

Great Yarmouth College of Further Education

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.

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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 expected 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

Great Yarmouth College of Further Education

Eastern Region

Inspected April 2000

Great Yarmouth College of Further Education is a medium-sized general further education college, which serves the town of Great Yarmouth and the hinterland of East Norfolk and North Suffolk. The college offers a wide range of academic and vocational programmes in all programme areas funded by the FEFC. Provision in six areas was inspected. The inspection was carried out jointly with the TSC. The college produced its first self-assessment report for the inspection. Inspectors found the report useful, but considered that it had not given sufficient emphasis to some aspects of the college's performance. Inspectors agreed with two of the curriculum grades and one of the cross-college grades proposed by the college.

Since the last inspection the college has made considerable progress in reaching and supporting groups who might otherwise not benefit from further education. It has made improvements to many buildings, including provision of ramp and lift access and there are some good new IT and learning facilities. Managers are open and consultative in style and communication across the college is good. There is a comprehensive framework for quality assurance. Students are well supported. Governors contribute effectively to the development of strategic plans. Teaching and

achievement are good, sometimes outstanding, in visual and performing arts, health and social care and hotel and catering, the programmes areas with the highest levels of recruitment of students. Business studies provision is unsatisfactory. Some issues identified during the previous inspection had not been fully addressed at the time of the inspection. The college's management information system is not able to provide accurate data. The arrangements for quality assurance have not sufficiently raised the overall standard of teaching. Careers guidance is weak. There are no strategies to improve poor rates of retention and low success in some curriculum areas. Governors give insufficient scrutiny to college performance. Little progress has been made in improving the overall performance of the college. Achievements remain close to the average for the sector. Student retention has declined significantly and in some curriculum areas is well below the levels indicated in national benchmarking data. The college should improve: the declining retention rate; poor achievement in some areas; inadequacies in management information systems; the inadequate review of college performance by governors; action-planning in the context of strategic planning; inadequate monitoring of procedures and plans; inadequate course reviews; insufficient integration of key skills in some areas; and the poor state of some accommodation.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Business	4	Support for students	3
Hospitality and catering	2	General resources	3
Health and social care	2	Quality assurance	3
Visual and performing arts	2	Governance	3
Humanities	3	Management	3
Basic skills	3		

The College and its Mission

1 Great Yarmouth College of Further Education is a medium-sized general further education college serving the town of Great Yarmouth and the hinterland of North Suffolk and East Norfolk. The college recruits students from a wide geographical area including some who work in the North Sea offshore and energy industries. The college traces its origins back to the Technical Institute which was established in 1945. In 1994, the college was consolidated on a single campus at Southtown. In November 1999, it enrolled 1,371 full-time and 2,369 part-time students. More than 66% were aged over 19. In the same year, the college employed 179 full-time equivalent staff of whom 92 were full-time or part-time teachers and 87 were support staff.

2 The borough of Great Yarmouth contains areas of outstanding natural beauty, for example the Broads National Park, and is the third most popular destination for short-break and day-trip holidays in the United Kingdom. The town of Great Yarmouth is a busy port and has provided a base for offshore and energy-based industries for the past 30 years. Other local industries include electronics, engineering and food processing. Road and rail links are poor and unemployment in Great Yarmouth is well above the average for the Eastern region. The town contains electoral wards with high levels of social deprivation.

3 The college offers courses in all programme areas funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Subjects are offered at general certificate of education advanced/advanced supplementary level (GCE A/AS level), and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE). General national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) are offered at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. A comprehensive range of part-time vocational courses is available. Many of these courses are linked to national vocational qualifications

(NVQs). The college provides a wide range of vocational training opportunities including New Deal and other government-funded programmes. Many opportunities for study are offered in the community through arrangements for outreach and distance learning.

4 The current college management structure was established in 1999. In addition to the principal, there are four senior postholders with responsibility for finance, human resources, the curriculum, and clerking to the governing body. The curriculum and service areas are managed by a number of teams, each with a team leader.

5 The college's mission is 'to promote and provide educational, economic and social progression opportunities for students and the community'. The mission statement places particular emphasis upon:

- 'developing the potential of students, staff and governors
- working in partnership to promote quality, access and progression
- contributing to local economic and social development
- promoting equal opportunities
- learning linked to economic regeneration'.

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected during April 2000. Before the inspection, inspectors reviewed the college's self-assessment report and considered information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. Data on students' achievements for 1997 and 1998 were based upon the individualised student record (ISR) and supplemented by data provided by the college on students' achievements for 1999. These were checked against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. Significant inaccuracies were found in the data. As a consequence, the report contains some incomplete tables of students' achievements. Inspectors based their

Context

judgements on those aspects of validated college information and ISR data which were considered to be reliable.

7 The college was notified of the sample of its provision to be inspected approximately 10 weeks before the inspection. The inspection was carried out by 12 inspectors and an auditor, working in the college for a total of 55 days. They observed 76 lessons, evaluated students' work and examined college documents. Meetings were held with college governors, managers, other college staff and students. A team of seven Training Standards Council (TSC)

inspectors focused on work-based training in six areas: business administration; construction; social care; hairdressing; engineering; and hospitality. Where appropriate, inspectors from the FEFC and TSC shared evidence.

8 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Of the lessons inspected, 62% were judged to be good or outstanding and 5% less than satisfactory, compared with national averages of 65% and 6%, respectively.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	1	8	5	0	0	14
GCSE	0	1	1	0	0	2
GNVQ	0	5	8	1	0	14
NVQ	1	5	4	0	0	10
Other vocational	4	11	6	2	0	23
Other*	3	8	1	1	0	13
Total (No)	9	38	25	4	0	76
Total (%)	12	50	33	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*

*includes tutorials

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9 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 (%)
Great Yarmouth College of Further Education	11.6	76
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

Business

Grade 4

10 Inspectors observed 11 lessons. The self-assessment report overstated the strengths in teaching and learning and students' achievements. Inspectors identified further weaknesses.

Key strengths

- a good standard of work on assignments on GNVQ advanced courses
- an effective team approach to internal verification

Weaknesses

- persistently high drop-out rates
- insufficient feedback to students on their assignment work
- inadequate opportunities for the development of information technology (IT) skills
- insufficient training in key skills
- insufficient curriculum development

11 The college offers courses in business from foundation to advanced level, including full-time GCE A levels in accounting and business studies, an access to higher education programme, NVQ courses in administration up to level 3 and a range of management and professional courses. In 1999, business studies and leisure and tourism staff were combined into a single team. Inspectors agreed with the college that course management is not thorough and that there has been insufficient curriculum development to address the decline in the recruitment of students. Many planned courses have not met their recruitment targets. The teaching team is well qualified and experienced but there has been too little opportunity for staff development to improve teachers' knowledge of current business practices. The content of course handbooks and other information for students is

inadequate. Course files are not kept up to date. The teaching team does not systematically follow college procedures and does not plan and develop its programmes in line with the college strategic plan. College procedures for course review and evaluation and target-setting are followed but with insufficient rigour. Team meetings are held weekly and are minuted. There is some good practice. For example, there is an effective process of internal verification in which all members of the team are involved.

12 Inspectors did not agree with the college that the standard of teaching is good. Although some lessons were well planned and engaged students' interest, there were also some weaker lessons in which teachers did not make appropriate demands on students. Teachers often failed to check that students understood the work during lessons. Some teaching was dull. IT is not an integral part of the curriculum and students have inadequate opportunities to develop IT skills. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. Although work experience is an integral part of GNVQ courses, insufficient time is spent reflecting on this experience in subsequent lessons. Students' assignment work on the GNVQ advanced courses is generally of a good standard. In one lesson students were assessed on their presentations as part of an assignment on market research. They had prepared thoroughly and demonstrated a good understanding of the topic. In many cases, written feedback from teachers to students is insufficient. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report. Insufficient attention is given to the development and assessment of key skills. This weakness was not recognised in the self-assessment report.

13 Inspectors did not agree with the college's judgements on students' achievements. There have been persistently high drop-out rates from courses. Retention rates are poor. Over the three years from 1997 to 1999, only 50% of

Curriculum Areas

students who started a business course successfully achieved their target qualification. Pass rates are generally at or below the national average for the sector. The retention rate on the GNVQ advanced business has averaged 65% for the last three years which is below the national average. The achievement of those students who complete is good and significantly above the national average. On GCE A level programmes the retention rate has been poor, but pass rates for those who complete the course have often been good.

14 Most business studies lessons take place in rooms which are spacious and adequately furnished but not all rooms are well equipped with modern teaching aids. There is no corridor access to some rooms which leads to interruptions to classes. The accommodation does not reflect a modern business environment. Handouts and other teaching materials are kept in the area but are not indexed or kept up to date. Although the college has adequate computing resources, they are not managed effectively to provide adequate access for business studies students.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ intermediate business	2	Number of starters	14	9	24
		Retention (%)	93	78	58
		Achievement (%)	92	100	83
GNVQ advanced business	3	Number of starters	46	30	36
		Retention (%)	67	63	64
		Achievement (%)	93	89	95
National Examining Board for Supervisory Management – management certificate	3	Number of starters	23	*	12
		Retention (%)	70	*	92
		Achievement (%)	100	*	90
GCE A level accounts	3	Number of starters	*	*	13
		Retention (%)	*	*	77
		Achievement (%)	*	*	70
GCE A level business studies	3	Number of starters	*	*	22
		Retention (%)	*	*	64
		Achievement (%)	*	*	86

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

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Hospitality and Catering

Grade 2

15 Inspectors observed 11 lessons. They agreed with most of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report and identified some additional strengths and weaknesses. TSC inspectors observed hospitality courses provided by the college for work-based trainees.

Key strengths

- flexible enrolment procedures throughout the year
- the high level of support and guidance for individual students
- the effective integration on courses of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- the effective development of vocational skills
- good progression for students within programmes
- good rates of retention and achievement on NVQ level 3

Weaknesses

- learning objectives often unclear
- unsatisfactory rates of retention and achievement on NVQ level 1
- insufficient monitoring of rates of student retention and achievement

16 The college offers a range of hospitality and catering programmes, which includes NVQs in food preparation and cooking and food service, and other qualifications that accredit particular skills, for example whole food cookery and basic food hygiene. Inspectors agreed that a strength of the provision is the modular timetable which allows new students to enrol throughout the year and all students to gain a range of additional qualifications. Full-time and part-time students study together and are well

managed by staff. Less experienced students benefit from working with more experienced colleagues. Course teaching teams meet at regular intervals to review the courses. Although teaching schemes show careful sequencing of topics, the learning objectives are not made sufficiently clear. There is also insufficient monitoring of rates of retention and achievement. These weaknesses were not recognised in the self-assessment report.

17 Inspectors agreed that students' vocational skills are effectively developed. In the kitchens and other realistic working environments, students work purposefully and independently. They are encouraged to progress at a pace which suits them and to present work for assessment when they have mastered the relevant skill. Inspectors agreed that a high level of support and guidance is given to individual students. Supplementary one-to-one teaching is available for students who are not making adequate progress. Students receive a good induction to the college and are provided with appropriately detailed information about how they will be managed and assessed during their studies. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well integrated on courses. The college kitchens and restaurant provide good opportunities for students to experience both modern and traditional culinary practices. For example, a study unit on vegetarian cookery culminates in students planning and promoting a formal vegetarian dinner. Students are frequently engaged in providing catering for functions outside college and gain valuable experience in this way. Students frequently undertake vacation work in catering and benefit from the college's well-developed links with local industry.

18 Inspectors agreed that pass rates are high on the NVQ level 3 and on supplementary qualifications and that there are good rates of internal progression from NVQ level 1 to level 3. All students who completed their NVQ level 3 qualification in 1999 gained employment within

Curriculum Areas

the catering industry. There has been a decline in the number of students recruited onto the NVQ level 2 programme and the retention rate was poor in 1999. Pass rates are low on the NVQ level 1 course. These weaknesses were not recognised by the college.

19 Teachers are appropriately qualified and have a good range of vocational skills and industrial experience. There is a well-developed staff appraisal system. Teachers maintain good

links with the catering industry and are aware of current industrial trends. The standard of accommodation and specialist equipment is uneven. Some is up to date and provides a good basis for industrial practice. As the self-assessment report identifies, some of the teaching and staff work areas and the changing facilities for students are of a poor standard. Attractive displays of students' work celebrate success and give a clear identity to the area.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in hospitality and catering, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
NVQ catering and hospitality – food preparation and cooking general (one-year course)	1	Number of starters	+	*	9
		Retention (%)	+	*	78
		Achievement (%)	+	*	43
C&G 7065 food preparation and culinary arts (one-year course)	1	Number of starters	*	*	36
		Retention (%)	*	*	81
		Achievement (%)	*	*	69
NVQ catering and hospitality – food preparation and cooking (one-year course)	2	Number of starters	+	*	31
		Retention (%)	+	*	65
		Achievement (%)	+	*	81
NVQ catering and hospitality (one-year course)	3	Number of starters	*	*	18
		Retention (%)	*	*	89
		Achievement (%)	*	*	75

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

*data unreliable

+course not running

Curriculum Areas

Health and Social Care

Grade 2

20 Inspectors observed 11 lessons. They agreed with many of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report but found additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors from the TSC observed one lesson in health care provided by the college for work-based trainees.

Key strengths

- high retention and pass rates on most full-time courses
- high progression rates to more advanced courses
- good support for individual students
- effective programme management
- well-organised work placements
- high levels of attendance

Weaknesses

- insufficient assessment of key skills
- some insufficiently demanding teaching
- some unsuitable teaching accommodation

21 The college offers: GNVQ courses in health and social care at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels; the national diploma and certificate in childhood studies; and the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) advanced management of care. Since the previous inspection the college has extended its provision of part-time and short courses to widen participation. For example, a course for classroom assistants in rural schools has been developed in association with Norfolk Social Services. Inspectors agreed that courses are well managed. Course teams hold regular meetings and prompt action is taken to address issues that are raised. There is appropriately detailed course documentation and students speak highly of the individual support which

they receive from their tutors. Adult students and students with specific learning needs are integrated effectively on courses. Inspectors agreed that the high level of individual student support is a strength.

22 Inspectors agreed with the college that lessons are carefully planned and have well-defined objectives. Teachers make effective use of question and answer techniques to encourage students to contribute in lessons. In the best lessons students were able to extend their knowledge and understanding by engaging in a variety of imaginative learning activities. They were encouraged to draw on their own experiences. In one lesson students were provided with a range of food products which they assessed for nutritional value. This gave them a useful starting point to explore the dietary requirements of young children. In a few lessons too much emphasis was placed on group work which was not sufficiently demanding for more able students. Inspectors agreed that the carefully monitored work experience makes a valuable contribution to students' learning. There are clear guidelines for students and work placement supervisors.

23 Inspectors agreed that there are high retention and pass rates on most full-time courses. The BTEC national diploma course has retention rates above the national average for the sector for each of the last three years with a pass rate of 96% in 1998-99. The retention rates for the GNVQ advanced health and social care have also been well above the national average. In 1998-99 the pass rate for this course was 100% and 71% of students achieved a high grade compared with a national average of 47%. All the students who studied on the GNVQ foundation health and social care course in 1998-99 achieved the qualification. There are good rates of progression to more advanced courses. All of the students who completed the GNVQ foundation course in 1998-99 continued to a higher level course at the college. Most students on advanced level courses progress to

Curriculum Areas

higher education or employment in the health and social care sector. In the classes observed, the average attendance was 84% which is above the average for the further education sector, a strength not identified in the self-assessment report.

24 Students' work is of a high standard. Students have a good understanding of their subjects and the ability to research topics thoroughly. Students on the national certificate course successfully retrieved information from Internet websites to support a presentation which they were undertaking. Most student portfolios are well organised. Assignments are designed carefully to enable students to provide evidence of their development of a range of key skills and are of an appropriate level. FEFC and TSC inspectors found that opportunities to assess students' development of key skills in a

relevant vocational context were not always exploited. This shortcoming was not identified in the self-assessment report. Teachers grade assignments accurately and provide students with constructive feedback on how to improve their work. There are effective arrangements for the internal verification of assessment.

25 There is good provision of specialist books and journals. Students also have access to computers, which they use extensively. Some lessons are taught in unattractive and unsuitable classrooms. Teachers are well qualified and have appropriate professional experience. Students benefit from the services of part-time teachers and visiting speakers who are practitioners in the profession and who have knowledge of current developments in the care sector.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ foundation health and social care	1	Number of starters	*	13	11
		Retention (%)	*	83	82
		Achievement (%)	*	40	100
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	Number of starters	*	34	27
		Retention (%)	*	71	83
		Achievement (%)	*	71	55
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	Number of starters	*	15	17
		Retention (%)	*	87	82
		Achievement (%)	*	85	100
BTEC national diploma in childhood studies (nursery nursing)	3	Number of starters	41	*	27
		Retention (%)	85	*	89
		Achievement (%)	83	*	96
C&G 3250 in advanced management for care	3	Number of starters	10	22	18
		Retention (%)	100	86	83
		Achievement (%)	100	84	81

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

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Visual and Performing Arts

Grade 2

26 Inspectors observed 17 lessons. They agreed with many of the judgements made in the self-assessment report but some weaknesses were understated.

Key strengths

- good pass rates on most full-time courses
- well-planned and well-managed lessons
- the high quality of students' work
- stimulating teaching
- effective teamwork at course level

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on some full-time courses
- some inadequate accommodation in visual arts and dance and drama
- insufficient monitoring of students' retention

27 The college has increased the provision since the last inspection. It now offers a range of art and design courses including specialist national diplomas in graphics and fashion and textiles, as well as courses in performing arts and commercial music. GCE A levels are offered in art and design, music and music technology.

28 Inspectors agreed that there is good teaching. Much stimulating teaching captured and held students' interest. Tutors set students well-designed, interesting tasks. There are many opportunities for students to learn independently. Second-year performing arts students were rehearsing a production of a new musical, many elements of which they had created. In art and design students were working productively on briefs which they had devised for themselves and were confident and articulate when discussing their work. The average attendance in classes observed was good.

29 As the self-assessment report identifies, lessons are well managed and there is good teamwork. Staff work together when planning assignments so that students can take advantage of activities offered in other classes. Staff have developed extensive opportunities for students to gain professional experience in performance in the local community. Inspectors agreed that the quality of students' work is high, particularly in photography which is creative, exciting and shows good levels of competence. Students tackle design briefs with courage and originality, producing large-scale pieces. In an intermediate dance class of very mixed ability, students quickly mastered a dance sequence and performed it with confidence. However, students are not allowed sufficient opportunity to express their views in some lessons. In a few lessons the tasks set did not take account of the different experience and levels of prior achievement that students brought to their courses.

30 Pass rates on most full-time courses are above the national averages for the sector. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. Pass rates were 100% on the performing arts first diploma in 1998-99, and 100% on the BTEC national diploma in commercial music for the last two years. Achievements on GCE A levels have been significantly above the national average for the last two years and on national diplomas in design have been above the national average for the last three years. Retention is below the national average on some full-time courses. This weakness was not recognised in the self-assessment report. The retention rate on the BTEC performing arts first diploma was 64% in 1998-99. On the BTEC national diplomas in design it was 70% in 1998-99. The retention rate for GCE A levels in art and design have been significantly below the national average for the last three years. There is insufficient attention to monitoring of targets and insufficient recognition given to performance indicators, weaknesses that were not identified in the self-assessment report. Course leaders are unaware of targets for

Curriculum Areas

retention and for widening participation as specified in the college strategic plan. Course reviews, annual reviews and other team meetings have failed to address the significant issues relating to poor retention rates.

31 Accommodation is inadequate for some activities in visual and performing arts. This weakness is understated in the self-assessment report. Facilities for performing arts are cramped and there is no sprung floor for dance activities. Some rooms used for art and design are too small and students are not able to measure proportion effectively, or work on large-scale pieces. There is insufficient access to specialist industrially relevant software for design work. Some classrooms are not

accessible for students with restricted mobility. Partition walls are flimsy and noise from adjoining rooms has a detrimental effect on students' concentration. Staff work hard to overcome these difficulties. The walls are covered with displays of students' work that are current, relevant and stimulating. The students in visual arts benefit from areas assigned for private study periods. Accommodation is good for music courses; there are three recording studios and a recital room. There is good technical equipment for music and stagecraft. Teachers have sound subject knowledge and, in commercial music, staff have recent industrial experience.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in visual and performing arts, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	Number of starters	19	24	21
		Retention (%)	79	96	95
		Achievement (%)	93	87	95
BTEC first diploma in performing arts	2	Number of starters	+	+	14
		Retention (%)	+	+	64
		Achievement (%)	+	+	100
BTEC national diplomas in art and design including design and fashion textiles	3	Number of starters	24	26	43
		Retention (%)	67	77	70
		Achievement (%)	94	90	93
BTEC national diplomas in performing arts and commercial music	3	Number of starters	22	36	37
		Retention (%)	77	78	73
		Achievement (%)	88	93	96
BTEC diploma in foundation studies in art and design	3	Number of starters	9	14	15
		Retention (%)	89	100	93
		Achievement (%)	100	100	85
GCE A levels art and design photography, music and music technology	3	Number of starters	*	*	114
		Retention (%)	*	*	51
		Achievement (%)	*	*	98

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

*data unreliable

+course not running

Curriculum Areas

Humanities

Grade 3

32 Inspectors observed 10 lessons. They agreed with many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report, but identified some additional key weaknesses.

Key strengths

- some effective, well-planned teaching
- good rates of achievement and retention on the access to higher education programme
- effective tutorial provision
- effective links with higher education

Weaknesses

- weak and declining rates of retention
- poor attendance and punctuality of students
- inadequate accommodation and resources
- underdeveloped use of monitoring systems and data
- evidence of poor literacy skills in students' work

33 The access course has regularly met its recruitment targets over the past three years. The number of students taking full-time GCE A levels or GCSEs has fallen over the same period. Current enrolments are low and the college did not recruit sufficient numbers to run GCE A level English literature in the year 1999-2000. Numbers on the GCSE English course include students who are taking English in addition to their main course of study. Course teams meet regularly to review and plan provision. They contributed to the college's self-assessment report; subjects were reviewed separately and evidence summarised for the final report.

34 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that most teaching is well planned. Some courses have appropriately detailed schemes of

work and lesson plans, and thorough descriptions of the programme and assessment methods. On other courses the information is unsatisfactory. Schemes of work only consists of the lists of topics to be covered each week. As identified in the self-assessment report, there is some good teaching and learning. The majority of teachers clarify the aims and objectives at the start of the lesson and check on students' learning and progress. In the best lessons there is an appropriate variety of teaching methods; students are interested and motivated. There are frequent instances of students arriving late for classes. Registers show a poor pattern of attendance. During inspection the attendance rate in classes observed was 63%, well below the national average for the sector. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

35 Students' work frequently contains errors of literacy. Students who need to improve their literacy skills do not always receive appropriate help. All students receive training for IT key skills at set times; there is no similar timetabled arrangement for communications skills. This shortcoming was not identified in the self-assessment report. Tutorial provision is effective, particularly in supporting students when they are making Universities and College Admissions Services (UCAS) applications. Tutorials on the access programme are purposeful and well recorded. As the self-assessment report recognises, students value the review of progress and additional help that is available from their personal tutors. The access course has established good and productive links with higher education. All 17 of the 1999 leavers were offered places in higher education institutions.

36 The self-assessment report does not sufficiently recognise the poor and declining retention rates on many of the courses. ISR data do not give an accurate picture of the rate of retention on GCE A levels. According to college data, retention on all two-year GCE

Curriculum Areas

A level courses inspected is below the national average. Between 1997 and 1999 the retention rates on courses for GCE A level sociology and psychology dropped significantly. Courses for GCE A level English language and literature, English literature and GCSE psychology have retention rates considerably below the national average. Achievement rates calculated on the small number of students remaining are therefore misleading; the self-assessment report failed to note this point. The access course has high achievement and a good rate of retention. Achievement on the GCSE English course is consistently above the national average for the sector. These achievements are noted in the self-assessment report.

37 The courses are timetabled in general purpose teaching rooms spread across the college. Several of these rooms are unsuitable for teaching humanities subjects. Their inadequacy was understated in the self-assessment report. The access programme is currently taught for two days each week in an annexe where students are unable to use college resources. Some students have insufficient opportunities to use IT resources. The staff who teach on the courses are well qualified and enthusiastic. Several have experience as examiners.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE English	2	Number of starters	118	113	84
		Retention (%)	69	64	71
		Achievement (%)	83	74	55
GCSE psychology	2	Number of starters	40	20	14
		Retention (%)	43	55	43
		Achievement (%)	41	82	100
GCE AS psychology	3	Number of starters	*	*	22
		Retention (%)	*	*	55
		Achievement (%)	*	*	56
GCE A level psychology and English (two-year courses)	3	Number of starters	*	*	64
		Retention (%)	*	*	33
		Achievement (%)	*	*	88
GCE A level sociology and English literature (one-year courses)	3	Number of starters	*	*	21
		Retention (%)	*	*	33
		Achievement (%)	*	*	100
Access to higher education humanities	3	Number of starters	25	19	20
		Retention (%)	72	74	85
		Achievement (%)	100	86	94

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

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Basic Skills

Grade 3

38 Inspectors observed 11 lessons. They agreed with some of the judgements made in the self-assessment report, but identified additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- effective planning and teaching
- motivated students in most lessons
- effective learning support
- good management of classroom activity
- good resources and accommodation

Weaknesses

- inadequate data for target-setting and performance monitoring
- low retention rates and poor attendance on some courses
- underdeveloped provision for community-based adult basic skills
- inappropriate teaching materials on some programmes
- low take-up of additional learning support on vocational courses

39 Basic skills provision includes: discrete adult basic skills in literacy and numeracy, pre-vocational access programmes for school-leavers; additional learning support from specialist basic skills staff; and one-to-one support. In addition support for key skills training is provided in a number of vocational areas. Students on discrete basic skills programmes work towards nationally recognised qualifications.

40 Most teaching is effective and well planned, as was identified in the self-assessment report. The grade profile of lessons is slightly above the national benchmark for basic education. In discrete basic skills, all lessons were good or outstanding. The most effective lessons are clearly planned and take into account the needs

of individual students. In these lessons students are concentrating on learning and are clearly motivated by the appropriate variety of teaching styles. This strength was not recognised in the self-assessment report. Students follow individual learning plans which have been agreed between teacher and student and which are reviewed and amended at regular intervals. In weaker lessons, differing levels of ability among students is not acknowledged. Students follow undemanding worksheets, which are not related to their vocational specialisms. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

41 The self-assessment report recognises that students are provided with a comprehensive range of support options in basic skills. These include: one-to-one support; group support outside the main programme; support integrated within the main programme; and attendance at adult basic skills lessons in literacy and numeracy. All full-time and most part-time students are assessed at entry on their skills in literacy and numeracy. However, only 27% of students with diagnosed needs took up support in 1998-99. This weakness was not recognised within the self-assessment report. The college offers a restricted programme of basic skills for adult students. There has been little response as yet from the college to the national drive to extend basic skills provision. With the exception of one 'basic skills at work' programme, there is no community-based or evening provision. This lack of activity is in contrast to the college's clear commitment in its mission to widening participation. This weakness was not recognised in the self-assessment report. There is little use of market research to plan or extend provision. Staff receive information on the strategic planning process, but do not feel that they have the opportunity to contribute to the process. Communication is through regular meetings and a weekly staff newsletter.

42 The data on students' retention and achievements are unreliable and hence limit the

Curriculum Areas

extent to which staff can set appropriate targets and monitor and improve performance. This situation was not recognised in the self-assessment report. It has not been possible to produce a table recording students' progress because the data is not meaningful. College records demonstrate some good levels of achievement. There is clear and recorded progression on the vocational access programme, a strength not recognised in the self-assessment report. However, there are poor rates of retention and attendance on a number of programmes and no clearly recorded action plan to address these significant weaknesses. Overall the average attendance during inspection was 66%. This is below the national average of 78%.

43 Inspectors agreed that there are some good resources and accommodation for basic skills. The key skills suite of rooms provides IT facilities to support learning, and the resources centre for learning development has recently installed specialist software. There are good paper-based resources, particularly for numeracy. Teaching materials for some programmes, however, do not meet individual learning needs. Key skills materials, for example, are often not vocationally specific or integrated with the main programme. This weakness is not recognised in the self-assessment report. A team of committed full-time and part-time staff teach basic and key skills. Relationships between staff and students are supportive and foster learning. Learning support assistants work alongside tutors in many lessons and add well-judged assistance and encouragement. Very few staff (12%) have specialist basic skills qualifications, although many take up opportunities for in-house and external development.

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 3

44 Inspectors agreed with some of the judgements in the self-assessment report but found additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- extensive and productive links with schools
- good personal support services for students
- effective guidance and support for non-traditional students

Weaknesses

- inadequate co-ordination and monitoring of student support services
- underdeveloped provision of careers education and guidance
- inadequate arrangements for monitoring additional learning support

45 Inspectors agreed with the college that it has strong links with local schools. College staff help teachers in five schools in the assessment of GNVQ foundation courses. The college also offers vocational courses to disaffected year 11 pupils. Effective guidance enables these pupils to be integrated successfully within college courses. Advice from the college is appropriate and impartial. Prospective students benefit from a range of 'taster', information and induction days and additional guidance is available following the publication of GCSE results. There is no mechanism, however, for testing the effectiveness of the service by matching the number of initial enquiries to final enrolments. Induction at the start of courses is well organised. Students receive a handbook which includes the charter and gives useful information about college services.

46 All full-time students have a personal tutor and regular tutorials. The college has clear

guidelines for personal tutors, which encourage a systematic approach. Inspectors do not agree that tutorial support is effective in all curriculum areas. Some tutorial programmes are no more than lists of topics with little time allowed for pastoral work. The best tutors are supportive and purposeful in their approach to students. Some tutors do not help students to produce useful action plans and few set constructive, specific targets for improvement. Whilst the college conducts an audit of tutorial records to ensure that tutors comply with the college tutorial framework, the quality of provision is not monitored systematically.

47 The college provides students with a comprehensive range of welfare and personal support services, as the self-assessment report notes. The contribution from a qualified counsellor, a chaplain, a financial adviser and a guidance worker extend the range of personal support services. Students benefit from sessions on anger management, stress and drugs awareness. There is inappropriate accommodation for confidential interviews. The college's day nursery gives priority to students and staff. All students complete a diagnostic assessment in literacy and numeracy as part of their induction. Additional learning support at different levels is available to students. The proportion of students taking up the offer of additional learning support is low, at 36% in 1999-2000. Tutors do not systematically monitor the progress of students with an identified need for learning support. The college did not recognise this weakness in its self-assessment. Students with disabilities receive good support in lessons. Learning support assistants work with course tutors on some programmes to enable students with specific learning needs to gain from classroom teaching.

48 Careers education and guidance is not fully effective, as the self-assessment report recognises. Students receive good support when they apply to higher education. However, the advice and guidance offered to students wishing

Cross-college Provision

to enter employment is inadequate. The service, jointly provided by the college through its tutorial programmes and by Norfolk Careers Service, is poorly co-ordinated. Resources to support careers guidance are dispersed and careers advisers are not involved with the planning or running of tutorials. Although all students are entitled to an individual careers interview, many students do not take advantage of this opportunity. Records of interviews by careers advisers are not automatically sent to personal tutors.

49 The college is committed to developing learning opportunities for people within the community who would not normally expect to enrol on college courses. The 'Learning Shop' has approximately 1,500 students acquiring IT skills in the college or in rural centres, such as public houses and village halls. They are able to learn at times that suit them, including Saturday mornings. 'The Futures' programme has a broad range of short courses, intended as a stepping stone to mainstream courses at the college. Students have progressed from this programme to higher education courses. The college has a large number of asylum seekers. They come from a wide range of backgrounds. The college caters well for their language and social needs. The self-assessment report did not identify this strength.

50 The individual support services for students, such as counselling, are well managed. The different aspects of support for students are not effectively co-ordinated. Student support managers and tutors do not hold formal meetings to plan developments and monitor progress. Issues relating to student support are also rarely addressed during meetings of curriculum teams. The student data available to managers from the college's central system are insufficient to allow for thorough monitoring of the effectiveness of guidance and support.

General Resources

Grade 3

51 Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report, but found additional weaknesses. The impact of some weaknesses was underestimated.

Key strengths

- good provision of IT resources
- most accommodation well furnished
- well-equipped resources centres
- industry standard facilities in some vocational areas

Weaknesses

- the poor standard of some classrooms and staff workrooms
- the unsuitability of some buildings
- inadequate common areas and washrooms
- untidy outlying areas of college site

52 The college campus is situated on a compact site close to the river docks area of Great Yarmouth. The buildings vary widely in age and fitness for purpose. The two Edwardian former school buildings are expensive to maintain and difficult to adapt for modern use. Most of the buildings, including a four storey block, were built some 35 years ago. Inspectors agreed that they have been effectively refurbished to provide satisfactory classrooms and specialist accommodation. There is a pleasant modern training restaurant constructed 10 years ago, well-appointed salons for hairdressing and beauty therapy, and commercial music studios that meet industry standards. The mobile classrooms in regular use are no longer fit for educational purposes. A former builder's premises has been adapted for practical teaching. Much of this accommodation is in a poor state of repair; there is some dampness and noise intrusion.

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A local annexe used for teaching is uncomfortable and unsuitable. The central area of the site is attractively landscaped and has outdoor seating appreciated by students and staff. Outlying areas of the campus are untidy and have poor surfaces. Arrangements for car parking are haphazard, a weakness not mentioned in the self-assessment report. The college is aware of the weaknesses and has established an accommodation strategy to address them.

53 Since the last inspection, the college has invested heavily in its computing facilities, as identified in the self-assessment report. There are 400 computers for students' use. The ratio of computers to students has improved from 1:19 to 1:5 since the last inspection. There are 300 modern machines with recent software packages; 290 are linked to the college network. Users are mostly well satisfied with the quality and availability of the computers. There are five machines with enhanced text and speech access for students who are blind or partially sighted. Eighty-five machines have Internet access.

54 The best teaching accommodation is light and airy. Furniture is comfortable and modern. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that the new key skills area is an example of this provision. Attractive displays of students' work are exhibited in many teaching areas. Most rooms have overhead projectors and whiteboards although there is insufficient provision of screens and blinds. The self-assessment report understated the poor condition of a few classrooms. There is sometimes a mismatch between group and room size. Distracting noise through thin partition walls is a problem in a few rooms. As noted in the self-assessment report, staff rooms vary in standard. Some workrooms are too small. Computers for staff use are seldom networked and are not up to date. There is no staff common room.

55 The resources centre includes a reference library, a group project room, a silent study area

and the college languages centre. It is attractively furnished and has good facilities, for example a high-quality video viewing facility, eight CD-ROM players and five Internet connections. Since the last inspection the bookstock has increased from 15,500 to 28,000 volumes. Study spaces have increased from 36 to 92. There are 200 CD-ROM titles which provide for many curriculum areas, some 600 video cassettes, and a good range of periodicals. Library staff liaise well with most teachers over the acquisition of new titles. There are some good modern collections of books for example in art and design. Some books in business and some humanities subjects are dated. There is a good range of resources for staff and learning packs for students. The library is open every week of the year until 21.00 hours from Monday to Thursday. It closes at 16.30 hours on a Friday. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment judgement that the resources centre is a strength of the college.

56 There are some attractive and useful facilities available for students, such as a smart coffee shop, a travel agency and beauty therapy and hairdressing salons. The refectory offers a good range of food at reasonable prices and the opening hours extend conveniently into the evening. However, it becomes overcrowded and untidy at peak times from use as a social area. The college recognises that there is inadequate provision of social areas and washrooms for students. This weakness was identified in the last inspection report. The spacious sports hall is under-utilised. There are no playing fields. The recent installation of ramps and a lift has improved access for wheelchair users.

Cross-college Provision

Quality Assurance

Grade 3

57 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report but found additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- a comprehensive framework for quality assurance
- effective linkage of well-established staff appraisal to staff development
- systematic methods for gathering students' views
- well-documented and thorough monitoring of complaints

Weaknesses

- course reviews insufficiently thorough
- some inadequacies in action plans
- insufficient analysis of data on students' achievements
- no systematic collection of the views of employers and parents

58 Inspectors agreed with the college that some improvements have been made to the quality assurance arrangements since the last inspection. The quality assurance framework covers all aspects of the college's work, a strength not identified in the self-assessment report. Responsibility for the various procedures is clear. An informative newsletter provides a useful reminder to staff of deadlines for the completion of reports. A significant initiative has been the audit of course files and personal tutor records to check that procedures are being followed. Audit reports indicate that tutor records are generally well maintained but that some course files are incomplete. A well-devised lesson observation scheme which has comprehensive guidelines was introduced in 1998. Thorough reports on lesson observations from each curriculum area are published in the

newsletter. There is insufficient observation of tutorials. The college acknowledges that the outcomes from lesson observations do not sufficiently influence plans for staff development.

59 The college produced its first self-assessment report in preparation for inspection. Staff, managers and governors contributed to the process. Teaching and non-teaching teams produced self-assessment reports to a standard format. Lesson observations influenced the formation of the judgements on teaching and learning. The analysis of data on students' achievements is not sufficiently thorough. This weakness is not recognised in the self-assessment report. Too little attention has been given to comparisons with national averages and benchmarking data. Action plans state how strengths are to be maintained and weaknesses addressed. However, in areas where students' achievements have declined, action plans to bring about improvements are not specific. The self-assessment process as the college recognises, is not yet an integral part of the college's planning cycle.

60 Programme development boards meet three times each year to review courses. Agenda items include actions taken since the last meeting, the monitoring of rates of student retention and achievement and a report on staff development. There is inconsistency in the completion of action plans from programme development boards. Some do not identify or record specific actions to address unsatisfactory performance. This weakness is not identified in the self-assessment report. A working group of the academic board summarises the reports from all the boards and makes recommendations to course teams for improvement. The academic board receives a report with recommendations for consideration. Individual courses are reviewed annually. There are good guidelines for course teams. Reporting has a common format. However, many course reviews are superficial.

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Insufficient attention is given to assessing the quality of teaching and learning. This weakness was noted at the last inspection. The review of courses is insufficiently evaluative and self-critical, a weakness not fully acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

61 Inspectors agreed that the views of students are systematically gathered and analysed, and compared with those from previous years. Action plans with recommendations for improvement are distributed to teaching and service area teams. The action taken by teams to address issues is not always recorded. Some course teams have introduced forums to discuss the results of questionnaires with students. Prospective students from schools indicate high levels of satisfaction with open days and with the information which they receive about college courses. The college acknowledges it does not systematically gather employers' and parents' views.

62 The college charter is well presented, and identifies the level of service that students, employers and the local community can expect. There are few measurable outcomes against which to monitor charter commitments. Student survey questionnaires include questions relating to the charter but responses are not checked systematically. The complaints procedure is clear and well understood by students. Complaints are analysed thoroughly and well recorded. Response times are carefully monitored. This strength is not identified in the self-assessment report. College records indicate that complaints are resolved satisfactorily within the target timescale. Complaints are regularly reported to the academic board and the corporation.

63 The quality assurance arrangements for non-teaching areas are monitored by service development boards twice each year. Issues arising from curriculum teams and student surveys are routinely discussed. Actions points are not monitored thoroughly. Service

standards have been established for many non-teaching areas, but not performance indicators and associated targets. This shortcoming is noted in the self-assessment report.

64 The college recognises that the well-established biennial staff appraisal scheme is a strength. A subcommittee of the academic board evaluates the operation of the appraisal process and advises on staff development. The formation of plans for staff development is significantly influenced by the results of appraisals, and course teams and service area reviews. In 1998-99, 80% of staff attended a training event. The college acknowledges the need to disseminate the good practice from professional development activities and to evaluate the effectiveness of staff development. The college achieved Investors in People status in 1998.

Governance

Grade 3

65 Inspectors and auditors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report but identified additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- the good contribution towards the development of the strategic plan
- close involvement in the review of the organisation of the college
- productive links with the community

Weaknesses

- insufficient scrutiny of aspects of the college's performance
- deficiencies in procedures for governor appointments
- inappropriate clerking arrangements

66 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is adequate. The

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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.

67 Inspectors agreed with the college that governors come from a wide range of business backgrounds and have strong community links. Governors make a constructive contribution to the college particularly in their relations with the community. For example, an individual governor represents the college in an Education Action Zone Partnership Group. The corporation has increased the number of staff governors and the membership includes a student governor. Nominations procedures have been established for community and staff governors. The search committee is active and maintains a list of potential candidates for governors. Weaknesses in appointment procedures are not recognised in the self-assessment report. Formal audits of governors' skills are not undertaken. There is no use of public advertising for re-appointments. The process of re-appointments of governors is not subject to thorough scrutiny. Governors make declarations of eligibility and interests upon appointment but not subsequently. The level of attendance for the full corporation meetings is consistently low at 65%, as identified in the self-assessment report. A target has now been set against which to monitor governor attendance. Governors' induction is effective. Governors are well briefed on current issues through well-prepared papers and regular contact with senior managers. Training is not systematic and there is no training needs analysis for governors.

68 The cycle of meetings is determined in advance for the corporation and finance committee, but not for the other remaining committees. The planning cycle does not identify key decisions that are required for the period ahead. The employment policy and finance committee considers the management accounts at its monthly meetings. Agendas are

well constructed and signposting for action is clear. Committee minutes and key papers are presented to the corporation for appropriate consideration. Minutes of the corporation do not reveal sufficient systematic and critical scrutiny of financial information. The corporation has adopted codes and policies that assist accountability. These include a code of conduct, a public disclosure policy and standing orders. The corporation does not regularly review its policies; some have not been updated for several years. It does not receive reports from the health and safety committee. Agendas, papers and minutes, with the exception of confidential items, are available for public inspection in the college library.

69 The self-assessment report recognises that the clerking arrangements are inappropriate. Auditors consider that under the present arrangements in which the clerk of the corporation is a member of the senior management team the post has insufficient status, independence and administrative support. There is a separate job description for the clerk but there are no firm arrangements for appraisal of the post. There is a lack of structured training for the clerk. The corporation has recently decided to advertise for an external clerk.

70 The self-assessment report acknowledges the effective contribution of the corporation over two years in the restructuring of the organisation of the college. Members attended workshops to contribute to documents concerned with 'Managing through Teamwork'. Proposals were modified and consultation arrangements established. The full corporation made final decisions on the new structure. As the self-assessment report states, governors have been active in the development of the current strategic plan. They have participated in joint workshops with senior managers to consider issues in depth. They have specifically encouraged the college to develop partnerships with local schools as part of its contribution to

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the local partnership, 'Learning for Community Success'. The corporation has not established clear arrangements for monitoring the strategic plan. Issues related to the plan are discussed at subcommittees, such as employment policy and finance, and at corporation meetings. There is no regular consideration of progress against planned objectives at corporation meetings. Quantitative targets have only recently been agreed in the updated plan.

71 Governors have made insufficient progress since the last inspection in the assessment of college performance. This weakness is not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. A curriculum and service standards committee was established in 1998. It has met seven times but has not yet agreed on the reports that are required to monitor rates of retention and achievement. The committee is beginning to investigate results but has been hindered by a lack of reliable data. The corporation has completed one self-assessment which concluded that it must establish a system for the regular review of its own performance. It also recognised the need to ensure closer contact with staff and students. Steps have been taken to establish a student council to act as a link with governors. Corporation agenda items are publicised in the staff newsletter.

Management

Grade 3

72 Inspectors agreed with most of the college's judgements, but identified additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- effective internal communications
- extensive consultation on the strategic plan
- effective review and monitoring of the equal opportunities policy
- extensive and productive links with the local community

- timely and comprehensive financial management reporting

Weaknesses

- inadequate action-planning for the strategic plan
- insufficient follow up of agreed actions and monitoring of key objectives
- some deficiencies in the college marketing strategy
- inadequate provision of management information
- insufficient control over some part-time teaching costs

73 Inspectors agreed with the college that the planning to support the development of the strategic plan is a strength. Staff at all levels were effectively consulted in the revision of the strategic plan. College strategic aims are clear and relate to annual operational objectives which have specific targets. However, the strategic plan is not adequately supported by appropriately detailed action plans. Individual teams are unable to link strategic objectives with practical tasks that have specified target dates and measures of achievement. This weakness is not recognised in the self-assessment report.

74 The college has achieved considerable success in its strategic aim of serving the learning needs of the community as well as being a key partner in local and regional development. The college is actively involved in leading or contributing to community-based projects, in particular the 'Great Yarmouth Learning Community'. Inspectors agreed with the college that its links with the community are extensive and effective.

75 The introduction of a revised organisational structure for the college involved extensive consultation with all staff and the governing body. The new structure places an increased emphasis on the process of teamwork, which is appreciated by staff. There is a flatter

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management structure and more delegation of responsibility. However, as stated in the self-assessment report, not all staff fully understand their revised responsibilities and accountabilities. Team leaders who are new to the role have received insufficient training. Insufficient attention is paid to recording decisions, following up agreed actions and monitoring key objectives. Team leaders have not been set individual objectives and targets. The college recognises that the planning and reporting cycle has weaknesses. Analysis and reporting of rates of retention and achievement are inadequate. Management of curriculum development and of courses is not uniformly effective. Some weaknesses which were identified at the last inspection have not yet been remedied. Little progress has been made in improving the overall performance of the college. Student achievement of qualification aims has remained at about the sector mean. In some areas, the rate of student retention has declined significantly and is well below national benchmarks.

76 Inspectors agreed with the college that staff are well informed about college developments and management actions. There are weekly briefings by the principal and weekly newsletters. Team leaders find these meetings helpful and effective. Clear records are kept of the decisions made in academic committees. Summary action plans produced from each meeting are monitored at the next meeting.

77 A comprehensive staff handbook includes a range of well-written and clear personnel policies. Policies are reviewed regularly. Procedures for recruitment and appointment of staff are well managed. Arrangements for the allocation of resources are satisfactory. The college is committed to the promotion of equal opportunities. The policy statement covers all college activity. The equal opportunities steering group has a wide membership and systematically monitors and evaluates progress against an annual action plan. This strength is not recognised in the self-assessment report.

78 Some useful research has been conducted into niche markets to support successful bids for funding. However, as was also identified in the last inspection report, labour market information is not used in the formation of the overall college marketing strategy. Market analysis is not used for planning purposes in some curriculum areas where there are significantly declining enrolments. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

79 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. A deficit is forecast for the current financial year that will reduce the college reserves. Insufficient control over some areas of part-time staffing costs has been identified as a significant factor in the deficit. However, not all relevant adjustments to costs have yet been incorporated into these forecasts. Comprehensive and informative management accounts are produced promptly each month. The strategic planning team receives and gives appropriate consideration to the management accounts at their meetings. The director of finance and resources is a member of the college senior management team and also fulfils a significant number of other responsibilities that includes information systems and estates.

80 The college recognises that its management information system does not provide accurate or timely reporting for curriculum managers. The system does not have the capacity to monitor student performance or report on provision where there is underperformance. The system does not allow monitoring of student applications through to admission. There has been no analysis of curriculum managers' requirements for information. These weaknesses were all identified and reported at the last inspection. Curriculum managers do not have confidence that the data provide an adequate basis for the analysis of the performance of courses.

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Conclusions

81 Inspectors found the self-assessment helpful as a starting point for the inspection. The curriculum area reports were closely matched to the criteria in Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*, and were appropriately detailed. The inspection team agreed with many of the judgements in the reports, but found that strengths and weaknesses were overestimated in some areas. In cross-college areas the inspection team identified some strengths and weaknesses in criteria that had not been identified by the college. Inspectors also found that some strengths had been overestimated, and weaknesses underestimated. Inspectors agreed with two of the curriculum grades that had been proposed by the college and one cross-college grade. They awarded lower grades than the college in other areas.

82 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 (November 1999)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	0
16-18 years	33
19-24 years	11
25+ years	55
Not known	1
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (November 1999)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Level 1 (foundation)	37
Level 2 (intermediate)	26
Level 3 (advanced)	28
Level 4/5 (higher)	1
Non-schedule 2	8
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (November 1999)

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	134	1,120	34
Agriculture	12	0	0
Construction	101	60	4
Engineering	118	154	7
Business	149	177	9
Hotel and catering	187	36	6
Health and community care	210	239	12
Art and design	270	154	12
Humanities	81	416	13
Basic education	109	13	3
Total	1,371	2,369	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 31% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (November 1999)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	78	14	0	92
Supporting direct learning contact	38	0	4	42
Other support	39	5	1	45
Total	155	19	5	179

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£5,192,000	£5,460,000	£6,197,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£17.55	£16.27	£16.24
Payroll as a proportion of income	73%	70%	67%
Achievement of funding target	109%	105%	106%
Diversity of income	13%	16%	18%
Operating surplus	-£193,000	-£139,000	£40,000

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 98/43 (1997), 00/10 (1998), college (1999)

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

Payroll – Council Circulars 98/43 (1997), 00/10 (1998), college (1999)

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

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 98/43 (1997), 00/10 (1998), college (1999)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 98/43 (1997), 00/10 (1998), college (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	227	300	285	175	328	793
	Retention (%)	83	74	76	80	76	68
	Achievement (%)	85	73	65	92	63	51
2	Number of starters	890	757	748	639	512	586
	Retention (%)	72	73	77	73	70	78
	Achievement (%)	69	65	66	80	72	63
3	Number of starters	821	726	739	568	613	544
	Retention (%)	82	72	66	76	77	76
	Achievement (%)	82	71	84	90	73	70
4 or 5	Number of starters	31	2	4	63	63	62
	Retention (%)	65	50	25	87	71	94
	Achievement (%)	73	0	0	75	13	56
Short courses	Number of starters	135	437	253	2,290	2,416	1,236
	Retention (%)	91	92	90	94	87	87
	Achievement (%)	91	83	63	81	69	67
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	75	59	30	236	347	285
	Retention (%)	83	83	97	77	76	88
	Achievement (%)	96	84	90	95	79	82

Source: ISR
n/a not applicable

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