

The People's College, Nottingham

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1998-99**

**THE
FURTHER
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FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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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 1997-98, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	9	60	29	2	–
Cross-college provision	18	54	24	4	–

Source: Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report
Sample size: 108 college inspections

Student Achievements

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

- as expected completions, which is the number of initial enrolments on qualifications where the student expected to complete the qualification in a given 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 the students have completed as expected (or are continuing with the prospect of late completion). 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 shown.

Summary

The People's College, Nottingham

East Midlands Region

Inspected January 1999

The People's College, Nottingham is a general further education college situated in the centre of the City of Nottingham. The college produced a comprehensive self-assessment report which covered all aspects of the work of the college. A rigorous internal validation process was used to check the self-assessment process. Inspectors agreed with many strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, although they considered that the college underestimated the significance of some weaknesses. Evidence to substantiate judgements was not always explicitly stated. Since the last inspection the college has undergone significant changes in management and resources and inspection grades have improved in many cross-college areas.

The college offers courses in all 10 of the FEFC's programme areas. About one half of its provision is in the areas of science and engineering, where the range of courses is a strength. Work in five curriculum areas was inspected. There is good teaching in many areas and pass rates on some courses are good. Links with employers are beneficial. Support services for students are well organised and well managed. Accommodation and IT facilities have substantially improved since the last inspection. There is a comprehensive framework for quality

assurance. Governors have a broad range of skills and use an exemplary handbook of governance practice. Managers have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and monitor staff resources closely. The college should: share good practice in teaching; continue implementation of strategies to improve retention and achievement; continue improvements to buildings, equipment and classrooms in some areas; address weaknesses in student support; ensure full implementation of quality procedures; develop target-setting at all levels; and address weaknesses in financial management, financial monitoring and management information.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Science	2	Support for students	2
Engineering	3	General resources	2
Health and social care	3	Quality assurance	2
English and access to higher education	3	Governance	3
Basic skills and ESOL	2	Management	3

The College and its Mission

1 The People's College, Nottingham was founded in 1846. It is one of five further education colleges in the Greater Nottingham conurbation. There are also two sixth form colleges, a city technology college, a sixth form centre, and a number of schools with sixth forms. The college has considered the educational character and needs of the conurbation in establishing its mission and strategic direction, and assessed the regional needs in determining its specialist science and technology provision.

2 Greater Nottingham has a population of around 680,000. Unemployment in the City of Nottingham in July 1998 was 9.9% compared with a national average of 5.5%. Since 1991, there has been expansion of the services sector which now employs 75% of the workforce. Manufacturing employs some 20%. Over 98% of firms employ fewer than 200 people. The City of Nottingham with its population of 280,900 is characterised by wards where there is intense social deprivation and persistent long-term unemployment. Ethnic minorities represent 10% of the population across the conurbation and this rises to 20% in some inner-city wards. There are low levels of participation in education and training; educational achievement is significantly below the national average amongst school-leavers in the City of Nottingham. This low achievement extends to socially excluded groups within the Greater Nottingham conurbation.

3 In 1997-98, the college enrolled 1,837 full-time students and 9,067 part-time students. Of the college's students, 40% were from areas of the city with poor participation rates in education and training. Some 72% of students were aged over 25 and the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups was 18.6%. There is a wide range of general further education qualifications from entry level upwards in most programme areas. In recent years the college has consolidated and extended

its programme in engineering, media technologies and applied medical and health sciences. It has established a centre of excellence in engineering training and education at the British Aerospace Royal Ordnance Works. A European capital grant is enabling the college to extend this facility with an advanced manufacturing centre. It is developing a regional centre of excellence for health and applied medical sciences at its centre at the Leicester Royal Infirmary. The college has led in the development of the human resource strategy to support the extension of Nottingham's Science Park.

4 The college works with other colleges, external partners and agencies in order to encourage lifelong learning and widen participation. The college also works very closely with all its clients in identifying training needs. The Community Development Unit has formed partnerships with community organisations and works with the city council and other partners to deliver a range of European Union funded education initiatives to the community. The Business Development Unit develops similar partnerships with business and public sector organisations locally and in Europe to provide advice and training on a range of topics, including the use of information and communication technologies for teachers, work with disaffected black youths and training for small and medium-sized enterprises. The college has developed learning methodologies and multimedia learning materials to improve access to education and training.

5 The college's mission is 'to provide the highest quality education and training services to meet the needs of our community'. The strategic aims of the college include: identifying and meeting training needs; promoting lifelong learning and equality of opportunities to education and training; increasing the range of opportunities for study; and enabling students to achieve success and progress to employment, further education and training.

Context

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected during the week beginning 11 January 1999. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other divisions of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). For the two years 1996 and 1997, data derived from the FEFC individualised student record (ISR) were used. The college submitted data on students' achievements for 1998. Inspectors checked data against primary sources such as registers and results lists issued by examining and validating bodies. Data for 1998 were found to be generally accurate. The college was notified of the sample of provision to be inspected in

November 1998. The inspection was carried out by 10 inspectors and two auditors working for a total of 48 days. Five of the FEFC programme areas were inspected and 59 lessons were observed. Students' work and college documents were inspected. There were meetings with college governors, managers, students and staff.

7 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. Of the 59 lessons inspected, 60% were rated good or outstanding and 8% were less than satisfactory or poor. This compares with figures of 65% and 6%, respectively, for all lessons observed during 1997-98.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	0	1	2	0	1	4
GCSE	0	2	0	1	1	4
GVNQ	1	2	3	0	0	6
NVQ	2	5	2	1	0	10
Higher education/ higher education access	1	4	4	0	0	9
Other vocational, including first and national diplomas	1	7	5	0	1	14
Other, including basic skills and ESOL qualifications	2	7	3	0	0	12
Total (No)	7	28	19	2	3	59
Total (%)	12	48	32	3	5	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98 (%)	19	46	29	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*

Context

8 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. The highest average attendance was in science at 84% and the lowest in basic skills and ESOL at 53% and in English and access at 60%.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
The People's College, Nottingham	10.1	69
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98	10.4	77

Source for national average: Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report

Curriculum Areas

Science

Grade 2

9 Inspectors observed 14 lessons, including general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and a range of vocational courses. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses in the college's self-assessment report. The report did not identify some weaknesses in teaching and learning.

Key strengths

- good-quality, appropriately-varied teaching
- high students' achievements on many vocational courses
- well-presented written work by most students
- the wide range of courses offered

Weaknesses

- a few students not fully involved in classroom activities
- pass rates below national averages for part-time GCE A level courses
- some equipment in need of maintenance and repair

10 There is a broad range of science courses at various levels, including courses in dental related subjects, pharmacy, medical physics and physiological measurements, sports science and access to higher education. A national vocational qualification (NVQ) in operating department practice is run at Leicester Royal Infirmary. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the science curriculum is managed effectively. Course files are consistently well organised, curriculum planning is clearly documented and there are detailed schemes of work. There are regular course and section level meetings, which are minuted and

action items identified. A formal system of individual action-planning has been introduced to address the poor GCE A level results in 1998.

11 The quality of most teaching and learning is good. In the operating department practice and medical physics and physiological measurements courses, a degree of flexibility is built in to the plans to accommodate guest lecturers. Clear lesson plans are written for all lessons and most handouts are of high quality. Inspectors agreed that a wide variety of appropriate teaching and learning methods is used to maintain students' interest. In one biology lesson, students were dissecting a heart and sketching and labelling the various elements. A practical lesson in sports science introduced first diploma students to microbiology techniques. All but one lesson was judged by inspectors to be satisfactory or better; many lessons were good or outstanding. In some theory lessons, teachers failed to ensure that all students were fully involved in the work. During question and answer sessions, teachers allowed their attention to be dominated by the more vocal members of the class and did not take steps to involve the quieter students. Students wore laboratory coats and, where appropriate, safety glasses. However, in one chemistry practical lesson, students were not shown the correct way to dissolve chemicals in a test tube, contrary to good laboratory practice. Homework is set on a regular basis but, occasionally, students' assignments are left unmarked for too long. In many lessons some students arrived late. Although the latecomers were soon brought up to date by the teacher, very few were questioned about why they were late.

12 Teaching staff are well qualified. Some have relevant recent industrial experience which is especially beneficial when they teach vocational courses. Some lecturers on the operating department practice course are employed as theatre technicians. Most laboratories and classrooms are good.

Curriculum Areas

A microbiology laboratory and preparation room have been recently refurbished to a very high standard. Some of the other laboratories are old fashioned in their appearance and layout and do not represent an ideal learning environment. The storage space available for physics equipment is inadequate. The level of specialist equipment available to science students is good. There is a dedicated instrument room containing several working spectrophotometers and other analytical equipment. Although these machines are not up to current industrial standard, they are used effectively for teaching, especially on the vocational courses. The college has recognised in its self-assessment that some of the specialist equipment used in the dental and medical physics courses, for example, the dental chairs and the ultrasound scanners, is old.

13 Students' achievements on many courses are good. The aggregated pass rate over the last three years for vocational courses, which accounts for about four-fifths of the science provision, is 62%. The pass rates for the higher national certificate science courses are consistently higher than 80%. The college acknowledges that the retention and achievement rates on some courses are poor. There is some poor achievement on general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate and advanced science programmes. Results on GCE A level subject courses taken by part-time study are often below the national average. Much of the students' written work is well presented and at an appropriate standard. Assignments are often thorough and detailed. As noted in the college's self-assessment report, computing facilities in science laboratories do not give students an appropriate experience of information technology (IT). Some of the computers are not able to support some of the newer educational packages. This is addressed in the action plan for science.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of achievement and retention rates in science, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
First diploma in science	2	Expected completions	20	30	26
		Retention (%)	90	57	73
		Achievement (%)	91	71	58
GNVQ intermediate science	2	Expected completions	11	7	8
		Retention (%)	91	86	62
		Achievement (%)	63	83	60
Access certificate in science	3	Expected completions	60	53	29
		Retention (%)	73	77	59
		Achievement (%)	44	61	66
GCE A level sciences	3	Expected completions	124	63	126
		Retention (%)	73	73	76
		Achievement (%)	63	56	76
NVQ (operating department practice)	3	Expected completions	*	61	82
		Retention (%)	*	80	76
		Achievement (%)	*	71	87
Higher national certificate science	4	Expected completions	39	104	40
		Retention (%)	92	79	78
		Achievement (%)	100	81	81

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Engineering

Grade 3

14 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college, although inspectors considered that a number of them had been overstated. The college did not give sufficient emphasis to poor overall students' achievements. Twelve lessons were observed across a range of mechanical and motor vehicle courses.

Key strengths

- the wide range of craft and technician courses
- variety of appropriate activities in most lessons
- close monitoring of students' progress during lessons
- mechanical engineering workshop facilities on the three sites

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on craft and technician courses
- lack of an up-to-date environment in the engineering classrooms at the Maid Marian Way centre

15 The self-assessment report acknowledged the wide range of craft and technician courses in mechanical and motor vehicle engineering from foundation to higher education levels. Courses offer various attendance patterns and are structured to meet the requirements of all students. Other specialist short courses have been provided for a number of employers. The college is a member of the Nottingham Engineering Forum and has recently received support from the European Development Fund to establish a computer-aided manufacturing centre to support the development of small to medium-sized manufacturing companies.

16 In the lessons observed teachers had schemes of work and lesson plans, although many schemes were only lists of topics to be covered. In most lessons teachers used an appropriate variety of materials, including presentations and videos, and students completed handouts to reinforce their knowledge of technical terms. Some teachers make good use of demonstration models or real components to illustrate key principles. A CD-ROM has been developed to support the work for the motor vehicle NVQ level 2. Cars brought in by 'customers' provide a range of realistic motor vehicle maintenance and repair activities. Motor vehicle craft students on the foundation course build a kit car as a project. As the self-assessment indicated there is a comprehensive handbook for the motor cycle course which gives full details of the practical work required. In most lessons, teachers monitor students' progress closely. Students' files have a suitable mix of handwritten and college produced notes. In some lessons, the pace of work is slow; teachers fail to vary the work appropriately and students' interest is not maintained. This weakness was not identified by the college. Assignments and tests are of an appropriate standard. In materials technology, teachers use short tests effectively to ensure their students' knowledge of terminology.

17 The Maid Marian Way centre houses two motor vehicle workshops which provide a satisfactory working environment that is effectively used. There is a mechanical workshop for the development of students' fitting and machining skills. It provides a pleasant working environment and is suitably equipped with handtools, machines and computer-controlled machinery. A science laboratory has a range of motor vehicle and mechanical science equipment but it is cluttered and does not provide enough open working space or modern equipment. The small drawing office and a suite of adjoining classrooms are in reasonable decorative order but do not give students an image of an up-to-date engineering

Curriculum Areas

environment. Two learning areas provide computing facilities and other paper-based learning material. The motor cycle courses are located in a modern, well-organised workshop in the People First centre. There is a good range of hand tools and a sufficient quantity of motor cycles, although there is a lack of recent models. Mechanical engineering workshops in a manufacturing facility in the Nottingham British Aerospace Royal Ordnance Works effectively support technician courses. They provide suitable fitting, machining, fabricating and welding facilities and give students experience of a realistic working environment. The self-assessment report identified resources in this area as a general strength. The mechanical workshop facilities which inspectors considered a significant strength, were not identified by the college as a particular strength.

18 On NVQ programmes the majority of assignments seen were wordprocessed and most

students' work was well presented. On technician courses, the retention rate decreased from 1997 to 1998 to a level below the average found in the FEFC inspectorate's engineering survey report. Retention rates in 1998 range from 67% on the national diploma in mechanical engineering to 35% on the first certificate. In some cases, retention rates are affected by the internal transfer of students to more appropriate craft courses. Pass rates in 1997 and 1998 on technician courses were just below the engineering survey average. Pass rates in 1997 and 1998 on craft courses were some way below the engineering survey average. Many students successfully pass individual course elements but do not complete all the elements to gain the full qualification. This was not recognised as a weakness by the college. In 1997, all level 2 manufacturing students found employment with local companies.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in engineering, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Craft	1, 2 and 3	Expected completions	466	575	199
		Retention (%)	85	70	78
		Achievement (%)	70	40	52
Other, including computer numerical control, welding and short courses	1, 2 and 3	Expected completions	443	523	410
		Retention (%)	80	81	80
		Achievement (%)	72	46	72
Technician	2 and 3	Expected completions	72	125	94
		Retention (%)	88	68	59
		Achievement (%)	83	67	67

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Curriculum Areas

Health and Social Care

Grade 3

19 Inspectors observed 10 lessons across courses in nursery nursing, childcare and education, health and social care, residential hospital support, dental nursing, oral health education and counselling. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but identified additional weaknesses in teaching and learning and students' achievements.

Key strengths

- well-managed and carefully-monitored work placements
- effective development and recording of key skills on GNVQ courses
- good links with employers in dentistry and care provision

Weaknesses

- poor teaching in many lessons
- poor pass rates and declining retention rates on many courses
- insufficient links between work experience and classwork

20 The college provides courses in health, social and childcare. Courses have been developed recently in partnership with employers, health trusts and a consortium of local care providers. Full-time students on college-based courses achieve supplementary qualifications in first aid and hygiene. In addition, they benefit from a range of activities and visits which enrich their curriculum. A part-time career start course for dental nursing includes business administration skills. These strengths were mentioned in the self-assessment report.

21 In the best lessons, teachers shared aims and objectives with students. Teachers used a

variety of learning resources, including computers and well-presented handouts. In most lessons, teachers failed to check that each individual student was learning. Students spent much of their time copying information from the board. In one case, the first 45 minutes of the lesson were spent in exposition of complex theories by the teacher reading from a text. No help was given to students to make notes and few were taken. In other lessons, students were given little opportunity to contribute to discussions or to ask questions. In only two lessons were students encouraged to apply their experience in work placements to the lesson topic. Many lessons were inadequately planned or prepared. Work was often unnecessarily repeated so that the progress made in the lesson was poor. Teachers failed to vary the learning activities appropriately to take account of the wide range of students' abilities. Teaching aids, other than the whiteboard, were rarely used. These weaknesses were not mentioned in the self-assessment report. On GNVQ and childcare courses, recently-revised, detailed schemes of work provide a good basis for course planning. On these courses, all full-time students benefit from well-managed and carefully-monitored work placements. A clear and friendly placement handbook helps students to prepare for and make good use of their placements. Assignments are well planned and students are given clear information about assignment outcomes and deadlines. Students receive written feedback on their assignments, but in most cases, it is sparse and does not provide them with sufficient guidance on how to improve their work. Spelling and grammatical errors remain uncorrected.

22 Students have good access to computers on a 'drop-in' basis, except at lunchtimes. They make use of the vocationally-relevant CD-ROMs and of the internet. The range and number of texts in the Carlton Road library relevant to the courses taught was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. The college has increased the stock of texts, but inspectors found

Curriculum Areas

a shortage of appropriate books for certain assignment work. There is little evidence of students' wider reading in marked assignments, few of which include bibliographies.

23 Retention is declining on most courses. It is poor on GNVQ foundation and advanced, childcare and oral health education courses. Although the retention rate has improved on the GNVQ intermediate course, it remains unsatisfactory at 71%. Recruitment to full-time childcare courses and to GNVQ courses in health and social care has declined in recent years. These weaknesses were understated in the self-assessment report. Pass rates are at or above national averages on the GNVQ foundation and advanced level courses and

significantly above national averages on the childcare and education and the NVQ course in residential hospital support. The pass rate on the certificate in dental nursing course has consistently declined from 89% in 1996 to 61% in 1998. On other courses, pass rates are low. In 1998, none of the students completing the national diploma in nursery nursing or the certificate in oral health education achieved the award. These weaknesses were not mentioned in the self-assessment report. GNVQ students have good opportunities to develop key skills, a strength mentioned in the self-assessment report. Students on the national diploma course in nursery nursing have timetabled IT skill development sessions.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in health and social care, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ intermediate	2	Expected completions	40	60	17
		Retention (%)	48	53	71
		Achievement (%)	100	56	67
NVQ (residential/hospital support)	2	Expected completions	*	*	10
		Retention (%)	*	*	80
		Achievement (%)	*	*	100
Other vocational intermediate	2	Expected completions	50	85	112
		Retention (%)	82	72	71
		Achievement (%)	89	67	68
GNVQ advanced	3	Expected completions	*	*	13
		Retention (%)	*	*	62
		Achievement (%)	*	*	75
National diploma in nursery nursing	3	Expected completions	8	22	9
		Retention (%)	100	68	33
		Achievement (%)	100	93	0

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

English and Access to Higher Education

Grade 3

24 Inspectors observed 12 lessons in general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and GCE A level courses in English and the humanities access to higher education programme. Inspectors generally agreed with the strengths in the self-assessment report relating to the access provision. Significant weaknesses in the provision for English were found by inspectors which had not been identified by self-assessment.

Key strengths

- high level of students' confidence in contributing to discussions
- detailed and constructive marking of written work
- the variety of appropriate teaching methods used on the access programme
- effective preparation of adult students for progression to university

Weaknesses

- low retention rates and poor attendance
- poor range of teaching methods used in most English lessons
- poor pass rates for GCSE English and GCE A level English literature
- lack of active curriculum management to ensure effective teaching of English

25 On English and access to higher education courses many teachers encourage students to express personal views on topics under discussion and students respond readily, confidently and perceptively. In a number of lessons, the experiences of adult students are valued and used as a basis for extending students' learning and building their confidence. This practice is not followed by all teachers.

26 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that teachers in access to higher education lessons used a wide variety of appropriate teaching methods to stimulate and motivate students and to set them challenging targets. Students responded positively and enthusiastically. Teachers effectively emphasised the skills necessary for successful progression to higher education. In a well-structured group tutorial, students effectively developed skills in note-taking. After taking notes individually, they then worked in small groups to compare and contrast the methods each had used. This was followed by feedback to the whole class with a list of techniques being recorded on the board. Points made by students were built on and expanded by the teacher. A handout was distributed and a full class discussion consolidated the students' understanding. A second passage was then read out to practise the new techniques learned.

27 In English, the range of teaching methods used is narrow. This was not identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. In many lessons, teachers talk too much and do not try to use other methods to stimulate students and gain their interest. Consequently many students are poorly motivated and little effective learning is taking place. In one unsatisfactory lesson, inappropriate and poorly-produced material was used to introduce a new subject. The aims and objectives of the lesson were not made clear. The introduction was not pitched at the right level for the ability of the students. Many complex handouts were distributed which contained difficult concepts and sophisticated technical terms with little explanation. Students were unresponsive. The need for more creative methods of teaching was mentioned in the self-assessment report for English but action has not been taken to provide the necessary development work.

28 The organisation and management of the access to higher education programme is good, as identified in the self-assessment report.

Curriculum Areas

In English there is a lack of active curriculum management to ensure effective teaching of the subject. Strategies to tackle the different needs of students and to motivate students studying literature are not being addressed. The quality of resource material, including assignment briefs and handouts, is often poor. Classrooms are adequate but they do not provide a stimulating learning environment.

29 Self-assessment identified that poor attendance and retention of students are general weaknesses in these areas of provision. Those students who complete the access programme and gain full accreditation progress to a wide range of courses and universities, both in Nottingham and elsewhere. The college acknowledges that GCSE English and GCE A level English literature pass rates are poor. The pass rate for GCSE English in 1997 was less

than half the national pass rate achieved by general further education colleges. In an attempt to improve retention and achievement for students taking GCSE English, an open college network accredited unit was introduced in 1997 to develop students' technical writing skills and improve their written English. Students have to complete the unit successfully before entering the GCSE examination. Nevertheless, the pass rate in 1998 continued to decline. A review to measure changes in retention on GCSE English during 1998-99 is planned. Pass rates for GCE A level English literature are also substantially below the national average for the sector. Most students' written work is of an appropriate standard. Teachers' detailed, constructive marking of written work helps students to improve their performance.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in English and access to higher education, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE English	2	Expected completions	102	199	105
		Retention (%)	77	71	68
		Achievement (%)	38	23	21
GCE A level English	3	Expected completions	18	13	29
		Retention (%)	68	57	72
		Achievement (%)	50	61	59
Access certificate in humanities and social sciences	3	Expected completions	138	78	63
		Retention (%)	67	59	68
		Achievement (%)	71	67	51

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Curriculum Areas

Basic Skills and ESOL

Grade 2

30 The inspection covered courses in basic skills and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Eleven lessons were observed at all levels. The scope of the inspection did not include specially-designed provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses listed in the self assessment report. Inspectors identified some additional strengths.

Key strengths

- good-quality, well-planned teaching
- well-managed provision
- effective use of varied teaching resources
- individual learning plans for basic skills students relevant to personal needs
- opportunities for all students to progress and gain accredited awards
- a supportive learning environment

Weaknesses

- low achievement and retention levels on some courses
- no coherent marking policy
- small amount of resources for ESOL

31 The college provision for basic skills and ESOL is well managed. The basic skills workshop in the college is well established and has gained the Basic Skills Agency quality mark. The college ESOL section has developed rapidly. Some basic education and ESOL is also offered at the People First centre and the Asian women's project. Good links are maintained between the main site and these centres. The two sections have a productive relationship and work well together as a team. The ESOL

curriculum is well designed, with opportunities to progress to different levels. In basic skills workshop sessions a thorough induction programme allows students to settle quickly. There is daytime and evening provision in both areas, but no 'drop-in' facility to use computers or other resources.

32 Inspectors agreed with the college that the quality of teaching is good. Most lessons are well planned and carefully organised. In the most effective lessons, teachers ensured that learning activities took account of the interests and experiences of the students. Kitchen design was used to help with the concept of measurements and an application letter for a lottery bid developed writing skills. An oral presentation, introducing a visitor to the class, provided evidence for accreditation. Teachers maintained students' interest and motivation by using a variety of appropriate teaching methods and resources. Individual work was supplemented by work in pairs and groups in ESOL classes. Students had much good-quality individual attention. In one lesson, there were three tutors, including support and volunteer tutors. The lack of a coherent marking policy results in variations in the quality of marking from some being very thorough and constructive to that which offers no comment at all on how the work might be improved. This inconsistency was not identified in the self-assessment report.

33 Most students are well motivated. They gain in confidence and self-esteem in a friendly, supportive environment. Students in all subject areas expressed their satisfaction at the progress they had made and the support they had received. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement in the self-assessment report that the individual learning programme in basic skills workshops enabled students to work on activities which took account of their personal needs. However, some students' work records described tasks that had been undertaken and not the skills that had been developed while performing those tasks. Inspectors agreed with

Curriculum Areas

the college's judgements that initial assessments, planning of students' individual learning programmes and progress reviews are not yet fully effective in the ESOL section.

34 Base rooms are suitably resourced and provide pleasant, learning environments. They include appropriate materials, computers, television, video and tape recorders. Computer software is not appropriate for the needs of students and not of the same quality as elsewhere in the college. ESOL students do not make sufficient use of IT in the workshop. The ESOL section is still building its bank of materials. All teachers have a teaching qualification and most have specialist qualifications in, for example, basic skills, ESOL and teaching students with dyslexia. Most staff are currently gaining an assessor award. Staffing is supplemented in the basic skills workshop by support and volunteer tutors, some of whom are well qualified or undertaking appropriate qualifications. These tutors provide individual support of high quality for students with additional learning needs.

35 The college acknowledged that there are low levels of achievement and retention on some courses. The basic skills section is now addressing the problem of low achievement by introducing new accreditation. In ESOL, recruitment of students is very high, but many students return to their home country or find work and, consequently, retention is low. In 1998, there was a pass rate of 93% in ESOL examinations, which included four first-class passes at intermediate level. In basic skills, most learners are working towards appropriate national accreditation awards.

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Support for Students

Grade 2

36 Inspectors broadly agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report. However, strengths were not always supported by evidence and weaknesses were insufficiently precise to enable the identification of appropriate actions.

Key strengths

- well-organised and effectively-managed student support services
- effective induction for all students
- comprehensive and well-designed tutorial framework
- well-organised student recruitment and initial guidance
- comprehensive range of support available on personal issues

Weaknesses

- insufficient support provided by tutors in some areas
- insufficient attention to monitoring students' progress and developing individual action plans
- ineffective co-ordination and development of additional learning support across the college

37 A comprehensive range of student services provides effective support for the majority of students. Issues identified in the previous inspection have been addressed. The services are well organised and effectively managed and have clearly-defined objectives and standards. A list of key criteria enables the effectiveness of services to be assessed. Staff have clearly-defined roles. Reception areas, which are integrated with student services, are welcoming and provide a central point of contact for information and services.

38 The college has clear policies for recruitment and definitive standards for processing applications. School careers open evenings and links with local schools effectively encourage recruitment. Guidelines are provided to all staff on the conduct of interviews. However, the college recognises that the quality of initial interviews varies between curriculum areas and that in some cases improvements could be made. Applications are logged and college response times are monitored. Current procedures do not ensure that all students wishing to change course mid-year receive appropriate guidance and support. The college does not systematically analyse data on transfers or progression to assess the effectiveness of initial guidance. Inspectors agreed that there are effective links between guidance staff and staff in curriculum areas. All students receive an induction to their courses. The programme has appropriate content and is well received by students. All full-time students are given an opportunity for their basic skills to be assessed during induction. In some areas, these tests are supplemented by diagnostic assessment of students' needs as they relate to the requirements of particular courses.

39 Comprehensive support on financial and personal matters is available through a qualified counsellor and a welfare rights adviser. Counselling support effectively meets the high level of demand. The college has good childcare provision on the two main sites. Recent inspections by the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) and social services identified that a good standard of educational experience was being provided.

40 Students benefit from a range of activities that enrich their studies. These include opportunities to take part in sports, work experience, residential programmes and European exchanges. However, students are not well informed about the opportunities available. The college has recognised the need to develop

Cross-college Provision

a wider range of sporting, social and cultural activities. A liaison worker provides support to the student union and helps in the production of a termly student newsletter.

41 A comprehensive and well-designed tutorial framework is being introduced and has been effectively implemented in some areas. It is supported by handbooks and materials developed from an analysis of existing good practice. The framework includes induction, study and key skills, careers information, advice on progression, and recording individual progress and achievement. Some tutorial sessions are based on comprehensive schemes of work and make use of a varied range of materials. However, the college recognises that in some areas tutorial provision does not provide sufficient support for students. Tutorial sessions observed by inspectors were not always effectively managed and some did not give sufficient emphasis to personal development. Some tutors did not monitor sufficiently students' overall attendance and performance and gave too little attention to developing and reviewing students' action plans and setting targets. All full-time students are encouraged to keep their records of achievement up to date. The college has taken part in the national pilot on a new records of achievement called Progress File. The college acknowledges that only a small number of students complete the process and leave the college with a fully updated record of achievement. The college has recognised the need to improve tutoring skills.

42 There is a comprehensive careers education and guidance policy. There are close and effective links with the local careers service. Careers advisers attend enrolment and recruitment events, provide individual guidance interviews and meet tutor groups. However, some tutorial programmes do not include careers education and guidance.

43 Additional learning support is provided within a student's main programme or through

a range of learning materials available in the learning centre. College data show that the retention of students has been improved by the provision of additional learning support. Insufficient attention is given to the additional learning needs of students in some curriculum areas. A low proportion of students have been identified as needing support in some curriculum areas and few part-time students take advantage of additional support. Individual learning plans are not well formulated or not created for some students. Course leaders do not receive regular reports of students' progress. Specialist support provided for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, such as dyslexia and sensory impairment, effectively supports their main learning programme.

General Resources

Grade 2

44 Inspectors broadly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report that contributed to the overall assessment of general resources but identified an additional weakness relating to learning resources.

Key strengths

- good standards of accommodation following substantial improvements since the last inspection
- effectively planned and managed maintenance programme
- substantially improved IT facilities
- wide range of information sources in library and learning centres accessible to students

Weaknesses

- poor space utilisation in some areas
- poor condition of structure of some buildings at the Maid Marian Way centre

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- small range of texts for a few curriculum areas

45 The majority of college provision is located on four major centres in the Nottingham conurbation and a centre at the Leicester Royal Infirmary. Three centres in Nottingham at Maid Marian Way, Carlton Road and the People First centre on Alfreton Road, are owned by the college. The other centre containing some of the engineering provision is suitably placed in the workshops of a major national engineering company. Sound studio facilities in the city are also used. Inspectors agreed that since the last inspection there have been substantial improvements to the college accommodation. It is well maintained and decorated.

Accommodation improvements support the college's strategic aims. At the Carlton Road centre, changes include the merger of the library and general IT resources into a well-resourced learning centre. Teaching rooms meet curriculum needs. Inspectors agreed with the college that the refurbishment of rooms has been to a high standard. However, some teaching accommodation lacks displays which would give it an appropriate subject identity. The student social area at Maid Marian Way is poorly furnished, poorly located and not well used. The college recognises that some parts of the accommodation are not accessible by people with restricted mobility. A helpful leaflet for people with mobility difficulties identifies named staff contacts, locations of reserved parking spaces, access routes into buildings, lifts and other facilities.

46 As identified in the self-assessment the maintenance of accommodation is well managed. Specialist surveys have provided information on the condition of buildings and college health and safety surveys and risk assessments have been used in the review of the maintenance programme. The 10-year planned maintenance programme contains clearly-identified priorities and associated costs. It is

updated annually and effectively implemented within the allocated budget. The college is working towards an international environmental quality standard, ISO 14001. An environmental task group has been set up to identify issues and develop solutions. The maintenance programme includes energy saving measures where possible and the college has implemented a recycling strategy.

47 Room utilisation surveys have been systematically carried out over the last two years and have identified considerable variations in the use of rooms. Actual usage is just within the average range for general further education colleges. The need to improve room utilisation was recognised in the self-assessment report. A central timetabling system ensures effective use is made of appropriate teaching accommodation. The college accommodation strategy has been recently updated because of changing college circumstances. It addresses the issue of utilisation, the poor condition of the structure of some buildings at one centre and identifies a number of possible solutions that are being investigated further.

48 The libraries at the Maid Marian Way and Carlton Road centres are pleasant working environments and provide access to a wide range of information including books, periodicals, videos and electronic sources. The good selection of 228 periodicals provides students with information on current developments across a range of subjects. The computerisation of the library catalogue across centres is almost complete. Students are already benefiting from access to the electronic catalogue. Links with other libraries give students access to a book loan service. The college has responded to a previously identified weakness of small amounts of texts for some curriculum areas with increased library funding, but acknowledges that this weakness still exists in some areas. Staff in the libraries and learning centres provide helpful support to students in finding information and using IT

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facilities. The support is highly valued by students.

49 There has been substantial investment in computing equipment and infrastructure since the last inspection. Equipment and software is up to industrial standards and is available at all the major centres in Nottingham. Currently the IT resources for students at Leicester are too few. All approved bids for equipment are ordered centrally and there is a three-year rolling replacement programme. The ratio of students to workstations is close to the sector norm of 6:1. The college network infrastructure to support the creation of an intranet across the college has been hampered by staff turnover. The learning centres at Maid Marian Way and Carlton Road provide good access to general IT facilities and the internet. Students receive helpful guidance to make effective use of the internet as a part of their normal studies. Levels of student use of computers vary between curriculum areas, but inspectors found that there are insufficient computers in the learning centres at Maid Marian Way and Carlton Road to meet peak demand.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

50 Inspectors were in broad agreement with the college's judgements on quality assurance in the self-assessment report. The college included in its self-assessment report a number of statements which were neither strengths nor weaknesses.

Key strengths

- the commitment to quality assurance leading to improvements
- the comprehensive framework for quality assurance
- the rigorous process of review and validation of self-assessment reports

- systematic procedures to gather the views of students, parents and employers
- effective staff development linked to staff reviews and strategic objectives

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped use of performance indicators and targets to improve performance
- failure of some teams to implement quality procedures fully
- insufficient extension of college's quality assurance arrangements to collaborative partners

51 Since the last inspection the college has made steady progress in improving quality assurance procedures. Good practice is disseminated through curriculum area and support services quality teams which include representatives from all sectors of the college. The college's commitment to improve continually the quality of provision is highlighted in the mission statement, the strategic aims and operating statements. There are clearly-defined procedures and responsibilities. Staff have a good understanding of quality assurance. As stated in the self-assessment report, there is a well-planned quality assurance cycle and calendar of activities. Quality is a standing agenda item at staff, management and academic board meetings. Inspectors agreed that there are clear procedures for reporting on quality at all levels.

52 Inspectors agreed that there are well-planned procedures for course review which have led to improvements. Course teams hold six scheduled meetings each year which have standing agenda items relating to quality assurance. Minutes record actions to be taken, although these are not always fully implemented. Where action points have been addressed satisfactorily this is not always recorded; only outstanding issues are considered

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at subsequent meetings. The continuous review at team meetings contributes to the annual course review. There is insufficiently rigorous analysis of students' achievements. Quantitative data and national benchmarks are seldom used. The college acknowledges that target-setting to improve performance has been underdeveloped. Some targets have been set and work is in progress to monitor the extent to which these targets for the improvement of enrolment, attendance, retention and students' achievement have been met.

53 The college has developed appropriate arrangements to assess the quality of teaching and disseminate good practice. Lesson observations are a requirement of the staff professional review and are part of the self-assessment process. Lesson observations are not a requirement for collaborative partners. The college acknowledges that the quality procedures used with collaborative partnerships are not as comprehensive as those used in the college. Most non-teaching areas have developed criteria for quality and performance measures and the extent to which they are achieved is monitored. Inspectors agreed that service standards have not been developed in all areas and the college has taken action to address this.

54 The college's second self-assessment report was produced in preparation for the inspection. There is a well-planned systematic approach to self-assessment. All curriculum and support teams across the college compiled self-assessment reports which contributed to the college report. Evidence to substantiate the judgements in self-assessment reports has not been explicitly stated. The college acknowledges that some of the contributory self-assessment reports are insufficiently self-critical and evaluative; there are many statements which are neither strengths nor weaknesses. Associated action plans do not always identify those responsible for taking action or indicate milestones for completion. A significant development has been the establishment of the

validation subcommittee of the academic board whose main task is to check compliance with quality assurance arrangements. A trained team of staff scrutinise course documentation, observe lessons and interview students as evidence to validate curriculum self-assessment reports. Detailed reports are completed and good practice is highlighted and disseminated across the college. This validation procedure has been extended to include support services. The self-assessment reports are checked for compliance with the college procedures and the characteristics of quality set by teams. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that this process is rigorous.

55 The college charter is comprehensive and well presented. It states clearly the standards of service for students and the college's pledges to employers and the community. The achievement of charter commitments is carefully monitored through surveys of students' views. The complaints procedure is clear and well understood. Inspectors concluded that complaints are appropriately dealt with. Students' and employers' views are systematically collected through course reviews, surveys, focus groups and during visits by staff to employers to monitor work placements. Parents' views are actively canvassed but the response rate is low. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that action has been taken and improvements made in response to students' comments.

56 The annual professional development review for staff is well established. The need for staff development is identified from lesson and task observation, reviews and self-assessment. Inspectors agreed that staff development activities are prioritised to meet the college's strategic objectives and the individual needs of staff. Nearly all staff have been involved in staff development over the last year. Staff development is well documented and all activities are evaluated. The college has achieved and maintained Investor in People status.

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Governance

Grade 3

57 Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and most of the weaknesses identified by the college. They also identified additional weaknesses in financial monitoring and audit which were not identified by the college.

Key strengths

- broad range of governors' skills and their community links
- an exemplary handbook of governance practice
- the development of self-assessment and action-planning
- effective clerking arrangements

Weaknesses

- lack of systematic review of college operating statements and performance targets
- failure of audit committee to secure timely action on internal control weaknesses
- low levels of attendance for parts of some corporation meetings
- no formal monitoring of college finances for a term

58 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.

59 The corporation comprises 20 governors who bring a broad range of experience and community links to the corporation. As noted in the self-assessment report, the nominations

committee has actively considered the performance of the corporation and identified and recommended new governors to the corporation. There are useful arrangements for the induction and training of governors. Inspectors did not agree with the self-assessment that attendance at meetings was good. Although the normal cycle of corporation meetings is scheduled one year in advance, there has not been the required attendance by business governors. The correct procedures were followed in all cases and rearrangement of the order of business has avoided delay to decision-making. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that the work of the clerk to the corporation is a strength. The clerk is experienced and the clerking arrangements effectively support the work of the corporation and its committees.

60 Inspectors agreed that the corporation has established a comprehensive range of procedures for openness and accountability. These procedures are clearly set out in an exemplary members' handbook. The corporation has adopted and updated a code of conduct. The college has prepared a register of interests which has been completed by all governors and by staff with significant financial responsibilities. There are standing orders to aid the business of the corporation. The corporation has agreed criteria against which decisions on confidentiality can be made and has set time limits for each confidential item after which the restriction can be removed. Public annual general meetings have been held for the last three years.

61 The corporation has established a range of committees to assist it in discharging its responsibilities. The committees are supported by clear terms of reference. As stated by the college the committee structure is being revised. The remuneration committee has developed a performance-based approach to the pay of senior postholders. The finance and resources committee normally monitors the college's

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financial position by the receipt of the college's management accounts each month. All governors normally receive summaries of the management accounts four times a year. Because of delays in the production of management accounts the governors were not able to monitor formally the college's finances for the autumn term 1998. Inspectors could not agree with the self-assessment that financial monitoring is a strength. The audit committee monitors the implementation of the recommendations made by the college's internal and external auditors. The audit committee has not been able to secure timely implementation of a number of audit recommendations. This weakness was not recognised in the self-assessment report.

62 A self-assessment and action-planning process has been developed for governance. Members have received training on self-assessment. The process is effective, involves all members of the corporation and includes individual interviews between the chairman and members. The most recent draft self-assessment report on governance was published widely within the college and staff were invited to comment. As a consequence, the corporation has refined its model of governance. To help give greater attention to policy development and strategic direction there have been some changes to the terms of reference of the committees and their work programmes. Inspectors agreed with the value members have placed on their self-assessment.

63 The corporation has contributed significantly to aspects of strategic planning. Opportunities taken to attend residential conferences have enabled many members to develop an awareness of current issues and be clear about the mission and purpose of the college. Considerable time has been devoted to consideration of merger and collaboration opportunities. Governors consider progress against overall targets and broad objectives and formally review the plan on an annual basis.

However, there is a lack of systematic and detailed review of college operating statements and performance targets throughout the year. These issues were recognised in the self-assessment report and the corporation has begun to address the need to comprehend more fully college standards and performance. The corporation has also requested termly reporting of progress made in achieving college operating statements.

Management

Grade 3

64 Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths identified by the college and with most of the weaknesses. They found a number of weaknesses in financial management which were not identified by the college.

Key strengths

- clear understanding by staff of roles and accountability
- close monitoring of staff resources
- good analyses of market intelligence
- effective equal opportunities policy and monitoring procedures

Weaknesses

- incomplete development and use of target-setting
- limited effectiveness of the management information system
- inadequacy of aspects of internal control systems
- delays in the production of financial information

65 There is a strategic management team of seven. The curriculum management structure has changed progressively since 1995; most recently in August 1998. The college

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management team, comprising the strategic management team and middle managers, has been reduced to 24 members. It is too soon to judge fully the effectiveness of recent changes to curriculum management, although middle managers already report improved access to and support from senior managers. Middle managers are also well supported by a management development programme. Lines of accountability are clear and understood, but several job descriptions are out of date.

66 The effectiveness of communication in the college has improved substantially since the first inspection. The management style is open and there are formal and informal means for briefing staff and allowing them to make their views known. Key written documents go to all staff. A new college meetings structure has recently been established. There are now 14 teams and a demanding cycle of meetings. There are no formal terms of reference for these teams yet, though brief details of their scope and function have been presented to staff.

67 There is a clear, documented strategic planning process. The college undertakes a detailed analysis of market, environmental and community information. Constructive working relationships with the local training and enterprise council (TEC), community, employers and the education authority inform strategic planning, and inspectors agreed that this is a strength. Staff are consulted about the college's mission and broad strategic aims. Operating statements, based on strategic objectives, are written at sector level. Quantified improvement targets have only recently been set and are not yet included in operating statements. Developments to improve target-setting are in hand, but inspectors do not agree that these yet constitute a strength.

68 The college has clear procedures for monitoring the efficient deployment of all staff. Inspectors agreed that staff deployment is monitored effectively by the senior management team. The college has not yet introduced unit

costing. Budgets in curriculum areas are adjusted according to the eventual number of funding units generated and this procedure is generally understood.

69 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is weak. Inspectors did not agree that finance controls and procedures are a strength. The college's internal auditors reported adversely in their annual report for 1996-97 on the state of the college's internal controls. A management action plan to address the weaknesses was due for implementation by August 1998. The internal auditors restated in their 1997-98 annual report that there was still not a satisfactory framework of control. Considerable recent action has been taken on internal audit recommendations but a number have yet to be implemented. Control weaknesses in recording student numbers were identified by the external auditors in their management report for 1997-98.

70 A new accounting system was recently introduced to improve the quality and timeliness of management accounts. A hardware failure delayed the expected benefits and caused an accounting breakdown, which was not reported to the FEFC. The failure prevented the production of management accounts throughout the autumn term 1998. Management accounts are supported by a detailed commentary but there are omissions in their content. At the time of the inspection, budget holders had not received reports since the start of the 1998-99 financial year. Senior managers have taken some action but some issues remain to be addressed.

71 Inspectors concluded that the college had overstated the effectiveness of its management information system and the use made of information. Various systems are used to monitor financial, personnel and student data but they are not yet fully integrated or exploited. Data on student numbers and units are provided weekly. Some of the data used for self-

Cross-college Provision

assessment were unreliable and resulted in some generous judgements about performance. A computerised registration system has been introduced to enable staff to monitor and improve student attendance. An end-of-year attendance record has been produced for 1997-98, and termly reports have now become available. Not all curriculum areas make full use of these reports. Whilst some developments in management information are in hand, these do not yet constitute a strength.

72 The college has a well-developed equal opportunities policy which is reviewed and monitored regularly. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that this is a strength. The college works closely with community and other groups to promote access to equal opportunities, and it belongs to the Nottingham Common Monitoring System. Induction assignments are being developed for students to raise their awareness of rights and responsibilities. Materials and strategies for their use in the classroom are at an early stage of development.

with the self-assessment, but in two areas lower grades were awarded. In most cross-college areas quality has improved since the last inspection.

74 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.

Conclusions

73 Inspectors found that the self-assessment reports produced by the college for inspection were comprehensive and provided a useful basis for planning the inspection. Evidence to substantiate judgements was not always explicitly stated. Some of the contributory self-assessment reports were insufficiently self-critical and evaluative. There were many statements which were neither strengths nor weaknesses. However, inspectors agreed with many strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. In one curriculum area provision was graded higher than by the college. In the majority of curriculum areas the college did not give appropriate emphasis to certain key weaknesses relating to teaching and learning and students' achievements. Three curriculum grades awarded by inspectors were lower than corresponding self-assessment grades. In three cross-college areas inspectors broadly agreed

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (July 1998)

Age	%
Under 16	0
16-18 years	11
19-24 years	17
25+ years	72
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 1998)

Level of study	%
Foundation	33
Intermediate	41
Advanced	18
Higher education	5
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	3
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (July 1998)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	406	2,015	22
Agriculture	0	16	0
Construction	58	2,142	20
Engineering	554	1,001	14
Business	195	1,059	12
Hotel and catering	17	184	2
Health and community care	253	642	8
Art and design	143	489	6
Humanities	161	988	11
Basic education	50	531	5
Total	1,837	9,067	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 36% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July 1998)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	92	1	0	93
Supporting direct learning contact	38	0	0	38
Other support	86	4	3	93
Total	216	5	3	224

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1996	1997	1998
Income	£7,339,000	£8,532,000	£8,182,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998	£13.99	£13.41	£13.78
Payroll as a proportion of income	86%	56%	58%
Achievement of funding target	111%	124%	99%
Diversity of income	24%	19%	17%
Operating surplus	-£2,121,000	-£947,000	-£861,000

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

ALF – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1998)

Payroll – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1995	1996	1997	1995	1996	1997
1	Expected completions	84	252	339	952	1,443	1,183
	Retention (%)	71	90*	81	78	83	72
	Achievement (%)	0	45	44	0	41	44
2	Expected completions	383	613	764	776	1,146	1,515
	Retention (%)	73	80	73	70	79	75
	Achievement (%)	0	53	54	0	59	36
3	Expected completions	–	436	395	–	1,211	1,333
	Retention (%)	–	76*	72	–	67	74
	Achievement (%)	n/a	54	48	n/a	56	45
4 or 5	Expected completions	–	17	24	–	452	374
	Retention (%)	–	100	100	–	94*	84*
	Achievement (%)	n/a	73	13	n/a	62	55
Short courses	Expected completions	93	129	334	1,514	3,293	5,139
	Retention (%)	99	98	93	97	97	95
	Achievement (%)	0	59	57	0	50	61
Unknown/unclassified	Expected completions	6	42	530	181	847	1,440
	Retention (%)	83	98*	83	82	95*	78
	Achievement (%)	0	83	15	0	62	48

Source: ISR

–ISR data not collected

*ISR data may not be reliable

n/a not applicable

FEFC Inspection Report 40/99

**Published by the
Further Education Funding Council**

Website <http://www.fefc.ac.uk>

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