

*Learning and Teaching Strategy
2005 to 2010*

Summary

Learning and Teaching Strategy 2005-2010 (extracts)

1. Introduction

Purpose

This document sets out a strategy for learning and teaching at the Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies for the next five years. The strategy informs the wider strategic planning process, curriculum plans and individual programme plans and supports a number of other key strategic planning documents, including the College's Human Resources Strategy, Research Development Strategy and Widening Participation Strategy.

2. Aims and Objectives of the College

Distinctive Characteristics

Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies has the following distinctive characteristics:

- Specialisation in the provision of learning and teaching in subjects related to hospitality, tourism and the 'service to people' sectors.
- Strong links with industry to which the College is a major provider of employees at all levels and of consultancy services.
- Vocational/practical elements in all programmes, and a strong management-related element in most.
- A systematically developed curriculum offer that covers FE foundation studies to Masters level study in most of our specialist subjects.
- Long-standing experience of supporting learners through progressive stages of education.
- A long-standing international reputation - 20% of HE students are drawn from some 75 countries outside the UK.
- Curricular approaches with international relevance.
- Long standing success in supporting students whose families have little prior experience of HE, or who are from neighbourhoods of social and economic deprivation.

Mission

Our aim is to maintain an environment that encourages and supports participation in the learning process by all those with the ambition and commitment to succeed. As a specialist provider of further and higher education vocational programmes, we will promote a culture of scholarship and opportunity that equips students with appropriate skills, knowledge and quality standards to enable them to compete, with advantage, at all levels within the sectors we serve.

Academic Structure

The College's specialist nature is reflected in its learning and teaching structures, in which the Academic Management Team provides an integrating mechanism for the work of five HE

Academic Schools and four FE teaching sections. The Academic Board monitors the quality of provision through a number of active committees, including the establishing, auditing and review of policies and priorities, which are managed and carried out by appropriate staff.

3. Context for the Learning and Teaching Strategy

The College is a learning and teaching institution

Learning and teaching are core activities. The College is committed to supporting its staff in the evaluation and application of new learning and teaching methods in line with its objective of attaining high quality and excellence in terms of teaching. The quality of learning and teaching in all areas of the curriculum has been recognised through independent audit - not least by the QAA and OFSTED. The award of 'Centre of Vocational Excellence' status to two curriculum areas was also predicated on the quality of learning and teaching and its outcomes in high levels of student retention and attainment. The College emphasises a 'student-centred' approach for all learning, teaching and support activities.

The change in the Home/EU student fee structure and the introduction of a new Bursary scheme from 2006 are likely to cause a period of considerable turbulence in the recruitment environment. It will be necessary to monitor closely the impact of the College's Bursary scheme and to rapidly adjust it if necessary. However, the College is in a strong financial and student recruitment position and there is confidence that demand for its awards will be maintained. Opportunities for growth in both the HE and FE sectors are thought to remain restricted for the lifetime of this plan, with an increase in home/EU student numbers coming only through periodic bidding activities to either HEFCE or the LSC.

The approach to e-learning over the lifetime of the previous strategy was one of building consensus and support for the use of technologies to support, rather than replace, more traditional teaching and learning activities. This blended learning approach has been successful, and has provided a firm foundation for the introduction of approaches that will make possible a substantial increase in the use of learning technologies.

The College has always enjoyed excellent relationships with employers and industry lead bodies. Opportunities for continued development of these will be actively sought, including the creation of bespoke learning opportunities, the involvement of industry and employers in curriculum design and even greater participation in learning and teaching activity.

The College has an international reputation as a provider of learning and teaching. A significant number of international students are recruited every year and some programmes are delivered in overseas locations. However, the impact of the international perspective goes even deeper, as the College seeks to provide an international perspective in every programme of study, encouraging UK students to embrace the global nature of the sectors to which our programmes are related.

The College will remain a specialist provider of learning and teaching in its sectors. In order for this to be maintained, it will be important that staff continue to be encouraged to keep abreast of relevant academic and industry changes.

Changes in the patterns of postgraduate education and the nature of work are likely to mean that non-standard teaching patterns and distance education is likely to figure more strongly in the future patterns of delivery, particularly in postgraduate taught courses. The systems to support these approaches will need to be regularly reviewed.

Strategic vision

The College will remain a specialist provider and, through organic growth and via opportunities to bid for additional funded student numbers, it aims to increase both HE and FE student numbers. Target FTE student numbers by 2010 are:

2500 Home/EU UG students

500 International students

1800 FE students

200 PG students

A large proportion of new HE students are likely to be from backgrounds with little or no experience of higher education. An increase in part-time students is also thought likely in both HE and FE programmes. It is expected that there will be greater use made of the flexibility inherent in many of the awards we offer.

The Accreditation Agreement with the University of Birmingham has been highly successful and in 2005 was re-approved for a further five years. This close working link with the University is a key aspect of our institutional success and its maintenance is very important.

4. Strategy for Learning and Teaching

The Learning and Teaching Strategy aims to:

Support and enable students to develop to their full potential through providing a learning experience of high quality which also acts as a foundation for lifelong learning and development.

A high standard of learning and teaching can be achieved in our specialist vocational provision when this is supported by tutor's vocational experience, knowledge and scholarship. The quality of learning and teaching will be assured by internal and external quality assurance procedures, supported by a programme of staff development in which encouragement is given to research and knowledge transfer activities. The College is committed to the development of learning and teaching methods, technologies and modes of delivery appropriate to its portfolio of subjects. In pursuit of this aim, the College has defined four strategic aims for learning and teaching. The aims, and the principal objectives for each are:

LTA 1: To enhance the learning and teaching process while retaining the best aspects of current practice.

- The application of learning and teaching methods that are shown to be educationally effective as well as cost effective. Where appropriate, student centred learning will be fostered and encouraged. The intention is to make learning and teaching a rewarding and fulfilling experience for both students and staff.
- The application of educational technology to make the learning process more innovative and imaginative without compromising pedagogical effectiveness and desired learning outcomes.
- The extension of the e-learning strategy to further promote the use of technology-based learning environments.

- The continued vocational contextualisation of learning and teaching- including the use of live case studies and an emphasis on reflecting current vocational practice in assessment and learning.
- The introduction of additional block-mode teaching and learning opportunities where this is relevant and support for distance learning through the College's e-learning portal.
- The continued encouragement for staff to be involved in personal and team development activities to support their expertise in designing and delivering teaching, learning and assessment.
- Making available additional resources to make it possible for more staff to be released from teaching and learning duties in order to undertake research industry updating and knowledge transfer activities.
- Continuing to support systems that enable the regular review of teaching, learning and assessment, including teaching observations, internal audit, student surveys and the newly introduced Module Review Board.

LTA 2: To increase opportunities for those with appropriate intellectual ability but backgrounds different from those traditionally entering college or university.

- Offering a system of bursaries to ameliorate the introduction of an increased tuition fee, targeted at those from low income groups.
- Particularly encouraging applications from people with disabilities to the College's programmes.
- Offering equal encouragement to those with traditional qualifications, such as A levels, and those with vocational qualifications, such as NVQs, National Diplomas.
- Addressing the needs of mature students with existing commitments that may necessitate a more flexible approach to learning, including sympathetic timetabling wherever possible and the provision of e-learning support materials.
- Increasing partnerships with other international and UK HE and FE institutions in providing pathways to HE from FE vocational provision.

LTA 3: To enhance the employability of students and to continue to equip them as lifelong learners capable of contributing effectively to their industry.

- Giving appropriate attention to the development of transferable skills that students will be expected to use when they enter employment - skills such as problem solving, IT, interpersonal/ group working, numeracy, written communication and time management.
- Promoting placement learning wherever suitable.
- Promoting student involvement in international exchanges and similar activities which broaden the context for learning.

- Ensuring that students have a good appreciation of the skills, knowledge and other attributes that they have acquired on the programme, that these are fully and accurately described in information for employers and graduates, and recorded in the planned students' Professional Development Portfolios.
- Providing opportunities to supplement students' core programmes, including short courses and volunteering opportunities.
- The promotion of a culture of lifelong learning and encouragement to maintain a reflective personal progress file post completion of a College programme.

LTA 4: To achieve and maintain high standards of provision in every aspect of teaching, learning and assessment.

- Maintain a high standard of accommodation for teaching and learning, including specialist practical facilities, libraries and resource centres
- Develop new programmes at appropriate levels of study to extend the range of learning opportunities offered by the College and ensure coherent internal progression routes.
- Maintain a programme of regular review of the effectiveness of programmes in achieving their aims and in enhancing the student learning experience wherever possible.
- Continue to prioritise both academic and industry credibility in selection criteria for staff.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Learning and Teaching Strategy will be reviewed annually by the Curriculum and Quality Committee of Academic Board to ensure its currency and relevance. The Committee will also monitor progress towards achieving the targets set out in the plans.

The Corporation will continue to monitor learning and teaching in academic departments through the annual programme of student satisfaction questionnaires, internal audits and programme self- assessment