

# Exeter College

REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE  
**1999-00**

THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL***

*The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) 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 according to a four-year cycle. It also inspects other further education provision funded by the FEFC. In fulfilling its work programme, the inspectorate assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.*

*College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Inspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work they inspect. A member of the Council's audit service works with inspectors in assessing aspects of governance and management. All colleges are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.*

*Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry CV1 2WT  
Telephone 024 7686 3000  
Fax 024 7686 3100  
Website [www.fefc.ac.uk](http://www.fefc.ac.uk)*

*© FEFC 2000 You may photocopy this report and use extracts in promotional or other material provided quotes are accurate, and the findings are not misrepresented.*

# Contents

Paragraph

---

## Summary

---

### Context

The college and its mission	1
The inspection	5

---

### Curriculum areas

Mathematics	9
Construction	14
Business – management and professional studies	19
Leisure and tourism	24
Health and care	29
English and modern foreign languages	35
Geography, history, philosophy, psychology, sociology and religious studies	40
Basic skills	45

---

### Cross-college provision

Support for students	50
General resources	57
Quality assurance	64
Governance	71
Management	78
Conclusions	85

---

### College statistics

## Grade Descriptors

Inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the report. They use a five-point scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.

The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses
- grade 2 – good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses
- grade 3 – satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses
- grade 4 – less than satisfactory provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths
- grade 5 – poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses.

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1998-99, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	10	53	30	7	–
Cross-college provision	14	54	23	7	2

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*  
Sample size: 104 college inspections

## Student Achievements

Where data on student achievements appear in tables, levels of achievement are shown in three ways:

- as number of starters, which is the number of enrolments on qualifications where the student was expecting to complete the qualification that college year. For example, a student on a two-year programme who began their programme in October 1995, would appear in the results for 1996-97 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which students have completed as expected or where they are continuing their studies beyond the expected end date of the qualification. For programmes of study of two years or more, retention is calculated across the whole programme, that is, from the start to the end of the qualification
- as an achievement rate, which is the number of qualifications students have fully achieved as a percentage of completed qualifications with a known outcome. Partial achievements are not included.

# Summary

## **Exeter College**

### ***South West Region***

**Inspected February 2000**

#### **Summary**

Exeter College is a tertiary college serving Exeter and east, mid and south Devon. The college produced a detailed self-assessment report. The judgements in the report were supported by clear evidence. The report was developed through a well-planned process of self-assessment which involved curriculum and cross-college teams, managers and governors. It drew on course and support service reviews, observations of teaching and learning, internal audits and the views of students, parents and employers. Action plans arising from the self-assessment report are realistic and by the time of the inspection, good progress had been made in implementing them. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements and grades in the report. The weaknesses identified by inspectors were often included in the report, but their significance was sometimes underestimated. Statistical data on students' achievements provided by the college contained some errors.

The college offers school-leavers and adults a wide range of general education and vocational courses in nine of the FEFC's 10 programme areas. Courses are provided at foundation, intermediate, advanced and higher levels. This diverse provision demonstrates the college's commitment to meet the varied needs of the local communities. Provision in seven programme areas was inspected, including courses offered in the local community and by franchise providers. There are extensive and productive links with the local community and other external partners. The support for students is outstanding. Governors bring a wide range of experience and expertise to the college. Effective governance and management has steered the college through a period of financial

constraint. Senior managers have an open and consultative approach which is appreciated by staff. Communication is good at all levels in the college. The strategic planning process involves all staff. Students who wish to progress to higher education receive sound advice. The college has a comprehensive quality assurance system. The college should improve: low levels of students' retention on some courses; teaching and learning in some areas; the use of IT on some courses; the space and facilities in the libraries; access for those with restricted mobility; and the quality of data on students' achievements generated by the management information system.

# Summary

The grades awarded as a result of the inspection are given below

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Cross-college provision</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Mathematics	3	Support for students	1
Construction	3	General resources	3
Business – management and professional studies	2	Quality assurance	2
Leisure and tourism	2	Governance	2
Health and care	2	Management	2
English and modern foreign languages	2		
Geography, history, philosophy, psychology, sociology and religious studies	2		
Basic skills	3		

## The College and its Mission

1 Exeter College was established in 1970 as the first tertiary college in England. The college operates from eight sites in the city centre. There are productive working relationships with the five 11 to 16 partner schools in the city. In 1998-99, 86% of city school students progressed to the college. In addition to acting as a sixth form centre for partner schools, the college has diversified its provision to become a major provider of adult and continuing education in Exeter and Devon. In 1998-99, approximately two-thirds of the college's students came from east, mid and south Devon, an area which is essentially rural in nature with poor transport facilities and few direct road or rail connections. Outside of the city, the college competes for students with four general further education colleges and a large number of 11 to 18 schools. The college has been particularly successful in attracting greater numbers of mature students from the outlying districts. At the time of the inspection, there were 4,253 full-time and 12,169 part-time students, of whom around 12,500 were enrolled on FEFC (Further Education Funding Council) funded courses.

2 Most local industry is confined to small and medium enterprises with no more than 10 employees. Much of the employment in the area comes from manufacturing companies, the financial sector and service industries. The level of unemployment in Exeter is 2.7% compared with the national rate of 4.0%. The college provides training for some 600 trainees for PROSPER, the local training and enterprise council (TEC) company. A vehicle body repair student from the college was named national vocational qualification (NVQ) achiever of the year for the East Devon area. A programme of franchised courses has been developed, and accounts for approximately 10% of the college's FEFC-funded work. The college has fostered good relations with the universities of Exeter and Plymouth and has links with a number of

other further and higher education institutions. The college's commitment to serving the local community is shown through the strong links with local employer and community groups and substantial provision for local businesses. Individual students' needs are met through distance learning and flexible study arrangements, when conventional lessons are not appropriate.

3 The college offers full-time courses from levels 1 to 4. Vocational training is provided in a range of subject areas. General national vocational qualification (GNVQ) results are steadily improving. Many students study three or more general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects. Some undertake the international baccalaureate. In 1998-99, the pass rate for the international baccalaureate was 96% compared with 81% worldwide. GCE A level results have improved steadily year by year. In 1999, the college's average point score for a single GCE A level rose from 4.7 to 5.2, and the point score for an individual student's overall programme increased from 12.7 to 15.5. In addition to their main course of study, students can choose from a wide range of enrichment activities. In 1999, over 750 students progressed to higher education.

4 In March 2000, there were 481 full-time equivalent staff, 95 of whom were support staff. Of the 378 permanent staff, 268 are teachers. The college mission is 'to be the principal provider of further and continuing education and training to those aged 16 and over within Exeter and the surrounding region'. The college seeks to 'enrich the lives and sense of achievement of its students and to maximise their potential in, and contribution to, the community by providing high-quality, relevant and accessible guidance, education and training, within a local, national and international context, free from discrimination or undue obstacle'.

# Context

## The Inspection

5 The college was inspected during the week beginning 28 February 2000. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and reviewed information about the college provided by other directorates of the FEFC. Data on students' achievements for 1997 and 1998 were derived from the college's individualised student record (ISR) returns to the FEFC. Data on students' achievements for 1999 were provided by the college before the inspection. Inspectors checked the data against class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies and found a number of errors. The college then carried out further work which resulted in improvements in the accuracy of the data. There were still some omissions, particularly for 1996 to 1998.

6 The inspection was carried out by 15 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 65 days. Three inspectors also spent nine days inspecting franchised provision. Inspectors observed 113 lessons and examined students' work and documentation relating to the college and its courses. Meetings were held with governors, managers, teachers, students and support staff. Seven inspectors from the Training Standards Council (TSC) worked with the inspection team during the inspection. The TSC inspectors concentrated on the work-based training supported by the college in construction, engineering, manufacturing, business administration, hospitality and hair and beauty. They spent 32 days based at the college. They observed instruction sessions and interviewed trainees, employers and college staff. Where it was appropriate to the FEFC inspection framework, evidence gathered by TSC inspectors was taken into account when grading college provision

7 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Of the 113 lessons observed, 63% were judged to be good or outstanding and 5% were judged to be less than satisfactory. This compares with the national averages of 65% and 6%, respectively.



# Context

## Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCSE A/AS level	5	17	10	2	0	34
GCSE	0	5	5	1	0	11
GNVQ	4	5	6	1	0	16
NVQ	2	7	6	0	0	15
Other vocational	3	4	4	0	0	11
Other	7	12	5	2	0	26
Total (No.)	21	50	36	6	0	113
Total (%)	19	44	32	5	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99 (%)	20	45	29	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*

8 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1998-99

### Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Exeter College	10.4	79
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99	11.2	78

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*

# Curriculum Areas

## Mathematics

### Grade 3

**9 Inspectors observed 13 lessons covering general certificate of secondary education (GCSE), GCE A level, National Open College Network (NOCN) accredited courses and the international baccalaureate course.**

**Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements made by the college but considered that some strengths were overstated.**

#### Key strengths

- well-planned lessons
- effective course organisation
- the careful setting and marking of students' work
- good individual support for students
- good pass rates at GCE A level

#### Weaknesses

- retention rates on some courses below the national average
- low mathematics results at levels 1 and 2
- some poor classroom practice by teachers
- some poor accommodation

10 Mathematics provision includes a large cohort of students taking GCSE, NOCN mathematics at levels 1 and 2, and GCE A level mathematics, with smaller numbers at GCE advanced supplementary (AS). Specialist teachers also teach on other courses such as the access to higher education science and the international baccalaureate, as well as supporting students attending 'drop-in' mathematics workshops. Mathematics courses are carefully planned to cover syllabus content. Students are well informed about course content and the variety of study options available to them. They are encouraged to design a mathematics programme that best suits their

requirements. The college's self-assessment recognises this flexibility as a strength.

11 Most teaching is satisfactory. The self-assessment report summarises the quality of teaching and learning as good. However, the inspection revealed wide variations in the quality of teaching and learning. There were several examples of good practice. Inspectors agreed with the college that teachers plan their lessons well. Marking of assignments is thorough, indicating the standard reached and giving guidance on how students might improve their performance. In the more successful lessons, teachers used a broad range of teaching methods which provided variety of activity, gave students appropriately demanding work and maintained their interest. Teachers encouraged students to play an active part in lessons, and made skilful use of questions and answers to elicit students' ideas and test their understanding of topics. In the less effective lessons, teachers used a narrow range of teaching methods, did not include practical or investigative work and failed to take account of students' learning needs. Teachers did not use information technology (IT) as a mathematical tool. There were few opportunities for students to work in groups or use learning resources other than worksheets.

12 Inspectors experienced difficulty in obtaining complete and reliable data for the full range of courses in mathematics. Arrangements for the collection and analysis of information about some students' performance in mathematics are unsatisfactory. The good pass rate on the two-year GCE A level course was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. In 1998 and 1999, 91% and 90%, respectively, of students who completed the course were successful. The proportion of students who obtained grade C or above has been above the national average for the past three years. The college's self-assessment report underestimated the weaknesses in the retention and achievement rates on some mathematics

# Curriculum Areas

courses. Pass rates are poor on GCSE and NOCN courses. In 1997 and 1998, only 32% and 31%, respectively, of those who completed the course leading to GCSE mathematics passed the examination. The college acknowledges that the GCSE mathematics course does not meet the needs of many students who take it. The NOCN courses at levels 1 and 2 have been introduced to provide an alternative qualification for these students. However, although 50% of students on the NOCN level 2 course achieved the qualification, only 27% of students on the NOCN level 1 course passed. Retention rates on GCE A/AS level mathematics courses have been low. Retention on the AS course has declined from 73% in 1998 to 53% in 1999. Retention on the GCE A level mathematics course was poor at 61% in 1997 and 56% in 1998, though it has improved to 74% in 1999. Attendance rates at lessons observed were good, but students

arrived late for some of the lessons. Students who are successful at GCE A level have a good record of progression to higher education.

13 Teachers are well qualified, and confident in their subject matter. They work well together. The 'drop-in' mathematics workshops provide a pleasant and effective learning environment for students. Comprehensive subject study guides form a useful resource for helping students to learn. The workshop sessions work well for most students. Most value highly the additional support which they receive. These strengths were mentioned in the self-assessment report. Some of the other accommodation used for teaching mathematics is unsuitable. Some classrooms are uncomfortably small and prevent the use of some teaching methods. Provision is inadequate for group work, and there is not enough equipment for mathematics lessons.

## A summary of retention and achievement rates in mathematics, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
NOCN mathematics	1	Number of starters	*	*	127
		Retention (%)	*	*	92
		Achievement (%)	*	*	27
NOCN mathematics	2	Number of starters	*	*	523
		Retention (%)	*	*	52
		Achievement (%)	*	*	50
GCSE mathematics	2	Number of starters	659	447	268
		Retention (%)	79	70	92
		Achievement (%)	32	31	38
GCE AS mathematics (one-year course)	3	Number of starters	92	47	48
		Retention (%)	71	73	53
		Achievement (%)	43	31	52
GCE A level mathematics (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	247	229	192
		Retention (%)	61	56	74
		Achievement (%)	76	91	90

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

\*course not available

# Curriculum Areas

## Construction

### Grade 3

**14 The inspection covered construction, building services and furniture crafts. Ten lessons were observed. Although inspectors agreed broadly with the college's self-assessment of this curriculum area, they identified some additional strengths and weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- well-motivated students, especially in workshop sessions
- high attendance levels
- thorough course team reviews
- good retention rates on intermediate construction crafts courses
- significant improvement in some students' achievements

#### Weaknesses

- lack of a clear development plan for the construction provision
- the narrow range of teaching methods
- poor students' achievements in 1997 and 1998
- insufficient key skills development for craft students
- some inadequate accommodation

15 Links with employers are good. The college is responsive to the needs of construction employers. It has coped well with the demanding requirements of the electrical contracting and plumbing industries. Marketing has improved. Creative furniture studies courses have been introduced. The college has designed a programme of skill training for the Royal Marines which enables them to carry out construction work in areas of conflict around the world. This provision is held in high regard by students and employers. Enrolments have

increased significantly in 1999-2000. However, the college has not successfully introduced provision at foundation level. This restricts opportunities for students. There are few links with schools. Course reviews are thorough and incorporate clear targets. Course teams tend to work independently of each other. There is no collective view on how the construction provision should be developed. Students' records are extensive and well maintained. Internal verification is rigorous. TSC and FEFC inspectors judged that reports of students' progress provided for employers lacked sufficient detail.

16 Most teaching is satisfactory and some is good. Attendance rates are high. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that lesson activities are not sufficiently varied. Although teachers follow awarding body and employer training specifications, many lessons are inadequately planned. Students are often encouraged to work on their own and at their own speed in practical lessons, but lesson materials are not always designed to meet individual students' needs. Teachers fail to identify the key skills students should develop. Rigid timetabling separates theory from practice. Many theory lessons are poorly organised. Teachers make little use of visual aids to stimulate students' interest or extend their learning. In their marking of assignment work, most teachers indicate clearly what the errors are and in what ways the work might be improved.

17 Students are enthusiastic and industrious and work especially well in the workshops. They value the college experience. Some travel considerable distances to attend part time. Most students' work is of a good standard. However, not all portfolios and log books are well kept. Few craft students develop their IT skills effectively. Retention rates on almost all courses have been well above national averages for the past three years. Pass rates in 1997 and 1998 were extremely poor, particularly in electrical

# Curriculum Areas

installation and plumbing. Pass rates have improved significantly in 1999. Achievement rates on advanced crafts and technician courses, at 84% and 73%, are above the national averages of 70% and 67%, respectively.

18 Teachers are appropriately qualified and some have recent industrial experience. Technician support is good. Specialist accommodation and resources are of mixed quality. The York Wing facilities are very poor. Some workshops, for example, in electrical installation and plumbing, offer learning environments which simulate real work situations. There are new, high-quality gas safety training and assessment facilities for plumbers. Hand tools and machines are well maintained. Carpentry and joinery workshops are too small to allow students to undertake full-scale projects. A few workshops are in a poor state and inefficiently used. An electrical installation workshop was cluttered with desks and chairs that encroached on students' training cubicles. Students' clothing and food containers

littered some workspaces. A bricklaying workshop leaked water on the students' work area. Specialist classrooms are uninspiring and some are too small for the size of most of the groups using them. Some text-based learning materials are of good quality. Others are poorly presented and outdated. There is no systematic review of their suitability and relevance. The college's library does not have an adequate range of technical literature. Some of these problems were not mentioned in the self-assessment report.

## A summary of retention and achievement rates in construction, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Foundation vocational (crafts)	1	Number of starters	29	9	*
		Retention (%)	83	89	*
		Achievement (%)	88	0	*
Intermediate vocational (crafts)	2	Number of starters	172	195	162
		Retention (%)	86	86	86
		Achievement (%)	30	22	55
Advanced vocational (crafts)	3	Number of starters	7	22	33
		Retention (%)	86	95	76
		Achievement (%)	0	0	84
Advanced vocational (technician)	3	Number of starters	59	39	34
		Retention (%)	86	77	76
		Achievement (%)	45	50	73

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

\*course not available

# Curriculum Areas

## Business – Management and Professional Studies

### *Grade 2*

**19 The inspection covered management and professional business courses run mainly for adult students. Thirteen lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.**

#### **Key strengths**

- good opportunities for student progression within the college
- good teaching
- well-structured courses which build upon students' work experience
- high pass rates on most courses
- good-quality course materials
- high-quality learning environment and specialist resources

#### **Weaknesses**

- the uneven quality of feedback on students' coursework
- the failure to make sufficient use of allocated tutorial time

20 The professional and business management provision is located in the college's business school in the city centre. Of these courses, 80% are at level 4 or higher. These courses attract people who wish to improve their qualifications to enhance their promotion prospects, or acquire new skills that are attractive to potential employers. Further education students can progress within the college from levels 2 and 3 to higher education. Degree courses are offered in partnership with universities. Courses are planned carefully to fit in with students' personal circumstances. In addition to their main qualification, many students acquire additional qualifications. For

example, students on the hotel and catering international management course may also achieve the South West Tourist Board's welcome host certificate, and the Institute of Legal Executives legal studies course may also lead to a law degree. Students value the flexible attendance arrangements and good progression opportunities.

21 Inspectors agreed with the college that teaching on business courses is good. Schemes of work and lesson plans are detailed and well structured. Teachers use varied teaching methods to sustain students' interest and provide a range of appropriate and stimulating learning experiences. They give attention to the requirements of individual students. Teachers use their up-to-date subject knowledge to relate concepts to the commercial world and build on students' prior knowledge and skills. In the best lessons, teachers make good use of case studies to relate theory to commercial contexts. Students are constantly involved through skilful use of questioning techniques. Teachers use student responses positively to develop their knowledge and to ensure that they can apply theory in an appropriate vocational context. Students are encouraged to draw on their own experiences at work to tackle problems. Assignments are well designed. Learning materials are detailed and informative. In a minority of lessons, learning activities lack appropriate variety. In its self-assessment report, the college notes that the comments of some teachers on students' work are insufficiently helpful and constructive and that although in many cases students receive help on a one-to-one basis, tutorial time is not always well managed.

22 Most students' work is of a high standard. Portfolios are particularly well presented. Students' work demonstrates good understanding of business theories. Many students successfully complete relevant units or examinations during their course. Pass rates for these individual elements are often above the

# Curriculum Areas

national average. On some courses, a significant number of students have failed to obtain their full qualifications within the timescale set. For example, of the 25 students who took part 2 of the Institute of Legal Executives legal studies examinations in 1999, six passed and 11 are continuing. Many of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants' students progress through stages 1 to 4, enrolling for the next level whilst retaking examinations from the previous year. In cases where students make slow progress and do not obtain the full qualification within the timescale, the college's management information system does not record their subsequent success. Students' pass rates in the introductory management certificate and the continuing certificate in management have been 100% over the last three years. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, retention and pass rates on some courses have deteriorated. For example, retention rates on the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants course were below the national average in 1999. Achievement rates on NVQ level 4 accounting and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants certificate also declined in 1999 from 63% to 53% and from 87% to 47%, respectively.

23 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that students have access to high-quality specialist accommodation and resources. The accommodation provides a pleasant and productive learning environment. Rooms are well equipped and suitably furnished. Students have easy access to up-to-date business materials and IT software, which enables them to complete their tasks to a high standard. Students are also able to use learning materials in the nearby university library. Teachers are appropriately qualified in the subjects they teach. Many have recent industrial experience which they use well to illustrate their teaching. Most have relevant assessor and verifier qualifications.

# Curriculum Areas

## A summary of retention and achievement rates in business – management and professional studies, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
NVQ accounts (taught course)	2	Number of starters	29	36	40
		Retention (%)	83	89	83
		Achievement (%)	96	100	97
National Examining Board for Supervisory Management certificate	3	Number of starters	25	31	13
		Retention (%)	100	83	77
		Achievement (%)	89	83	100
NVQ accounts (taught course)	3	Number of starters	59	67	61
		Retention (%)	80	91	87
		Achievement (%)	77	89	89
NVQ accounts (taught course)	4	Number of starters	71	32	52
		Retention (%)	96	94	90
		Achievement (%)	65	63	53
Association of Chartered Certified Accountants certificate	4	Number of starters	16	22	18
		Retention (%)	86	95	89
		Achievement (%)	82	87	47
BTEC continuing certificate in management	4	Number of starters	45	45	31
		Retention (%)	91	89	65
		Achievement (%)	100	100	100
Higher Chartered Institute of Management Accountants certificate	4	Number of starters	7	11	10
		Retention (%)	82	72	63
		Achievement (%)	100	100	84

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)



# Curriculum Areas

## Leisure and Tourism

### *Grade 2*

**24 Inspectors observed 11 lessons. Sport was not inspected, although it was included in the self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They found both strengths and weaknesses, however, which the self-assessment report did not mention.**

#### **Key strengths**

- much good teaching and learning
- high achievement on most courses
- well-managed courses
- carefully integrated work experience
- the wide range of enrichment activities

#### **Weaknesses**

- below average retention rates on most courses
- poor punctuality in some lessons
- lack of coherence of course provision

25 The college offers full-time GNVQ courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels, and an Edexcel Foundation national diploma course. There are opportunities for students on level 3 courses to gain the NVQ level 2 qualification in activity leadership in addition to their primary learning goal. Demand for GNVQ foundation and GCSE courses and student numbers have fluctuated in the last three years. GCSE enrolments decreased from 13 in 1996-97 to seven in 1998-99. The course did not enrol any students in 1999-2000. The GNVQ foundation enrolled 10 students in 1996-97. It did not run in 1998 or 1999, but has recruited sufficient students to be reintroduced in 1999-2000. The self-assessment report did not mention the decline in recruitment to these courses or identify action to remedy the situation.

26 Courses are well managed. Teaching staff meet regularly. Students contribute to course reviews. There are clear systems for drawing up and implementing action plans. Teaching and learning are supported by well-designed course documentation. There are comprehensive course and work placement handbooks for students. Most of the teaching is good. Lessons are generally well planned and include a range of teaching and learning activities. Teachers use appropriate teaching methods, including individual support and guidance, small group work and role-play. Students respond well in lessons and are encouraged by teachers to contribute to discussions. In a lesson on discrimination, the activity had been planned around extracts from political and social speeches. The teacher ensured that all of the students became involved in a lively and well-managed debate. Teachers draw on their own experience of work and on the experiences of their students in order to enliven their lessons. Most students are responsive in class and work in a disciplined way. However, some students arrive late for their lessons. Some teachers failed to secure the interest and participation of the students. They used methods which did not take into account the differing abilities and experience of students. Teachers complement their lessons with a programme of visits, including some which are residential, locally, nationally or overseas. The curriculum area has strong links with employers who provide work placements for full-time students. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that residential opportunities, visits to industry and work experience are strong features of the provision.

27 Teachers' marking of work is usually thorough. Written comments give a clear indication of how improvements can be achieved. Effective use is made of tutorials to help students to improve their performance. In a few cases, the written feedback students receive on their performance is cursory and contains

# Curriculum Areas

little guidance on how they should improve the quality of their work. Whilst achievements of retained students have improved, retention rates have declined. In 1997 and 1998, retention rates on all courses were above the average for the sector. In 1999, retention rates on the GNVQ intermediate and advanced, GCSE and NVQ level 2 fell to below the national average. However, inspectors found evidence to suggest retention rates are improving significantly in 1999-2000. In 1997 and 1998, pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate and advanced were below the national average. In 1999, achievement rates on the GNVQ intermediate rose from 42% in 1998 to 87% in 1999. Pass rates of 100% were achieved on NVQ level 2 and GCSE. In 1999, 65% of students who completed their course of study progressed to employment and 35% went on to higher education.

28 Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report that specialist resources were good. Most teaching accommodation is adequate. Rooms contain good displays of relevant course materials. A few classrooms provide poor working conditions. Access to computer facilities is good. Students frequently use IT when carrying out research activities. A direct IT training link with a major tour operator provides an effective teaching and learning resource. The library contains an appropriate range of relevant texts and journals. Staff are well qualified. Most have relevant, up-to-date industrial experience.

## A summary of retention and achievement rates in leisure and tourism, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ foundation leisure and tourism	1	Number of starters	10	*	*
		Retention (%)	77	*	*
		Achievement (%)	90	*	*
NVQ in travel services	2	Number of starters	*	11	9
		Retention (%)	*	82	67
		Achievement (%)	*	67	100
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	Number of starters	24	34	36
		Retention (%)	88	76	64
		Achievement (%)	68	42	87
GCSE tourism and travel	2	Number of starters	13	15	7
		Retention (%)	77	87	71
		Achievement (%)	90	92	100
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism	3	Number of starters	31	36	37
		Retention (%)	87	81	62
		Achievement (%)	64	70	100

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

\*course not available

# Curriculum Areas

## Health and Care

### Grade 2

**29 Inspectors observed 15 lessons in health and social care. Three lessons were part of the college's franchised provision. Inspectors agreed with the key strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.**

#### Key strengths

- much good teaching
- well-managed induction programme
- high levels of support given to students
- high retention rates on the GNVQ intermediate course and the certificate in caring services
- good progression within the college and to higher education and work
- wide range of work placements for students on childcare programmes
- rigorous internal verification system

#### Weaknesses

- few work placement opportunities on GNVQ courses
- low levels of retention on the certificate in childhood studies
- insufficient opportunities to develop key skills on some franchised courses
- inadequate IT resources

30 The health and social care provision is designed to meet the needs of the community and enable students to progress to higher level courses or employment. Courses include GNVQ intermediate and advanced diplomas, NVQs, certificates in caring services and childhood studies, and the diploma in childhood studies. Of the provision, 13% is taught by franchise partners at venues in Devon away from the college. The college identified the range of courses at the main college campus and in

the community as a strength and inspectors agreed.

31 Courses are well planned and effectively managed. Students' records and portfolios are efficiently maintained. Systems for internal verification are well established and understood by students. The views of employers, parents, students and staff contribute to the course review process. The good induction process is valued by students. There are effective arrangements for identifying the learning support needs of students. The quality of tutorial support is consistently good. Topics for tutorials include systematic review of work, completion of records of progress, and careers guidance. Strong links with employers and other health and childcare professionals are used to enhance students' learning. For example, GNVQ advanced students uniquely shadow the local community health council using the college as their constituency. Students on childhood studies programmes benefit from well-organised and carefully supervised work placements. This is not the case for students on GNVQ health and social care courses who have few opportunities to undertake work experience.

32 The college's self-assessment report recognised the strengths in teaching and learning. Much of the teaching is either good or outstanding. Detailed schemes of work and lesson plans identify appropriate objectives. Teachers use a variety of appropriate learning activities to stimulate students and keep them interested. Students are encouraged to apply their work experiences to the lesson topic. In the best lessons, teachers check that each individual student is learning. Students are given every opportunity to contribute to discussions and ask questions. Teachers take account of the wide range of students' abilities. Lessons include an appropriate mix of lecture, small group discussion and practical work. Teaching aids are well used. Teachers provide college students with frequent opportunities to monitor their progress in developing key skills. However,

# Curriculum Areas

teachers on franchised courses do not make full use of the opportunities presented in vocational studies for the development and practice of key skills.

33 Most students produce work of a good standard. They organise their portfolios systematically. Most work well independently or in small groups, and make lively and confident contributions to lesson activities. There are high retention rates on the GNVQ intermediate course and the certificate in caring services course. Retention on the NVQ level 2 in 1999 was 99%. Retention on the certificate in childhood studies was 100% in 1997 and 1998, but dropped to 87% in 1999. Pass rates on the certificate in caring services have risen from 44% in 1998 to 90% in 1999, while those on the certificate in childhood studies have declined from 77% to 52%. Students' progression to higher education and employment is good.

34 Staff have appropriate qualifications and professional experience. The accommodation for health and social care courses is adequate. The specialist equipment and other resources are satisfactory. All course groups have been allocated base rooms which are adequately resourced and equipped. At some centres away from the college, resources for supporting teaching and learning are insufficient. Some rooms are small and, as a result, the range of learning activities which take place in them is restricted. There is a good range of specialist books, journals, CD-ROMs and learning packs. IT equipment is of poor quality, hindering students' learning.

## A summary of retention and achievement rates in health and care, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	Number of starters	57	52	38
		Retention (%)	75	85	89
		Achievement (%)	88	48	65
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	Number of starters	37	67	42
		Retention (%)	89	73	76
		Achievement (%)	61	84	63
National certificate caring services (social care)	3	Number of starters	28	22	10
		Retention (%)	61	82	90
		Achievement (%)	41	44	90
National diploma childhood studies	3	Number of starters	30	40	39
		Retention (%)	83	75	69
		Achievement (%)	*	90	81
National certificate childhood studies	3	Number of starters	14	30	24
		Retention (%)	100	100	87
		Achievement (%)	57	77	52

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

\*unknown

# Curriculum Areas

## English and Modern Foreign Languages

### Grade 2

**35 Inspectors broadly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses that were identified in the self-assessment report. Twenty-three lessons were observed. One lesson was part of the college's franchised provision.**

#### Key strengths

- well-managed provision
- well-planned courses
- much good teaching
- good pass rates in GCE A level English, French and German
- good retention in GCE A level modern languages

#### Weaknesses

- below average retention in GCE A level English language
- some poor pass rates in 1997 and 1998 in modern languages
- inadequate use of the language being studied in some modern language lessons

36 The provision for English and modern languages caters for large numbers of students. GCE A level courses are offered in English language, English literature, French, German, Italian and Spanish. Intermediate level programmes include NOCN courses in English language, Japanese and modern Greek, and GCSE English. English literature is studied as part of the access to higher education provision. The international baccalaureate programme includes modern languages and English literature. Various modes of study are available to meet the needs of a range of students.

37 Courses are well managed, a strength noted in the self-assessment report. There are thorough schemes of work for English but some schemes for modern languages are insufficiently detailed. Teaching was good or better in the majority of lessons. Teachers used a range of learning activities, supported by good-quality learning materials. In English, teachers make use of video recordings, art work and music to bring their subject to life. In one lesson on a play set in Australia, students rehearsed scenes to the sound of recorded aboriginal music and constructed model set designs. Some teachers showed particular skill in encouraging students to voice their own responses to literature. In GCE A level English language, difficult linguistic concepts are clearly explained and used as the basis of lively discussions. In a few lessons in English, teachers failed to involve all of the students in the work. There is little use of IT in the curriculum. In some modern language lessons when teachers do not use the language being learned as the normal means of communication, students lack confidence in speaking the foreign language. Good use is made in English of theatre trips and visiting speakers. In some modern languages, students benefit from the college's residential centre in Normandy and organised exchanges with students in other European countries. Foreign language assistants provide support to GCE A level students in regular conversation lessons. A language workshop gives further support to all students studying a foreign language. In both curriculum areas teachers mark students' work carefully and give constructive comments to show students how to improve their assignment work in the future. These strengths are mentioned in the self-assessment report.

38 Much written work by students on GCE A level English and language courses is of a good standard. Good creative writing is produced by students, including some poetry of outstanding quality. Pass rates in GCE A level English language and English literature are consistently

# Curriculum Areas

above average for full-time students. Pass rates at grades A to C are good on two-year GCE A level courses in English. At intermediate level in English, where many students are entered for both GCSE and NOCN awards, the overall pass rate is in line with the national average. The pass rate for students taking GCSE English is above average. GCE A level pass rates were good for French and German in 1999. There were a few poor pass rates on language courses in 1997 and 1998. Pass rates in modern languages on NOCN courses are sometimes low, as many students choose not to take the examination. Retention rates are average on GCE English literature and intermediate level courses, but below average on GCE A level English language courses. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report.

Retention rates are good on GCE A level courses in modern languages, but were poor on GCSE German courses in 1998 and 1999.

39 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college is well equipped for the teaching of languages. Four classrooms are designated as language laboratories. All language teaching areas are well resourced with dictionaries, video facilities and magazines. Teaching accommodation is pleasant and well decorated. For English courses, there is adequate access to video players and other equipment, and good resources developed by teachers. Library resources are adequate for both curriculum areas. There is a large team of well-qualified and experienced teachers.

## A summary of retention and achievement rates in English and modern foreign languages, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE Italian	2	Number of starters	33	30	36
		Retention (%)	91	83	97
		Achievement (%)	87	92	53
GCSE English	2	Number of starters	322	304	92
		Retention (%)	76	66	69
		Achievement (%)	54	45	67
GCE A level English language and English language and literature (all modes)	3	Number of starters	89	141	143
		Retention (%)	70	71	63
		Achievement (%)	82	91	87
GCE A level English literature (all modes)	3	Number of starters	*	*	280
		Retention (%)	*	*	71
		Achievement (%)	*	*	97
GCE A level French	3	Number of starters	111	91	85
		Retention (%)	83	85	81
		Achievement (%)	72	74	95
GCE A level German	3	Number of starters	41	51	19
		Retention (%)	85	86	68
		Achievement (%)	68	51	92

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

\*data unreliable

# Curriculum Areas

## Geography, History, Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology and Religious Studies

### Grade 2

**40 Inspectors observed 17 lessons. Two lessons were part of the college's franchised provision. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision.**

#### Key strengths

- well-managed and well-organised courses
- much good teaching
- effective support for full-time students
- good pass rates at GCE A level
- good standard of students' work
- subject-related enrichment activities

#### Weaknesses

- low retention rates in some subjects
- underdeveloped tutorial support for part-time evening students
- some less effective classroom management

41 The college offers a good range of courses for full-time students. Part-time provision includes short courses in archaeology, geology, and criminal psychology. Specialist staff also teach on the access to higher education course and the international baccalaureate. Full-time students often take additional qualifications through the personal development programme. Courses are well managed. Full-time teachers meet regularly to discuss issues related to teaching and learning and students' achievements. Teachers consult with students and clearly respond to their views and concerns. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that there is not enough liaison between some

full-time and part-time teachers. This results in lost opportunities for sharing good practice.

42 Much of the teaching is good. Most lessons are well structured. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects.

Assignment topics are wide ranging. In the most successful lessons, teachers give students opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding in a systematic way. In a GCE A level psychology lesson, students were encouraged to evaluate their own understanding of Piaget's theory and identify what they had learned. Teachers give clear explanations of topics, often supported by helpful handouts. In sociology, staff have produced a booklet of specialist terms and an interesting pack of mnemonics to aid revision. In most lessons, students' contributions demonstrate appropriate use of specialist vocabulary and awareness of relevant ethical issues. In a small number of lessons, teachers failed to take into account the different abilities of students. Some students did not participate fully in discussions. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that some teachers fail to provide students with opportunities to build on their previous knowledge and to demonstrate a critical understanding of complex topics. Teachers are skilled at preparing students for the requirements of examinations and assessments. Assignments are carefully planned and marked. Teachers set homework regularly and correct it thoroughly. The feedback they give to students is detailed and constructive, particularly in history. The good practice in assessment was acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Students' experience is enriched by visits and other educational activities. Interesting fieldwork opportunities in geography include residential visits to the Lake District and Kenya. In psychology, students visit the zoo to observe animal behaviour and follow this up in their coursework. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that there is strong

# Curriculum Areas

pastoral and subject support for full-time students. Tutorial support for part-time evening students is less well organised.

43 Students' work is good and well presented. Each year at least one student is shortlisted for the Collins sociology project award. Most students progress to higher education or appropriate employment. In the international baccalaureate, students' achievements in history and psychology are above the international norm. Achievement rates on GCE A level courses have been consistently good, a strength acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Pass rates and the proportion of students achieving grades A to C are above the national average. At GCSE the achievement is just below the national average. Retention is a weakness in GCE A level geography, history and sociology. This was acknowledged in the self-assessment report and the college is taking action to improve retention. Figures for the current academic year 1999-2000 indicate that there has been an improvement. Retention rates at GCSE are above the national average.

44 Teachers are well qualified for their work and carefully deployed. This strength is recognised by the college in its self-assessment. Most of the classrooms are adequate. In a few cases, lessons are not matched to rooms of an appropriate size and, as a result, the range of learning activities which can be carried out in them is restricted. Wall space is used creatively in some classrooms and encourages learning. The philosophy room has lively displays of cartoons and philosopher jokes. Most teachers produce learning materials of satisfactory quality. There is an appropriate supply of handouts and other written materials. There is some use of IT, but in most subjects, IT is not fully integrated with other aspects of work.



# Curriculum Areas

**A summary of retention and achievement rates in geography, history, philosophy, psychology, sociology and religious studies, 1997 to 1999**

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE psychology and sociology	2	Number of starters	183	128	160
		Retention (%)	73	72	70
		Achievement (%)	38	49	45
GCE A level psychology (one-year course)	3	Number of starters	137	110	86
		Retention (%)	83	77	71
		Achievement (%)	45	70	65
GCE A level psychology (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	144	168	157
		Retention (%)	88	79	71
		Achievement (%)	78	96	89
GCE A level sociology (one-year course)	3	Number of starters	71	54	53
		Retention (%)	90	67	68
		Achievement (%)	38	75	84
GCE A level sociology (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	109	119	123
		Retention (%)	78	64	59
		Achievement (%)	81	92	85
GCE A level history (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	128	81	80
		Retention (%)	92	83	50
		Achievement (%)	81	92	86
GCE A level geography (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	111	93	86
		Retention (%)	91	73	75
		Achievement (%)	79	100	93
GCE A level philosophy	3	Number of starters	46	45	39
		Retention (%)	85	71	78
		Achievement (%)	81	92	76

*Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)*

# Curriculum Areas

## Basic Skills

### *Grade 3*

45 Inspectors observed 11 lessons across the range of provision. Although the self-assessment report recorded many of the strengths of this provision, some weaknesses were overlooked.

#### Key strengths

- well-planned and well-documented provision
- a high level of support, much valued by students
- widening provision in response to learner need

#### Weaknesses

- some inadequate individual learning programmes
- insufficient use of IT as a learning resource
- insufficient co-ordination of the provision

46 Approximately 50% of the college's basic skills provision is given by the adult essential skills unit at the city site and at community venues. A further 25% of the provision is given by franchise partners. The college is particularly responsive to adult learners and its extensive work in the community has significantly widened participation. The basic skills provision has been developed to improve students' progression to mainstream courses at the college. Students attend at times which suit them. A series of carefully graduated courses means that students can succeed at one level and move with confidence to the next level. However, the work of the adult essential skills unit has yet to be fully integrated with the college. Other basic skills provision comprises college-based pre-foundation entry and GNVQ foundation programmes linked to curriculum areas, and learning support for students on

mainstream courses at the college. Basic skills support is given by the 'inclusiveness' tutor in the students' curriculum area and by learning support staff through the college's 'drop-in' centre and the mathematics workshops. Aspects of the provision are not yet fully developed; effective co-ordination has lagged behind growth. The college is now recognising this weakness.

47 Students are assessed on entry using either Basic Skills Agency (BSA) or course-based assessment materials. Initial assessments are used as a basis for planning individual students' programmes of study. The college has identified weaknesses in the way in which the current initial assessment process meets students' needs. For example, not all students have appropriate individual programmes of learning. The quality of course documentation is good, including detailed schemes of work and thorough records of students' progress and achievements. Tutors make helpful comments to enable students to improve their performance. Students are well supported by inclusiveness tutors and learning support staff.

48 Most teachers are skilled in helping students feel positive about learning. The majority of students are appreciative of the support they receive from teachers. Teachers and support staff work hard to provide a learning environment in which students feel comfortable and are able to learn effectively. In the better lessons, the teaching is imaginative and successful in motivating students to learn. Students are fully involved in as many practical and realistic tasks as possible to encourage them to work on their own and in groups. Teachers and support staff take full account of the prior achievements and needs of each student, who they provide with effective individual support and guidance. Students develop confidence and self-esteem, and make considerable progress in their studies. Students' individual needs are not addressed in all lessons. Some teachers do not allow weaker students time to absorb learning

# Curriculum Areas

and do not provide the more able students with sufficiently demanding work. This reflects a failure to identify specific learning outcomes for each student. Plans and teaching methods do not consistently take account of the individual learning needs of the students. Tasks are not effectively differentiated to facilitate small steps in learning, a weakness underestimated in the self-assessment report. Basic education programmes for students attending a combination of activities sometimes lack coherence.

49 Inspectors identified a number of weaknesses in accommodation. Some teaching rooms are well stocked with teaching and learning materials, but some lessons take place in classrooms where there is no opportunity for students to select their own exercise or worksheets and no access to a computer to wordprocess literacy work. Other lessons are held in classrooms that are too small for group work and other activities. Although many handouts are of a good quality, some are poorly reproduced. Not all students have access to materials which enable them to study on their own. Good-quality resources are not always readily available to the teachers involved in the community-based provision. There is little use of IT, even where computers are available. The college acknowledges that access for students' with restricted mobility is poor at some centres. However, the college ensures that such students are provided for, by relocating lessons in accommodation that is accessible to them.

# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### *Grade 1*

**50 Inspectors findings agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college in its self-assessment report for this area.**

#### **Key strengths**

- highly regarded personal support for students
- effective initial guidance
- well-managed tutorial provision for full-time students
- effective learning support
- good links with parents
- comprehensive guidance on higher education
- well-used counselling, welfare and childcare services
- an active student union

#### **Weaknesses**

- low level of tutorial support for some part-time students

51 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that it provides a student support service of a high quality. The findings of questionnaires used regularly to elicit the views of students and parents show that the large majority are very satisfied with the support students receive. Arrangements for supporting students are well co-ordinated by college managers using agreed policies and procedures. The quality of the service is closely monitored. Staff receive training, and are given comprehensive handbooks to encourage consistency of approach and practices.

52 Prospective students are given thorough and impartial guidance before and on entry to the college. Students and their parents can get

to know the college through a wide range of events and gain information and careful advice to help them in choosing an appropriate course. There is good liaison between the college and the five partner schools. A college link tutor interviews all school-leavers. A team of trained interviewers deals with students who apply from schools outside Exeter. An adult guidance worker works in 10 of the college's outlying centres to help adults consider the range of opportunities open to them. Staff in the international office respond promptly to enquiries from overseas students. Full-time students receive a well-planned induction to their courses. Handbooks emphasise students' entitlements and responsibilities. Part-time students and those in franchise centres are encouraged to take advantage of college facilities. The college has good communication with the parents of students. Parents receive a handbook, a termly newsletter and reports. Parents are introduced to tutors in October, with further meetings to discuss students' progress and higher education applications.

53 All students are entitled to learning support. Tutors make the initial assessment using materials appropriate to each course. All full-time and some part-time students are assessed for a variety of needs, including literacy and numeracy. A database tracks all students identified as needing support. Few students decline the support offered. At the time of the inspection, over 550 students were receiving support, including some GNVQ and GCE A level students. Students on some level 1 and level 2 courses receive additional learning support from the inclusiveness tutors who work alongside them in lessons. Students who at first reject it, often later seek additional support. In 1998-99, few students who received such support withdrew early from the college. The college provides support for students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities to enable them to attend mainstream lessons. Students speak enthusiastically about the

# Cross-college Provision

support they receive. Inspectors agreed that learning support is a strength.

54 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that tutorial support is good. There is a clear tutorial framework for full-time students with times for group and individual tutorials. Students are entitled to two individual tutorials with their tutor each term. Activities include monitoring progress and attendance, setting targets, and discussing career plans. Inspectors observed tutorials across a range of the college's provision and found much good practice. Students benefit from easy access to their tutors. The college carefully monitors the implementation of its tutorial system for full-time students. Minimum tutorial entitlements for part-time students were agreed in 1999. The college recognises that some of its students, particularly those attending evening classes, are not receiving a minimum entitlement.

55 The college offers a well-developed programme of guidance for students who are considering progression to higher education. Over 1,000 students applied to university from the college in 1999-2000. A higher education co-ordinator provides a comprehensive range of informative handbooks to supplement resources based in the library. A guidance pack provides examples which help students to present worthwhile personal statements on their Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) form. Effective support is offered to students who do not receive offers of university places. Cornwall and Devon Careers Advisers provide most of the careers guidance at college. The service is regularly reviewed. Careers advisers give guidance to particular groups of students. Careers education and guidance for those seeking employment is less well developed than that for entrants to higher education.

56 The services available to students of the college are well publicised, fully used and effective. A counselling team provides an expert and flexible service. The welfare officer and

nurses maintain contacts with relevant external agencies. The college nursery has 75 places which are used by a range of clients. The student union is active and well organised. Student representatives are invited to attend most of the consultative committees of the college. The president, who is a member of the governing body, works closely with senior managers to deal with issues raised by students.

## General Resources

### *Grade 3*

**57 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the detailed self-assessment report. Where appropriate, judgements in the self-assessment report were substantiated by quantitative evidence. Inspectors attributed more weight than college staff to some weaknesses.**

#### **Key strengths**

- the central location of all college sites
- good quality of some accommodation
- the provision of library facilities on four sites
- good sports and fitness facilities
- the excellent nursery

#### **Weaknesses**

- small libraries with insufficient study spaces
- some unreliable computers and audiovisual equipment
- poor reception area at the main site
- unsuitable areas for staff and students with disabilities

58 Exeter College is conveniently located on eight sites in Exeter city centre. The largest centre is at Hele Road. The college owns a residential centre in Normandy. Brittany House and Victoria House have good-quality, spacious,

# Cross-college Provision

modern classrooms. Teaching rooms on the other sites are generally fit for their purpose, but some have unsatisfactory furniture. Most rooms are adequately equipped with whiteboards, overhead projectors, television and video facilities. Many classrooms do not have screens for the projection of images. A few rooms are not large enough for scheduled lessons.

59 Since the last inspection the college has acquired Victoria House and vacated one site. From spring 2000, new, high-quality accommodation in Victoria Yard will replace the unsatisfactory Preston Road site. The main college reception area is in Victoria House. It projects a modern, professional image. Reception facilities at Hele Road are inadequate and poorly located. The college grounds and buildings are maintained to a satisfactory standard. There is a planned maintenance programme, but the response to routine repairs can be slow. The college does not have an up-to-date assessment of room utilisation. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that this is a weakness.

60 The provision of libraries on four sites ensures that a convenient service is provided to the majority of students. Surveys of staff and student views show high levels of satisfaction with the full range of library and learning resource services. However, on occasions, accommodation and staffing constraints have had an adverse effect on the service provided to students. All four libraries are small for the number of students using them. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment judgement that there are insufficient study spaces. In the main library at Hele Road there are less than 40 study spaces. At Episcopal Road there are only 17 spaces for over 450 full-time humanities students. Low staffing levels restrict the effectiveness of the service at peak times. Three libraries are each staffed by one person. Sometimes a library has had to close early due to staffing difficulties.

61 The college has 556 modern computers for

students' use, giving a ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students of 1:8. Over 20 laptops, with appropriate software, are issued to students with particular disabilities. The good distribution of computers between sites ensures that there are enough computers to meet students' needs most of the time. However, demand at peak times and demand for Internet machines sometimes cannot be satisfied. The self-assessment report acknowledges the unreliability of some computers and problems with the provision of prompt and effective servicing. The situation has recently improved, following changes in IT support procedures. Management of computing resources is effective. There is a sound IT development strategy, and a consultative group comprising managers, teachers and support staff. There are common standards for the purchase of hardware and software. There are detailed records of each machine and its software, but no facility to electronically monitor machine usage. The college intranet and website are at an early stage of development. The college has a well-equipped television studio and a suitable range of audiovisual equipment. However, many video cameras and tape recorders are old and unreliable.

62 The college has some good facilities for staff and students. There is a well-equipped fitness centre, a large gymnasium at Hele Road, and 9 acres of sports fields on the outskirts of Exeter. There is an excellent 75-place nursery at the Bishop Blackall site. However, there are no staff or student common rooms on the main site and the student union area is scruffy and poorly furnished. The refectories provide a small range of food and are closed in the afternoon and evening, although a wide range of food is available from nearby town centre outlets. Most staff have suitable accommodation and good access to computers in staff rooms. Some support staff, for example library staff, audiovisual staff and the occupational nurse, work in cramped conditions.

# Cross-college Provision

63 Some areas of the college are unsuitable for staff and students with disabilities. Brittany House and Victoria House are suitable for people with disabilities, but wheelchair users cannot gain easy access to some other buildings. The interior features of some buildings make them unsuitable for people with disabilities. The self-assessment report acknowledges that the college has been slow to respond to experts' recommendations about how to improve access for staff and students with disabilities.

## Quality Assurance

### Grade 2

**64 Inspectors agreed with the majority of judgements made by the college about its arrangements for quality assurance.**

#### Key strengths

- college-wide commitment to continuous improvement
- a coherent quality assurance framework
- rigorous course reviews
- well-established internal and external verification
- thorough self-assessment process
- well-managed staff development programme
- improving achievements in many subjects, particularly at GCE A level

#### Weaknesses

- declining retention on many courses
- lack of reliable data on students' achievements for course reviews and self-assessment
- failure to use national benchmarking data to measure achievements in franchised provision

65 Inspectors agreed that the college's commitment to quality assurance and

continuous improvement is a strength, as noted in the self-assessment report. The college's quality assurance framework is comprehensive, and has proved effective in meeting the requirements of self-assessment. Elements within the framework which assure quality include course reviews, internal and external verification, lesson observations, service standards, charter commitments, internal quality audits, analysis of performance indicators, and customer surveys. There are carefully documented and clearly written procedures to guide staff on how to improve quality in their areas of responsibility. A strong lead is provided by the quality assurance and development team, headed by the quality assurance manager. The team works closely with curriculum and cross-college managers to ensure that quality procedures are carried out. Staff value the support they receive from the team. The 'quality' committee, which brings together representatives of all departments, actively promotes quality assurance throughout the college and monitors the work of the quality assurance and development team.

66 Inspectors agreed with the college that in some areas, clear and measurable improvements in performance have resulted from the quality assurance process. Overall pass rates at GCE A level have improved by 13% over the last two years. In 1999, 20 GCE A level subjects achieved pass rates of 90% compared with five subjects in 1996. However, on many courses, retention rates have declined. This weakness was recognised in the self-assessment report. Since issues of retention have been highlighted through course review processes, college data for 1999-2000 indicate that there has been an improvement in retention rates in some curriculum areas. The college's management information system has not been able to produce accurate information on all of the college's students' achievements. Inspectors agreed that the college's ability to judge accurately the effectiveness of its quality

# Cross-college Provision

assurance arrangements and trends in achievement and retention has been undermined by some unreliable management information system data.

67 Annual course reviews make an important contribution to the college's quality assurance arrangements. Reviews consider feedback from surveys of provision, internal and external verification and performance against the year's targets. Target-setting is well established and effectively monitored. Recent action plans give strong emphasis and commitment to effecting improvements in retention and achievements. Inspectors agreed with the college's view that internal and external verification procedures are well established and thorough. There are effective processes for gathering the views of students, employers, parents and staff. Questionnaires are issued at regular intervals. Effective use is made of feedback. The students' charter, which clearly sets out students' entitlements and responsibilities, is monitored twice a year by means of surveys of students' views. Monitoring shows that complaints are dealt with promptly.

68 There are well-documented procedures related to franchised provision and the college makes frequent visits to partner organisations. Inspectors found that the quality of teaching and learning in franchised provision has improved since the last inspection. However, inspectors noted some weaknesses in the quality assurance arrangements for franchised provision. Curriculum teams are not yet making comparisons between students' performance and national benchmarking data produced by the FEFC. Judgements about teaching and learning are not sufficiently analytical. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report.

69 The college devotes a high level of resources to its well-planned staff development. Staff value the opportunities provided for professional development. Inspectors agreed

with the self-assessment report that staff development is closely linked to college strategic objectives. Personal development reviews, course reviews and lesson observations contribute to the assessment of individual's development needs. All staff development activities are evaluated and their value to the individual and the organisation assessed.

70 The production of the college's third self-assessment report encompassed all aspects of the college's operations and involved all staff. In an extensive and thorough process, course self-assessment reports produced by the teaching teams formed the basis of departmental reports, while cross-college self-assessment reports were produced by the appropriate managers. These reports were informed by lesson observations, internal audit reports, external and internal verifiers reports and by surveys of customers' perceptions obtained through regular questionnaires. The judgements in the component reports were carefully checked by senior managers, the quality assurance and development team, and the quality committee and subsequently endorsed formally by the corporation. Governors were involved at all stages of the self-assessment process, and carried out their own self-assessment exercise. Overall, the self-assessment report is comprehensive and evaluative, with lists of evidence to support strengths and weaknesses. The curriculum sections provide good evidence for judgements reached under teaching and learning, but the analysis of students' achievements is less rigorous.



# Cross-college Provision

## Governance

### Grade 2

**71 Inspectors and auditors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. The college has taken some action to address the weaknesses identified in the report.**

#### Key strengths

- committed, well-informed and supportive governors
- significant involvement in strategic planning
- constructive relationship between the corporation and senior managers
- an effective committee structure
- effective monitoring of board performance
- thorough appraisal of the principal and senior postholders

#### Weaknesses

- underdeveloped arrangements for curriculum monitoring and analysis of students' achievements
- weak monitoring of some college policies in areas other than finance
- insufficiently structured induction and training

72 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is good. The corporation substantially conducts its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC.

73 Since the last inspection, governors have given considerable attention to, and have been successful in, improving the financial health of the college. Over the same period, the corporation has largely concentrated on

resolving the college's accommodation difficulties. Governors are strongly committed to the college and its mission. They have significant involvement in the strategic planning process. Governors work with senior staff to review the college mission and to agree the college's key strategic aims. The strategic plan is drafted by senior managers, and approved by the corporation only after thorough discussion. The corporation agrees critical performance indicators and targets for the college, and monitors the college's progress in achieving them. There is insufficient monitoring of curriculum provision and analysis of students' achievements, including franchise activity by governors. The curriculum and quality committee has recently proposed more rigorous arrangements for monitoring students' retention and achievements.

74 The self-assessment report stated that the effective use of the broad range of expertise and experience brought to the college by the governors is a strength and inspectors agreed. The governing body has a determined size of 18. At the time of the inspection, there was one vacancy for a community governor. The search committee seeks nominations for new governors mainly through recommendation. Recently a new selection and appointment procedure has been agreed. Governors have not undertaken a formal audit to identify which skills they lack collectively. Induction for new governors has been insufficiently well structured. More formal induction arrangements have been introduced recently involving meetings with key managers and briefings about the duties and responsibilities of governors. Existing governors are invited to take part in induction to refresh or update their own knowledge. Members' individual training needs are not assessed. Governors receive presentations by college managers, and are given the opportunity to attend external training events. However, as the self-assessment report acknowledges, these activities do not constitute

# Cross-college Provision

a structured training programme for all members of the corporation.

75 Members of the corporation work well with each other. They have a constructive relationship with senior managers. Members devote considerable time to their responsibilities. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that the corporation manages its business effectively. The clerk is a college vice-principal with a separate job description approved by the corporation. The clerk works closely with the chair in managing the governing body's business. There is an annual calendar of meetings. Additional meetings are held as necessary. Agendas, supporting papers and minutes are produced promptly to an agreed timetable. Minutes do not always record in sufficient detail the debate that takes place before decisions are made. The clerk keeps a list of actions agreed at board and committee meetings, and monitors their implementation. Committee reporting arrangements are good. There is an updated code of conduct, a 'whistleblowing' policy, standing orders and a register of interests which is updated annually. The code of conduct does not fully incorporate all the Nolan committee recommendations. The public availability of corporation papers in the library is not widely publicised. The board does not receive regular reports on the implementation of the equal opportunities and health and safety policies.

76 There is an appropriate and effective committee structure. Some terms of reference do not clearly specify membership. Governors who have relevant experience chair committees. There are two committees in addition to those required by statute. The business services committee monitors the college's finances, management information system, estates and personnel. The curriculum, standards, marketing and quality committee has been recently established to address the need identified in the self-assessment report to raise curriculum standards and quality.

77 Inspectors agreed that members are actively involved in the self-assessment of governance. Committees assessed their own effectiveness, and their judgements contributed to the overall self-assessment of governance. The corporation assesses its own performance against an annual action plan and the college's strategic aims. The corporation has established rigorous processes for the appointment and appraisal of the principal and senior postholders. The chair of the corporation undertakes an annual appraisal of the principal's performance. The principal and the chair appraise senior postholders against individual objectives related to the strategic plan and a range of job specific management and personal skills.

## Management

### *Grade 2*

**78 The college's self-assessment report was comprehensive. The inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses which were identified in the report.**

#### **Key strengths**

- effective strategic and operational planning involving all staff
- open and consultative management
- effective communication across the college
- detailed course costing framework
- good links with external organisations
- effective financial reporting

#### **Weaknesses**

- inadequacies in student management information systems
- less effective management of health and safety in some departments

79 The college has recently emerged from a period of considerable change and uncertainty.

# Cross-college Provision

Effective measures have been taken to establish and maintain financial stability. The college has invested considerable time and energy to finding a solution to its accommodation problems, and has been enterprising in making the best use of its resources. Student numbers have increased. Student achievement rates have improved in many curriculum areas, although low retention rates in some subjects are a cause for concern. Management restructuring has been successfully carried out. Staff utilisation is carefully controlled.

80 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that the college is well managed. The management structure and lines of responsibility are clearly defined. The senior management team comprises the principal and four vice-principals. The college management committee comprises the senior management team and 17 department heads, nine of whom are responsible for the curriculum, four for curriculum and college support, and four for business support. Each team meets fortnightly. Every department has a management group which works with the departmental head to manage the area. The senior management team has an open and consultative approach to management. There is evidence of good teamwork throughout the college. The committee structure works well and provides good opportunities for staff to be involved in decision-making. Staff in the college feel valued by managers. They consider their views are listened to and taken into account. Staff are fully involved in the strategic planning process. There are clear links between strategic aims and operational objectives. Each department produces an annual development plan which includes targets for the year. There is a detailed course-costing framework that all managers use to plan their curriculum provision. This enables managers to exercise tight control over their budgets. Communications throughout the college are effective. There is a regular cycle of meetings, and a wide range of informative

bulletins and circulars. Many staff are now on electronic mail which has improved communications between college sites.

81 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The college has recovered from a recent period of financial instability. There are effective budgeting and monitoring procedures. The executive finance team meets fortnightly to oversee and lead the strategic and operational management of the college's financial activities. Budget holders receive clear monthly reports. The financial reports provided for senior management and governors include detailed commentary and a 12 months rolling cashflow. There are separate termly reports for specific financial performance indicators such as student enrolment, retention and achievement. The experienced and well-qualified finance team is effectively led by the director of finance. The financial regulations and procedures have been updated and reviewed to incorporate changes in practice recommended by the internal and external auditors. The internal auditors have not identified any significant weaknesses in the college's systems of internal control.

82 As the college acknowledges, student data generated by the management information system have not always been reliable. The use of indicators to measure the academic performance of the college has been hampered by a lack of accurate data. Although the college has made some improvements in the management information system, many staff still lack confidence in the accuracy of data it provides. Issues surrounding the reliability of data were identified by a number of curriculum inspectors. Some departments have no clear view of the achievements of some students.

83 The college's self-assessment report identifies as a strength the substantial number of effective links the college has developed with external agencies. Local school staff, careers

# Cross-college Provision

officers, employers, and many community representatives praised the college for its willingness to establish productive partnerships which have resulted in considerable benefit to the community. Feedback from local business people indicates that the college is well known and well respected. Links with the local education authority (LEA), neighbouring colleges and schools are good. The college provides education and training for many community groups. Degree courses are franchised from local universities. Strong relationships with the local TEC, are now well established.

84 Operational management is assisted by an extensive range of policies and procedures that are regularly reviewed. Comprehensive personnel policies and procedures are implemented across all departments. Equal opportunities is effectively promoted in the college. All consultative committees address equal opportunity issues as a standing agenda item. However, implementation of the policy within the curriculum is not always effectively checked. The health and safety committee meets regularly and maintains a broad oversight of health and safety across the college. Consistent implementation of the policy and management of health and safety at departmental level are not yet evident.

## Conclusions

85 The college's self-assessment report was a useful basis for planning and carrying out the inspection. The report was evaluative and provided a realistic view of the college's strengths and weaknesses. All of the college's staff were involved in the development of the college's self-assessment report. Strengths, weaknesses, evidence and action plans were clearly presented. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements given in the self-assessment report, but gave more significance than the college to some weaknesses in the report. In some curriculum areas, weaknesses in teaching

and learning and students' achievements were understated. Inspectors agreed with most of the grades in the cross-college areas. They considered that the college was overgenerous in its grading of two curriculum areas. Inspectors noted that the college had made considerable progress with its action plan by the time of the inspection.

86 Strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection are listed under each section of this report. The main strengths and weaknesses are identified in the summary.

# College Statistics

## Student numbers by age (March 2000)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	1
16-18 years	27
19-24 years	14
25+ years	58
Not known	0
Total	100

*Source: college data*

## Student numbers by level of study (March 2000)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Level 1 (foundation)	21
Level 2 (intermediate)	24
Level 3 (advanced)	30
Level 4/5 (higher)	4
Non-schedule 2	21
Total	100

*Source: college data*

## Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (March 2000)

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	674	2,932	22
Agriculture	14	0	0
Construction	119	373	3
Engineering	256	831	7
Business	420	2,253	16
Hotel and catering	273	1,386	10
Health and community care	430	1,398	11
Art and design	665	499	7
Humanities	1,323	1,856	19
Basic education	79	641	5
Total	4,253	12,169	100

*Source: college data*

## Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 10% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

## Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (March 2000)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	204	64	0	268
Supporting direct learning contact	73	18	4	95
Other support	101	13	4	118
Total	378	95	8	481

*Source: college data, rounded to nearest full-time equivalent*

# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£16,487,000	£16,434,000	£17,117,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£16.81	£15.35	£16.20
Payroll as a proportion of income	67%	63%	65%
Achievement of funding target	113%	100%	98%
Diversity of income	25%	23%	24%
Operating surplus	-£857,000	-£444,000	£127,000

Sources: Income – Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

ALF – Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1997 and 1998), Funding Allocations 1998-99 (1999)

Payroll – Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1997-98 (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

Diversity of income – Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

Operating surplus – Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

### Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
1	Number of starters	894	1,102	1,318	515	660	1,039
	Retention (%)	85	80	80	92	87	87
	Achievement (%)	74	56	48	49	44	47
2	Number of starters	2,318	3,886	3,202	1,080	1,740	1,470
	Retention (%)	84	81	78	84	89	82
	Achievement (%)	70	59	51	58	50	56
3	Number of starters	3,585	4,978	5,492	1,618	1,869	1,760
	Retention (%)	86	88	80	90	85	82
	Achievement (%)	72	66	73	51	57	64
4 or 5	Number of starters	32	26	28	204	283	180
	Retention (%)	97	96	89	95	96	87
	Achievement (%)	74	83	90	51	70	70
Short courses	Number of starters	1,722	1,382	806	864	1,443	1,157
	Retention (%)	87	88	81	93	93	85
	Achievement (%)	70	66	26	60	69	59
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	287	607	812	2,617	4,535	5,174
	Retention (%)	98	92	95	98	97	95
	Achievement (%)	71	78	72	68	74	74

Source: ISR

**FEFC Inspection Report 71/00**

**Published by the  
Further Education Funding Council  
Website [www.fefc.ac.uk](http://www.fefc.ac.uk)  
© FEFC May 2000**