Guildford College of Further and Higher Education

Contents

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

Guildford College of Further and Higher Education

South East Region

Inspected February 2000

Guildford College of Further and Higher Education is a large, general further education college with two main sites in Guildford and a centre in nearby Woking. Governors and staff at all levels contributed to its comprehensive and evaluative self-assessment report. Inspectors confirmed many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report and found some additional ones. They also concluded that the report did not pay sufficient regard to rates of students' retention and achievements which vary significantly across the college. As a result, some areas had been over-graded by the college. Since the preparation of the report, the college has rectified some weaknesses in the report.

The college offers courses from entry to degree level in all 10 of the areas funded by the FEFC. The inspection covered provision in seven programme areas, together with aspects of cross-college provision. Most teaching is satisfactory or better, but the proportion of lessons judged to be good or outstanding was below the most recent national average for the sector. On some courses, students' achievements are unsatisfactory. Attendance rates during the inspection were below the averages for the sector. The college has undergone significant change in the last two

years. A new principal is providing effective leadership. Management problems are being resolved and communication is effective. Staff appreciate the more open and consultative approach of managers. The governors played a key role in the review of the educational character of the college but have not rigorously monitored the achievement of corporate objectives or the academic performance of the college. The college has a clear commitment to improving standards. However, the quality assurance procedures and processes are new or in the process of change, and there are as yet few measurable results. Since the last inspection, there have been improvements to the support that students receive and induction procedures are now appropriate. Tutorial provision for full-time students is effective in all the areas that were inspected. However, the level of additional learning support is inadequate for the number of students who require this help. The unreliability of aspects of management information continues to be a weakness. The college is well resourced and the maintenance of the college estate has improved since the last inspection. The college should improve: achievement and retention rates on some courses; the standard of teaching; students' punctuality and rates of attendance; the level of additional learning support available to students; aspects of data collection; the monitoring by governors of the college's academic performance and corporate objectives.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Computing and information technology	3	Support for students	2
Construction	3	General resources	2
Engineering	3	Quality assurance	3
Leisure and tourism	2	Governance	3
Health, care and early years	2	Management	2
Art, design and media	3		
Basic skills	3		

Context

The College and its Mission

1   Guildford College of Further and Higher Education is a large, general further education college situated on the north side of the town, 30 miles south west of London. There are five other further education colleges in the area, as well as eight sixth form colleges and Merrist Wood College which is an agricultural college. The University of Surrey is in Guildford.

2   The Surrey economy is characterised by: a low unemployment rate of 1.1%; a large number of small and medium-sized employers; the requirement for a highly skilled workforce; and growing recruitment difficulties. Particular skills shortages exist in information technology (IT), management and business/technical services. There is also a need for increased provision in basic skills. The college has recently taken over the management of community-based adult education for north-west and south-west Surrey from the local education authority (LEA).

3   The college operates on two sites in Guildford, the main college campus on Stoke Park and the Markenfield annex, which are within walking distance of each other. The college also maintains an outreach centre in the Maybury Ward of Woking to provide education and training in that area.

4   The college offers courses in all of the 10 programme areas funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Vocational courses are available from pre-foundation to degree level. The college contracts with Surrey Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) to run a range of youth and adult programmes.

5   The total number of students enrolled in the 1998-99 academic year was 17,365. There were 2,749 full-time enrolments. Franchised provision accounted for 26% of the income received from the FEFC during 1998-99. Approximately 83% of the students were aged 19 or over. The college estimates that at least 7.2% of its students during 1998-99 were from minority ethnic populations. Data from the FEFC publication *Widening Participation in Further Education Statistical Evidence 1997-98* show that 6.1% of enrolments in the South East region were by people from the ethnic minorities.

6   The college has developed a range of partnerships. The digital academy for advanced print and media production has been developed in partnership with Reading College and School of Arts and Design. Partnership links have also involved the University of Surrey, the University for Industry, employers and Woking community groups. The college is a founder member of the Guildford and Waverley Community Learning Partnership and works closely with other further education colleges in the county. There are links with 60 schools.

7   The college's mission is 'to satisfy fully the needs of our customers and the community for individual and organisation development through lifelong education and training'. The strategic priorities of the college are: learning for the whole person; individualised learning; leading learning through new technology; learning for success and innovation; serving our community; learning partnerships; developing a learning organisation. As part of the college's strategy for widening participation, pre-vocational training courses help adults who are wanting to return to work. With the assistance of funding from the European Social Fund, the college runs a Prince's Trust volunteer programme to improve the confidence and key skills of unemployed 16 to 25 year olds. Life skills are taught under the government's gateway initiative funded by Surrey TEC.

Context

The Inspection

8   The college was inspected during February 2000. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and information about the college provided by other directorates of the FEFC. Inspectors used data on students' achievements derived from the college's individualised student record (ISR) returns to the FEFC for 1997 and 1998. The college submitted its own data on students' achievements for 1999. These were checked by inspectors against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. In most areas the data were found to be accurate but in construction and basic skills there were concerns about the reliability and/or validity of the data. The inspection was carried out by 13 inspectors and an auditor for a total of 56 days. The inspection team observed 106 lessons, examined students' work, reviewed open learning provision in IT, visited franchised provision, and scrutinised college documents. Meetings were held with governors, managers and other college staff and students. In the same week as the FEFC inspection, seven inspectors from the Training Standards Council (TSC) inspected provision in construction, automotive engineering, business administration, hospitality and catering, hairdressing and foundation for work. TSC inspectors interviewed 89 trainees and 37 employers, examined six reviews, scrutinised 44 portfolios and visited 35 work placements. Where it was appropriate to the FEFC framework, evidence gathered by the TSC inspectors was taken into account when grading college provision.

9   The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Of the 106 lessons observed, 57% were judged to be good or outstanding and 7% were judged to be less than satisfactory. The figure for good and outstanding lessons is 8% below the average figures for all colleges inspected during 1998-1999.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	1	0	1	1	0	3
GNVQ	7	12	12	2	0	33
NVQ	1	5	7	1	0	14
Other vocational	6	18	12	3	0	39
Other	1	10	6	0	0	17
Total (No)	16	45	38	7	0	106
Total (%)	15	42	36	7	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

Context

10   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 (%)**
Guildford College of Further and Higher Education	10.0	74
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

Computing and Information Technology

Grade 3

11   Inspectors observed 13 lessons in computing and IT. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report although it underestimated the significance of poor retention and achievement rates on some courses. Inspectors from the TSC inspected seven trainees who were taking a course in computer literacy and information technology.

Key strengths

- a good range of learning materials of high quality
- up-to-date network hardware and software
- well-managed tutorials for full-time students
- pass rates on national vocational qualification (NVQ) and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) courses

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on some courses
- low pass rates on some courses
- inadequate links between staff and industry
- some weak assessment practices

12   Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college offers a broad range of full-time courses in computing and IT. Enrolments, especially in the GNVQ advanced IT, have increased sharply. A wide range of part-time day or evening courses is offered on the main campus and in many adult education centres located in the community. However, there are few courses which serve current professional needs in IT. The NVQ in use and support of IT level 3 is the only substantial part-time course for computing professionals offered at the college. The school and staff have no formal links with industry. The routine work of the school is well managed and communications are good. Staff are involved in setting targets for rates of admission, retention and achievement. The half-yearly reviews of action plans are used in the self-assessment report.

13   Teaching is satisfactory. Most lessons are well planned. Schemes of work are appropriately detailed. Lesson plans have clearly stated objectives. Practical lessons are used effectively to develop programming and technical skills as well as office skills. In one GNVQ intermediate IT lesson the teacher's careful planning and well-directed questions enabled the students to create a good standard of database design. However, in less satisfactory lessons, students spent time copying from the overhead projector and did not understand complex concepts. Students on the second year of GNVQ advanced IT repeated an exercise which they had already covered on their intermediate course. Most lessons use high-quality learning materials which include a range of appropriate tasks, many of which are available on the college network. These materials were used to great effect in most lessons. Tutorial support is well managed. Two tutors shared the tutorial work for GNVQ intermediate students. They monitored the portfolio building and tracked the assessments to ensure that students were on schedule. They also monitored attendance at learning support lessons.

14   Rates of retention and achievement on some courses are below the national average for the sector. These significant weaknesses were not adequately recognised in the self-assessment report. For example, the pass rate for the general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) computing has not exceeded 31% for three years. The pass rates for general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate IT and for FEFC-funded computer literacy and information technology courses are below the national average. More than 50% of computer literacy and information technology

courses are franchised. The college has had some difficulty with the franchise providers in collating all certification from the awarding bodies. Retention and achievement rates are good on the TEC-funded computer literacy and information technology courses. Retention is mostly poor on GCE A level computing, GNVQ advanced IT, and GNVQ foundation IT. Retention is good on GCSE IT and computer literacy and information technology. There are also good achievements on NVQ level 2 in using IT and GCSE IT. GNVQ students' portfolios are well organised. On some courses written feedback from teachers is too brief to be helpful to students. Inspectors found that some assignments were not adequately related to the professional work environment in computing.

15   Inspectors agreed that the resources for computing courses are up to date and that the weaknesses relating to resources in the self-assessment report have been rectified. Specialist IT equipment and software has been upgraded recently. Effective open learning centres are available to students. All computers have fast access to the Internet. Technical support is sound. Computing resources are good in the community centres. There is open access to computers at one of the centres every weekday afternoon. Staff have access to online IT courses on the college network or at home on the Internet. There is a college IT trainer who supports and trains staff throughout the year.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in computing and information technology, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Computer literacy and information technology	1	Number of starters Retention (%) Achievement (%)	458 98 32	558 88 44	1,038 91 35
GNVQ foundation IT	1	Number of starters Retention (%) Achievement (%)	14 100 43	8 75 83	12 11 58
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	Number of starters Retention (%) Achievement (%)	27 52 36	34 74 52	64 72 48
GCSE IT	2	Number of starters Retention (%) Achievement (%)	* * *	16 69 64	10 90 86
NVQ in using IT	2	Number of starters Retention (%) Achievement (%)	16 38 17	15 80 92	39 74 83
GCE A level computing	3	Number of starters Retention (%) Achievement (%)	50 76 28	58 86 31	65 63 22
GNVQ advanced IT	3	Number of starters Retention (%) Achievement (%)	13 77 40	35 43 64	44 55 70

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)
*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Construction

Grade 3

16   Inspectors observed 21 lessons in construction. They agreed with the college's judgements in the self-assessment report but considered that insufficient emphasis was given to students' achievements and retention rates. Inspectors from the TSC observed training for 20 work-based trainees in electrical installation, carpentry and joinery, and plumbing. Their findings were broadly in agreement with those of FEFC inspectors.

Key strengths

- good theory teaching on craft courses
- high-quality study packs for craft courses
- effective course reviews and target-setting
- a supportive tutorial system

Weaknesses

- low achievement rates on some programmes
- non-compliance with health and safety regulations by staff and students
- poor student punctuality
- lack of integration of key skills with craft courses

17   The college offers a wide range of provision that includes: all areas of construction crafts; interior design; some professional courses; franchised gas assessment; and an honours degree in building. Enrolments on the NVQ level 2 in wood occupations and plumbing have steadily increased over the last three years, but declined on NVQ level 3 painting and decorating, and plumbing over the same period. The college has good links with Surrey TEC and the Construction Industry Training Board. It does not have systematic links with local employers.

18   Courses are well managed. There are terms of reference for programme review teams. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that review and evaluation reports are comprehensive and incorporate target-setting and a commentary on trends and strategies for improvement. Full-time students have two days a week industrial placement in each year of their course; placements are not well monitored by course tutors. Tutorial support is good and fully recorded for both full-time and part-time students. Personal targets are set for students during their individual tutorials. Students' subsequent work is monitored at the next tutorial.

19   Most teaching is satisfactory. Theory teaching on craft courses was good. There is some uninspiring teaching on technician courses. Lessons are generally well planned and teachers use an appropriate range of learning activities to improve students' understanding of construction concepts. In one lesson, students in a carpentry and joinery class calculated the height of a tower scaffold related to its width. The lesson had clear aims and objectives and related theory to practice. The students worked purposely through examples of varying degrees of complexity. Teachers have developed a comprehensive range of good-quality study packs to support learning on a wide range of courses. These materials enable students to learn at their chosen pace. Punctuality is poor on most programmes and teachers did not demand explanations from students who arrived late. Key skills work is not well integrated with craft courses, which results in opportunities for a full assessment of skills being missed. Students undertaking practical work do not develop safe working practices. Inspectors observed inappropriate footwear being worn in workshops. Students are unaware of the regulations for the control of substances hazardous to health. Risk assessment sheets are not displayed in the workshops. Some of these weaknesses were identified in the college's self-assessment report,

but had not been rectified at the time of the inspection.

20 Retention rates are satisfactory and in a few courses slightly above the national average for the sector. Achievement rates on some courses are poor. NVQ level 2 for all craft trades and the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) in electrical installation were 15% to 20% below the national averages in 1997 and 1998. The self-assessment report identified these weak results but without sufficient emphasis. Pass rates for all other courses are in line with national averages. The college's 1999 data were unreliable and were therefore not incorporated in the summary table of achievement and retention. In 1999, achievement rates have risen in most courses and are at or above the national average. Despite the range of provision the progression of students from the craft to technician courses is low.

21 Students' written work is of a high standard. It is well presented and shows evidence of the use of IT. Assignment briefs and tasks are well defined and are work related. Teachers have clear assessment criteria for marking students' work. Numerical marking is used to assess students' work in the certificate in site management instead of criterion referenced grading.

22 Teachers are appropriately qualified and most have assessor and verifier qualifications. Classrooms are spacious and suitably equipped. Workshops are drab and do not provide a satisfactory learning environment. Students use modern computing facilities with up-to-date industrial standard software for computer-aided design, surveying, estimating and structural mechanics.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	**1998**	**1999**
NVQ (all craft trades)	2	Number of starters	180	183	*
		Retention (%)	67	70	*
		Achievement (%)	53	47	*
C&G (electrical installation)	2	Number of starters	76	64	*
		Retention (%)	96	71	*
		Achievement (%)	45	41	*
Short courses (domestic gas safety)	2	Number of starters	172	304	*
		Retention (%)	99	99	*
		Achievement (%)	76	91	*
GNVQ advanced	3	Number of starters	11	9	*
		Retention (%)	100	78	*
		Achievement (%)	91	67	*
NVQ (all craft trades)	3	Number of starters	38	38	*
		Retention (%)	79	95	*
		Achievement (%)	31	96	*

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

Engineering

Grade 3

23   Inspectors observed 11 lessons covering a range of full-time and part-time programmes. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's own self-assessment but found additional strengths and weaknesses. The self-assessment report gave insufficient weight to students' achievements. TSC inspectors observed training in automotive engineering. They observed five lessons and met 11 trainees.

Key strengths

- good teaching in most lessons
- some exemplary schemes of work and lesson plans
- effective tutorial support, individual action-planning and review
- the use of IT in support of learning

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory retention rates on the majority of programmes
- late completion by high numbers of students
- poor attendance on a significant number of programmes
- unsatisfactory workshop accommodation

24   The programme area covers motor vehicle, electronics, computer-aided drawing and design and general engineering. It offers a range of courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels including craft and technician qualifications. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that liaison with local industry and employer involvement in the curriculum are a weakness. Recruitment to the electronics part-time programmes is low. The programme area's course monitoring and review process takes insufficient account of student and employer views.

25   Teaching in most lessons is good as the self-assessment report noted. Schemes of work include the teaching methods and resources that are to be used. Lesson plans include well-designed practical tasks and good resource materials to support students' learning. Teachers take account of students differing abilities. In most lessons, teachers check on students' understanding of the work by obtaining feedback from them. In a computer-aided drawing and design lesson, good planning allowed the teacher to organise support according to students' individual needs. The students made appropriate progress. In some lessons, learning support assistants worked alongside the subject teachers to provide help for individual students identified as needing additional support. All substantial programmes have a timetabled tutorial. Tutors work on an individual basis with their tutees to review current performance and set targets for improvement. This review is fully documented and action points from tutorials are followed up at the next tutorial. Attendance in some lessons was low but there is no systematic follow-up of these absences. Full-time motor vehicle students complete an extensive work experience which has a beneficial effect on their practical work at college. Other full-time students do not have access to work placement opportunities.

26   Pass rates are at or about the national averages for engineering in the sector, and most are improving. A significant number of students on some courses fail to complete by the expected dates and have their programmes extended to complete assessed work or to complete their portfolios. This weakness over completion of work was not recognised in the college's self-assessment report. Retention rates on some programmes are unsatisfactory; the retention rate on the level 1 motor vehicle has been consistently poor at 59% for the last three years. The retention rates for the C&G electronic

servicing course at level 1 has been distorted by a substantial franchise arrangement in 1999. Targets are set for retention and achievement and are monitored at course level. Students' work is of a good standard. Assessments are not well planned. Written assignments are appropriate but often do not have well-defined grading criteria. Feedback on assessed work provides information to students on how they could improve their performance. Attention was given to correcting spelling, grammar and punctuation in the marking of written work. Opportunities for assessment are often missed, although the assessment burden on some students is already excessive.

27   Teachers are well qualified. Learning resources are of a high standard. The machine tool stock is old but has been well maintained and meets the requirements of the programmes. Accommodation for classroom and laboratory activities is good, but the workshops for motor vehicle and engineering do not provide a stimulating working environment. There is effective use of IT to support students' learning. Students have access to modern equipment and specialist software. A computer system tracks some students' achievements. The engineering students are making increasing use of the college's computer network and of the college's resource centre. The learning centre subscribes to a good range of periodicals and has a good stock of engineering textbooks, including multiple copies of some texts.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	**1998**	**1999**
NVQ motor vehicle studies	1	Number of starters	32	41	41
		Retention (%)	59	59	59
		Achievement (%)	11	33	63
C&G electronic servicing	1	Number of starters	48	22	75
		Retention (%)	83	73	48
		Achievement (%)	40	56	41
NVQ motor vehicle studies	2	Number of starters	45	37	33
		Retention (%)	49	65	82
		Achievement (%)	24	33	*
C&G computer-aided drawing and design	2	Number of starters	63	66	108
		Retention (%)	95	98	87
		Achievement (%)	57	85	73
GNVQ advanced and precursors	3	Number of starters	39	28	27
		Retention (%)	72	75	63
		Achievement (%)	48	67	*

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)
*large number of continuing students – data could not be validated

Curriculum Areas

Leisure and Tourism

Grade 2

28   Inspectors observed 12 leisure and tourism lessons. They agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but found one strength to be overestimated.

Key strengths
- a wide range of provision
- a good standard of teaching
- strong individual support for students
- good students' achievements on most courses
- well-managed programmes
- an effective internal verification system

Weaknesses
- low retention on some courses
- poor punctuality in some lessons

29   The college provides a good range of leisure and tourism courses. Inspectors agreed that the flexible arrangements for studying courses are a strength. For example, there are two start dates for full-time GNVQ courses each year, in September and February. To make up full-time, one-year programmes the NVQs in travel services at levels 2 and 3 have been successfully combined with British Airways fares and ticketing at the appropriate level and the Association of British Travel Agents certificate or tour operators certificate. Any course can also be studied independently either at the college or through distance learning. An NVQ level 2 in sport and recreation has been combined with the operations certificate of the Institute of Sport and Recreation Management to produce a full-time sports foundation course for students who prefer a more practical focus for their study. Additional coaching qualifications and the 'welcome host' course are also offered.

30   The leisure and tourism curriculum is well organised. Management responsibilities are clear. Staff meet regularly to monitor and review performance and to share good practice. In addition to college questionnaires, students on leisure and tourism courses complete questionnaires on specific courses throughout the year. The results are effectively used to improve the running of the curriculum but are not fed back to students. There is a comprehensive and sound internal verification system for all courses.

31   Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that teaching is good. They judged 10 of the 12 lessons observed to be good or outstanding. Strong individual support is given to students both in lessons and through the tutorial system. Frequent references are made to industry practice, and often relate to the teacher's own experience. There are good links with employers. In an imaginative project, second-year GNVQ students work for two weeks at a local theme park. Lessons for the study units, which are scheduled for assessment during the work experience, are taught at the park. Most learning materials are of a good standard. In a few lessons, teachers failed to provide work which was sufficiently demanding for students. Learning support staff attend some lessons where there are students present who have been identified as needing support. Key skills are effectively taught and assessed in separate lessons and, where appropriate, through unit assignments. Assignment briefs are clear and vocationally relevant. Students' work is of a high standard. Most teachers provide helpful comments, particularly on GNVQ courses, to help students to improve their work.

32   Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that pass rates on most courses are good. Pass rates on GNVQ leisure and tourism have been consistently above the national average for the sector for the last three years, although few students achieved high grades in 1998-99. Achievements on all other courses, except bronze medallion, are above the national

average. The retention rate is low on a number of courses including the Institute of Sport and Recreation Management certificate, and the Association of British Travel Agents certificate and bronze medallion. The rate is similar to national averages in other courses. During the inspection the level of students' attendance was just above the national average for this programme area and has improved since the self-assessment report was produced. Inspectors found the punctuality of many students poor. Some students arrived at lessons over 30 minutes late, a weakness recognised in the self-assessment report.

33   All staff have appropriate qualifications and experience. Most hold relevant assessor awards. The range and quality of books and periodicals for students is good. Specialist accommodation for leisure and tourism includes a travel centre and a fitness suite, which are open to the public. The travel centre has restricted opening times and lacks information on mainstream travel products. These shortcomings are not recognised in the self-assessment report. The effectiveness of the fitness suite is limited by the low use made of the facility by the public for work experience. The nearby local leisure centre currently provides practical sport and work experience for some courses and there are plans to extend this arrangement. Classrooms are mainly bare and there are few examples of students' work on display.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Bronze medallion	1	Number of starters	31	28	22
		Retention (%)	61	61	82
		Achievement (%)	11	35	22
Association of British Travel Agents certificate	2	Number of starters	19	85	87
		Retention (%)	100	93	80
		Achievement (%)	63	86	83
NVQ travel services	2	Number of starters	**	35	34
		Retention (%)	**	83	71
		Achievement (%)	**	90	88
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	Number of starters	31	23	23
		Retention (%)	77	70	83
		Achievement (%)	79	80	100
British Airways fares and ticketing 1	2	Number of starters	*	89	64
		Retention (%)	*	83	88
		Achievement (%)	*	73	69
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism	3	Number of starters	81	89	64
		Retention (%)	80	69	70
		Achievement (%)	77	84	88
NVQ travel services	3	Number of starters	32	11	19
		Retention (%)	88	91	79
		Achievement (%)	89	70	100
Technicians certificate in sport and recreation	Unspec-ified	Number of starters	37	30	35
		Retention (%)	65	60	71
		Achievement (%)	50	78	71

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)
*course not running
**data unreliable

Health, Care and Early Years

Grade 2

34   Inspectors observed 13 lessons covering courses on health, care and early years. They agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but found additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths
- the wide range of courses
- good teaching
- very good support for part-time students
- high retention rates on most courses
- good achievements on full-time childcare courses
- effective teaching of key skills
- well-organised and well-monitored work experience

Weaknesses
- missed opportunities to use students' practical experience in lessons
- insufficient attention to students' different learning needs in some lessons
- the low level of achievement in GNVQ advanced health and social care

35   The college offers a wide range of appropriate courses in health, care, early years, care management, and counselling. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that this range of courses is a strength. A large number of first-aid courses is provided through a well co-ordinated and well-managed franchise. In the last few years the college has expanded its part-time course provision in response to demand for counselling and NVQs in care and early years. Full-time students take a range of additional qualifications. Courses are well managed. Counselling courses are managed in

a separate section of the college. Regular course team meetings are held. Actions to be taken are minuted and monitored effectively. End-of-course reviews use retention and achievement data to set targets. Students' representatives participate on course committees. Students provide written feedback to course teams at the end of the course. Their comments are also sought at the end of each module; action is taken to address their concerns.

36   Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that there is strong tutorial support for all students. The tutorial support for part-time students is particularly good. Tutorial times match the requirements of the course. For example, on courses of the Institute of Welfare Officers, there are group tutorials at the beginning and end of each term. In addition students receive an individual tutorial each term and also after the mock examinations.

37   Teaching is good. Three-quarters of lessons observed were good or better. Lessons were well structured. Teachers used an appropriate range of methods although some lesson plans lacked sufficient detail. Students' contributions to discussion during lessons are generally good, showing a clear understanding of both professional issues and the subject matter. In counselling courses the teaching is particularly demanding and effective. Following an introduction to gestalt theory, students sat on the floor, tasting the different types of food which they had provided. They were asked to concentrate upon the process and to be aware of their sensations and thoughts. Based on this activity, the teacher helped them to understand key gestalt concepts such as the cycle of awareness and interruptions to contact. In some lessons, there was insufficient differentiation in learning activities to suit different students' learning needs. Teachers make good use of their professional experiences to demonstrate links between theory and practical applications. Work placements are well planned and effectively monitored. In most

lessons students are encouraged to discuss their own vocational experiences. However, opportunities are missed to use these experiences to reinforce students' theoretical learning. Teachers make regular visits and their reports are used to set clear targets for students. Key skills are effectively taught and assessed in separate lessons using vocationally relevant assignments. Students are assessed at key skills levels appropriate to their ability.

38   Retention and achievement rates are good. Retention rates are at or above the national averages for the sector. In most courses, pass rates are above the national averages. They are particularly good in full-time childcare courses such as the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) certificate in childcare and education and BTEC national in childhood studies. The college has recognised a weakness in achievements in GNVQ advanced health and social care and is taking measures to improve them. Attendance and timekeeping are good. Many students progress to appropriate employment and to higher education. Assignments briefs are well designed. Students' work is of a good standard.

39   Staff are well qualified, and have recent relevant experience. Childcare classrooms can be used flexibly and are suitable for practical activities. Some lessons take place in the college's children's centre. Suitable specialist equipment and resources are available for all occupational areas except in first aid where there are not enough resuscitation models, particularly of babies and toddlers. Most of the rooms have displays of students' work that are visually stimulating and vocationally relevant.

Curriculum Areas

**A summary of retention and achievement
rates in health, care and early years,
1997 to 1999**

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	**1998**	**1999**
First aid at work/first-aid refresher course	1	Number of starters Retention (%) Achievement (%)	3,118 100 98	3,916 100 96	4,321 97 97
NCFE certificate in counselling skills/certificates in counsellling theory	2	Number of starters Retention (%) Achievement (%)	123 80 84	82 95 71	84 92 88
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	Number of starters Retention (%) Achievement (%)	17 94 81	29 62 50	29 70 75
CACHE certificate in childcare and education	2	Number of starters Retention (%) Achievement (%)	16 75 83	* * *	20 65 92
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	Number of starters Retention (%) Achievement (%)	34 71 54	20 55 45	23 91 33
CACHE diploma in nursery nursing	3	Number of starters Retention (%) Achievement (%)	119 88 93	62 82 96	30 61 100
BTEC diploma in childhood studies (nursery nursing)	3	Number of starters Retention (%) Achievement (%)	27 85 91	19 89 80	20 90 100

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

Curriculum Areas

Art, Design and Media

Grade 3

40   Inspectors observed 24 lessons in art, design and media. They agreed with the main strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but felt insufficient emphasis had been given to weaknesses relating to students' achievements. By the time of the inspection, the college had made progress in addressing some weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths
- effective programme management
- a strong emphasis on independent learning initiatives
- the wide range of provision
- good resources in art, design and print

Weaknesses
- insufficient emphasis on classroom management
- poor achievement in level 2 programmes and in GCE A level art
- unsatisfactory assignment planning for courses in media

41   The programme area encompasses a wide range of specialist activity both on and off the main site. Academic and vocational programmes in most art, design and media subjects are offered at both levels 2 and 3. There are imaginative franchise partnerships for contemporary music and radio journalism. Full-time students can access technically advanced facilities for graphics communication through an on-line link to a technically advanced centre established jointly with Reading College and School of Arts and Design. As identified in the self-assessment report the curriculum area is well managed and there is clear leadership from the head of school. Course teams meet regularly and follow structured agendas. Students'

achievements are measured against national averages for the sector and appropriate targets set for improvements.

42   Teaching ranges from outstanding to less than satisfactory. In the most effective lessons there is an emphasis on independent learning through practical assignments, and students are expected to take responsibility for the organisation of their own learning. In one lesson, GNVQ intermediate media students made pinhole cameras and developed the images recorded. The teacher effectively reinforced the theory whilst monitoring students' progress. Teaching in the franchised contemporary music courses is excellent. Students learn current practices in the modern music industry and many students progress to careers in this field. As noted in the self-assessment report a wide range of appropriate teaching methods helps students to learn. Video is used in the teaching of both media and photography. In some lessons, students are expected to take thorough notes, answer quizzes and respond to questions intended to check understanding and knowledge. Less effective lessons are poorly planned and students are unclear about what is expected of them. In some lessons, staff paid insufficient attention to classroom management. Students brought food and drink into lessons without being challenged. In one lesson students checked messages on their mobile phones.

43   Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that there are some courses with low pass rates. Achievement at level 2 is poor. GNVQ intermediate pass rates are below the national average for the sector but have seen a steady improvement in the last three years. Only 25% of students achieved qualifications on National Open College Network (NOCN) courses in 1998-99. Students' achievements have been good for the past two years in the national diploma in media and photography, but weak in graphic design. Achievement in GCE A level art is poor but in media rose sharply in 1998-99.

BTEC national courses have good retention rates. GNVQ advanced art and design and NOCN courses had very poor retention rates in 1998-99. Retention rates for other courses are in line with national averages.

44   Written work and research for projects are of a good standard. Students were able to describe their experiences and to record and organise their research findings well. Teachers emphasised the need for observational drawing skills in all art and design courses, but with few exceptions, drawings were weak. Sketchbooks, with the exception of those from a few committed students, contained few drawings. On the national diploma in media, the assignment briefs were poorly presented and lacked detail, although the projects were interesting. Assessment criteria were not clear and students did not know the standard of work expected of them.

45   Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. There is good technical support. The range of equipment for art and design work is appropriate for current courses and is of a good quality. It is particularly well maintained and the ceramics area, for example, is very clean and well organised. The equipment is located in cramped accommodation which can make access difficult. Students' work is well displayed. Accommodation for the programme area is dispersed. This is a disadvantage for creative studies students who benefit from the observation of other specialist work in progress. Some foundation course and graphic design classrooms are isolated from courses in the main building.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in art, design and media, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
NOCN art and design	2	Number of starters Retention (%) Achievement (%)	62 100 76	210 90 57	353 87 25
GNVQ intermediate art, design, media	2	Number of starters Retention (%) Achievement (%)	51 76 51	44 84 59	58 74 61
GNVQ advanced art and design	3	Number of starters Retention (%) Achievement (%)	34 53 65	28 71 71	24 33 86
National diploma media	3	Number of starters Retention (%) Achievement (%)	53 85 78	47 83 89	33 79 95
National diploma graphic design	3	Number of starters Retention (%) Achievement (%)	23 74 44	21 90 84	22 82 67
GCE A level art	3	Number of starters Retention (%) Achievement (%)	151 81 34	112 79 29	93 79 36

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

Basic Skills

Grade 3

46   Inspectors observed 12 basic skills lessons. Inspectors judged that the college's self-assessment report was not sufficiently evaluative. They did not agree with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college.

Key strengths
- effective working arrangements in lessons for students with learning difficulties
- the good basic skills workshops in the college
- well-designed materials for teaching numeracy in the college
- good provision of courses for adults in the community

Weaknesses
- no overall strategy to evaluate basic skills provision through learning support
- ineffective co-ordination of basic skills developments
- inadequate methods for recognising achievements of adult education students
- an inadequate support structure for community-based basic skills tutors

47   The college's provision in basic skills includes: tuition as an aspect of learning support; elements within courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; and community-based provision for adults. These three aspects of provision differ considerably in their mode of operation. They were not fully described prior to inspection, and some important evidence which inspectors required was unavailable.

48   Data which are related specifically to students who are receiving basic skills tuition within the context of learning support have not been collected or analysed. On entry to college, most students undergo the Basic Skills Agency's (BSA's) diagnostic screening which is administered by staff in the college's schools. Students may be referred to the learning support co-ordinator for further assessment and then receive tuition on a one-to-one basis, or they may receive learning support within their vocational programme. On some courses, basic skills is a discrete element within the course programme. There are currently 85 students receiving one-to-one support, but these are not all basic skills students. Students referred for learning support are not obliged to take up this offer. Where learning support is provided within the context of vocational activities, it is usually taught by a member of the college's learning support team, though some subject specialists are now also able to carry out this work.

49   The college is committed to developing good support for students including those with basic skills needs, and has increased its investment in this area significantly over the last two years. The college's self-assessment report judges on-course support to be more effective than discrete learning support. Inspectors were unable to confirm this judgement because of insufficient evidence. Practice across the college is inconsistent. Some staff have developed their own initial assessment procedures, but are unaware of similar developments elsewhere. There is insufficient opportunity to share good practice. The college lacks effective co-ordination of developments in basic skills. Inspectors judged this to be a significant weakness and one which was not mentioned in the self-assessment report.

50   The college has a range of full-time and part-time provision at entry and foundation levels for students with learning difficulties. This provision includes: a gateway programme;

a continuing education programme; and a GNVQ foundation course. Students' basic skills needs are assessed using specially designed materials. Gateway students work towards the Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR) national skills profile. Continuing education and GNVQ students work towards C&G Numberpower and Wordpower awards. The level of study is determined by the initial assessment. In most cases, lessons take place in a workshop environment. Teachers set students personal assignments. Students are set assignments on which they work at their own pace. Activities are well organised and staffing levels allow students to receive a high level of personal support. Their files are well presented. Attendance, at approximately 51%, is poor. Rooms are spacious. Study areas are carefully planned. A good range of educational resources is available. An imaginative range of materials relevant to the locality has been developed for the teaching of numeracy. However, these materials are not always aligned with students' vocational interests and personal needs. Inspectors agreed that the department has an experienced and capable staff team who are prepared to experiment.

51   In September 1999, the college took over direct responsibility from the LEA for the management of community-based adult education for north west and south west Surrey. Currently, 180 students undertake literacy and numeracy tuition at nine centres in seven towns across the area. Students are able to progress from pre-entry level to GCSE in mathematics and English. Provision is available during the daytime and in the evening. Students are entitled to study up to 12 hours each week. All tuition takes place in groups, with a paid tutor assisted by volunteer tutors. Methods for assessing students' needs on enrolment are adequate. An experienced administrative worker conducts an initial telephone interview to identify students' concerns and interests. The student is then allocated to a group where the tutor conducts a more in-depth assessment. Lessons are well organised. Tutors devise learning activities with the needs of individual students in mind. Students work industriously, in a friendly environment. Volunteers provide unobtrusive assistance.

52   Students value being able to work at their own pace. However, there is little opportunity for students to work together on activities which would stimulate creative and critical thought. Some exercises do not sufficiently relate to the context within which they will be applied. The existing arrangement for reviewing and recording students' progress does not allow students to identify what they have learned, as distinct from what they have done, nor to demonstrate how they have applied their learning. This weakness was not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Many students are entered for Associated Examining Board and C&G awards. There are students for whom these awards are not appropriate. However, some students do genuinely seek qualifications and go on to achieve the awards. Progression and destination data are not collected.

53   The service has received little investment since it received the basic skills kitemark three years ago. Some of the rooms used for tuition are shabby and there is little appropriate educational equipment available. The college has recently invested in computers at one of the centres, but staff lack the expertise and the time to make use of them.

54   There is scope for sharing materials and developing good practice across all aspects of basic skills provision, especially where students are working towards the same awards. The college recognises but has not yet addressed this issue. The college's data were unreliable and were therefore not incorporated into a summary table of achievement and retention.

Support for Students

Grade 2

55   Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report. They considered that a few strengths were overstated and identified some weaknesses that were not mentioned in the report.

Key strengths

- a well-managed, centrally organised service to support students
- an impartial guidance and effective admission system
- good links with local schools and the careers service
- a thorough induction programme for full-time students
- good tutorial support for full-time students
- good arrangements for work experience placements
- the effective contribution of the marketing service to the development of student support

Weaknesses

- some inadequate support for part-time students
- insufficient provision of additional learning support
- insufficient social and recreational activity for students

56   The college's centrally organised support for students is well managed. The services benefit from motivated staff who are committed to their work. Students value the broad range of services available to them. Full-time students receive effective impartial advice and guidance to enable them to find the right course. There are well-established links with schools and the local careers service. Publicity and course information is comprehensive and clear. The college's marketing department has won a number of national awards for the quality of its promotional materials as well as its innovative work in designing and operating a college website. Course enquiries received through electronic mail are a growing feature of the work of the college's advice and guidance centre.

57   Students spoke highly of the induction programme which was provided when they started their courses. Comprehensive information on college-wide support services is made available through staff presentations, student handbooks, and leaflets. There is also an introduction to the Internet. The website contains the college charter, complaints procedure and equal opportunities policy. Students valued the activities aimed at familiarising them with relevant services. Many students said that they were unaware of funds to provide financial support, such as the college access and bursary fund.

58   All students are assessed for additional support needs in literacy and numeracy at the beginning of their course. Although a large number of students are identified by the college as needing additional support, too few receive this service. The college has not carried out an accurate assessment of the scale of provision required. Additional learning support is offered on an individual basis, and in larger groups. In both contexts inspectors found good provision. The service was highly valued by students and staff. The college has not carried out an investigation into whether retention rates and examination results of students who receive learning support are better than those of students who do not. Retention rates for the three years up to 1998 are at or above the national median for the sector. Retention rates for 1999 have declined slightly as achievement rates have improved. They are still, however, at the national median.

59   Inspectors agreed with the college that the effective tutorial system is a strength. The college has made good progress in improving the personal tutorial scheme since the last inspection. Inspectors found sound policies and practice. Personal tutors are committed to the scheme and ensure that they develop an appropriate tutorial programme. The programme includes: regular individual progress reviews; action-planning; group and individual work on careers; higher education applications; and welfare workshops. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that there are weaknesses in the induction and tutorial support arrangements for some part-time and evening students at the college. The college provides effective careers advice and guidance. The service is enhanced by the partnership agreement with Surrey Careers Service which makes available specialist careers advisers for up to three days a week.

60   A wide range of information and support services is available to students through either their personal tutors or centrally-based student services. Students spoke highly of the college counselling service. The college identified in its self-assessment report that it needs to increase the level of counselling provision. It organises centrally effective arrangements for work experience placements. A total of 1,300 students are expected to benefit from this scheme in the current academic year. The college has been successful in involving a wide range of employers in this scheme which includes nearly 350 schools and 900 local businesses. Staff ensure that appropriate work placements are organised and employers and students receive proper support and supervision.

61   The college operates a children's centre, at the Markenfield site, which offers 83 childcare places to staff, students and the general public. Students expressed a lack of awareness of the availability of childcare funding to enable them to benefit from this service. Recent inspection reports of the children's centre by Surrey Social

Services and the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) are positive. Inspectors found provision for students' social and recreational needs to be weak. Students are unaware of, or are not enthusiastic about, taking up recreational activities. There is little participation in activities organised by the student union. The college has recently appointed a new student services manager and both staff and student representatives are keen to establish an attractive and popular programme of activities.

General Resources

Grade 2

62   Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They identified additional strengths and weaknesses. At the time of the inspection, the college was addressing most of the weaknesses.

Key strengths
- an attractive and well-maintained estate
- a good resource centre
- the effective liaison between resource centre staff and teaching departments
- effective access to IT facilities
- effective property maintenance
- good nursery facilities

Weaknesses
- poor space utilisation
- a lack of progress in developing clear strategies for rationalising accommodation
- a lack of subject identity in many areas of the college

63   The main campus is in an attractive setting located on the edge of public parkland. The main college building was built in an imposing style in the 1930s to house a technical school and art college. Students regard the college as a

welcoming, safe and secure place in which to work. Two extensions constructed in the 1960s are deteriorating. The jubilee building was constructed in the 1980s and, following major repairs which involved replacement of the roof, provides good accommodation for catering courses and the resources centre. The poor accommodation for construction courses are scheduled for demolition. Markenfield House, a former primary school located within walking distance of the main site, houses the college nursery, which provides a bright, well-equipped and friendly environment. The building is not as well suited to hairdressing and beauty therapy. The facilities for these courses are old and uninspiring. A range of other locations is used for community-based courses.

64   The estate management team is enthusiastic and well qualified and work is carefully monitored. The planned and costed maintenance scheme is reviewed annually and work is scheduled on the basis of a projected annual allocation of £0.5 million. Some of the work is carried out in-house. There is an asset register but a costed capital replacement programme has not yet been prepared.

65   Staff workrooms are good and include one new, well-resourced open plan work room which provides an effective base for communication and exchange of ideas between staff. Most classrooms are well maintained and decorated and are appropriately equipped and furnished. Many classrooms are multipurpose and contain little display material or celebration of students' work. This absence of lively subject bases, and the wide featureless corridors, which are a dominant feature of the main 1930s block, result in a bland environment. Most parts of the college's buildings are accessible, though sometimes with difficulty, to people with restricted mobility. Access to many areas is dependent on one lift. At the time of inspection, tendering was in progress for further improvements to access.

66   Student services and learning support staff are conveniently located in comfortable and well-organised rooms. Facilities for counselling include a waiting room and, although discreetly located, are not accessible to those with restricted mobility. In addition to a pleasant and well-used refectory there are three student common rooms, one of which is reserved for adults, and a licensed club. Access to the bar is strictly controlled. Apart from a small fitness centre, sports facilities are inadequate.

67   The college has recognised in its self-assessment report that space utilisation is poor despite the removal of all temporary accommodation and the sale of one site. In order to improve room utilisation, accommodation services prepare a central timetable and allocate rooms. Procedures for monitoring space utilisation are being strengthened. The existing accommodation strategy is under review. Although the college has taken some important steps, it has been slow in developing a clear strategy for rationalising and developing its accommodation. Fully appraised options have not yet been developed.

68   The resources centre is striking in appearance and provides a good learning environment. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that this is a strength. The IT facilities for independent study in both the resources centre and the IT workshop are good and well used. New procedures for monitoring and managing usage are being developed. The college's budget for the centre provides for a sound level of expenditure. Centre staff are well qualified and provide helpful advice and support. Professional librarians are linked to different college schools to ensure that the resources are appropriate and reviewed regularly. Staff speak highly of the support which they provide. The range of books, periodicals and CD-ROMs is appropriate.

69   IT facilities are good. All computers are networked and of a high specification. The

availability of computers for staff use is good and staff and students have effective access to the Internet. The network was recently updated and the IT strategy is being formalised and recorded. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that the provision of IT equipment is a strength. There is currently no specific policy for maximising the use of computers which are located in designated IT teaching rooms.

Quality Assurance

Grade 3

70   Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report but considered some strengths were overstated. They identified additional weaknesses.

Key strengths
- a commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement
- effective linkage of the quality assurance system to self-assessment procedures
- good staff development opportunities
- thorough internal verification arrangements
- a college ombudsman for student complaints and compliments

Weaknesses
- no review of students' achievements at the end of the year
- a lack of specialist curriculum links with franchise partners
- the uneven quality of school reviews
- insufficient use of students' retention and achievement data in the self-assessment report

71   The college has a clear commitment to improving quality. One of the college's six

corporate aims is to 'continuously improve quality and transform our organisation'. The college did not build on the strengths and address the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Following that inspection, the quality assurance system was changed but not fully implemented. The weakness of this situation was revealed in the college's first self-assessment report written in 1997-98. As a consequence, the quality assurance process was then developed, and retained the principles of the previous system. Most managers are new and some quality assurance processes are new or changing. There were few measurable results on which inspectors could base judgements.

72   The college's quality assurance system is based on its monitoring and evaluation framework and covers all college activities. Programme managers produce an annual monitoring and evaluation report for each course or group of courses. The report contains a review of student enrolment and retention for the current year and a comparison against the targets set. The analysis of students' achievements is made with data from the previous year. This limits the usefulness of the reports and the immediate usefulness of the action plan. This weakness was not identified in the college's self-assessment report. Heads of school collate course reports to produce a school report. Some are not sufficiently quantitative, others lack information on trends or do not make comparison against national averages in the sector. The college has identified the uneven quality of the school reports in its self-assessment.

73   The reports produced by the schools and non-teaching units include an analysis of strengths and weaknesses written to the headings of the FEFC inspection framework. Directors with responsibility for cross-college areas, and school managers use the analysis to produce the college's self-assessment report. The procedures for producing the report are

thorough. The report, however, does not take sufficient account of information on students' retention and achievements rates. As a consequence, some areas were judged by inspectors to be over-graded by the college.

74   The college has a developing appraisal system that includes all full-time staff and part-time staff with a half-time contract or more. The two-yearly appraisal cycle and an annual review are soon to be replaced with a yearly cycle and a half-yearly review for all staff. The main objectives of the appraisal system are: to identify the tasks and targets that will help staff to contribute to the college's strategic aims; to support them in achieving these aims; and to contribute to their personal development. The college has recently established performance indicators linked to its corporate aims. Managers have been given their performance indicators which they then translate into targets for staff. These targets will be measured in appraisal. The college began a programme of graded lesson observations in 1998-99 that has been extended this year. The inspection team's profile of lesson grades was lower than the profile established on the college's programme.

75   Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that it is committed to staff development. Staff development is central to the achievement of the college's corporate aims. The college spends about 1% of its staffing budget on staff development activities. It also supports staff development that is not specifically related to college objectives by contributing to the cost of courses.

76   The college effectively manages the contracting, managing and monitoring of its franchised courses. However, there are no formal links between curriculum areas and franchise partners even when the same course is offered by both. All franchise partners are required to use the college's quality assurance procedures and to contribute to the college's self-assessment report. Their strengths and weaknesses are incorporated into the

curriculum sections of the college's report. Their data on students' achievements and retention are amalgamated with the data of courses run in the college.

77   Inspectors agreed that the college has good internal verification arrangements. The college lead verifier is responsible for ensuring a consistent approach to verification. Most schools have their own lead verifier; the system is being extended to all schools. The college has achieved good external verifier reports and has been selected as a pilot centre for Edexcel Foundation's QA2000 scheme.

78   The college outlines its commitment to students, employers, sponsors and the local community in its charter. Students are aware of the charter. Inspectors agreed that the college has a good complaints and compliments procedure operated through the college ombudsman. The ombudsman records the number and type of complaints and compliments received and produces a twice-yearly report for the college executive.

Governance

Grade 3

79   Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They found some additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths
- committed and knowledgeable governors
- clear determination and review of the college's educational character by governors
- the high standard of clerking
- the effective development and implementation of performance indicators for the corporation

Weaknesses

- inadequate financial forecasting
- underdeveloped arrangements for the monitoring of academic performance
- underdeveloped procedures for monitoring the achievement of corporate objectives

80   In 1998, following a period of instability caused by changes in senior management and by poor financial performance, governors, in collaboration with the principal and staff, initiated a review of the college's mission. The result of this process was a new vision and direction for the college, supported by all staff, which sets the learner at the heart of all college activity. Governors have received and approved annual updates on the strategic plan. However, the process by which governors monitor progress towards the achievement of corporate objectives has not been systematic nor sufficiently rigorous. The college identified this in its self-assessment report and measures taken since the submission of the self-assessment report have gone some way to remedying this weakness. Corporate performance indicators have recently been determined and corporate targets have been approved. Together they provide an appropriate basis for monitoring achievement.

81   The corporation has not ensured that the college's annual income is sufficient to meet its total expenditure. The corporation has not been sufficiently rigorous in its consideration of financial forecasts during the current three-year planning period to July 2000. Governors did not ensure that there were appropriate contingency plans to deal with: the risks associated with a significant level of franchised provision; underachievement of funding targets; and the comparatively high cost of the college's direct provision. In November 1998, the corporation approved a recovery plan which involved a significant planned deficit in 1998-99. Estimates in the latest annual budget indicate

that the college will have cash and general reserves that will be about £4 million less than originally forecast. Governors have agreed a set of key financial performance indicators, but these do not include a target for investment in the college's management structure.

82   The finance committee meets monthly and has challenged management where shortfalls in the college's financial performance have been reported. The committee's effectiveness has been impaired by late reporting of significant shortfalls in the achievement of FEFC funding units. Governors have given careful consideration to the financial consequences of new ventures, such as the digital academy. The audit committee is operating effectively and is increasingly holding managers to account for weaknesses in the college's systems and expecting prompt remedial action.

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

84   The corporation has agreed a determined membership of 18 in line with the statutory modifications to the instrument of government. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that governors are committed to the college and have a wide range of expertise. The corporation's procedures for the recruitment of new governors reflect best practice.

85   The corporation has an appropriate range of committees. Each has clear terms of reference. The college's self-assessment report identified that the clerk to the corporation provides good support to governors. Inspectors agreed. Effective agendas and supporting papers for corporation and committee meetings provide a sound basis for decision-making. There is a high rate of attendance at corporation meetings. The corporation has a comprehensive

set of standing orders to guide the conduct of its business. The clerk has recently produced a new governors' handbook. There are effective arrangements for the induction of new governors. All governors participate in updating activities, attend relevant conferences and receive regular briefings from the clerk and senior managers.

86   The corporation has a positive approach to openness and accountability. A clear policy on confidentiality keeps confidential papers, agenda items and exclusions from corporation meetings to a minimum. The corporation has a well-established code of conduct which incorporates the Nolan committee's seven principles of public life. There is a comprehensive register of interests, covering both governors and senior managers which is updated regularly.

87   Early in 1999, the corporation determined that its policy and advisory committee should monitor the academic performance of the college. The committee has concentrated on setting targets for rates of retention and achievement. There is little evidence in its work of examination of the actual performance of individual curriculum areas. It does not require that action is taken by managers to address areas of concern. The corporation has recently linked governors to curriculum areas to improve their knowledge of the college's provision. Consideration has been given to the need to observe the distinction between governance and management. A useful briefing document has been drawn up to guide governors and managers in their respective roles.

88   The corporation has agreed a procedure for the appraisal of the principal which will be conducted by the chair on an annual basis; the result will be used in the remuneration committee's review of salary. The principal currently appraises the clerk. This procedure is inappropriate since the clerk is accountable to the corporation.

Management

Grade 2

89   Inspectors and auditors agreed with the college's overall assessment of management. They found additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths
- strong leadership
- open and consultative management
- an effective management charter
- good use of performance indicators for managers
- good communication throughout the organisation
- effective action to restore the college's financial health

Weaknesses
- the undefined role of programme manager
- inadequate arrangements for obtaining reliable information on student data
- late data returns to the FEFC

90   The college is in good financial health. However, its financial position has deteriorated significantly in the last two years, primarily due to non-achievement of funding targets, which was not matched by a similar reduction in expenditure. The college had unplanned losses in 1997-98 and a planned deficit in 1998-99, resulting in a decline in its cash reserves from £4.3 million to £2.3 million. Following a period of instability, change is being well managed. A recovery plan completed in 1998-99 is intended to restore the college's financial health by the end of 1999-2000. This plan has involved a major restructuring of management and reduction in staffing levels, combined with stringent measures to control expenditure. The college recognised its over-dependency on

franchised provision. Financial plans are based on reducing franchised activity as a proportion of FEFC income from 28% to 15% by the end of 2000-01, although there will be adverse short-term financial consequences.

91   The restructuring process benefited from the determined leadership of the principal acting with the full support of the corporation. The open and consultative management approach throughout the period of consultation with staff created confidence in the decision-making process in the college. The improved communication between the governors, senior managers and staff has raised morale and was a positive factor in the college's recent re-accreditation as an Investor in People. In a review of the college's educational character, all staff participated in refocusing the college's strategic objectives which now give the clearest priority to the needs of the learner. Inspectors agreed that this review process was a strength.

92   The executive team consists of the principal and five directors. They meet weekly. One meeting each month is devoted to the systematic review of college-wide performance indicators and the personal targets of executive team members. The executive team and the heads of schools and support units form the college management team, which meets monthly. Meetings start with two presentations by members to update colleagues on their areas of responsibility and to share good practice. The main business concentrates on operational matters and the regular review of operating plans. These meetings are effective in supporting and developing managers who have been in post for less than a year. Minutes of meetings are good and record progress on agreed action points. The principal has published a management charter which defines her expectations of college managers and what staff can expect of her. Managers consider that it provides a supportive framework for their role and emphasises their accountability to the principal and corporation.

93   The management of the college's provision at head of school and unit level is effective. However, the restructuring process has not yet addressed the next tier of management. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report. Historically, many programme managers have not been provided with job descriptions. Some are responsible for only one course, others for several. There are weaknesses in procedures for gathering reliable student data at course level. Managers are taking steps to address this particular issue.

94   The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. A new financial management framework, introduced in 1999 as part of the recovery plan, improves the link between the budget and operating plans for curriculum areas. The finance team provides training and support for all budget holders. Financial reports are provided promptly each month to budget holders, senior managers and governors. There is a good system of financial monitoring by the executive team and budget holders report monthly on their financial performance. The financial reports for governors and senior management are comprehensive. They include a rolling cashflow forecast for 12 months ahead and a clear commentary on the college's financial performance. The college maintains a comprehensive set of financial regulations and procedures. However, it does not have a policy and procedures for dealing with fraud and irregularities, in line with Council Circular 98/15, *Audit Code of Practice*.

95   The internal auditor has identified significant weaknesses in the college's systems, and for the last two years has been unable to give an unqualified opinion on the internal control system. Managers have identified appropriate action to deal with these weaknesses but until recently have been slow to ensure that such action has been implemented effectively. ISR data and funding unit claim

returns have routinely been submitted late to the FEFC. The audit report on the final funding unit claim and ISR data for 1997-98 have been outstanding for more than a year.

96   Inspectors agreed that the college has initiated partnerships with a number of agencies. It has a key role in the Surrey Lifelong Learning Partnership and in a partnership with the four other Surrey further education colleges. Its mission as a community college that is committed to widening participation is exemplified in its work with the Muslim community in West Surrey. Agencies in partnership with the college speak highly of their relationship. The college has an experienced team of market researchers that contributes to planning procedures.

97   The college staff handbook contains details of personnel procedures, and the policies for equal opportunities and health and safety. While personnel procedures are kept up to date and equal opportunities are routinely monitored, arrangements for the implementation of health and safety procedures are incomplete.

Conclusions

98   The self-assessment report prepared by the college was comprehensive and formed a useful basis for planning and conducting the inspection. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses but also identified additional ones. At the time of the inspection, appropriate action to rectify some of the identified weaknesses had already been taken and other weaknesses were being addressed. Inspectors agreed with five of the curriculum grades awarded by the college but found that two curriculum areas had been over-graded. The college produced an update of the self-assessment report in which it had upgraded two cross-college areas. Inspectors were unable to find evidence to justify the upgrades. They agreed with the cross-college grades of the original self-assessment report.

99   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 (January 2000)

Age	%
Under 16	0
16-18 years	25
19-24 years	19
25+ years	55
Not known	1
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (January 2000)

Level of study	%
Level 1 (foundation)	26
Level 2 (intermediate)	22
Level 3 (advanced)	28
Level 4/5 (higher)	6
Non-schedule 2	18
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	371	809	12
Agriculture	0	5	0
Construction	172	646	8
Engineering	119	181	3
Business	308	656	10
Hotel and catering	290	252	5
Health and community care	374	1,630	20
Art and design	639	400	10
Humanities	277	2,303	26
Basic education	62	571	6
Total	2,612	7,453	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 4% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (Janaury 2000)

	Perm-anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	167	23	31	221
Supporting direct learning contact	38	7	0	45
Other support	149	4	0	153
Total	354	34	31	419

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£15,450,000	£15,417,000	£14,755,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£16.66*	£16.29*	£16.20
Payroll as a proportion of income	60%	61%	64%
Achievement of funding target	96%	98%	93%
Diversity of income	23%	25%	24%
Operating surplus	-£99,000	-£614,000	-£2,516,000

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)
*provisional data

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	425	693	570	182	1,722	1,152
	Retention (%)	98	87	84	83	86	86
	Achievement (%)	44	43	50	44	38	43
2	Number of starters	1,782	2,129	1,917	984	1,758	1,979
	Retention (%)	85	81	81	82	82	79
	Achievement (%)	41	47	64	55	54	52
3	Number of starters	1,816	1,986	1,977	1,206	2,452	2,018
	Retention (%)	79	84	86	87	81	90
	Achievement (%)	61	56	61	52	49	58
4 or 5	Number of starters	6	13	25	166	335	351
	Retention (%)	50	69	96	85	79	90
	Achievement (%)	100	78	79	71	54	51
Short courses	Number of starters	1,793	1,792	1,605	9,221	12,542	14,916
	Retention (%)	98	94	93	99	99	95
	Achievement (%)	69	65	64	89	73	65
Unknown/ unclassified	Number of starters	1,067	739	1,316	1,098	800	1,151
	Retention (%)	96	90	89	91	84	89
	Achievement (%)	53	51	41	63	46	33

Source: ISR

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