

BORDERS COLLEGE ANNUAL REPORT

INSTITUTION-LED REVIEW ACADEMIC YEAR 2007-2008

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to summarise the outcomes of the principal quality assurance and enhancement activities, including self-evaluation, undertaken during academic year 2007-08. This report was approved by the Board of Management on 13 November 2008.

The College has a number of policies and procedures relating to quality assurance and enhancement. The Board of Management are involved in this through the Curriculum and Quality Committee and the College's Leading and Learning Scheme.

Staff are provided with the College's Quality Enhancement Handbook. The purpose of the handbook is to provide all staff with the essential information and guidance they need to implement the College's Quality Enhancement System. The Quality Enhancement System includes the following elements:

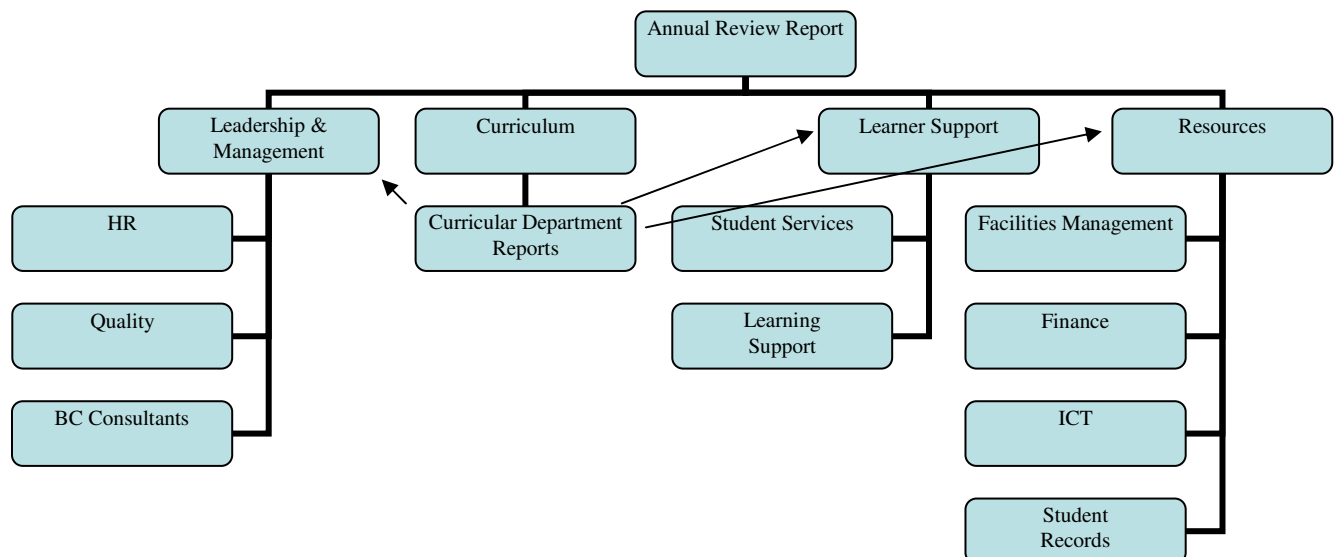
Self-evaluation and action planning; managing performance and target setting; internal quality reviews, external quality reviews; approval procedures; internal/external verification; learner and stakeholder feedback.

The College holds Academic Board meetings four times per year to discuss a number of items relating to the academic standards of provision.

SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS

All staff are involved in the College Self-Evaluation process. The process results in the production of an annual self-evaluation report and a development plan. Every programme and college support service is monitored on an annual basis through either a block review meeting or a support department meeting. The meetings are used to analyse the strengths and weaknesses within their area of the college. The strengths and weaknesses are identified using the HMle External Review Quality Indicators. This self-evaluation process then enables the teams to identify the actions required at either departmental or college level within their development plan. An action can be developed either to maintain a strength, address a weakness, meet a strategic objective or mitigate against a risk.

The College level reports on Leadership and Management, Curriculum, Learner Support and Resources are developed using the sub-level reports from support and curricular departments. This ensures that the significant strengths and weaknesses are identified relating to the College's quality culture, learner engagement and the quality of learning and teaching.



OUTCOMES OF SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS

The Self-evaluation process has identified significantly more strengths than weaknesses which has led to the following confidence statements:

- There is confidence that learners are progressing well and achieving relevant, high quality outcomes.
- There is confidence that the college has effective learning and teaching processes.
- There is confidence that the college is led well and is enhancing the quality of its services for learners and other stakeholders.
- There is confidence that the college is actively engaging learners in their own learning and the work and life of the college however this has been identified as an area that can be improved.

Actions to maintain and/or improve the strengths are contained in the Development Plan 2008-09.

The Self-evaluation process also led to the following weaknesses being identified:

Element 1 – Key Performance Outcomes

- The College 2007-08 figures for Early Retention, Retention and SARU were below the targets set for that academic year but were above the 2006-07 sector averages (with the exception of FEPT). The Early Retention figure reduced by 1% on the 2006-07 figure.
- The College fulfils its statutory duties well although there are inconsistencies in; approaches to security, Health and Safety training for curricular staff, devolving responsibilities for risk/COSHH assessments

Element 2 – Impact on Learners and other users of college services

- Engagement with Learners should be improved to ensure the programmes and services to learners meet their needs.

- There is a need to increase the flexibility of delivery and assessment modes and to improve gender imbalance within some programmes.

Element 3 – Impact on Staff

- The skills of managers, particularly middle managers, in identifying priority development needs and discussing performance issues need to be improved.
- The Peer Review system, while intended to lead to effective dialogue is inconsistently implemented and not fully effective.

Element 4 – Impact on Employers and Communities

- The College serves the local and national communities well but due to high demand for some areas of the curriculum the college is unable to provide applicants with their first choice of course and occasionally is unable to recruit viable student numbers to some courses.

Element 5 – Education, Training and Lifelong Learning

- The speed of operation and limited access to ICT equipment on current sites restricts the learning experience for some learners.

Element 6 – Providing Direction and Facilitating Change - There were no weaknesses identified for this element.

Element 7 – Management and Support of Staff

- The CPD systems and processes can be improved to ensure CPD activities are relevant and appropriate.

Element 8 – Partnerships and Resources - There were no weaknesses identified for this element.

Element 9 – Education, Leadership and Direction

- In some departments, further strategies are required to continue to improve learning and teaching.
- The Strategy for meeting Additional Support Needs is to be revised to ensure consistency across the college.

Actions to improve these weaknesses are contained in the Development Plan 2008-09.

Use of evidence

Every strength or weakness is justified by at least one source of evidence. Examples of the type of evidence used are:

- Surveys, student satisfaction surveys/feedback, staff survey, employer survey
- Minutes of meetings
- External organisation/Audit reports
- Paper documents and IT generated reports
- Policies and procedures

Role and nature of student involvement

The College ensures that students are involved in the Self-evaluation process in the following ways:

- A Class representative for each programme was appointed by the students.
- The Class representatives attended Block Team Meetings and other cross-college meetings.
- There were regular Course Tutor Meetings at which students and class representatives discussed course and college issues.
- At Galashiels, Hawick and Newtown there were 3 Site Student/staff council meetings to discuss site issues.
- Students were surveyed in Block 1 and Block 2 covering questions on Facilities, Curriculum and Learning Support.

EXTERNAL REVIEW

The College participated in reviews by other bodies:

Investors in People

The College retained the IIP Quality Standard following a visit in January 2008. The report stated that the college met all the requirements of the Standard and demonstrated excellent practice in relation to investment in people, and is very committed to continuous improvement.

Actions arising from this review have been incorporated into the Development Plan 2008-09.

External Verification Visits

The College received a total of 31 visits from a number of awarding bodies including SQA, NCFE, EQL, City and Guilds and Edexcel. There were no external holds and all 27 subject areas had successful EV reports. In addition, there was an ECDL Audit which achieved grade B.

BC Consultants participate in a number of system compliance audits from Skills Development Scotland and Scottish Enterprise. The outcomes of these audits resulted in Skillseekers and Health and Safety maintaining medium risk category and Get Read for Work was reduced to low risk category. Any recommendations arising from these audits were actioned immediately by the relevant department.

INTERNAL REVIEW

Internal Audit

The College appoints an Internal Auditor every year and the outcomes of these audits are reported to the Audit Committee. The audit areas were co-location project management, financial systems review, corporate governance and risk management, ICT Strategy and Sums audit. The opinion of the auditors is that there are no major internal control weaknesses and the lack of 4 and 5 rated recommendations indicate an absence of major issues. The College has a framework of controls in place that provide reasonable assurance regarding the effective and efficient achievement of the College's objectives and the management of key risks. There were only a few minor recommendations to be considered for improvement. All reports contained action plans detailing the responsible officers and implementation dates.

There was an Internal Verification System and Programme Audit carried out during the year. The audit covered all curricular departments and BC Consultants. A range of minor recommendations were identified and were actioned immediately. The only significant outcome related to reviewing the Peer Review process which has been incorporated into the Development Plan 2008-09.

Programme Reviews

Each curricular department carries out at least one programme review annually. The programmes reviewed during 2007-08 are listed below:

Business department; Microsoft Office Specialist (delivered part time and as an integral part of all FE programmes) and the Highers Programme. Supported programmes (Access); Heads you Win, Learning Opportunities, Workwise Preparation. Landbased department; Amenity Horticulture (Decorative). Technology department; City & Guilds Vehicle Maintenance and Repair. Service industries department; SVQ Level 1 Beauty Therapy. Care department; Care Intermediate 2

The outcomes and actions identified are detailed within the department self-evaluation report and development plan 2008-09 but the most significant outcomes ranged from:

- Implement the new Student Interview Process
- Review and clarify entry requirements
- Introduce a new school plus subject to improve recruitment
- Change the qualification entirely to one offered by another awarding body

ACTIONS IDENTIFIED

The actions required following Self-evaluation, Internal and External Reviews are written into the Development Plan 2008-09. These will be regularly monitored and reviewed during the academic year 2008-09.

The actions identified as a priority for 2008-09 are indicated below:

- There is a summary of actions relating to Early Retention and Retention which details the actions each department including SMT will take to monitor and ensure the figures are above the sector average.
- There are 2 strategies being reviewed or developed:
 - Security Strategy (for all college sites)
 - Additional Support Needs Strategy
- There are several policies and procedures being reviewed and new systems implemented:
 - Learner Feedback
 - Peer Review
 - CPD
 - Central Timetabling
- Staff Development identified:
 - Management Training
 - IOSH Managing Safely
- Areas for Development:
 - Blend2learn –increasing the flexibility of delivery
 - Curriculum for Excellence – increase knowledge
 - New Curriculum opportunities explored
- Completion of the Colleges Estates Strategy will result in several new buildings opening during 2008-09. The new buildings in Hawick and Galashiels will provide

improved access to ICT facilities, classroom and workshop rooms. The Scottish Borders Campus at Galashiels will be a shared facility with Heriot Watt University and as well as the improved facilities mentioned, there will also be a brand new Learning Resource Centre with more study areas.

GOOD PRACTICE IDENTIFIED

As a result of External and Institution-led reviews the following areas of good practice have been identified:

HMle Expanding Opportunities – A report on school-college partnership programmes in Scotland – August 2008. The case study from the Service Industries department was used to share good practice on improving services to learners. Due to fully timetabled beauty salons the department decided to timetable the practical sessions for high school pupils in the evening to ensure they gained realistic work conditions.

HMle Assessing, Recording and Analysing Learner Progress and Outcomes – September 2008. The use of SFC benchmarking tool within care department was cited as an example of good practice. The department used the benchmarking tool to identify colleges with very good KPI's and then visited those colleges. Following the visits, the team adjusted aspects of the design of the programmes and enhanced levels of learner support.

e-Skills are Key Skills has proven to be a great success in helping curricular staff as part of our preparations for taking full advantage of ICT resources to support learners when we move to Netherdale. So much so that two other FE colleges have expressed an interest in taking up this College devised qualification for their staff.

A Borders network for ESOL provision has been established and a list of classes is updated regularly and distributed to the network. An induction procedure was developed to help inform and direct students to the appropriate level and location of provision.

'Who Cares?' was a collaborative programme of training provided to people interested in working in the care sector who had little or no experience. Most were unemployed. BC Consultants worked with Access to Industry, NHS Borders, Scottish Borders Council Social Work and Community Learning and Development to design and deliver the course, (it also complemented the College's 'Prepare to Care' course).

An **e-Portfolio** based system has been developed to deliver on-line the SVQ in Management Levels 3, 4 & 5 and the Assessor/Verifier qualifications A1 & V1. The system is a comprehensive e-Assessment solution that has been designed by training and assessment professionals with years of industry experience.

INTERNAL REVIEWS FOR 2008-09

The Self-evaluation Process has highlighted the need for Internal Review of the following areas:

- A review of the PI Improver role and the impact on Retention
- A review of the current Peer Review system and it's effectiveness in identifying Good Practice, enhancing learning and teaching strategies and identification of CPD.
- A review of Core Skills