

Commercial in Confidence



THE ISLE OF WIGHT COLLEGE



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1. Assessment Information

Assessment Type	ACCREDITATION REVIEW
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2. Organisation – Introduction, Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

The Isle of Wight College (IOW College) is a further education college serving a local (island) population on the Isle of Wight, Hampshire. In 2015/16, the college supported 1725 full-time students, 1395 part-time learners and 1669 full-cost learners. Due to increasing competition for 'A' level students by schools on the island, the college stopped its 'A' level provision in 2016, to focus on vocational programmes. Programmes delivered range from foundation to higher level, as well as HNC, HND and foundation degrees, accredited through partnerships with universities. The college also offers leisure courses and bespoke employer focussed programmes and is developing a broad range of apprenticeship programmes, to meet employer needs.

The local context of the island presents the college with a number of challenges and opportunities. The Isle of Wight is one of England's most underperforming areas for education, and was last year named as one of 16 local authorities where less than 60 per cent of children have below average attainment levels. The island has areas of deprivation with low school results linked to a range of social issues. A higher proportion than the norm of young people on the island, fail to achieve core GCSE outcomes in English and Maths; across the island a number of young people are home educated. Many young people, facing a range of barriers to achievement and have limited career aspirations.

Although the island has a strong hospitality focus (e.g. as a holiday island), the Isle of Wight has witnessed growing STEM opportunities with some of the leading technology, electronics and aerospace employers operating on the island. Over the last few years, the College has been helped to invest in new facilities with a new STEM Centre developed in conjunction with Solent LEP and other stakeholders and a new Centre of Excellence for Composite, Advanced Manufacturing and Marine (CECMM), due to open in 2017.

The college is also working proactively with a number of employers, universities and other stakeholders to support qualifications and initiatives to address both local skill gaps (e.g. in STEM, nursing and care related areas, hospitality, the public sector and teaching) and to enhance the career aspirations of students.

To better support students who do not have the necessary qualifications to progress directly onto vocational programmes or students without a clear vocational path, the college offers an Insights programme. The College has also developed a new facility, Pathways, for students with learning difficulties or disabilities.

IAG scoped for this assessment relates to the delivery of Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) outlined in the policy of the same name and the college's IAG Statement of Service. Services are delivered by the Careers Adviser (with external CEIAG offered by a National Careers Service Advisor); staff within support functions such as the Admissions, Marketing, Learning Resources Centre, Student Services and Apprenticeship teams; by the Foundation Learning Co-ordinator (e.g. for the Insights programme) and embedded across the curriculum.

At IOW College, key aspects of CEIAG delivery are around ensuring that prospective /actual learners are provided with information on the full range of post-16 education, training and employment options and can access information from a variety of sources.

Careers education includes topics linked to an exploration of career ideas (KUDOS), job search activities such as CV and interview preparation, progression (such as UCAS applications) and access to up to date careers tools and websites. CEIAG support also includes visits, talks and events related to careers awareness (e.g. from employers and universities), support with work experience and on course progression and information, advice and guidance.

The college provides a broader range of IAG outside the scope of this assessment and the remit of the CEIAG policy e.g. related to personal development and enhanced employability and entrepreneurial skills. Therefore, it is suggested, that the college reviews the full range of IAG interventions/services offered across the college and by department, to develop both an overarching IAG strategy and policy and to structure, measure and monitor wider departmental IAG practice.

The college's mission is '*learner first*' with CEIAG supporting learners to make informed career choices so that learners can progress towards their career goals. CEIAG contributes towards the college's four strategic aims and supports recruitment, retention, progression and destination outcomes. For example, the college has a 92% retention target, a 90% positive progression target and is keen to grow Higher Education applications (e.g. measured through UCAS applications) and apprenticeship applications. The college's strategic aims include: -

- To be the lead post-16 education provider on the island.
- To offer a wide range of learning opportunities which are responsive to learners' needs and enable sustainable institutional growth.
- To provide first class resources and ensure their efficient and effective application to support learning.
- To recruit and retain a highly skilled and motivated staff and governing body.

The Careers Adviser uses Learner Survey outcomes, specifically ratings linked to career and progression information, options and choices, data relating to UCAS applications including that relating to equality and diversity applicants and destination data gained by the college, to measure performance. This data informs the Self-Assessment Review process and the resultant Quality Improvement Plan.

To support the engagement and recruitment of learners and as part of the CEIAG process, information about courses and progression opportunities is provided to prospective stakeholders in many ways. This ranges from open days, presentations, visits and taster events to extensive careers related information provided through social media, marketing material and the website. Where required, more targeted 1:1 support can be provided e.g. by the Admissions team, the College Careers Adviser and faculty areas, enabling individuals to access information in ways relevant to their needs. The Apprenticeship team work proactively with employers and other partners to promote apprenticeship opportunities and raise awareness of changes to apprenticeships (e.g. the levy). Interviewees felt that they could access information in ways relevant to their needs.

Depending on the programme, prospective learners are invited to an assessment/interview process with the relevant curriculum area, to discuss their options and aspirations. Through such interventions, learners are helped to consider their career goals and access relevant information on additional support available (e.g. bursary/childcare/and transport funding and additional learning support).

Learners felt that the process enabled them to make informed decisions and be guided onto relevant courses. Learners also commented that the new online application and enrolment process, eTrakr, provided them with timely updates about the status of their application and actions required.

As part of information provision and in line with the college's strategic goals around improving English and Maths outcomes and enhancing progression outcomes, the college provides clear information and guidance on what functional skills/GCSE minimum requirements are required for designated courses/careers. The college also provides information on the types of English/Maths support available to learners, to help them achieve core qualifications. The college has revised how both functional skills are delivered/embedded and the overall management of the process, including changing the role of personal tutors to Student Progression Advisers, to improve outcomes for learners. Whilst it is still early days to measure outcomes, the college is seeing improved attendance on programmes; learners interviewed were clear of English/Maths requirements for their progression route and felt that they were gaining confidence in their skills.

To support learners to achieve their learning goals, curriculum staff supported by Student Progression Advisers (as required), will undertake regular reviews with learners to ensure that not only are they on track for their qualification but that their wider needs are supported. Student Progression Advisers offer targeted 1:1 support to help learners address barriers to learning and access relevant internal and external support as necessary, with a focus on improving outcomes for vulnerable learners. For example, links have been made to Children's Services, CAMHS, the Education Welfare Officer and with parents/foster carers and social workers as appropriate, and/or with internal services such as Additional Learning Support and the Careers Adviser, to address an individual's needs.

Where appropriate, alternative course options will be explored with the learner to best suit his/her requirements. Individual learners talked about being helped to transfer to an apprenticeship and being helped to change qualification levels, to better support their goals.

Through effective recruitment processes and offering bespoke support, the college has been able to achieve and maintain its 92% retention target.

In line with its strategic intent, the college offers a range of learning opportunities which are responsive to learner's needs. For example, to prepare learners for employment/progression, the college offers relevant work experience/activities and where appropriate, facilitates industry related projects/competitions (for example in graphics, landscaping and joinery). As part of Open Evenings and a range of internal and external events, learners are invited to showcase their talents, (e.g. hairdressing, construction and motor vehicle), to develop and promote their skills. More holistically, across the college and within departments, a programme of speakers and careers initiatives have helped learners to become more aware of work and job opportunities within different business sectors. The college also hosts an island Careers Convention. Learners commented that such initiatives have helped them develop their skills and build a more realistic understanding of the work-place/potential career paths which, in turn, has helped to inform next steps. Learners on care related courses commented that by being able to undertake a range of placements they had gained a clearer understanding of different work environments and career roles and make more informed university choices.

The college recognises that many learners are prevented from accessing HE courses on the mainland due to a range of barriers (not least personal needs and the cost/time commitment of travel to the mainland). To address higher level skill gaps, the college is developing the CECAMM facility in conjunction with a range of stakeholders, has enhanced STEM provision and is working with local universities to develop outreach HE programmes in a number of key disciplines. It is hoped that such initiatives will enable IOW employees/learners to upskill and/or attract new talent to the island and enable local businesses to remain competitive. Proactively, the college has upskilled its own staff members to be able to deliver new programmes so that they are knowledgeable and motivated to support the college's strategy.

The Careers Adviser uses Learner Survey data to measure progress against key deliverables. For example, the Learner Survey indicates that the overall proportion of learners who can clearly identify next steps has declined from 92% (13/14) to 82% (15/16) with issues identified in a small number of areas. As a result, the Careers Adviser is working with relevant faculties to address gaps. For example, a new study programme is being developed to meet a need for lower level construction skills.

In terms of internal progress, 95% of students progress to higher or same level qualifications and it is predicted that 85% of learners will achieve positive destinations after leaving the college (although all leavers are supported and encouraged to achieve a positive destination). The college is aware that post course tracking of learners has posed a difficulty and has a plan of interventions to address this. In terms of qualification achievements, college outcomes were impacted by low English and Maths results. These are being addressed through a more targeted and embedded approach and clearer communication about English and Maths requirements in career planning discussions.

To support HE progression outcomes, the Careers Adviser has facilitated the development of a number of new pathways for L3 students seeking to progress into higher education (e.g. relating to L3 fitness, hairdressing and painting and decorating programmes). The Careers Adviser has also developed a number of compact agreements with local universities to support IOW College students into HE.

In line with its strategic intent to encourage and create HE and apprenticeship opportunities, the college has achieved many positive outcomes. For example: -

- In 2015/16, of 162 students who applied to university c.26% were 6th form students. In 2016/17 despite the loss of 'A' level programmes, 160 students have applied for university (against a target of 120); all students have a vocational background.
- In terms of Equality and Diversity, UCAS data indicates that there are no significant differentials for IOW College minority learners and those with a self-declared disability, in gaining a university place.
- Despite falling national trends of male students progressing to university the college has seen an increase in the number of male students progressing to university (44.6%).
- The college has increased the number of apprentice learners from 2% (2012/13) to 5%.

To support the college's strategic aim around the provision of excellent resources and their efficient and effective application, course and careers information on the college website has been improved.

A new process has been developed to centralise course/progression information. As a result, information provided through the website (the core tool for course information) is current, accurate, updated in real time, user friendly and easily readable on iPad or phone technologies (identified as learners' preferred tools).

To support CEIAG upskilling, the Careers Adviser provides regular INSET training/updates and will work with departments (including the LRC) to develop/deliver a range of interventions such as CV writing and UCAS workshops. Curriculum staff work closely with external bodies/employers to enhance their knowledge. Staff interviewed felt that they were proactively supported to deliver professional CEIAG interventions and/or refer learners to the Careers Adviser. However, through this assessment, it has been identified that there would be value in sharing and benchmarking CEIAG practice across curriculum teams, to ensure that good practice is captured and maximised.

As previously noted, the college is keen to ensure that learners are aware of the broad range of options open to them. In addition to interventions referred to earlier, including progression and careers discussions with tutors, support from the Learning Resource Centre and CEIAG offered through the Careers Adviser/NCS Service, the Careers Adviser manages a centrally located volunteer, employment and apprenticeship board, with links to vacancies advertised through Isle of Wight Jobs. Learners can also access a broad range of information/tools through the college careers website, the NCS website and through the LRC. Learners commented on the accessibility and availability of information and the value of online tools to help them.

On many programmes, curriculum staff deliver a complementary study and support programme to prepare learners for next steps. Some learners on HE/Access programmes, commented that it would be useful to have a clear plan of CEIAG interventions, to know what was being covered over the year. For example, several learners commented that they would like to know more about university finance so that they could prepare better.

As noted earlier, through the interview and assessment process, a learner's individual needs are identified, discussed and developed into an Individual Learning Plan on eTrackr. Learners and staff commented on the value of eTrackr as a tool to build the learner's CV, capture skills development and record progress reviews and next steps.

Curriculum staff interviewed commented on facilitating work placements/experience/opportunities aligned to the needs of the learner and offering bespoke support (e.g. help with UCAS applications, CV writing and personal statements), to enable an individual to meet his/her goals. Where appropriate, learners will also be supported by the Careers Adviser and other specialist staff to explore wider possibilities/new avenues. Learners and staff commented on the value of e.g. university travel funding which has enabled individuals and small groups of learners to access UCAS events/ university visits on the mainland and has helped learners to consider their options.

Overall, learners interviewed felt that the support they received through the college, was individualised, enabled them to focus on their personal goals, understand their options, increase their confidence and motivation and be better able to plan next steps. Many learners commented on the fact that their aspirations and goals had been enhanced and they were now able to consider higher level qualifications and broader career paths. Those looking at university options generally felt that they were well prepared for HE, had been able to explore courses relevant to them and were positive about future possibilities.

Learners appreciated the opportunity to gain business skills through projects developed with employers and/or to undertake work experience. They felt that these not only helped to build their business/customer awareness and wider interpersonal/employability skills but provided pertinent skills for their C.V.

At a broader level, a number of learners commented on the value of gaining an awareness of wider workplace issues including those around discrimination and stereotyping, British values, health and safety and safeguarding. They felt that they were now more attuned to college/workplace requirements and what to do if there was an issue.

3. Strengths

A number of strengths were identified during the assessment. These are detailed below. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard.

- Using technology to improve access to information - The college has developed systems to improve the range and accuracy of online information and access to it. For example, through improvements to course information on the website and through an online application system, information can be accessed from a range of electronic devices. Improved functionality enables the learner to search/ask questions/live chat and apply for courses. Course information on the website is centrally updated in real time, thus ensuring that course information is current and accurate. (4.7)

More strategically, the Marketing Team are using technology to improve access to/showcase events. This in turn has the potential for broadening stakeholder engagement. For example, the service provided live broadcasts of various award ceremonies in 2016, thus enabling those parties unable to attend the awards ceremony to access and (remotely) celebrate the success of learners. The service has also used drone footage (of the site) and You-Tube clips to provide information on Isle of Wight College activities/information. It is anticipated that such information will help to engage a wider range of stakeholders and through building up knowledge of the College, will help stakeholders to improve their awareness of services and contribute to more informed decision making. (4.7)

- Currency of knowledge within discipline area - Staff interviewed were able to comment on proactive strategies for updating their professional knowledge including developing partnerships/networks with employers and other professional contacts, visits from and to universities/employers, access to relevant journals/bodies and internal/external training/workshops. (2.4)
- Partnership working - College staff work proactively with a range of partners to enhance progression opportunities and address skill gaps. For example, the Careers Advisor working with relevant staff, has been able to bridge progression steps into HE, for several qualifications where progression opportunities were lacking. The college has worked closely with the LEP and other stakeholders to develop STEM facilities/enhance STEM skillsets and to create CECAMM, to better meet the needs of the local labour market. The apprenticeship team in conjunction with internal and external partners is continuing to raise the profile of apprenticeships and share knowledge about changes to apprenticeship funding. Examples were cited of staff developing informal and formal networks with local employers/bodies to share information/facilitate opportunities for learners. A number of learners commented on opportunities developed by their tutors/within the curriculum area to undertake employer linked projects (including opportunities to present their project work to employers and receive feedback). (1.8, 4.4)
- Bespoke and flexible support - The college's ethos of 'learner first' is clearly embodied in practice and is demonstrated in a range of flexible programmes and tailored support, to meet the needs of different learners. Learners and staff commented that such programmes enable Isle of Wight College to engage with a broad range of learners, help them to address barriers to progression and raise their aspirations. (3.2)

4. Areas for Future Development

A number of areas for future development were identified during the assessment which may develop or enhance the service delivered. These are detailed below and for the organisation to consider as part of its ongoing continuous quality improvement actions. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard. These will form the basis for discussion at the Continuous Improvement Checks (CIC) conducted twelve and twenty-four months from the date of this Assessment, along with any other notable developments.

IAG overarching strategy - Across the college there are many strands of IAG (information and support) delivered within and across departments. This includes IAG relating to the whole learner journey and the development of a broad range of entrepreneurial and personal skills, IAG provided to staff, to employers, to partners and other stakeholders. Although the focus of this assessment is on careers education, information, advice and guidance as outlined in the CEIAG policy and Statement of Service, the college may wish to consider developing an overarching IAG strategy to frame the different service strands, identifying what is available and how it is offered. (1.1, 1.2, 3.1)

Cross college IAG working group - From the **matrix** assessment, areas of CEIAG good practice across different curriculum areas, were identified. Therefore, the College may wish to develop an across college IAG working group to share, identify and maximise good practice around e.g. the recruitment of learners, work-experience, careers interventions and developing work based projects. (4.8)

Raising profile of HE /Access courses and apprenticeships - A number of HE/Access learners commented that the college could do more to raise the profile of HE/Access courses and the support available, to encourage more mature learners back into learning and in turn, to raise their aspirations. In tandem with this, the college may wish to do more to improve awareness of apprenticeships, particularly at higher levels and in areas of skills shortage. To support this, the college may wish to develop a focus group(s) with relevant student groups, to consider what prospective (target) learners want to know and how to market programmes to them. (1.6)

Developing the value of work experience - Whilst learners value work experience and staff actively seek to ensure that the experience is appropriate for the learner, the college may wish to look at ways of maximising the impact of work experience for individuals through more streamlined processes. This could be through e.g. the use of appropriate log books, through curriculum related project work requiring the learner to research information/practice in the workplace and/or through presentations back to classmates. (3.2)

Clearer plan of departmental support Interventions for access students/those applying to HE - A number of students commented that they would like a clear study skills/support programme, so that they are aware of topics to be covered over the term/year and can plan for them. This would also reassure learners that key topics will be covered in a timely way. For example, some students said that they would like a session on applying for student university loans/ how to manage the loan /some simple guidelines. (3.2)

Parents information - The college may wish to review IAG provided to parents/guardians, of young people, so that they are better able to support the young person at college. For example, whilst the college provides information to parents at Open Days and through updates when the young person is on programme, the college may wish to consider developing further guidance around e.g. college standards, what the young person should expect at college, why functional skills/GCSEs in Maths and English are so important, bursary information and support and resources available, to help parents/guardians better prepare and support their young person. Taking this further, some young people suggested that there could be more information provided to parents about applying to university/applying for funding as they felt it was a daunting prospect. (1.6)

Soft skills measurement tools - As part of the overall personal development of learners, the college may wish to investigate/embed tools to help learners consider/reflect on distance travelled in relation to personal/soft skills development as there did not appear to be a cohesive approach. Such tools could also be used in CV/personal statement development. Where tools are used, the college may wish to consider how these could be better shared (e.g. through the proposed cross college IAG working group). (3.1)

Developing across-college mini enterprises, where appropriate - Whilst it is recognised that the college does not want to lose the support of local employers if they developed competing internal curriculum 'trade' services, the college may wish to consider ways of developing across-college enterprises/businesses/projects that are not in conflict with the external market. In setting up such activities, the college may wish to consider how different curriculum areas can work together to share expertise/knowledge and enhance participants' business/teamworking/enterprise skills. (4.8)

The annual **matrix** Continuous Improvement Check will allow the organisation to demonstrate on an ongoing basis the developments they are continuing to make to support individuals <http://matrixstandard.com/continuous-improvement-checks/> . These may include the Areas for Future Development above.

Please note that annual Continuous Improvement Checks are mandatory and non-completion within the required timescale will impact on your organisation's accreditation.

5. Methodology

The following methods were used to gather evidence against the **matrix** Standard during the assessment process.

- 1:1 interviews - 7 1:1 interviews were conducted including interviews with 2 Senior Management, the Careers Advisor, 2 employers and 2 partners.
- Telephone Interviews - 3 telephone interviews were conducted with 2 partners and 1 employer.
- Group interviews - 16 group interviews were conducted. 11 group interviews were with staff delivering different aspects of CEIAG; 5 group interviews were with learners (apprentices, part-time, full-time, Access and HE)
- Review of website.
- Review of a range of documentation including the business plan, induction material, marketing and IAG information, policies and procedures and recording, tracking, reporting and feedback information.
- Tour of the Admissions, Learning Resource Centre and Student Services facilities.