REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE

Curriculum Area
Survey Report

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Basic Education

THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL

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The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education every four years. It also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and gives advice to the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

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SUMMARY

The basic education programme area comprises several different types and levels of provision and caters for a very wide range of students. Most of the courses are provided at basic levels but some are at more advanced levels. The programme area provides for students who may not be able to gain direct access to courses in other programme areas, to meet the individual needs of those and other students and to help them to make progress within and beyond the programme area. The distinctive feature of the programme area is that most students are in transition; they are moving from learning goals within the programme area to other more advanced or specialised provision.

In 1996-97 there were 231,700 students on college courses in the programme area, amounting to about 6 per cent of all students in further education. A further 70,500 students were in external institutions outside the further education sector. In all, 351 sector colleges have some basic education provision. Some basic education students are attending literacy and numeracy classes or classes in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Some students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and colleges are beginning to organise more inclusive provision so that more of these students are able to access the whole range of college courses. Although the need and demand for basic education is undiminished, the increase in students during the last three years has been slightly lower than in the sector as a whole. This reflects the growth of basic education as additional support for learning in place of separate courses. This support is becoming effective in helping students to achieve their learning goals, often in other programme areas.

Basic education is one of the most complex and challenging aspects of further education for both teachers and students. In spite of this, more than half of the colleges inspected have basic education programmes with more strengths than weaknesses. Standards of teaching and the

promotion of learning, however, are lower than in other programme areas, as reflected in the inspection grades awarded since 1994. They reflect the difficulty which some colleges find in meeting the complex and diverse needs of basic education students and in organising and managing the programme area. A common feature of the less effective provision is that the needs of learners are not adequately assessed and met. Some forms of course accreditation are inappropriate. There are some differences between the various areas of work. For example, the inspection grades awarded to lessons for students with learning difficulties are lower on average than for other parts of the programme area.

Many students in the programme area are disadvantaged when they begin their courses. Their achievements in developing confidence, self-esteem and skills for everyday living are as important and, for some students, more important, than the development of other skills and knowledge. The motivation of students is particularly high and most make progress towards their learning goals. However, achievement rates of students' learning goals are poor and are lower than in other programme areas, and there is a lack of planned progression for many students. In 1995-96, only 60 per cent of students who completed their courses achieved their qualifications or learning goals. The retention rate (81 per cent in 1995-96) was also lower than in the sector as a whole.

Basic education exists within an unusually wide range of organisational structures which rarely match the FEFC's description of the programme area. Provision is more effective in colleges in which senior managers are directly involved in the planning and development of the curriculum and courses. Course managers often have too many functions and insufficient training for their roles. There are some significant deficiencies in management information; students' achievements and destinations are rarely reported effectively at programme or college level. Many colleges find difficulty in applying college-wide quality

assurance systems to courses in this programme area. Quality assurance of basic education lacks rigour.

Most teachers in the programme area are conscientious and committed to their work. Many provide good levels of tutorial support and guidance for their students. They do not all have sufficient specialist expertise and some lack appropriate teaching qualifications. Some teachers fail to make effective use of the increased opportunities for learning provided in learning resource centres, and information technology as an aid to learning is underused. In some colleges, the quality of equipment and learning resources is poor, and some of the teaching accommodation in centres away from the main sites is inadequate.

The report of the widening participation committee, *Learning Works: Widening participation in further education*, acknowledges that national strategies for education and training have failed to make significant progress in increasing participation and achievement in further education. The agenda for change, described in the report, is likely to have a significant impact on basic skills provision. The FEFC has a legal duty to have regard to the requirements of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Many, but not all, of these students are found within the programme area. *Inclusive Learning,* the report of the learning difficulties and/or disabilities committee, chaired by Professor John Tomlinson, has set a challenge for colleges to redesign the learning environment to match the requirements of learners more effectively. The likely effect is that provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities will be made more comprehensive across all programme areas.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

1 Basic education is the sixth largest of the programme areas of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and one of the most diverse. It is larger than art and design, hotel and catering, construction and agriculture. The programme area includes the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), programmes for adults returning to learn and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The report comes at a time of considerable interest in aspects of basic education provision following the publication of *Inclusive Learning* and *Learning Works*, the reports of the FEFC committees chaired respectively by Professor John Tomlinson and Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, the review of entry level qualifications following the publication of the *Review of Qualifications for 16–19 Year Olds* by Sir Ron Dearing and the increasing emphasis by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) on basic skills as a part of a number of initiatives, for example, New Deal and New Start.

2 This report presents an overview of quality and standards in basic education in the further education sector. It is based on evidence from specialist programme area inspections undertaken between September 1994 and June 1997. Inspection evidence relating to designated institutions, external institutions and independent specialist colleges is included where this contributes to an overview of the programme area. The report also draws on information obtained from responses to questionnaires and interviews with managers during 43 visits by inspectors to sector colleges. As part of its survey of the programme area, the inspectorate consulted relevant agencies and professional bodies. A list of those consulted is given in annex A.

THE BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME AREA

Definition

3 The programme area includes widely differing types of provision, at levels from pre-entry to advanced. However, because the provision relates to particular types of learner as well as to subjects and courses, it is difficult to categorise. For many students, the provision is transitional and not an end in itself. It prepares them to move on to other studies and wider goals. The report examines some factors that are important in helping students to make a successful transition; for example, the analysis of learning needs, guidance, and support for learning.

4 The FEFC's definition of the programme area, as stated in Council Circular 95/02, *College Strategic Plans 1995-96 and Beyond*, is:

Programmes of study in basic numeracy, literacy and English for speakers of other languages; discrete provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities such as courses to teach independent living, numeracy and communication skills; programmes of study for adults, such as 'return to learn' which do not focus on a particular curriculum area and cannot therefore be placed in one of the other nine programme areas.

Throughout the report the term 'basic education' is used to describe the whole programme area.

Students in Basic Education Provision

5 Some students following literacy and numeracy courses, also known as 'basic skills' courses, are returning to education after a significant period away from it. Many wish to raise their levels of literacy and/or numeracy in order to improve their employment prospects or to progress to another course. Some follow these courses

to help themselves manage their lives more effectively. An increasing number receive additional support with literacy and numeracy while pursuing their main studies in another programme area. Colleges provide this support in specially organised lessons as a part of students' main studies, or more frequently through facilities provided in learning resource centres.

6 Students attending ESOL classes come from a wide range of backgrounds and some are well qualified in their own work or profession. Many of them are recent arrivals in England; for example, British citizens from other countries who have come to work in England. Others are refugees or asylum seekers. Many have been resident in England for several years. Together, they represent a variety of ethnic communities. In some colleges, there are more than 20 different cultural and linguistic groups.

7 Programmes for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities include students of all ages and abilities. Younger students have often progressed from a special school. A growing number of adults with learning difficulties attend college part time and most of the small amount of provision for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties is part time. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities often attend specially designed, discrete courses. Students who attend these courses are those who:

- have severe intellectual impairments as a result of neurological, chromosomal or biochemical disorder or brain injury
- have significant difficulties in learning because of intellectual, environmental and social factors
- have learning difficulties as a result of physical, sensory or psychological difficulties
- are too immature in their behavioural or learning patterns to allow them to achieve on courses in other programme areas

- need a bridge into further education because they have, or are recovering from, mental health disorders
- have a sensory impairment and are being taught, for example, to learn Braille
- have degenerative conditions, or are newly disabled.

The statutory duties of the FEFC concerning students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are described in annex B.

8 The proportion of students in the basic education programme area aged 19 or over (77 per cent) is the same as that for the sector as a whole and the proportion of students which is female (57 per cent) is similar. Significant differences between this programme area and the sector as a whole include: the lower proportion of 16 to 18 year olds studying full time (52 per cent compared with 64 per cent), and the higher proportion of students from minority ethnic groups (33 per cent compared with 12 per cent). Annex C summarises information about students in the programme area.

Numbers of Students

9 In 1996-97, there were 231,700 students on courses in colleges in the programme area, accounting for about 6 per cent of all students in the sector. Some 82 per cent were FEFC funded, the others being funded from other sources such as training and enterprise councils (TECs) and local education authorities (LEAs). About 74 per cent attend general further education colleges. The percentage growth in student numbers within the programme area between 1994-95 and 1996-97 was lower in tertiary colleges and general further education colleges than in sixth form colleges, although sixth form colleges have less than 2 per cent of all the students in the programme area. Some agriculture colleges and some sixth form colleges have not, in the past, provided basic education. They are now having to provide this to meet demand. The distribution of students in different types of college is shown in

annex D. In addition to the provision in sector colleges, 70,500 students in 1996-97 were following basic education courses in many of the country's 412 external institutions. These institutions may receive FEFC funding for vocational education courses under the arrangements set out in sections 6(5) and 6(6) of the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992*.

10 The increase in students in the programme area between 1994-95 and 1996-97 has been around 23 per cent compared with an increase for the sector as a whole of 26 per cent (table 1). This slower rate of growth can be accounted for partly by the general increase in support for learning. Support for learning, or learning support, is defined in *Inclusive Learning* as 'support that enables students to have access to the curriculum and to learn'. Some students have previously followed a basic education programme before moving to an academic or vocational course in another programme area. Many now receive additional support in literacy, numeracy and ESOL while following these courses.

Table 1. Students in sector colleges 1994-95 to 1996-97

Students (in 000s)	***1994-95***	***1995-96***	***1996-97***
All programme areas	3,149.7	3,540.3	3,967.5
Basic education	189.1	205.2	231.7
Basic education as % of all programme areas	6.0%	5.8%	5.8%

Source: college strategic plans, July 1995, July 1996, July 1997
Note: excludes specialist designated and external institutions and are for FEFC-funded students and those funded from other sources

11 During the last three years, student numbers in basic education have fallen by 11 per cent in the Eastern Region and increased by 105 per cent in the Yorkshire and Humberside region. The uneven pattern of growth can be attributed to the extension, by some colleges, of their provision while others have allowed their provision, particularly where it is not funded by the FEFC, to decline. In some colleges, the number

of basic education students has increased by up to 70 per cent since 1996. In other colleges, the provision has fallen by 10 per cent during the same period. Annex E shows regional trends in the volume of provision. Overall, the long-term trend shows an increase in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who now number approximately 100,000.

12 The number of basic education students in individual institutions ranges from a few students in some specialist colleges of art and design, and agriculture and horticulture to large-scale provision in some general further education and tertiary colleges. In the North West region, one college had more than 14,000 students enrolled on basic education courses in 1996-97. Six colleges have more than 3,500 students enrolled on basic education courses and for 10 sector colleges it represents more than 20 per cent of their total provision. The scale of provision often affects the flexibility of the curriculum offered and the opportunities for students to progress. In some colleges, the volume and range of provision facilitates progression from part-time to full-time study and from basic education to other more specialised and advanced courses. Basic education as a proportion of all provision in colleges is shown in annex F.

13 Collaborative provision in this programme area has developed more slowly than in other parts of the sector; there were 17,750 basic education students on collaborative provision in 1996-97. In all, 87 colleges offered basic education under collaborative provision arrangements. Basic education accounted for 3.5 per cent of all such provision in the sector in 1996-97. Some colleges have collaborative community networks, providing community-based courses for students unable, or unwilling, to attend courses at the college. Such networks are providing opportunities for an increasing number of students from groups which have been under represented in further education.

Scope of Provision

14 Many colleges have long-established literacy and numeracy programmes. For some, the traditional pattern of their provision changed at the time of incorporation as they took over provision that had previously been provided by local authority adult education services. In other colleges, programmes have been developed to support new groups of students. The differing histories of development mean that basic skills provision now varies significantly in style, size, range and quality. Programmes are mostly part time, day or evening, and are usually taught for between two and six hours a week. Colleges often organise courses as individually agreed programmes for students located within specialised literacy and numeracy rooms or resource areas. Other types of provision include 'drop-in' sessions, support in mainstream lessons, lessons in 'outreach' centres away from the college, and family literacy projects. The general trend is towards more provision in basic skills workshops and learning centres where students have access to relevant resources and work on their own, often using materials designed for the purpose. Inspectors have found that some teachers require more training to enable them to support students effectively in making the best use of these resources.

15 ESOL students are often taught in discrete groups, although there is an increasing amount of ESOL support provided in learning resource centres and workshops or integrated with other courses. Students tend to be taught in larger classes guided by a general, rather than an individual, learning plan. Much of the teaching is addressed to the whole class. Sometimes a particular need for ESOL provision is created by the pattern of immigration to this country; for example, courses were introduced to meet the needs of the Somali communities. Elsewhere the provision exists for historical reasons rather than for reasons related to the identification of community needs. For example, there is little provision for Asian women in some colleges whereas in others it is well established. Some ESOL provision is orientated towards vocational

training or the development of vocational skills such as computing. ESOL is taught at differing levels, ranging from entry level to advanced level. In some colleges, there is a tendency to blur the distinction between literacy, ESOL and English as foreign language (EFL).

16 Most colleges now make provision for students with learning difficulties, and provide support for students with mobility, hearing or visual difficulties. Students with learning difficulties can usually enrol on pre-foundation level courses, if they need them, and progress to foundation level. Many students with disabilities are supported on their academic and vocational courses, and a few colleges run additional specialist courses for students with hearing or sight loss who need to develop particular skills before they progress to academic or vocational courses. Provision for students with disabilities is most extensive in the larger colleges, although a few smaller, and some specialist colleges also make wide-ranging provision. A number of colleges provide link courses for students from local special schools to enable them to make the transition from school to college.

17 Basic education makes a considerable contribution to widening participation in further education. The students recruited include those in receipt of means-tested benefits, members of certain minority ethnic groups, and those with few or no former qualifications. Many of them see basic education courses as a starting point on the way to more advanced or specialised education, or employment. Research undertaken for the Tomlinson committee indicates that people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, those with profound and multiple disabilities and those with mental illness continue to be under represented in further education. Other under-represented groups include travellers, refugees and adults with learning difficulties.

18 Colleges are increasingly providing courses for disaffected young people, some of whom are aged under 16. The FEFC funds these students in exceptional circumstances. Many of these students engage

in programmes which have a basic education element within them. Some have the opportunity to attend a link course, or take part in 'taster courses', before they attend colleges regularly. Teachers report that disaffected young people, and those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, are better motivated by the relative informality of further education institutions and the encouragement they are given to take some responsibility for their own learning. The increasing numbers of year 11 school pupils attending colleges do so for several reasons including exclusion from or refusal to attend school. They now have the opportunity to complete their studies which they might not have had in the past.

19 'Return to learn' programmes for adults, also known as 'access to further education' courses, are provided for students returning to certificated provision after a significant gap in formal learning. They provide an important route to more structured full-time provision for students, many of whom undervalue their abilities and potential. Some basic education programmes are linked to non-vocational provision in ways which enhance students' learning; for example, in encouraging progression from non-vocational programmes to basic education.

Location and Learning Environment

20 Basic skills and ESOL are provided in two main settings: at colleges' main sites and at centres in the local community. Students attending community centres are often taught in mixed ability classes while many college-based students undertake their work in learning resource centres and basic skills workshops. Some colleges have many centres located in the community, at schools and other venues. In 1995-96, for instance, one college in the Yorkshire and Humberside region operated more than 100 centres providing a range of basic education courses. In a few colleges, this 'outreach' provision amounts to 50 per cent of the basic education programme. The provision varies according to the geography of the area, the cultural background, the needs of the learner

and historical patterns of provision. The location of some courses is designed to attract specific groups, such as women's groups. There is effective family literacy work in primary schools where teachers have worked with parents and their pre-school children to develop literacy and numeracy skills alongside other activities including computing and cookery. Some colleges have productive links with local employers and have developed literacy and numeracy courses on employers' premises.

21 Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in sector colleges is mostly located on main sites and some students experience difficulty in finding convenient transport. Many colleges also provide courses in day centres run by social services. Some students attending these centres progress to programmes at the main college site; many others, however, see the day centre provision as an end in itself. In 1996-97, the FEFC funded 2,030 places for students in 89 independent specialist establishments providing programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities whose needs could not be met in their local sector colleges. These establishments are diverse. Some are similar to small sector colleges, providing a range of courses and specialist support for students. Some provide for low numbers of students and are based in accommodation adapted for educational purposes such as Victorian houses, farms, smallholdings, riding stables, or decommissioned schools. Almost all provide education in a residential setting suitable for students with complex disabilities and learning difficulties.

22 More than 3,000 students, about half of whom follow basic education courses, attend long-term adult residential colleges. There are six of these in England which are designated, under section 28 of the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992*, to receive funding from the FEFC. They have clear missions to provide education in a residential setting for people who have few formal qualifications. Students intending to progress to higher education usually attend full time for one year; those who are returning to learn and have other aspirations may

attend shorter residential courses of three or more days. One such college in Yorkshire and Humberside provides programmes each year for more than 1,000 students on short residential courses, many of whom are returning to education for the first time since leaving school.

23 The basic education programmes provided by external institutions are set in environments which are different from those offered by colleges. Many are local authority adult education programmes. Other programmes are based around small projects which have a local community focus. Whether large or small, however, most external institutions have missions relating to specific types of student and many of the people they attract would not readily attend sector colleges.

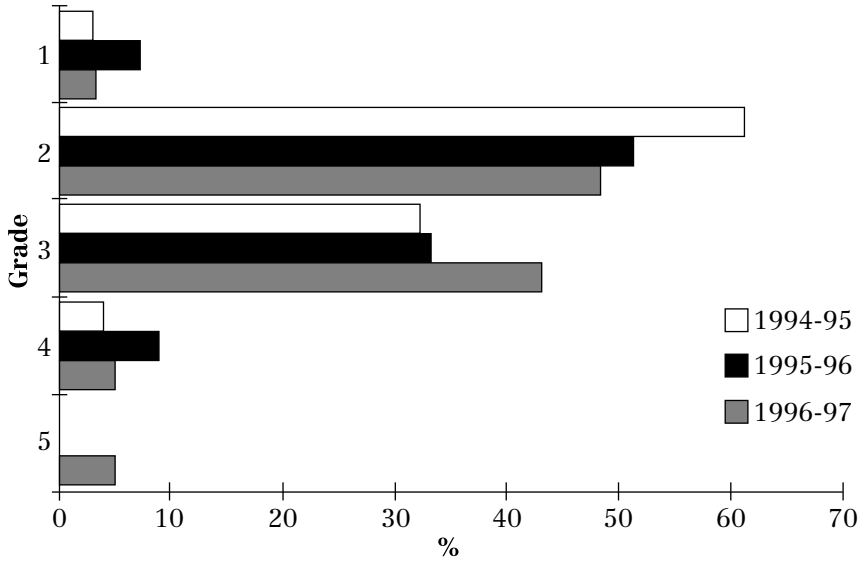
TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

Standards in the Programme Area

24 Basic education is one of the most demanding and difficult areas in further education, yet it rarely receives adequate support and attention from college managers. The standard of much of the provision found in this programme area is a cause for concern when compared with the standards in other programme areas. This is partly a consequence of the difficulty which some colleges, particularly those still developing this area of provision, find in meeting the complex and diverse needs of basic education students. The standards are also the result of a range of issues related to the organisation and management of the programme area. Other issues affecting standards are explored elsewhere in this report. They include the recruitment of inexperienced teachers, a lack of support for the growing number of part-time teachers, insufficient sharing of good practice between teachers and inadequate curriculum guidance for teachers.

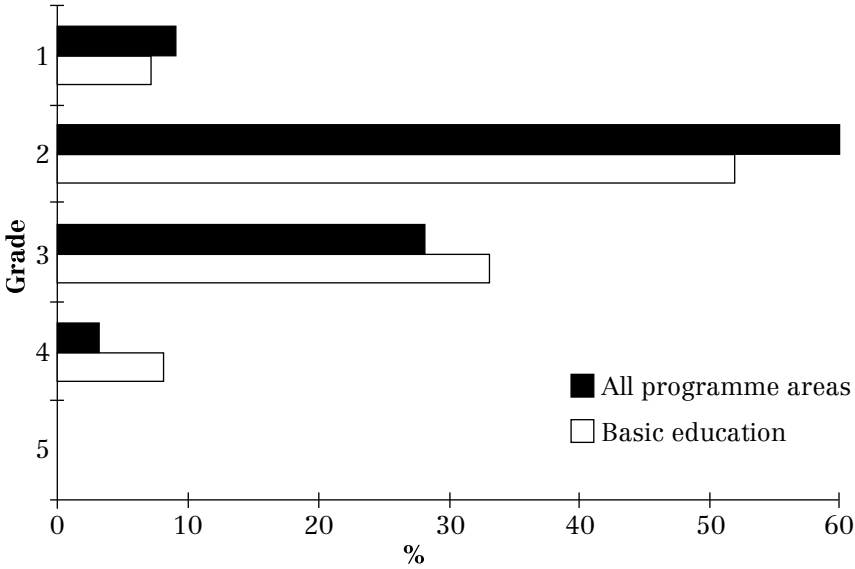
25 The inspection grades awarded to colleges' basic education provision between 1994 and 1997 have been consistently lower than for provision in other programme areas; 59 per cent of basic education programmes were graded 1 or 2 compared with an average of 69 per cent for all programmes. The programme area grades reflect inspectors' judgements about the quality of teaching, the promotion of learning, the effectiveness of curriculum organisation, and the standards of students' achievements. In 1996-97, 51 per cent of basic education programmes were graded 1 or 2. Figure 1 shows the declining grades awarded to basic education programmes between 1994-95 and 1996-97. Figure 2 compares these grades with those for all programme areas. Annex G gives descriptors for the grades used by the inspectorate.

Figure 1. Basic education programme area grades, 1994-95 to 1996-97



Source: inspectorate database, June 1997

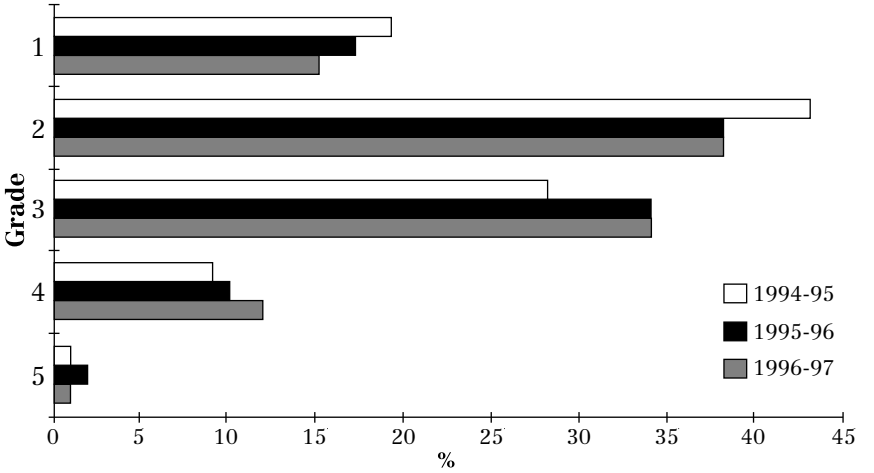
Figure 2. Basic education programme area grades compared with those for all programme areas, 1994-95 to 1996-97



Source: inspectorate database, June 1997

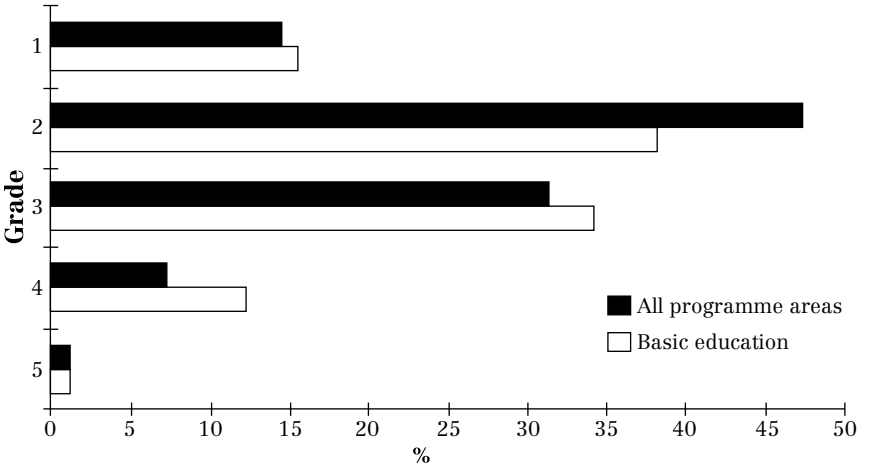
26 Inspection grades for basic education lessons are also lower than the average for all programme areas. In 1996-97, 53 per cent of lessons were graded 1 or 2 compared with an average of 61 per cent for all programme areas. In the same year, 13 per cent of basic education lessons were graded 4 or 5 compared with 8 per cent for all programme areas. Figure 3 shows the declining grades awarded to basic education lessons from 1994-95 to 1996-97. Figure 4 compares these grades with those for all programme areas.

Figure 3. Basic education lesson observation grades, 1994-95 to 1996-97



Source: inspectorate database, June 1997

Figure 4. Basic education lesson observation grades compared with those for all programme areas, 1996-97



Source: inspectorate database, June 1997

27 The overall distribution of lesson observation grades includes some significant differences between subprogramme areas. For example, the grades awarded to lessons for students with learning difficulties are lower on average than for other provision in the programme area; 17 per cent were graded 4 or 5 in 1996-97 compared with 10 per cent of basic skills and ESOL lessons (table 2). In many colleges, the content of lessons for students with learning difficulties and the teaching methods used are inappropriate. Many teachers do not understand how to help students to learn. Consequently, lessons often consist of a series of pointless activities which are of little relevance or interest to the students. Too much time is spent attempting to remedy students' weaknesses in basic skills through classroom-based activities involving the completion of worksheets, many of which are never marked. Teachers give students too few opportunities to build on their strengths and to learn practical vocational skills.

Table 2. Lesson observation grades awarded for subprogramme areas, 1996-97

Type of course	*Grade*				
	1 %	*2* %	*3* %	*4* %	*5* %
Basic skills and ESOL	13	40	37	10	0
Other provision (mainly courses for students with learning difficulties)	15	34	34	15	2

Source: inspectorate database, June 1997

Initial Assessment of Learning Needs

28 Effective learning programmes in basic education are devised on the basis of rigorous assessment of students' preferred ways of learning, prior achievements and requirements for learning support. In some

colleges, teachers have given careful thought to prioritising what each student needs to learn and have established an overall goal for the student. This enables them to establish a benchmark against which progress can be measured. However, many colleges undertake initial assessments of students' abilities through a battery of 'standalone' tests which do not consider the student's overall goal. The assessments, therefore, often fail to provide an appropriate baseline from which a student's individual programme can be developed. Many colleges use screening tests developed by the Basic Skills Agency (BSA) to identify students who need help with literacy and numeracy when they enter the college. However, not all of them follow these tests with diagnostic assessments. Where it is effective, initial assessment takes sufficient account of the demands of the students' main programme, an individual programme of support is negotiated with the student, and the student's vocational or academic teachers are informed of the support to be provided.

29 In some colleges, teachers use the results of students' initial assessments effectively. Staff are aware of the outcomes of these assessments and use them as a basis for schemes of work and lesson plans. This ensures that learning programmes are pitched at the right level, enable students to move on from earlier learning and are relevant to students' aspirations. Consideration of students' previous learning also helps in the process of setting appropriate learning objectives.

At one college, students who had progressed to a full-time course brought to their interviews portfolios of selected pieces of work from their previous part-time literacy course. The portfolios were used as a basis for discussing what students had already learned and what they wished to learn on the new course. Seeing earlier work also helped teachers to decide which students required learning support.

30 In many colleges, however, students were undertaking work which their initial assessments had suggested that they could already do or work which did not meet the needs identified in their initial assessments. For example, in the third week of an ESOL course a part-time teacher was showing a group of students how to complete job applications, unaware that most of the students were recent arrivals to the country. The teacher had not seen the students' initial assessments which were kept in the course tutor's office on another site.

31 Learning programmes for students in basic education are most effective when they are based on individuals' assessed needs and aspirations, described within a clear structure and recorded in the form of a learning plan. Good learning plans contain targets for the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills which have been negotiated between teacher and student. They focus primarily on outcomes appropriate to the individual rather than the requisites for the award of a formal qualification. An increasing number of students have assessment reviews, assessment records, action plans and activity log sheets. However some 'individual plans' are the same for the whole class, and other plans are little more than a timetable of activities, containing no learning objectives. Individual learning plans for students with learning difficulties are often of poor quality. Teachers give insufficient thought to identifying a primary learning goal which will be of relevance to the student's future life.

Programme Design

32 Colleges with good basic education provision have teachers who recognise the importance of well-designed learning programmes with clear aims which enable students to learn effectively and to progress from one course to another. The individual learning needs of students are identified and effective support is made available. In other colleges, programmes have little structure or evident purpose and teaching is not linked, where appropriate, to the students' main learning programme.

Sometimes there are few opportunities for students to learn in realistic or vocational settings, they do not understand how tasks or subjects fit together and teachers do not have an overview of the students' experience throughout the day. For example, one class of students with learning difficulties moved from a two-hour session on communication skills to a 90-minute session on wordprocessing skills, although few could read the material given to them in either session.

33 Effective schemes of work include information on the content of courses, the teaching methods to be used and the procedures for assessing and recording students' progress. Although there are schemes of work for most basic education courses, these often comprise no more than a record of the topics to be covered by teachers and a list of competences taken from the accreditation document. The content of programmes is found to be most effective when it is relevant to students' experience and goals. In many colleges, programmes are not designed in this way. The rationale for some activities is unclear to students or the programme reflects teachers' own skills and experience. In some colleges, teachers devise programmes which students will enjoy rather than ensuring that they learn new skills which will be useful to them. This is particularly evident in programmes for students with learning difficulties where some schemes of work outline activities which are unrelated to the title of the course. For example, a 'survival cookery' course contained sessions on making scones, sausage rolls, sponge cakes and Christmas cake. Another course included activities such as making calendars, padded coat hangers, Easter bonnets and lavender bags, under the title of 'homemaking skills'.

34 Some teachers have clear aims for their courses but their lessons are not always relevant to students' lives. Students may be required to demonstrate a competence listed in a scheme of accreditation but one which does not relate to their own circumstances or aspirations. For example, in one observed lesson, school-leavers learned about

mortgages but not about rents. All of them lived at home and intended to continue to do so or to move to rented property.

35 In some colleges, basic skills teaching overlaps with the teaching of key skills. This may happen as the result of a planned continuum. More frequently, however, it is because college managers believe, incorrectly, that the curriculum and learning objectives for key skills and basic skills are the same. Many students need help with their basic skills of literacy and numeracy to enable them to succeed on their courses. This help is additional to their main courses. Assessment and accreditation of students' achievements in basic skills are separate from any other qualifications that they may be pursuing. Key skills, including communication, numeracy and information technology, are most effectively provided as an integral part of students' main courses and in relevant vocational contexts. Assessment of key skills contributes to the main qualification for which students are aiming. The more effective programmes take account of the differences between basic skills and key skills.

36 The FEFC received overwhelming support from colleges in deciding to implement the recommendations made in *Inclusive Learning*. The report sets a challenge for colleges to redesign the learning environment to match the requirements of learners. To support this process the FEFC is funding a £1 million quality initiative in 1997-98 and a further £4 million in 1998 to 2000. The aim is to help colleges to become more inclusive in the way they offer further education. The likely effect is that provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities will be made more comprehensive across all programme areas.

Teaching Methods and Learning Styles

37 A common feature of effective teaching is that teachers understand the range of ability levels, the interests within the group and students' preferred methods of learning. They have the skills to devise individual

learning programmes, prepare material, manage the pace and variety of the work and organise a mix of whole class, group and individual tasks to take account of these different abilities and interests. Real life situations are used for learning. Teachers take care to explain the purpose of any task and help students to understand how it fits with their previous learning. Teachers identify in advance the relevant materials at the right levels for students of different abilities. They help students to work on their own and with support, and students learn to help each other where this is appropriate.

> In one element of a basic education programme for pre-vocational students, the teacher led an effective group discussion about working in teams. The students worked enthusiastically, showing ideas. This was followed by a practical problem-solving exercise designed to show the need for team members to work co-operatively. The students enjoyed the lesson and stayed on afterwards to talk to each other about the activity.

38 In some colleges, students' own experiences and aspirations are used as a starting point for learning. This is particularly important for students returning to learn in further education. In the best practice, the educational implications of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds are understood. Skilled teachers know their students and their communities well. The local community is used as a resource for learning.

> Students in an ESOL group used videos of London life, including one about a day in the life of a taxi driver, as a basis for discussion of place names and regional accents. Discussion covered regional variations in the students' countries of origin, the difficulties some experienced in understanding different English accents and possible ways of understanding accents more easily.

39 Some teachers fail to make learning relevant and meaningful for their students. For example, in one observed lesson for students with learning difficulties, the teacher had a handwritten list of over 30 breeds of rabbit. He wrote these one by one on a whiteboard and students copied the list onto paper. The teacher had a small picture which included a few of the listed breeds. He showed this to the students individually when the name of a pictured breed appeared on the board. Students copied the names of most breeds without seeing a picture of them, or being given any significant feature of the various breeds. Other teachers make effective use of everyday sources to enable students to practise their skills.

> In one lesson the teacher had designed worksheets in a way which enabled crosswords to become a group game. Two teams devised clues for each other and then took turns to request and provide clues for the missing halves. This created a lively opportunity to extend their vocabulary and practise their spelling. The vocabulary which students acquired was relevant to the scheme of accreditation.

40 In literacy and ESOL lessons, some teachers fail to achieve an effective balance between different learning activities. Learning in literacy lessons is too often a silent activity, focused on reading and writing. Not enough attention is given to developing students' speaking and listening skills. Students also receive too little help in learning to write for different purposes and for different audiences, and they rarely have opportunities to edit their own work. Where teachers are skilled in using spoken language to develop and extend students' language, students are encouraged to contribute to the lesson orally or through signing and to test their thinking aloud. Teachers pitch their spoken explanations at levels appropriate for the group and use open-ended questions to invite responses from students of different abilities. In some ESOL lessons, however, the teachers' focus is almost exclusively on

practising spoken English, to the exclusion of other skills. Where the balance between activities is appropriate, learning is more effective.

> In one well-planned lesson, the teacher had devised an appropriate variety of activities. The topic was skilfully introduced using a well-designed overhead projector transparency and a printed handout. This was followed by some individual reading, a practical exercise conducted in small groups and a class discussion.

41 There is some good bilingual teaching of ESOL, especially where students are learning English for the first time. Some teachers effectively combine opportunities to develop oral skills with opportunities to develop reading and writing. An increasing number of teachers are linking language teaching to vocational skills or are giving students the opportunity to develop language skills for specific purposes.

> In one ESOL lesson, students who were interested in understanding the British legal system learned the appropriate specialist vocabulary and practised their oral and presentational skills by acting out a court room scene.

42 In numeracy, students often develop the ability to calculate lengths, areas, weights and volumes, but have difficulty in applying these skills to practical tasks. Where numeracy teaching is effective, it is usually made relevant to the everyday experiences of the students and there are practical activities to help students to learn.

A lesson on volumes and value for money started with the teacher putting on the desk various empty bottles and cartons of different sizes. The students were asked to sort them according to size. They then compared their estimates with the actual volumes. This led to a lively discussion about appearances being deceptive and marketing tactics. Later, the teacher presented some case studies of costings for products based on different sizes of containers and showed that the larger sizes were not always the cheapest. The students undertook the various tasks with enthusiasm and learnt some skills associated with estimating, sorting by volume and calculating costs per unit.

43 The teaching of numeracy, especially at the most basic levels and for students with learning difficulties, however, is often weak. In one lesson the teacher devised an activity based on lotto. Numbers were written on the board and students copied these down and checked whether they had them on their cards. Few students could read the numbers and most copied without understanding what they were doing. The teacher took no account of students' different abilities and little was learned during the session.

44 Many teachers do not have adequate teaching skills to deal with students who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. For example, in one tutorial the tutor tried to lead students in an exercise about relationships, using a 'lonely hearts' page to discuss personal attributes and the idea of selecting someone who matched these. The topic was disturbing to one student who had a history of rejection by her parents. Although the teacher was aware of the student's difficulties, he had not thought how the topic might affect her. Nor did he have the skills and experience to handle the situation in a way which might have helped the students to understand the topic.

45 Some teaching in literacy and numeracy classes is dull and unimaginative. The work takes place at too slow a pace and it lacks variety and interest. In most lessons, students work by themselves, completing various worksheets. There is too little opportunity for them to work in groups, to express their opinions and develop new ideas, and there is not enough use of discussion as a stimulus for writing. In contrast, ESOL students are often taught as a whole class, there is little opportunity for them to work on their own in their own time, and teachers take too little account of their different needs and abilities. Some teachers, particularly those teaching students with learning difficulties, use unsuitable learning materials and the tasks which they set for students are not conducive to learning. In one lesson, for example, students were being taught how to weigh. They were handed photocopied sheets of drawings the teacher had made of items such as bacon, cows, cake and a bottle of milk. They were then asked to tick the items that could be weighed using scales, to cut out pictures of these and stick them on another piece of paper.

Assessing and Recording Learning

46 Assessment is integral to effective learning. Properly organised, it helps students to recognise each of their achievements and to be aware of the progress they are making. It also helps teachers to plan further learning objectives and to set appropriate tasks. In colleges where assessment works well, the methods of assessment are appropriate for the student, the criteria for assessing progress are clear and teachers and students understand them. Few teachers are trained specifically to undertake assessments but some colleges have well-documented assessment procedures and arrangements for recording students' progress. This helps students to collect and present the evidence required to enable them to progress to other courses. A few colleges have developed innovative ways of recording students' progress.

A video camera was used to record students performing practical tasks on their course. Each student had a personal copy of the video which was updated throughout the course. Students were encouraged to use the video to assess their own performance. Photographs were also used to provide evidence of students' progress and these formed part of the records of achievement which students took with them on work experience and to job interviews.

47 Procedures for assessing and recording students' work and completing the related documentation are only as effective as the knowledge and expertise of the teachers using them. In one sixth form college, for example, staff had given considerable time to the development of a study skills record. Used properly, the document enabled students to record their progress at the end of each study skills session. However, not all staff were aware of the record, some were not convinced of its value and others forgot to remind students to use it. The record was in use for only a few months. Elsewhere, there are many examples of effective arrangements for recording progress and achievement.

In a general further education college, care had been taken to involve literacy and numeracy teachers in the development of a record of progress. The record was used at the end of each literacy or numeracy session to note the student's progress. Overall progress was reviewed every six weeks and new goals were set. The record was used well by teachers who recognised its value in helping them to plan their teaching. Students valued the responses they received when the record was discussed with them.

48 Some forms of assessment focus inappropriately on students' behaviour, or their social and cultural background, rather than on

matters relevant to their learning. The outcomes of assessment are not always used to inform the development of students' individual programmes. If students are inaccurately assessed it often means that they have to repeat work unnecessarily. Most colleges rely on written records of progress, which makes it difficult for students who have problems with reading to play a full part in reviewing and recording their progress. Few students who have difficulty in reading are involved in reviewing their own progress.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

Attitudes and Motivation

49 The achievements of basic education students often relate to self-esteem, confidence, communication and other skills for everyday living. Most students gain in confidence during their studies. The motivation of students in this programme area is particularly high. Many fit their education into busy and complex lives and overcome difficult financial or domestic circumstances to attend college. Some students gain useful skills which enable them to progress to higher level courses, training or employment. They enjoy their courses and take pride in their achievements, even when these are below what teachers should be encouraging them to achieve.

50 Colleges are beginning to use a variety of methods for recording students' increasing confidence as learners. Some students keep log books or individual portfolios which record their achievements. Two adult students at one college had written a book about their return to learning. In another college, students with learning difficulties kept a photographic diary of important events during the course; these included their first day at college, residential visits, work experience and the college award ceremony. A few colleges take care to display students' work in common areas such as the library or foyer to show the value they place on students' achievements.

A London college has helped students gain public recognition for literacy achievements. Two students on a literacy course were encouraged to enter the Eastside general certificate of education advanced/advanced supplementary level (GCE A/AS level) poetry competition. They won joint first prize. Their poems will be integrated with artwork and displayed on the Docklands Light Railway.

Accreditation and Qualifications

51 The number of enrolments for courses leading to qualifications in this programme area increased by 15 per cent between 1994-95 and 1995-96, which was greater than the increase in the number of enrolments. In all, students were registered for 75 different qualifications, many of them attracting a small number of students. A particular difficulty in interpreting the data relating to qualifications is that more than half of the enrolments are for courses leading to qualifications classified as 'generic' on the FEFC individualised student record (ISR). These include, for example, an increasing number of students registered for Open College Network credits in a range of subjects including literacy, numeracy and ESOL. The ISR does not indicate the level or subject being studied by these students. The number of students entered for these qualifications was higher in 1995-96 than in 1994-95, although it is anticipated that the number will decrease following the publication of Council Circular 97/29, *Recording Schedule 2(d) to 2(g) Courses from 1997-98 and Revised Qualification Codes*.

52 Achievement rates for learning goals in basic education, 1995-96, were lower than for all other programme areas. Of those completing their courses, 60 per cent achieved their learning goals in 1995-96. In this programme area it is important to note that some students have learning goals which are not qualifications. The average retention rate

of students in the programme area was 81 per cent in 1995-96 compared with 86 per cent in 1994-95. The rate ranged from 33 per cent to 100 per cent for courses leading to qualifications but there are difficulties in monitoring and recording the retention of students who enrol at various times during the year and who may leave early having gained partial accreditation. In addition to the students who do not complete their courses, there are students who complete their courses but do not enter for an examination or submit work for accreditation. The percentage of students achieving their learning goals in relation to the numbers originally enrolled on courses was 52 per cent in 1994-95 and 48 per cent in 1995-96. The achievement rates for cohorts of basic education students in individual colleges during the last three years range from under 20 per cent to more than 80 per cent. National achievement rates for individual qualifications range from 0 per cent to 100 per cent. Table 3 summarises achievement rates in basic education for 1995-96.

Table 3. Enrolments, in-year retention rates and achievement rates of primary learning goals for students in basic education, by subprogramme areas, 1995-96

Subprogramme area	*Enrolments*	*In-year retention rate*	*Achievement rate*
	No.	*%*	*%*
Literacy	30,200	80	43
Numeracy	24,200	79	44
ESOL	15,600	75	52
Access to further education	5,800	87	74
Courses for students with learning difficulties	26,100	89	74
Other basic education courses	1,500	79	48
Courses leading to generic qualifications	131,600	81	65
Total	**235,000**	**81**	**60**

Source: ISR, July 1996
Note: enrolments and percentages are for FEFC-funded students only

53 In literacy, numeracy and ESOL, 55 per cent of students were registered for qualifications at entry level, 31 per cent at level 1 and 14 per cent at levels 2 and 3. In each of these subject areas, a small number of qualifications represented most of the enrolments in 1995-96. In literacy, 98 per cent of students were enrolled on courses leading to:

- City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) certificates in communication skills (wordpower); foundation level and stage 1

- Associated Examining Board (AEB) achievement tests in literacy; levels 1, 2 and 3
- Royal Society of Arts Examinations Board (RSA) spelltest.

The following numeracy qualifications represented 79 per cent of enrolments:

- C&G certificates in numeracy (numberpower); foundation level and stage 1
- C&G certificates in numeracy; stages 1 and 2
- AEB tests in numeracy; levels 1, 2 and 3
- RSA certificate in numeracy; level 1.

In ESOL, 81 per cent of students enrolled for three main groups of qualifications:

- Pitmans Examination Board certificates in ESOL; basic, elementary and intermediate
- RSA profile certificate in ESOL
- English Speaking Board certificate in English as an acquired language; pre-foundation, foundation, intermediate and advanced levels.

54 The low rate of achievement of learning goals is a consequence mainly of the development of basic education provision from generally non-accredited courses. During the last decade, and particularly since 1994, there has been a trend towards greater use of accredited awards. This has improved the quality of provision, providing greater rigour and a more structured approach. For most students, the opportunity to gain a nationally recognised qualification, which can be the first step to other studies, is a welcome development. Some students, however, still do not perceive accreditation to be of value, given their immediate circumstances, and some teachers do not offer students sufficient

encouragement to register for qualifications. Some recent changes to accredited schemes, for example to C&G numberpower, have made them easier for teachers to use but for many students there continue to be few accreditation schemes which effectively meet their learning needs.

55 Learning goals set for many students in this programme area are inappropriate. Some college managers believe, incorrectly, that provision must be accredited to be eligible for FEFC funding. This stems from a misunderstanding of schedule 2 of the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* (the Act) and it sometimes results in colleges introducing accredited courses which are unsuitable for students. Courses in literacy, numeracy, ESOL and those covered by schedule 2(j) of the Act do not have to be externally accredited to meet the criteria for FEFC funding. Meeting the criteria described in schedule 2 ensures eligibility to apply for funding although the provision of funding is dependent on courses meeting students' needs.

56 Misunderstandings about FEFC funding arrangements often have a direct impact on students' education. In some colleges, inspectors found that students were being advised to enrol for a particular course simply because it was accredited, rather than because it was suitable for their needs. Even where students were enrolled on appropriate courses teachers were mistakenly using the scheme of accreditation as the curriculum. A growing number of confident teachers have found accreditation that suits their students' needs. Other teachers' low expectations of their students, however, limits both achievement and progression. For students with the most severe learning difficulties, accredited courses rarely meet their learning needs.

57 Among the targets described in *Lifetime Learning*, national targets for education and training are those relating to the achievement of competence in communication and numeracy at levels 2 and 3. Most qualifications achieved by students in this programme area are at entry level and level 1, and this is an important step towards their gaining qualifications at higher levels. In other ways basic education makes a

direct contribution to the achievement of the national targets. In 1994-95, more than 2,000 students achieved level 2 competence in numeracy and about 1,000 achieved at least level 2 competence in communication. However, the proportion of the population with low levels of competence in literacy and numeracy is not diminishing. For example, the BSA estimates that more than 60 per cent of adults have a competence lower than level 2 in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

58 Some students progress successfully to other courses, further training or employment because of their achievements. However, the accredited achievements of students with learning difficulties are often difficult to evaluate, both because of the nature of the accreditation frameworks in use, and the ways in which many colleges use them. There is no overall structure, at a national level, to show how the many different pre-foundation accreditation frameworks relate one to another. Some frameworks are focused primarily on accrediting personal skills or key skills; others are intended to help students to progress to national vocational qualifications (NVQs). Students in many colleges develop skills which are useful in themselves and which also form elements of some accreditation schemes. They leave college with a collection of accredited units which falls short of the qualification for which they were aiming. A small number of colleges are giving careful thought to how best to record and celebrate students' achievements when the use of accreditation may not be appropriate.

59 Few colleges have useful data on the achievements of students with learning difficulties who follow discrete courses, because the achievement of a single unit of accreditation is counted as a success. It is common to see success rates on discrete courses recorded as 100 per cent for every course year by year. However, this often conceals modest levels of achievement. In some colleges, students with learning difficulties who simply complete the course are recorded as being successful. Many colleges were unable to provide inspectors with valid

information about the achievements of students with learning difficulties. Some schemes of accreditation give students credit for 'successes' at a variety of levels, for example, being able to complete a task 'with physical help' or 'with verbal prompts', or simply with 'having experienced an activity'. This can lead unhelpfully to a student being accredited as able to 'make a sandwich with hand-over-hand support', 'having experienced a hairdressing salon' or 'having been present when biscuits were made'. While achievements should always be recorded, it is difficult to determine what value some aspects of external accreditation have to the students themselves.

60 The use of Open College Network accreditation is growing rapidly and it is becoming the main accreditation framework for basic education. It provides credit for students' achievements but is not a qualification. Colleges prefer it to some other forms of accreditation because teachers can write programmes which suit their own students and because they find that they can fulfil the requirements for validation relatively easily. The rationale for combinations of modules on some programmes is unclear, and there has been a lack of consistent standards between Open College Networks, especially at the lower levels. Where open college accreditation is implemented with rigour, it can help in structuring learning programmes in ways that are beneficial to students.

61 The report from the widening participation committee, *Learning Works* highlights the concern that over half of the young people who leave school do so without the initial foundation platform of five GCSEs at grade C or above. The report shows the impact which low levels of achievement have on people's learning throughout their lives and identifies the capacity of further education to engage and re-engage them by offering a wide range of provision at different levels and in different settings. For adult learners, the report acknowledges the backlog caused by decades of underachievement in which national strategies for education and training have failed to make significant

inroads in increasing participation and achievement. The agenda for change in the report includes the creation of a new 'pathway to learning', a unitised system for recognising achievement with accreditation for guidance and support, and the establishment of a lifetime entitlement to education up to level 3. This agenda is likely to have a significant impact on basic skills provision.

GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Partnerships and Community Links

62 Many colleges have effective links with a range of local agencies and community organisations, including local minority ethnic groups and voluntary organisations, which result in imaginative responses to local needs. Colleges are increasingly providing basic education courses on Saturdays and a few remain open to students during the summer vacation. Some colleges have extensive community-based provision. Such initiatives have helped colleges to raise recruitment and attract different types of student. Occasionally, responsiveness is at the expense of the quality of provision. As with a sixth form college establishing new provision for students with mental health difficulties, for example, staff are sometimes insufficiently trained to teach the new courses.

63 There is much effective 'outreach' work. Students value courses in centres close to their homes which are accessible and welcoming. Family literacy schemes often help to establish productive partnerships between schools, colleges and local communities. Some colleges employ teachers to visit students at home, which is helpful to students who are unable to attend college because of ill health or for cultural or religious reasons. In maintaining their community provision, colleges often collaborate closely with the adult education service of the LEA, and some colleges and LEAs have arrangements under which students are referred to the provision most appropriate to their needs and interests.

A disadvantage of much community-based or home-based provision is that there is little or no opportunity for planned progression. Some students continue to study in this way when alternative patterns of study would be more appropriate.

64 Many colleges have used links with national organisations such as the National Organisation for Adult Learning (NIACE) and the BSA to support the development of their basic education provision. Some have developed extensive informal networks which support students and encourage new students to engage in education. Significant contact with specialist careers officers, social workers and special schools has helped students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make an easier transition to and from college courses. A few colleges have established parent groups to support their work with younger students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Liaison between sector colleges and independent specialist colleges for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is not yet widespread but, sometimes, it has given students access to a wider curriculum.

65 In making provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, colleges have developed links with health authorities, social services departments, LEAs and schools. The government's green paper *Excellence for all Children: Meeting special educational needs* refers to issues on transition from school to further education. This has sometimes resulted in referrals and the development of new provision. Some multi-agency groups have helped colleges to develop programmes in partnership with other agencies to meet community care objectives. In some colleges collaborative forums include health, social services, careers and the local authority and the liaison has led to the expansion and improvement of provision. Important background information about students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can help colleges to respond effectively to individuals' educational needs. Unfortunately, referrals from schools and other agencies are not always accompanied by precise or adequate information.

Recruitment of Students and Market Research

66 Recruitment of students in this programme area depends largely on word of mouth and direct contact with local organisations and groups. There is rarely a co-ordinated college strategy based on a thorough analysis of community needs. Recruitment methods depend on the type and location of provision. Successful forms of recruitment include consultative conferences or reference groups involving systematic links with external agencies. 'Taster' courses, link courses and visits to schools by college staff are common for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Effective methods for recruiting to basic skills and ESOL courses include: adult learner road shows; town-centre 'shops'; advertising in supermarkets, schools and playgroups; 'drop-in' workshops; mailshots; and door-to-door leafleting.

67 The marketing of programmes in this area is often weak. In many colleges, there is little systematic market research, particularly in respect of intelligence about the labour market and community care. Some colleges continue to recruit people from the same client groups and have few strategies for attracting new types of student. Their strategic plans do not give enough attention to this programme area. Some colleges obtain information on the market as part of their close working relationships with different agencies and some have advisory groups which enable them to assess local needs and market their provision, for example, in providing ESOL courses. A few colleges have developed systematic marketing plans and databases of community and voluntary organisations. Some have marketing plans broken down into segments with a budget set for each area, college-wide analyses of how students hear of courses each year, town-centre 'shops' with a wide range of promotional materials, and evaluations of events and activities which are used to inform planning.

Support for Learning

68 Colleges are increasingly introducing procedures for checking and analysing students' needs for learning support. In some colleges this is restricted to checks on levels of literacy and numeracy in relation to the required levels for success on academic and vocational courses. In most colleges the assessment of the support needs of students with visual and/or hearing impairments is undertaken by specialist staff whose services may be bought in from an external agency. Generally, these assessments are of a high quality. Colleges also make good use of the National Federation of Access Centres to assess the technical equipment and other forms of support which students with physical disabilities require. In colleges in which provision is well-developed, detailed assessments are used to identify support needs, and these are costed and recorded on the ISR. In the case of students with learning difficulties, colleges use a variety of methods to assess the need for additional learning support. For example, college staff attend progress reviews on prospective students as they prepare to leave school and the link courses, designed to ease students' transition from school to college, also provide good opportunities for staff to assess what additional support students need.

69 Increasingly, colleges are providing basic education as learning support within students' main programmes of study rather than through discrete courses. This support is beginning to have a beneficial impact on the overall success rates of students. For example, in 1994-95, the withdrawal rates for those students receiving additional support were lower than for those not receiving support. Learning support is provided in a variety of ways. Students can attend additional sessions in the learning centre, they can work alone or in small groups with guidance from teachers, receive support which is integrated with courses, or they can be provided with equipment such as laptop computers or dictaphones. The most effective provision is where students' support needs are analysed thoroughly and teachers consult students about the ways in which they would like support to be provided.

70 Where learning support is effective, the support teachers work with vocational and/or academic teachers to plan the support to be given to the students. Main course teachers are helped to devise learning materials, such as handouts and worksheets, which use language and concepts that the students can understand and the teachers subsequently evaluate the impact that the support has on the student's progress in class. In some colleges, learning support teachers provide other teachers with detailed advice on the teaching methods likely to be most effective in helping a student to learn. This is found helpful in planning lessons to meet the needs of all the students in the group.

> In a painting and decorating NVQ level 1 lesson, nine of the 25 students had been assessed as being in need of additional support with literacy and numeracy. Three learning support assistants had been assigned to the group to work with the vocational teacher. One student, who could barely write, but who had good practical skills, was making successful progress on the course as the result of the high level of support he was receiving with these basic skills.

71 In many colleges, students receive support by attending workshops held in the learning centres. This provision is most effective when staff in the learning centre liaise with subject tutors and provide support which is geared to the work that students are doing in their main programme.

> A number of students on an NVQ level 1 programme in motor vehicle engineering were identified as requiring support. A learning support tutor worked in partnership with the course tutor to develop an effective communications programme, accredited through wordpower, which was closely related to the practical aspects of the course.

72 Many colleges provide specialist advice where this is required; for example, educational psychologists may be available to give advice on dyslexia. Some college staff, however, are unclear about when it may be appropriate to draw upon this advice and some fail to ensure that students know when and where the advice is available. Support for students with visual and/or hearing impairment is often very good but the support provided for students with learning difficulties is of more variable quality. In a minority of colleges, support workers are skilled in helping students to learn. They know what the students are capable of and liaise closely with the teacher so that the roles they perform in lessons are well planned and effective. In some colleges, support workers hinder students' development by providing them with too much help and, sometimes, by doing the work for them. For example, in one class, a student who was making a cake had gone for a coffee break leaving the cake mixture in a bowl. When she returned, the support worker had transferred the mixture to a tin and put it in the oven to bake so that it would be ready for the end of the lesson. This denied the student the opportunity to learn to work to deadlines and reinforced the mistaken belief that she could take a break whenever she wished.

73 Colleges often provide support for learners as well as support for their learning. A relatively high proportion of students enrolled on basic education programmes are eligible for additional learning support funds. In some colleges, where the average level of funding is low, the real costs of additional support are not met by the FEFC. This sometimes leads to colleges choosing not to enrol the students who have expensive additional support needs, or referring them to institutions with higher levels of funding, which can afford to support them but may have less appropriate provision. Most colleges have a counselling service which is available to students and staff, although few colleges provide disability counselling. Some colleges, however, are not aware that funding for additional learning support can be claimed in respect of personal counselling, which may help some students to remain on the course of study which is their first choice.

74 Childcare provision helps encourage students with pre-school age children to participate in further education and it is particularly important for students on 'return to learn', basic skills or ESOL courses. The government has recently made a commitment to developing a childcare strategy and has allocated £300 million for this over the next five years. In many colleges, student services staff provide ready advice on a range of matters, including personal finance and careers and, sometimes, students receive practical assistance with travel costs to college. Students also value the opportunities they have to discuss their aspirations and personal circumstances with their tutors. Many students with disabilities, however, cannot attend college for lack of suitable transport. Poor public transport services, particularly in rural areas, create a barrier to participation in further education.

Guidance and Tutorials

75 Colleges differ widely in their ability to provide sound advice and guidance to basic education students. Some guidance staff are qualified and have received specific training in offering guidance to different age groups and to students with differing needs. College accommodation for guidance is not always appropriate, lacking soundproofing to allow confidential discussions to take place or adequate furniture to help students feel comfortable. Many colleges do not provide details of their courses, charter and student handbook in a form which is accessible to students who are not fluent readers, who require other means of communication, such as an audio tape, or whose first language is not English. Many colleges have established effective central units for student admissions and guidance, and in some colleges enrolment can take place at any time during the year. There are also some examples of effective action by colleges to ensure that students can transfer to courses which more closely meet their needs.

A student who was not satisfied with a part-time basic education course was telephoned by the course tutor when she ceased to attend. When she explained that the course did not meet her needs, her requirements were discussed and she was offered, free of charge, a place on another course on a Saturday. Having attended this for several weeks, she wrote a letter of appreciation to the college.

76 Some college staff are unclear about the distinction between programmes for developing basic skills and programmes for overcoming learning difficulties. This can lead to inaccurate descriptions of the different services, inappropriate advice and students not being able to understand what they are likely to receive. Part-time students rarely receive the same level of guidance from tutors as full-time students. Sometimes, those following basic skills or ESOL courses may repeat modules, undertake courses without having a clear idea of the routes for progression or receive little help in defining their learning aims. Some colleges, however, take care to ensure that they have effective mechanisms to provide part-time students with sound initial guidance. 'One-stop' enrolment is becoming more popular, with colleges enrolling basic education students at town-centre locations or at several centres rather than at one main site. Accreditation of prior learning or experience is relatively unknown on basic skills courses and programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

77 Most colleges provide an induction programme for full-time basic education students. Part-time students might also receive an induction but the quality of this is more variable. Induction for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities may take the form of a common programme designed by the course team. Some colleges use an induction checklist to record each element of the induction programme and a record is kept by the student. Others have developed self-assessment activities during induction which help students to find

their preferred methods of learning or to assess their competence in particular skills. Some colleges, especially sixth form and tertiary colleges, have well-developed and effective tutorial systems which are in place for all students, including those in basic education. In these colleges, students have timetabled tutorials, and follow a carefully devised tutorial syllabus. Teachers keep tutorial records on each of their students. These may include details of the classes attended, the learning contract, information on the student's initial assessment and subsequent reviews of progress, and a record of tutorial activities.

In one college, there is a common approach to induction and tutorial processes. A working group decides a checklist of items that should be included in programmes. A comprehensive tutor handbook gives clear guidance on procedures and content.

78 Careers guidance and support into the next phases of students' lives also vary in quality in different colleges, but this aspect of work is generally less well developed than initial guidance or on-course support. Students with learning difficulties on discrete courses receive more support from their course tutors than from college-wide services. The FEFC has recently published a good practice report on careers education and guidance. The main strength of careers education and guidance in the colleges inspected was careers education which was well integrated with other aspects of the curriculum or was part of the tutorial programme. The importance of this work is likely to be influenced by a guidance circular entitled *Careers Education and Guidance in Further Education Colleges*, issued by the DfEE. It summarises the requirements on colleges in respect of careers education and guidance resulting from the *Education Act 1997*, which include the right of students to careers advice.

CURRICULUM ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

Missions and Policies

79 Many colleges have general statements in their missions that outline their commitment to meeting the needs of the 'whole community' but little thought is given to how this commitment will be realised. In colleges, where provision is well developed, specific reference is made to developing an inclusive approach to education for all students, the mission is underpinned by policies and procedures which provide a college-wide framework for the provision, and action plans indicate the ways in which the college will respond to the needs of all students. In most colleges, the commitment to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is implicit rather than explicit. Some colleges choose to emphasise their commitment to aspects of the programme area, for example, by including the provision of learning support in strategic and development plans. Most colleges monitor the implementation of policies on provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and have groups to monitor progress on the implementation of disability policies.

80 Few colleges have policies that clearly inform teaching and learning in the programme area. Colleges, generally, do not have policies on learning. The curriculum has been driven more by historical circumstances than by clear principles and policies. Governors' interest and involvement in shaping and monitoring policies for basic education vary. Few governing bodies have a governor designated to take a special interest in this area of work. However, where governors are involved, they are seen as supportive and they assist the process of further developing basic education provision. Few governors have an in-depth understanding of basic education.

Strategic Management

81 Strategic planning for basic education is generally weak; some senior managers make little use of targets in this area and have a low awareness of trends in basic education. Many colleges change programmes little from one year to another and take little account of market research. The objectives stated in strategic plans are mostly generalised. Where senior managers are directly involved in, and knowledgeable about, the planning and development of the programme area, provision is invariably good. Strong leadership and clear policy frameworks help in developing effective curricula and maintaining the quality of provision.

82 Those colleges which provide successful programmes for students with learning difficulties are rigorous and thorough in their strategic management of this area of work. Accurate information about local need and trends is gathered, updated and used as the basis for designing provision. Partnerships with external agencies enhance the quality and range of the work. Progression routes are established for students on discrete courses, and for those who enter at foundation level. Colleges are increasingly developing curricula so that each programme area provides a foundation level course which helps students with learning difficulties to gain access to nationally recognised vocational qualifications. Data relating to students' achievements and destinations are used to evaluate programmes and inform planning. Such colleges as these, however, are in the minority. Many colleges have not reviewed their provision since it was established. Managers have little information about prospective student groups, or about local trends in education, employment or day care.

Organisational Structures

83 Work belonging to this programme area can be found within an unusually wide range of organisational structures in the colleges. Basic education provision rarely falls within a single faculty, school or

department, and even where it does, different names are used to describe aspects of the same provision. Sometimes the fragmentation of management responsibilities across different areas or new management structures has resulted in poor communication and confusion among staff over roles and responsibilities. For example, basic skills can be taught to students with learning difficulties who are studying on discrete courses, to adults following basic skills courses, or to students following a general further education course as part of an arrangement for additional learning support. Sometimes staff may be well qualified and experienced in one area but not in another, and the co-ordination of provision may involve up to three separate departments: learning difficulties, basic education and learning support.

84 Besides the increased emphasis on basic education as learning support rather than as a discrete course, most colleges are attempting, with various degrees of success, to draw together and co-ordinate all aspects of learning support, beginning with a strategy for cross-college assessment. Learning support is sometimes managed as a separate entity and, in many colleges, responsibility for cross-college learning support has been taken out of the faculty structure to ensure that students perceive it as an entitlement for all. Discrete programmes for students with learning difficulties tend to be managed within a faculty or department and the managers responsible often lack experience or expertise in teaching these students. In some colleges, this separateness allows the course team a considerable degree of autonomy; staff may become isolated from current practice in other programme areas and so develop curricula which reflect their own interests rather than those of the students. Where organisational structures are sound, the skills of the staff are effectively deployed so that good practice can be shared and teachers and students understand the various roles and functions which have been established. In some colleges cross-college developments have been resisted by staff teaching the discrete programmes, who perceive them as a threat to their roles.

85 In some instances, reorganisation has led to duplication and overlap in aspects for ESOL and basic skills provision. ESOL and basic skills provision may be organised across departments, but managed and co-ordinated by the vocational department. The links between vocational provision and cross-college provision for basic skills and ESOL, however, are helping to strengthen the concept of inclusive learning. Some larger colleges have complex structures; for example, one has a matrix structure in which an adult education manager links with 16 other curriculum managers. Often provision made through community networks creates a number of problems for the management, control and monitoring of provision. Lack of staff time, because there are too few posts or too many part-time posts, also restricts curriculum development and leads to inadequate links between basic education and other areas.

86 Some colleges have taken effective action to remedy deficiencies identified during inspections. For example, evidence from the reinspection of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities shows that where managers have taken a firm leadership role the weaknesses originally identified have been significantly reduced. Often, this has required a restructuring and reorganisation of the way in which the provision is managed.

In one college, the provision had been restructured under the personal guidance of the principal to help develop a 'whole-college' approach to the needs of the students. A cross-college group with representatives from departments across the college had been formed to debate and discuss issues relating to provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Formal policies and procedures were developed to underpin the new approach. Pre-foundation and foundation level vocational programmes leading to nationally recognised qualifications were introduced and 'real work' environments were created for students to learn practical vocational skills.

Course Management

87 Middle managers concerned with basic education are expected to carry many responsibilities and are frequently untrained for their management role. Programme co-ordinators are often not given the time to do an effective job; many teach more than 20 hours a week in addition to their management and administrative duties. Managers of learning support usually work full time; co-ordinators of ESOL and basic skills are more often fractional appointments and they operate at lower levels within the college management hierarchy. There are examples of effective management, mostly at operational levels. There is a growing recognition that basic education provision requires time and well-developed management skills if it is to be effectively co-ordinated. Where provision is effective, colleges have strong and cohesive basic education teams which meet regularly to discuss business and curriculum matters. In smaller colleges, one person may hold responsibility for discrete courses and learning support, sometimes coupled with a teaching commitment.

88 Some deficiencies in management information at programme level have a particular influence on this area of work. Inspectors encountered significant issues relating to data collection in basic education, particularly in respect of students' achievements and destinations which are generally not reported effectively at college level. Many programme managers do not require reports on enrolments, retention, achievements and destinations as a routine part of programme monitoring and evaluation, or as part of an annual cycle of reporting of performance in the area. Where information exists, it is often incomplete and/or unreliable. Particular difficulties have been found with the accuracy of statistics provided by colleges on students' achievements in this area. Management information is not often used effectively for planning purposes; there is often a reliance on informal collection of information or historical planning patterns. The rich information held centrally by college systems is rarely fully exploited by programme managers in making their decisions.

Assuring Quality

89 College managers report difficulties in applying college-wide quality assurance systems to the basic education programme area where many courses are part time and often have multiple entry and exit points for individual students. Procedures to assure quality in this programme area are often found to be at an early stage of development. This is reflected in the comparatively low standards in the programme area which are reported by inspectors. A particular issue for quality assurance in this area of work is that the use of questionnaires to gather students' views is often inappropriate for students with learning, language or reading difficulties. Weaknesses in quality assurance systems include: procedures that fail to generate action plans for improvement; the lack of appropriate staff development; students' lack of awareness of the college charter, sometimes because it is in a form which it is difficult for them to use; and part-time teachers' unfamiliarity with quality assurance procedures.

90 In many colleges there is a lack of rigour associated with the quality assurance of basic education programmes, partly because incorrect assumptions are made by managers about the high quality of the work. This has significant implications for colleges as they attempt to develop effective self-assessment procedures. Basic education managers rarely set or use performance indicators although, increasingly, information on enrolment and retention is being collected. There are few examples yet of procedures that include observation of teaching, and internal verification procedures in this area are not well developed. Quality procedures often work well at course level but these are not drawn together into a complete programme framework. Very few colleges have agreed criteria by which the success of programmes in this area of work can be judged. There is a belief by some managers that external validation procedures are sufficient to assure quality. Internal arrangements may therefore be weak with some teachers

having a low level of awareness and understanding of quality assurance issues. Other managers seem to believe, wrongly, that student satisfaction alone is a sufficient indicator of the quality of provision. The absence of clear standards for teaching and the promotion of learning and a lack of understanding about what is achievement and how it is to be measured are common weaknesses.

91 Many colleges have external accreditation for their quality arrangements, for example, accreditation by the British Standards Institute or Investor in People status. An increasing number of basic education programme areas within colleges have also achieved the BSA quality standard. There is no clear correlation, however, between the holding of external accreditation and the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures in the programme area. College managers often adapt college systems to take account of the nature of the programme area. Such adaptations may include arrangements for responses from students at several points during the year or the additional consideration given to programme targets. The best provision is generally found where course teams have sufficient time to meet and review progress and performance. Comprehensive and well-maintained course management files are important in ensuring consistency. One college had established a cross-college learning support and assessment review panel which met twice termly to monitor decisions and review provision. This was felt by the college to be a key forum for clarifying policy and practice, and ensuring support for managers, in an area where students' needs are complex.

92 Other examples of successful quality assurance were found in a number of institutions.

In one college, quality assurance is achieved through a meticulous completion of course review and evaluation reports, assessment records, end-of-year summaries and forms for reporting students' progress. There are regular staff meetings and meetings with representatives of outside agencies.

In another college, teachers have a keen awareness of the concept of quality. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are included in the college's arrangements for obtaining feedback from students, and staff have adapted materials and produced additional worksheets to enable students to contribute their views on the college's induction procedures.

One franchised community network, managed by a college, employs 14 staff to monitor quality. They have adapted their procedures for use with community groups, including members whose first language is not English. The work has included the development of more appropriate procedures for collecting responses from students which involve the use of community languages.

93 Appropriate and sufficient staff development is a prerequisite for effective teaching in this programme area. Teaching basic skills and ESOL is a skilled and specialised activity for which appropriate specialist qualifications and high levels of competence and experience are necessary if the work is to be effective. Many college managers underestimate the extent to which professional development, involving specific training and updating, is required to underpin successful teaching in basic education. Teachers say that opportunities for meeting colleagues engaged in similar work in other colleges, and so for sharing experience and good practice, have diminished during the last four years. Relevant and useful events are organised both nationally and regionally by organisations such as the Further Education Development

Agency (FEDA), the BSA and the National Organisation for Adult Learning but in some colleges, teachers are not encouraged to participate in these events. Colleges often make changes in schemes of accreditation and methods of assessment on basic skills and ESOL programmes without providing sufficient training for teachers. Changes in teaching styles, for example those caused by the move towards work which is organised in learning resource centres, are generally not supported with appropriate training. Staff development opportunities for the growing number of part-time teachers is especially lacking in most colleges.

94 Training for teachers of students with learning difficulties is also inadequate in many colleges. Most training comprises one-day events or short courses aimed at raising levels of awareness. There are few specialist qualifications which are designed for teachers of students with learning difficulties and few teachers have the opportunity to undertake advanced level training designed to give them the skills they need to help these students to learn effectively. Although many colleges have developed training programmes to raise all teachers' awareness of the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, only a few have insisted that all attend. Consequently, the training is generally attended by staff who are interested in the work and already have some awareness of these students' needs.

Staffing

95 Most teachers, support staff and volunteers who work in the programme area are committed to providing education which is of high quality. They work hard, using their experience and skill for the benefit of their students. However, some do not have sufficient specialist expertise to recognise what students need to learn. Provision in basic skills and ESOL is generally dependent on part-time teachers. They often have significant levels of responsibility but are generally unable to attend team meetings or engage in training programmes. In many

colleges, for example, basic skills are taught entirely by part-time teachers, often working at the college for fewer than eight hours a week and co-ordinated by a teacher in a fractional full-time post. In departments providing courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities there are usually more full-time teachers and more specialist support staff. Unlike staff in other programme areas, basic education staff frequently have no relevant qualification for the area in which they teach. Some teachers lack general teaching qualifications and others lack specialist qualifications, for example, qualifications in teaching basic skills and ESOL, and it is rare to find a staff team which is fully trained to work with students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

96 Many colleges employ support assistants to work with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Some have produced guidelines on how these assistants should be used; in other colleges there are no criteria for their deployment and they do not have up-to-date job descriptions. Volunteers are sometimes used to support basic skills and ESOL students. In one large college, for example, there are 60 volunteers supporting ESOL students and 15 working in adult basic education. In several colleges, these volunteers work within a home tutoring scheme. Trained volunteers provide valuable support for teachers and students but the guidance they receive can be inadequate and in some colleges they are not properly supervised. Occasionally, volunteers are left to teach students on their own.

Learning Resources

97 A trend in basic education is towards methods of teaching and learning in which students work on their own using resources designed for the purpose. Good-quality resources enable students to learn effectively, working on their own. For example, one group of basic skills teachers designed resource packs related to different vocational subject areas which students could then use by themselves. Some teachers use

students' published work effectively as a learning resource. Others make effective use of authentic materials such as train timetables and driving handbooks. In the best practice, materials and equipment are relevant to the experience of the students and are stored and labelled so that students can select materials they want to use. However, the quality of learning resources varies. Some teachers use poor-quality worksheets, or introduce materials which are not relevant to the course or to students' interests. Occasionally, the resources used demean students' status as adults; for example, resources designed for children such as alphabet books and toy money.

98 Computers are underused as an aid to learning in basic education. In many cases, computing equipment is not available for teaching even though other programme areas have extensive information technology facilities. In some colleges, computers are available but teachers are unable to use them effectively. When given the opportunity, students are enthusiastic about using a computer and it helps them to improve their reading, writing and numeracy skills. A few colleges have purchased laptop computers to make sure that students in community-based provision have the same access to computers as students at the main site. Other examples of good practice include a college-based language development network, currently producing multimedia CD-ROM databases for use in the language development network.

99 Many basic skills teachers do not fully exploit the teaching aids which are available to them, such as overhead projectors, tape recorders and video machines. The quality of equipment and resources is often lower in centres away from the main college sites. This is particularly so where accommodation is rented or shared with other users, making the storage and maintenance of equipment and materials difficult. Teachers often display imagination and resourcefulness in overcoming these deficiencies to provide appropriate opportunities for learning. There are many examples of teachers regularly transporting equipment and learning materials to remote venues.

100 The specialist equipment which some students require for their learning is not always available or accessible. In one college, equipment for students with visual impairment was two floors away from the teaching room and difficult to transport easily. Support staff sometimes arrange for students with a physical disability to try out a wide range of equipment to help them in progressing to other courses or to employment. Simple but inventive aids are developed to enable students who have learning difficulties, besides their physical and/or sensory impairments, to take part in practical sessions. Equipment, in some colleges, is well maintained by an enthusiastic team of technicians.

Accommodation

101 Accommodation in this programme area ranges from high-quality, purpose-built teaching rooms to classrooms which are not fit for the purposes for which they are used. There are many instances of specialist base rooms for basic education students, often with ease of access to learning materials. Some colleges use realistic work environments, for example, college shops or engineering workshops, for students with learning difficulties who are preparing to study on vocational courses. The general trend to more provision in learning resource centres has created some difficulties for basic education students. For example, too little attention has been paid to ensuring that teachers change their methods of teaching to suit these learning environments. For some students, such as those with learning difficulties, who often have difficulty concentrating, these new environments may be inappropriate. Occasionally, colleges do not allow basic education students to have their own specialist classrooms and the general classrooms which are used often lack visual display. Classes are sometimes located in classrooms that are in poor condition, with leaking roofs or broken windows.

102 Many colleges offer basic education provision in a range of community-based locations which are easily reached by local people

using public transport or walking. However, colleges often have to decide between using accommodation which is accessible and that which is well suited for teaching. Mostly, the quality of outreach accommodation is of a lower quality than the accommodation on college sites. Inspectors often observe lessons in surroundings which adversely affect students' learning. Teachers working in centres away from the college often have restricted access to equipment and materials and experience difficulty in storing books, students' work and teaching materials. Teaching accommodation in some outreach centres is shared with other users so that visual displays and the creation of a relevant learning environment are difficult. Sometimes, shared use of accommodation creates unsatisfactory conditions for effective learning. At one outreach centre, two separate lessons, one in horticulture the other in art, were conducted in a dining room while other residents were eating their supper and watching television in the same room.

103 Access to buildings for students with restricted mobility is improving but most colleges and outreach venues are not fully accessible for those using wheelchairs. Some colleges have planned an incremental approach to improvements which increase students' access to facilities. Some teaching rooms and equipment have been adapted to enable students with physical disabilities to participate in activities; for example, adjustable work surfaces have been created in some classrooms and workshops. Signposting in colleges is sometimes not suitable for students with visual impairment or for those who do not read well.

104 In many colleges, students with learning difficulties can learn practical vocational skills in real work environments such as engineering workshops, commercial kitchens, hairdressing salons and training restaurants. However, in many colleges, they are excluded from specialist accommodation. They have, for example, been observed studying catering and art in classrooms without access to water and studying hairdressing in utility rooms. On many courses, students with

learning difficulties have their own base rooms even, on occasion, when students on other courses in the college do not. These base rooms are sometimes well equipped. They contribute to students' learning, particularly the development of skills for everyday living.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

105 The strengths of the programme area are:

- the effective provision of basic education, for students with complex and diverse needs, in more than half of the colleges inspected
- the successful, and increasingly effective, reorientation of some basic education provision from discrete courses to learning support
- the provision of learning in a wide variety of modes and settings
- the contribution that basic education makes towards widening participation in further education
- the many students who gain confidence and make progress towards their learning goals
- the high motivation of students
- conscientious teachers who are committed to basic education work.

106 In order to improve the quality of provision in this programme area, colleges should address the following issues:

- the comparatively low standards in the programme area
- inadequate curriculum guidance for teachers and insufficient sharing of good practice

- ineffective assessment of learners' needs in many colleges
- much teaching which fails to meet the needs of learners, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- lower rates of achievement than in other programme areas
- inappropriate forms of accreditation for programmes followed by many students
- the lack of planned progression for many students
- the ineffective collection and use of management information
- the lack of sufficiently rigorous arrangements for assuring quality
- inadequate staff development and management support, especially for the growing number of part-time teachers
- the underuse of information technology as a learning resource.

ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED DURING THE SURVEY

The National Association of Specialist Colleges (NATSPEC)

Basic Skills Agency (BSA)

Department for Education and Employment (DfEE)

Further Education Development Agency (FEDA)

The National Organisation for Adult Learning (NIACE)

STATUTORY DUTIES

The FEFC has legal duties for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities which arise from the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*. The first Act requires the FEFC to fund sufficient and adequate facilities for further education; to have regard to the requirements of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; to avoid disproportionate expenditure; and to assess the quality of provision it funds. The second Act requires the FEFC to make an annual report to the secretary of state on its activities and those of colleges towards students with disabilities, and to require each sector college, as a condition of receiving funds from the FEFC, to produce a disability statement for students. In addition to the duties upon the FEFC, colleges and other agencies such as the health service, social services and LEAs also have legal duties towards these students.

PROFILE OF BASIC EDUCATION STUDENTS, 1995-96

Table 1. Mode of attendance of students in basic education, 1995-96

	Female %	*Male* %	*Total* %
Part-time	41	28	69
Full-time	16	15	31
Total	**57**	**43**	**100**

Source: ISR, July 1996

Table 2. Age, sex and ethnicity of students in basic education, 1995-96

Age	*Part-time* %	*Full-time* %	*Female* %	*Male* %	*Total* %
11 – 15	2	1	1	3	2
16 – 18	7	52	18	25	21
19 – 24	17	18	17	17	17
25 – 39	44	21	39	34	37
40+	30	8	25	21	23
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**
Ethnicity					
Bangladeshi	2.5	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.4
Black African	3.7	5.6	4.2	4.5	4.3
Black Caribbean	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.4	2.5
Black other	0.8	1.1	0.8	1.0	0.9
Chinese	1.9	1.5	2.2	1.3	1.8
Indian	5.3	3.6	5.6	3.7	4.8
Pakistani	8.0	8.0	8.7	7.1	8.0
White	66.8	68.7	65.6	69.6	67.4
Other Asian	3.1	2.5	3.0	2.9	2.9
Other	5.4	4.2	4.9	5.1	5.0
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Source: ISR, July 1996
Note: based on 413 sector colleges

BASIC EDUCATION STUDENTS BY TYPE OF COLLEGE

College type	*Basic education students, 1996-97*	*No. of students 1996-97*	*Growth in number of basic education students, 1994-95 to 1996-97*
	%	*No.*	*%*
Agriculture and horticulture	0.2	460	58
Art, design and performing arts	0.0	30	-104*
General further education	74.3	—	17
Sixth form	1.6	3,360	31
Tertiary	23.9	—	10
Total	**100**	**—**	**—**

Source: college strategic plans, July 1997
**partly due to transfer of art and design colleges to HE sector*
Note: excludes designated institutions, one sixth form college and one general further education college where data were not available; totals are FEFC-funded and other-funded students

BASIC EDUCATION PROVISION BY REGION, 1994 TO 1997

Region	*Total student numbers*			*Increase in student numbers, 1994-95 to 1996-97*
	1994-95	*1995-96*	*1996-97*	*%*
East Midlands	15,300	16,100	16,000	4
Eastern Region	21,200	19,100	18,900	-11
Greater London	38,400	40,500	42,100	10
North West	35,100	38,100	40,000	14
Northern Region	5,000	6,500	6,500	29
South East	20,900	25,700	26,800	28
South West	13,200	15,100	14,700	11
West Midlands	25,300	29,000	35,800	41
Yorkshire and Humberside	17,200	20,800	35,300	105

Source: college strategic plans, July 1995, July 1996, July 1997
Note: excludes designated and external institutions, one sixth form college and one general further education college

BASIC EDUCATION AS A PROPORTION OF ALL PROVISION IN SECTOR COLLEGES

Colleges No.	***Students on programme area 10 courses as % of total student numbers***
95	0
299	1 – 10
30	11 – 20
7	21 – 30
1	31 – 40
2	41 – 50

Source: college strategic plans, 1996
Note: excludes designated institutions and three sector colleges

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

Grade 1 *Provision which has many strengths and very few weaknesses*

Grade 2 *Provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*

Grade 3 *Provision with a balance of strengths and weaknesses*

Grade 4 *Provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*

Grade 5 *Provision which has many weaknesses and very few strengths*

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