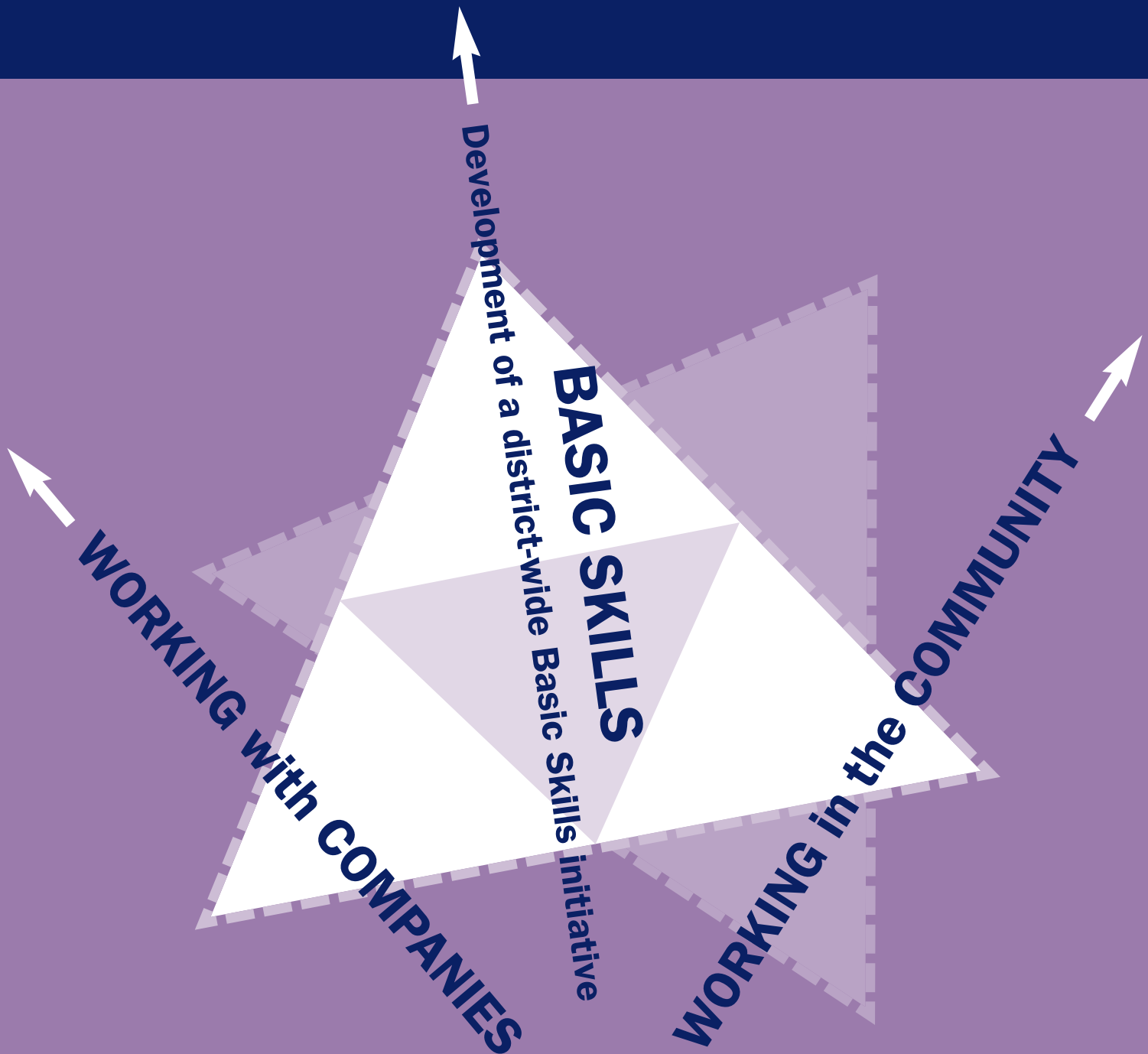


# good governance & management at Thanet College



# working with companies

## INTRODUCTION

The FEFC Inspection of Thanet College in May 1998 assessed College Governance and Management as Grade 1 outstanding provision, which has many strengths and few weaknesses.

The College has been successful in bidding for resources under Category 5 of the Standards Fund to develop a series of information packs as a contribution to sharing 'good practice' with other further education colleges in Kent. This is the second series we have produced. We are pleased to take this opportunity.

Our aim has been to produce material which conveys the overall nature and character of the approach we follow at Thanet College without in any sense wishing to produce an A to Z guide. Our intention has been to make the packs useful, practical and supportive of colleagues in Kent who believe there is a need to review their approach to aspects of governance and management.

The units in this pack cover the following governance and management issues:

- Basic Skills – Development of a District-wide Basic Skills Initiative
- Working in the Community
- Working with Companies

## COMMENTARY OF THE THANET COLLEGE INSPECTION TEAM

The report stated:

'The development of distance learning programmes has been particularly successful'.

The report went on to state:

'The Business division has very good working relationships with employers, who describe the College as 'responsible, flexible and innovative in bringing the College to the workplace'. Distance learning programmes have expanded rapidly and inspectors agreed that they are very successful in providing a flexible mode of study for many students'.

## CONTEXT

From 1993 Thanet College has increased significantly the income it receives via the FEFC (now the LSC) for company based training and development. It has also attracted funding from the LSC formerly funded through the local Training and Enterprise Council to deliver work based training. These two funding routes, together with fees charged directly to employers and European grants have enabled the College to develop its programmes to meet the needs of employers.

The College has needed to compete with other local and national training providers to deliver flexible company based training. To remain competitive in this market place the College has amended its staffing profile and revised job descriptions to match the changing skills and competencies required of staff. For example a separate office was set up in 1998 to deal with all administrative tasks relating to flexible company based provision. This has facilitated standardisation of presentation of resources, candidate tracking and has provided a central point of contact for staff and students. The office is linked to the college library, drop-in computer terminals, media services and computer and conference rooms which are easily accessible for use by local companies.



Local companies, which in Thanet are mainly SMEs (small and medium sized enterprises, employing up to 250 staff), have responded positively to the opportunity to improve the skills base of their work force through training and assessment delivered on their premises. In contrast few companies are willing to release their staff for one day or half-day per week training programmes on the College premises. Pro-active liaison with managers and supervisors within companies has been at the heart of the success of the company based provision, forming successful learning partnerships.

### **CORE PRINCIPLES**

- The strategic aims of the College define a high priority and commitment to working with companies and bringing the College to the workplace
- Targets for company based training incorporated into the Annual Operating Plan
- Employment of appropriately skilled and vocationally qualified, flexible staff
- Integration of work with companies across all sections of the College
- Pro-active role of the College in encouraging companies to become learning organisations
- High level of flexibility and responsiveness to the quality and range of company based need

### **KEY FEATURES OF THE THANET COLLEGE APPROACH TO WORKING WITH COMPANIES**

- Cross-college communication relating to working with employers through regular meetings, attended by a member of the Senior Management Team
- Training needs analysis conducted within companies prior to selecting appropriate programmes of study for staff
- Employers' organisational needs carefully considered and ongoing communication between college staff and managers/supervisors within client companies
- All open and distance learning programmes' delivery methodology reviewed through the College's robust internal quality assurance system. Annual course reports produced by course teams consistent with the requirements for other modes of programme delivery
- Staff tutor oversees distance learning tutorials as part of the College's commitment to quality improvement and meeting the needs of all students
- The College's comprehensive staff development programme available to all staff
- The effective use of student induction, mid programme and completion questionnaires by students to inform programme development
- Resources prepared to suit a wide variety of organisations. Where several students are working towards a qualification via one employer, college staff link with staff within the employer's organisation to design relevant learning and assessment materials



- Induction and ongoing support on the employers' premises for staff who are involved in supporting the assessment process
- Thorough induction and ongoing support for all students through structured tutorials at the workplace
- All students are encouraged to use the facilities offered by the Open Learning Resource Centre
- All contact with students documented using a progress report/action plan and a copy made available to their manager/supervisor
- Tutorial times are arranged to cause minimum disruption to activity within the students' workplace. College staff accommodate the shift patterns of students
- Tutorials are supplemented with taught sessions and workshops at the College or on employers' premises
- All college facilities and services are made available to open and distance learning students, including additional learning support and IT training
- Accreditation for prior learning is given wherever possible
- Ongoing support is available to students via telephone or electronic mail

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- **Governors**

Through the College's strategic planning process demonstrate a commitment to working with businesses, monitor and receive reports on the progress of this work

- **Principal**

Ensures the operation of the College reflects the targets and aims of the College's strategic plan and provides a high profile lead within the College and with business partners

- **Deputy Principal**

Ensures staffing needs and requirements are met and that quality standards are achieved

- **Director of Finance and Corporate Services**

Has overall responsibility for ensuring the financial viability of work with companies including pricing policy

- **Curriculum Divisional Directors**

Has a pro-active role in the support and empowerment of middle managers to maximise work with companies



- **Business Development Manager**

A middle manager with responsibility to network with local businesses, carry out training needs analysis and negotiate how Thanet College can provide the training required. Responsible for accessing non LSC monies to fund students on courses or fund infrastructure projects; cascades company training needs and funding opportunities to other middle managers

- **Middle Managers**

Responsible for marketing, operational management of programmes, communication with company management, identification and development of new programmes, deployment of appropriate staff

- **Lecturers**

Provide the delivery of the learning programmes to students. Responsible for induction, tutorials, assessment and verification of students' work. Coordinators may also undertake a minimum level of classroom teaching

- **Assessors**

Carry out assessment in the workplace

- **Administrators**

A discrete pool of administrators carry out the registration, certification, preparation of learning and assessment resources and student tracking. They also assist distance and open learning students to use Information Learning Technology resources

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

TETI (Thanet Employment Training Initiative) has been in existence for almost six years. It was established in response to a need defined by local companies to focus upon developing a work ethic amongst new recruits, particularly related to engineering. Since its inception the programme has supported more than 100 candidates into employment. More recently, as a response to a general shortage of engineers in the East Kent area, a project has been established with the short-term aim of targeting 60 students into engineering training within the next year. The project involves collaborative arrangements between Thanet College, Canterbury Christ Church University College and the wider employer community. The challenge will be to promote engineering as an attractive career and to offer innovative programmes which are relevant and meet the needs both of students and employers.

## FUTURE CHALLENGES

- **DEVELOPING THE COLLEGE MIS SYSTEM**

Reconciling MIS with roll-on roll-off style of delivery

### Impact

To facilitate enrolment of students at any stage during the year and to set duration of programme from exact date of entry



- **INFORMATION LEARNING TECHNOLOGY (ILT)**

Developing integration of ILT resources into all programmes

**Impact**

To provide access to learning resources via disk, CD-ROM or the Internet. Greater use of electronic mail for communication between students and coordinators and assessors

- **FUNDING**

Ensure continuance of a variety of funding streams. The work with SMEs is extremely price sensitive and in order to remain competitive the College needs to continue to access funding from a variety of sources

**Impact**

Maintenance of existing customer base and diversification into new companies

- **TRACKING**

Development of a database to track all employer contact cross-college

**Impact**

This will enable all sections of the College to have an awareness of the contacts being made within companies and students enrolled with the College. Thus a more holistic and seamless approach can be adopted by the College

- **RETENTION AND ACHIEVEMENT**

Ensure performance indicators clearly reflect retention and achievement of company based students

**Impact**

This will allow a comparison between programmes offered by different modes of delivery with national benchmarks which can then be shared with companies to inform their decision making

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

We would be willing to share other relevant information/documentation on request.

**YOUR RESPONSE TO THIS PACK**

Our commitment is to respond to colleges who may wish to pursue an interest with us in using any of our ideas or information.

We are continually reviewing and modifying our governance and management capability in the clear recognition of its value in achieving better outcomes in college performance and effectiveness. Should you wish to comment upon the information contained in the pack we would be pleased to hear from you. Contact either Bryan Mitchell, project coordinator or Caroline Hayward on 01843 605000 or Email: [principal@thanet.ac.uk](mailto:principal@thanet.ac.uk)

