

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Farnborough College of Technology

Date of visit: 11 November 2008.

### Context

Farnborough College of Technology is a medium sized general further education college. The college has a main site in Farnborough and a campus at Aldershot which provides a venue for construction skills training, essential skills and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). In addition there are a number of community venues where IT and other skills training take place. The college also has a work based learning contract with the local LSC. Courses are offered in all 15 sector subject areas, although the provision in agriculture is very small. The 2007/08 self-assessment report notes that there are over 5500 learner enrolments, over half of whom are adults. Around 12% of learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The mission of the college is "to ensure that our students achieve foundation, technical or higher level vocational qualifications and skills". Farnborough, Aldershot and the surrounding area have low levels of unemployment; however, there are pockets of rural and urban deprivation. Local secondary schools have 5 A\* to C GCSE pass rates of around 47% which is below the Hampshire schools average.

### Achievement and standards

What is the overall attainment picture following the 2008 examination results? What progress has been made in improving success rates at level 2 and 3?	Reasonable progress
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Success rates across the college improved in 2007/08 to an overall 77%. Long course success rates at levels 1, 2 and 3, for both 16 to 18 year olds and adult learners, increased and were at or above recent national averages. Of note here was the 4 percentage point rise in the level 3 success rate for 16 to 18 year olds which was at recent national averages in 2007/08. Entry level success rates declined in 2007/08; however, numbers of learners were relatively low. Short course success rates have also improved and were generally at or above recent national averages. Key skills success rates have improved markedly in 2007/08. In addition success rates for apprentices also improved in 2007/08. Of note are the significant improvements in overall success rates for apprentices in construction and engineering. However, improvement has been slower for advanced apprentices. Retention overall improved in 2007/08. For 16 to 18 year old learners at levels 1 and 2 retention levels remained largely static. The picture for achievements (pass rates)

is more mixed. Achievements improved in 2007/08 for 16 to 18 year old learners at entry level, level 2 and level 3. They also improved for adult learners at level 1 and level 2. For 16 to 18 year olds at level 1 and adults at entry level and level 3 achievements either stayed static or declined slightly.

#### Quality of provision

What progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching and learning – especially theory lessons?	Reasonable progress
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The college lesson observation system is very capably managed and structures are in place to bring about sustained improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. The 3-2-1 scheme, with its focus on rigorous grading and timely support and development for teachers has brought about improvement in the lesson grade profile since the previous inspection. Both engineering and construction have seen marked improvements in lessons graded good or better. It was in these curriculum areas that dull theory teaching had been observed. In 2007/08 over 250 observations were completed and 69% were graded good or better, 29% satisfactory and 2% unsatisfactory. Whole college developments in individual learning plans (ILPs), additional learning support and differentiation have all helped to drive up the standard of teaching and learning. The college plans to strengthen further this area by making another appointment to continue to develop coaching for effective learning.

How has the consistency of tutorial practice been improved?	Significant progress
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The college has made significant progress to ensure that tutorial practice is consistent. All students have two hours of tutorial each week. One hour is a structured group tutorial focused on themes from Every Child Matters. These include outside speakers, group discussions and presentations and have covered such issues as safe driving, drugs and alcohol, health eating and Chlamydia. The other hour is a review of progress made against learning plans and short term targets. Tutors meet with students individually at least twice every term and give priority to students with particular problems. The tutorial system is closely integrated with learning plans which students take very seriously. Students and learners value the tutorials. Progress has been rapid to improve the tutorial system and thoroughly researched to ensure the tutorials meet the needs of the learners and are consistent across the college.

How has the quality and use of Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) been improved so as to make them more “learner centred”?	Significant progress
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The quality and use of the ILPs is now significantly improved. The plans are now much more relevant to the needs of learners and are standardised across the college. Each plan is developed and recorded within a useful personal organiser and diary. Learners thus have ownership of plans and targets and are responsible for the completion of evaluations of progress and setting of new targets in concert with their tutors. Tutors provide effective support for learners to acquire the skill of setting SMART targets. Progress has been rapid and the college has developed the system carefully. The most recent version was introduced this academic year following a very successful prototype used the previous year. A comprehensive central traffic record system enables quick recognition of performance for individual students, courses or departments. Students and tutors find them very useful to track progress and keep a record of what students need to do to succeed. Procedures to assure the quality of the ILPs are robust.

What progress has been made in increasing participation by 14 to 16 year olds and of adults to level 2 provision?	Reasonable progress
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Over the past 8 years the college has provided part-time vocational courses to 14 to 16 year old pupils in local secondary school. Currently there are programmes in 6 curriculum areas and around 450 pupils are taking part. Success rates are good and were 83% in 2007/08. In addition a small number of pupils attend the college to use IT and health and care facilities as part of the new diplomas offered by local consortia. The college is a member of 2 consortia and a number of other diplomas are being developed. Recruitment of adult learners to level 2 courses has continued to be strong.

#### Leadership and management

What progress has been made in sharing good practice at curriculum management level?	Significant progress
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The college has made significant improvements to share good practice across curriculum areas. A tutorial working party meets regularly and has successfully developed opportunities to share good practice. Materials taken from well written schemes of work are shared across departments. The director of learning quality also identifies areas of good practice and ensures that these are shared across departments. All good practice is placed on the virtual learning environment to promote easy access for all staff. Examples of good practice include the development of the tutorial system, ILPs, and the increased rigour of the observations of teaching

and learning. Various departments across the college have contributed to the development of good practice in the newly established construction department. Key skills are effectively promoted across the college to develop subject specific teaching materials. Internal verification procedures have been reviewed and updated. Sharing of good practice is well established and have brought about improvements to the quality of provision as well as broadening the range of enrichment activities available to students.