

## **IAG Gold Standard assessment – East Riding College**

**External Assessment carried out on Beverley campus 03.10.2008**  
**External Assessment carried out on Bridlington campus 08.10.2008**

**Assessors – Vince Barrett and Annabel Brannan**

### **Overview**

East Riding College is a large general further education situated on two main campuses – Gallows Lane in Beverley and St Mary’s Walk in Bridlington. It has smaller centres at Carnaby near Bridlington, offering engineering and construction programmes and the St James’ Centre in Hull offering Trade Union studies and Access to Music programmes. Both of the main college sites are to be redeveloped. Construction at the St. Mary’s Walk site is well under way and is due to open in September 2009, providing a vastly improved learning environment. A suitable site for a similar new building is currently being sought in Beverley to replace the current rather cramped accommodation on the Gallows Lane site. The college currently serves approximately 1,100 mainly full-time 16-18 year old learners who principally progress from schools in the north (Bridlington and Driffield) and central (Beverley) areas of the East Riding although there are learners drawn from Hull and Holderness. There are increasing numbers of adult learners taking advantage of the college’s Access to HE programmes and in addition, there is in the region of 3000 adult learners on mainly part-time courses. The college’s catchment areas have a predominantly white population with a mixture of pockets of urban and rural deprivation and relatively high levels of social and economic advantage. The curriculum offer ranges from entry to advanced level in a wide range of vocational and academic courses and programmes, designed to meet the needs of this wide mix of incoming learners. There is also the offer of Foundation Degree study in conjunction with the universities of Huddersfield and Hull. The college's stated mission is to be proactive in the economic and social development of the region, working in partnership to provide access to the highest quality education and skills training to meet the needs of individuals, employers and the wider community.

### **Assessment**

Prior to the formal assessment, the Connexions Curriculum Adviser for the East Riding, Maureen Kelham, worked closely with key personnel in the college, assisting in the compilation of a detailed self-assessment form in preparation for external assessment. A portfolio of evidence containing documentary representation of the college’s IAG practice was provided to the assessors prior to the date of assessment.

The formal assessment procedure took a full day for the Gallows Lane site and a further half day for the St. Mary’s Walk site. The assessors were provided with a full programme which included interviews with the vice principal, senior managers and all key IAG personnel. During the assessment, the following additional activities were undertaken: interviews with learners (randomly selected) and visual inspection of the available facilities for provision of information, advice and guidance. All interviews and observations were later cross-referenced against the portfolio of paper evidence pre-submitted by the college. The relevant collected evidence demonstrating each Element and Component of the East Riding Gold Standard for Information, Advice and Guidance is described in summary below:

## **Element 1. Accessible and Visible Information**

**Component 1: There will be one or more information areas, open at clearly displayed times, accessible to all learners and providing a range of appropriate, current and impartial information which meets all needs**

Each site has a Learner Resource Centre; at Beverley this is situated in a modern purpose-built facility and at Bridlington in a converted gymnasium off the central corridor. Both are easily accessible and well-stocked with reference materials and course texts, as well as videos and interactive DVDs. Photocopying services are available along with bookable computer workstations with access to email, college intranet and the internet. There is a range of appropriate up-to-date information on any aspect or issue affecting learners - personal, learning, progression or health - and staff are available in each centre at all times during the working day to assist learners.

There are wide-screen monitors situated at key points on the Gallows Lane site which relay any new college events or information of importance to learners. The college also has an excellent web-resource 'Moodle' which contains a wealth of information for learners and staff about such things as enrichment activities, student union issues, learning materials and available support services. The email facility is well used. The college has recently invested in a piece of software 'Youthbytes' which enables 'pop under' messages to be displayed on all college monitors, drawing attention to forthcoming meetings, activities and events.

**Component 2: All staff involved in providing information will be familiar with its content and purpose**

Each college site has a team of learning support staff; all learners have a named personal tutor and access to a Learning Support Adviser or professional counsellor when appropriate. All staff with a responsibility for the provision of information, advice, guidance or learner support interviewed as a part of the assessment process demonstrated clear understanding of the breadth and purpose of information available. There are professional development opportunities and cross-team meetings in place to ensure this understanding is maintained.

## **Element 2. Accessible Advice and Guidance**

**Component 1: Internal and external advice and guidance practitioners will collectively possess the necessary skills, knowledge, training and qualifications to identify and respond to each learner's needs**

All college IAG personnel are professionally qualified in Advice and Guidance to at least Level 3 and two are currently working towards Level 4. Both the Guidance Officers are studying for a BA Hons in Education, undertaking research projects around the impact of IAG on learner retention. The college counsellors also possess the required high level professional qualifications. There are regular meetings of Guidance Services teams to discuss college IAG provision, led by Dennis Young, the college Guidance Services Manager with responsibility for oversight of IAG provision on all sites. Other external professionals e.g. social or health services, benefits agency are consulted as necessary and all are qualified and experienced in practising in their particular fields. There is a strong multi-agency approach in the college and the Connexions service is well integrated. The college has a continuing professional development programme to ensure that practitioners' knowledge and/or skills are regularly updated.

Learners value very highly the individual help available to them via tutors, Study Support Tutors and/or Learning Support Advisers and feel them to be very approachable and non-judgemental. Worthy of particular note is the work of the two in-house Guidance Officers Melanie Brown at Gallows Lane and Lesley Culpin at St. Mary's Walk. They each play a key role in co-ordinating the IAG required by learners to ensure that all needs are met. Counselling is available to all learners requiring sustained and in-depth support with any personal issues or problems.

**Component 2: All advice and guidance practitioners will know about the work of other IAG providers who may be better placed to meet learners' needs**

Internal and external IAG practitioners working in the college come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. All are aware of the remit of others and referrals are made easily between IAG personnel in order to ensure that specific questions on topics such as UCAS, student finance, accommodation or transition are addressed by the most appropriate practitioner. The Guidance Services Manager acts as mentor to new staff, ensuring a good understanding of the range of information advice and guidance services and protocols in the college.

**Element 3. Linked IAG Provision**

**Component 1: The provision of linked IAG will be part of the remit of a senior manager within the organisation or service**

The Director of Learner Services, Ann Yates, has the overall senior management responsibility for all aspects of IAG provided by the college on all its sites. Given the diverse learner population attending the college, ongoing pastoral care is given a high priority as learners join and progress through and beyond the college.

**Component 2: Practitioners will make clear to learners the links between IAG services and where necessary support learners in their transition between these services**

The Guidance Services Manager, Dennis Young, has a pivotal role in ensuring that links between all IAG services and agencies are clear to learners. Many reported their own very positive experiences of being guided between a plethora of agencies ranging between benefits, finance, health, social, childcare and accommodation agencies. All IAG personnel are trained in ensuring learners understand how to access help according to individual need.

**Component 3: Practitioners will recognise professional boundaries and know which alternative provision is appropriate for signposting or referral to meet each learner's guidance needs**

A handbook is given to all learners as a part of their induction. This provides a good guide to available IAG services. Connexions, as the principal on-site external IAG provider, has in place a Partnership Agreement detailing the work and boundaries of Personal Advisers based in the college. Referral procedures to internal or external guidance agencies is clear and understood by practitioners.

**Element 4. Quality and Delivery of IAG**

**Component 1: IAG will be targeted at the needs of learners and informed by social and economic priorities at local regional and national levels**

Although East Riding College is situated in a largely rural area, it does serve a very diverse range of learner need. The curriculum offer by the college is correspondingly broad with vocational and academic programmes up to Level 3 and a large Access to HE cohort. Consequently, the need for robust provision of information advice and guidance for such a clientele is essential; the college acknowledges its responsibility to provide this and all IAG is given in the context of individual learners' backgrounds, interests and aspirations. Many learners interviewed during the course of this assessment said that they were particularly grateful for the help they had received in securing the necessary financial support to enable them to undertake their courses. Others said how valuable the help with childcare had been. In response to national 14-19 developments, the college is also heavily involved in the development of Diploma consortia, ready for a September 2009 start in 7 lines of learning.

**Component 2: A planned personal development programme based upon DfES/DCSF national recommendations will underpin IAG**

Every full-time learner is allocated a personal tutor to whom they can refer for help and support with any aspect of their learning. There is a comprehensive personal development programme for all full-time learners, delivered by tutors and designed to underpin available advice and guidance. All programme materials are all readily available via the college's

intranet system and tutors may adapt these to suit their learners' needs. To complement the tutorial programme there is a huge range of enrichment activities on offer which includes a 'Next Steps' fair, visiting speakers addressing issues such as smoking and health, visits and fun activities. There is a very full calendar of enrichment activities available to all students and this is devised and run by Tracy Heywood, the college's Enrichment Officer.

### **Element 5. Diversity of IAG Provision**

**Component 1: IAG provision will recognise and reflect the diversity of learners' needs and promote equality of opportunity and access**

There is an established team of Learning Support Advisers led by Jane Chadwick Curriculum Quality Leader Basic/Key Skills, which supports all learners as they progress. In discussion, learners felt happy with their courses and said that the college supported them at all times. There is an initial literacy and numeracy assessment of all learners before or as they join the college. Learners identified as having additional needs are provided with appropriate additional support - academic, pastoral or both. However, there is a recognised need to take more detailed account of previous support arrangements at school or other previous places of learning when devising support packages for students with additional or multiple needs. This could be achieved through increased liaison with schools and informed by the Section 140 assessments which are carried out by Connexions PAs in year 11. These prospective college learners should be able to benefit from an extended phase of induction where college staff work with teachers and carers of young people with special or multiple needs to ensure a smooth transition into the new learning environment.

**Component 2: IAG will be available in other more neutral premises whenever appropriate**

Connexions centres are signposted as alternative sources of IAG and learners are made aware of the Connexions Centres in both Bridlington and Beverley. Uniquely, the college employs a Community Guidance Officer, Michaela Blackford, who works in community and Job Centre environments, helping people currently unemployed into learning or work. As the college provides such a wide range of vocational learning opportunities, many are encouraged to enrol but where college provision is not appropriate, Michaela works with other agencies to ensure that people are advised of more suitable provision.

### **Element 6. Impartiality of IAG Provision**

**Component 1: IAG will promote equally all options available and open to learners based on the defined needs and circumstances of each individual to ensure as far as possible, accurate matching of stated need to help and support**

Impartiality of information, advice and guidance, especially with regard to career and progression is seen to be very important within the college. Most of the college's 16-18 learners are full time and normally progress at age 17 or 18 on to work, further study or higher education. Information and advice on options for progression from all courses is impartial and includes information about provision available at other learning providers. There is particularly strong support for those learners who choose to move on to Higher Education because many of these learners are from families where there is no history of any previous experience of university. The college's School and Community Liaison Manager, Mick Mather, works closely with all feeder schools. The college enjoys good working relationships with schools and is represented at all local school options evenings. This is a considerable achievement given that all have sixth forms.

**Component 2: IAG will support learners in making informed decisions and will not favour any particular learner or groups of learners in order to address institutional targets or goals**

The Connexions PA has access to a range of student information – from Connexions Humber's CCIS Trakrekord database, the college's internal recording systems, ILPs, in order to help assessment of guidance need. Students are fully supported in selecting their next steps and in taking necessary action to achieve them. East Riding College does not have any vested interest in retaining learners on courses or programmes that are not matched to their needs or ambitions.

## **Element 7. IAG for Learning and Work**

**Component 1: IAG for learning and work will support learners in exploring the implications of possible career choices when planning their futures**

As East Riding College provides many vocational courses, it ensures that, as far as possible, learners undertake their learning in real work environments. Both the main campuses have training restaurants that are open to the public and I was able to witness first hand as a customer in both restaurants, the professionalism of young people training for jobs in catering, hospitality and food preparation. The college also has hairdressing salons and a fully operational travel agency on site. Many learners also undertake work experience as an element of their course with local employers and the college has built strong links in both Beverley and Bridlington. The implications of possible career choices are therefore firmly embedded in all vocational programmes of study.

**Component 2: IAG practitioners with a career focus will work closely with local employers to ascertain up-to-date LMI**

Labour market information is available to learners via the Careers specialist PA in college who keeps up to date with local and national employment trends and is able to advise learners accordingly. LMI is also available via the Moodle, Area Wide Prospectus and LMI Humber websites. Vocational programmes with large amounts of work placement time offer significant and current LMI to their learners.

**Component 3: IAG provision will ensure that all learners have access to a common 14-19 prospectus from the end of key stage 3 in order that they are made aware of opportunities and qualification requirements for study and training from the age of 14 and for further study, training or employment from the age of 16**

The college has listed its course provision in the local electronic Area-Wide Prospectus ([www.learneastriding.co.uk](http://www.learneastriding.co.uk)) and receives applications via the inbuilt common application process (CAP). As the Prospectus develops, post-17 learners will be able to use the log-in details provided to them in Year 10 at school to make applications to further learning.

## **Element 8. IAG responsiveness to the needs of clients**

**Component 1: IAG practitioners will liaise with each other and all external agencies and services that provide support for learners**

College policies are clear and were included in the portfolio of evidence presented prior to this assessment. As indicated in Element 3.2, the college has in place detailed mechanisms for ensuring liaison between IAG practitioners and these include stated systems for information sharing, child protection, and data protection. As witnessed during this assessment, the IAG needs of the college's learner population are immensely varied – ranging from which course to follow, how to change course, how to tailor guided course hours so as not to affect benefit entitlement, how to arrange childcare, coping with bereavement – the list is endless but in all cases, the college has responded appropriately and some learners indicated that they could not have continued in learning without the help of the college's Guidance Services.

**Component 2: IAG provision will ensure that available information is acknowledged and incorporated into advice and guidance sessions**

All shared IAG information is contained within student records in the college's database. In addition, the Connexions Personal Adviser maintains learner information in the Trakrekord database. This information may be accessed by one or more IAG practitioners to be incorporated into guidance sessions.

**Element 9. Evaluation of IAG**

**Component 1: All IAG practitioners and learners are able to feed back their views on the provision within the organisation**

Learners interviewed demonstrated knowledge of the variety of support offered in the college and expressed satisfaction with the help available to them. Although most learners choose either the Gallows Lane or St. Mary's sites because of their range of courses and proximity to home, several said they had chosen for furthering their careers in a new direction and younger students said they enjoyed the more adult environment of a college over school sixth form. The college demonstrates a 'continuous improvement' philosophy to its IAG provision and has been awarded the Matrix Standard in recognition of this. Learners do feel that their views are listened to and that action takes place where necessary and this is borne out by the Ofsted 2008 monitoring report which states "Learners' views are well considered."

Having spent a full day at Gallows Lane and half a day at St. Mary's Walk, interviewing, questioning and observing - in addition to consideration of the submitted paper evidence supporting the quality of IAG at East Riding College – the two assessors agree that the college should be recommended to receive the East Riding's Gold Standard Award for IAG.

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