacy and numeracy qualifications at level 2 or 3, but no-one currently has a level 4 qualification. All staff recruited follow a disability course and three teachers have specific degree level qualifications for teaching people with disabilities.

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

Are health and safety procedures and actions properly recorded?

- All health and safety policies and procedures, including risk assessments, are properly recorded and kept centrally in a single file.

Does the college meet the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act?

- The college's Race Equality plan was updated in October 2006 and is fully compliant with statutory requirements. It has been adopted and approved within the last year by the quality and standards committee.