Peterborough Regional College

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are set out in the Council Circular 93/28. During their inspection, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also use a five-point grading scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses. The descriptors for the grades are:

- *grade 1 – provision which has many strengths and very few weaknesses*

- *grade 2 – provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*

- *grade 3 – provision with a balance of strengths and weaknesses*

- *grade 4 – provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*

- *grade 5 – provision which has many weaknesses and very few strengths.*

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 98/95

PETERBOROUGH REGIONAL COLLEGE
EASTERN REGION
Inspected September 1994 - April 1995

Summary

Peterborough Regional College offers a wide range of vocational and general education courses to meet local needs. It has productive links with industry and a fruitful relationship with Greater Peterborough Training and Enterprise Council. The corporation is effective and a carefully considered and well sustained commitment to the management of change has been adopted. Student services staff provide effective support for students. Tracking of full-time students from application to enrolment is effective. Teaching and the promotion of learning are generally sound but the quality of the additional support in literacy and numeracy varies. There are some good results in GCE A level and GCSE examinations. Achievements in some vocational areas are low. The college has a clearly-defined policy on quality assurance which has yet to be fully implemented. There is a strong commitment to staff development and high levels of staff-development activity. Staff are appropriately qualified. The college should develop its marketing strategy and promote a clear corporate image; subject its strategic objectives to rigorous monitoring and review; improve learning and tutorial support for students; further develop its measurable quality standards; improve the quality of course monitoring and evaluation; raise retention rates and levels of attendance; and improve the quality of accommodation in some areas, including the huts.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision	Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision	2
Governance and management	3
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	3
Quality assurance	3
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science (including mathematics and computing)	2	Health and social care (including hair and beauty)	2
Construction	2	Art and design	2
Engineering	2	Humanities	3
Business and management studies	3	Basic education/students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3
Hotel and catering (including leisure and tourism	2		

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

1   Peterborough Regional College was inspected between September 1994 and April 1995. A team of seven inspectors spent a week in the college from 24 to 28 April 1995. A further 81 inspector days were used to inspect specialist aspects of college provision. Inspectors visited 323 classes involving approximately 2,890 students, and examined students' work. They also held discussions with governors, staff, students, local employers, parents and representatives from the Peterborough Council for Racial Equality, the Greater Peterborough Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and local schools.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2   Peterborough Regional College is a general further education college situated close to Peterborough city centre. The college was established in 1952 as a technical college to provide day-release training for employees from local engineering firms. The city has grown rapidly over the last decade and the college has widened its provision to meet new demands.

3   The college is the largest provider of further education in the north of Cambridgeshire. The nearest further education colleges are Huntingdon Regional College, 23 miles away, Isle College, Wisbech, 22 miles to the east and Stamford College, 14 miles to the north in Lincolnshire. The nearest centres for higher education are: the University of Cambridge; Anglia Polytechnic University, Cambridge; the University of Leicester; De Montfort University, Leicester; and Nene College, Northampton. Peterborough Regional College acts as a sponsor for the provision of adult education and franchises adult basic education to six local schools and to Peterborough College of Adult Education.

4   There are seven local education authority (LEA) secondary schools and six grant-maintained secondary schools in the Peterborough area. Ten of these have sixth forms and the remaining three will introduce sixth forms in September 1995. There are five schools for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Some of these offer sixth form provision. Although Marshfields, one of the five, offers its sixth form provision in conjunction with the college it has applied to run its own sixth form and now awaits a decision from the Secretary of State. In 1994, 67 per cent of 16 year olds in the Peterborough area stayed in full-time education.

5   Since 1990 there has been a 66 per cent increase in the college's full-time student enrolments. In 1993-94 alone there was a 13 per cent growth in full-time equivalent students. However, at the time of inspection, the college's data indicated that full-time student enrolments for 1994-95 had fallen by 9 per cent to a total of 10,691. The target for Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) funded growth is 11 per cent. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3. The college has 269 full-time equivalent teaching staff and 162

full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

6   The population of Cambridgeshire is about 645,000 including 153,160 resident in the Peterborough district. Minority ethnic groups make up 7.4 per cent of the population of Peterborough. The city has good road and rail links with London and the north east. East-west communications have improved recently with the opening of the A1-M1/M6 link road. The historical emphasis on engineering has been replaced by a more evenly spread pattern of employment. Major areas of employment include finance, insurance, business services, manufacturing, retail distribution, transport and communications. The unemployment rate for Peterborough is 8.9 per cent, which is just above the national average of 8.7 per cent (February 1995).

7   In its mission statement, the college aims to provide flexible, high-quality and accessible life-long learning opportunities appropriate to the needs of the community and to the economic development of the Greater Peterborough area.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8   The college offers a wide range of vocational courses which provides good opportunities for progression. There is a particularly wide range of courses in health and social care and in management and professional studies. The range of courses in catering and hospitality is narrower. Provision in less common areas includes courses in equine studies, preparation for the uniformed services, journalism, music and for trade union representatives.

9   Managers and staff have responded well to the national targets for education and training by developing a large number of courses leading to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs). The range of vocational provision includes NVQs from level 1 to level 5 and GNVQs at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. Twenty-two GNVQ programmes are offered in nine programme areas. In some areas, for example, in health and social care, GNVQs at advanced level are also offered part time. Several GNVQ programmes are organised to enable students to take additional studies, including some subjects at General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) or General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). In some areas of work, students can take relevant vocational qualifications in addition to their main studies. For example, the community sports leader award can be gained in addition to a GNVQ in leisure and tourism. The course timetables on some programmes are organised so that students may join the course in September, January or April.

10   There are several examples of good practice in assessing competence in the workplace, accrediting students' prior learning and introducing modular provision. The office technology section has a contract with the

Cambridge Curriculum Agency to provide an NVQ in business administration at level 2 and level 3 for clerical staff working in schools, which allows the accreditation of their prior learning. Some NVQ provision has been modularised, including courses in computer-aided design and electrical installation. There are over 300 students on these programmes and they are also offered opportunities to have their prior learning accredited. Computer-aided design students studying for City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) qualifications are encouraged to use resource-based learning materials which enable them to work independently with help from teachers.

11 The college offers 33 subjects at GCE A level. Thirty-six subjects will be offered from September 1995, including six modular courses. At present, there are also 33 subjects at GCSE. From September 1995 the full-time GCSE courses will be discontinued but over 30 GCSE subjects will continue to be offered part time. Most of the GCE A level and GCSE subjects can also be studied through open learning. At the time of the inspection over 270 students were enrolled on open-learning programmes.

12 There is a good range of courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These provide opportunities for students to progress to vocational courses. The college has developed a strong link with a local special school. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties are able to undertake a programme which involves two days' attendance at school, two days at college and one day of work experience. This gradual introduction to the college allows pupils to transfer to a full-time vocational course at the time most appropriate for them. The college has a substantial contract with the LEA to provide education for those pupils under the age of 16 who have been excluded from school. The course is designed to meet their individual needs. It includes teaching in basic skills and in vocational areas such as catering, hairdressing or motor vehicle maintenance.

13 The college has links with Nene College, De Montfort University and Sheffield University. There are first-year degree programmes in business studies, humanities and social sciences, a diploma in management studies, a higher national diploma in business and finance and engineering, and a certificate in education. There are also foundation-year degree courses in engineering and science. The college is working with the University of Sheffield to develop a degree programme in cultural studies which will be taught wholly at the college. These programmes provide good opportunities for college students to progress from further education courses to degree courses and other higher education courses within the same institution.

14 The college offers adult students a route to higher and vocational education through its programme of access courses. In 1993-94 over 300 students enrolled on this programme on a full-time or part-time basis. Many adults also enrol in classes to learn English as a foreign language. However, there are a number of students wishing to learn English for the

purpose of living and working in the United Kingdom who have been inappropriately enrolled in classes for students following English as a subject of study for examination.

15   There is some joint planning with Peterborough College of Adult Education but otherwise there is little overall planning of local adult education provision. The college is seeking to improve the situation by establishing franchise contracts with the six schools for whom it currently sponsors provision. There are also some curriculum links with local schools. Over 40 school pupils attend college on GNVQ and GCE A level courses and there are franchise arrangements with two local schools to provide GNVQ courses in the schools. Although there is intense competition between the college and local schools to recruit students, relationships are generally good.

16   There are also some co-operative ventures with other further education colleges. Working in partnership with three other further education colleges, Peterborough Regional College has recently been successful in securing funding to pilot the teaching of courses in remote locations, using video conferencing and other new technology.

17   The college has developed a number of European links. The academic board has set up a European subcommittee to further the implementation of college policies on Europe. These include the promotion of exchanges of college students with students in vocational colleges in other European countries and the teaching of modern languages. There are established exchange programmes with colleges in Peterborough's twinned cities in France, Germany, Italy and Spain. Students on several college courses also have opportunities for undertaking work experience in European countries. One initiative involves a link with Vinnetsa in the Ukraine. College staff have been to Vinnetsa to help set up a small business development unit and Ukrainian nationals have attended short business courses at the college.

18   There is no overall strategy for liaison with industry but in most areas of work the college's links with industry are effective and productive. Recently, college employer advisory panels have been replaced by a linked governor scheme. This arrangement enables business members of the corporation to provide teaching sections with relevant advice. Contact with industry also takes place through work experience, the delivery and assessment of NVQs, employers' representatives on a number of course teams, full-cost courses and consultancy work. In some curriculum areas employers have been involved in course design. For example, staff from social services have helped to design social care courses.

19   The college has a wide range of contracts and developments which result in the delivery of full-cost provision to industry. These include specially-devised programmes for the British Sugar Corporation and extensive language tuition for major employers including APV Baker, British Sugar, East Midlands Allied Press, Perkins Engines and Rockwell

International. The college has established a successful materials testing consultancy service. It receives regular work from up to 21 companies including Hawker Siddeley, Costain and Hotpoint. The college is also well advanced in negotiations with a Malaysian company to set up a craft skills training centre in Malaysia.

20   The college has developed a fruitful working relationship with Greater Peterborough TEC. The college is well represented on TEC groups including the strategic forum, the business forum and all relevant project steering groups. There are a wide range of TEC contracts and projects. These include a youth training contract for 15,000 trainee hours and projects for the development of the accreditation of students' prior learning and for the training of workplace assessors. A member of the college staff is seconded to the TEC for half a day a week to contribute to the development of the management charter initiative.

21   The college has not yet addressed satisfactorily the two key issues related to marketing: the unexpected decline in full-time student enrolments in 1994-95 and the promotion of a corporate image. Its marketing strategy fails to identify objectives and performance targets and market research is underdeveloped. However, there is an attractive full-time prospectus, the college staff attend careers evenings at local schools to promote the college's provision and overseas marketing has been successful in contributing to the recruitment of over 100 foreign students.

22   The college has a strong commitment to equal opportunities. There are policies on equal opportunities for employment matters and on harassment of staff and students which are supported by codes of practice. There are two separate equal opportunities committees: a curriculum and students' committee which reports to the academic board, and a staff committee reporting to the corporation. External representatives and college staff serve on both committees. Minority ethnic students comprise 8.7 per cent of the college's students, compared with 7.4 per cent of the population of Peterborough. Some publicity material is produced in minority ethnic languages and Urdu is offered at both GCE A level and GCSE. College courses show the marked imbalances of gender which are common to most further education institutions. For example, on the GNVQ information technology course there is one woman and 43 men.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

23   The board of the corporation has 14 members including the principal. Members have been carefully chosen to ensure that there is collectively a wide range of interests and expertise. There are nine independent members of whom five have business interests, which include company management, law, property, and computing. One of the members is the chief executive of Greater Peterborough TEC and one of the two co-opted members has detailed knowledge of local government. Two other members

have current experience of higher education. Community interests are represented by a member of the Peterborough Council for Racial Equality. The membership also includes a senior trade union official and a nominee of the staff. Two of the board members are women. At the time of the inspection, there was a vacancy for one member.

24　Members of the corporation work effectively with each other and with the college's senior managers. They see their role as agreeing strategies that enable the college to meet the needs of the community it serves whilst remaining financially sound. There are appropriate committees with agreed terms of reference which consider matters of detail and make recommendations to the board. They are: finance and general purposes, audit, building development, remuneration, staff and students, and continuing access and tertiary education. There is also a newly-established quality standards review committee. Most members of the corporation serve on at least two of the committees in addition to the main board. This overlapping membership of committees often enables the board to accept recommendations from its committees avoiding the need for it to debate every issue in detail. Nevertheless, committees do not deal with matters which cannot be delegated by the corporation and all matters of significance are always debated by the full corporation. Each member of the corporation is asked to take a particular interest in the work of one of the faculties or support services of the college so that they can develop a more detailed understanding of its work. This initiative is well received by college staff.

25　The principal and members of the corporation have taken a carefully-considered and sustained approach to maintaining the momentum of change. Senior managers have been acutely aware of the need to introduce new methods of working, to increase the emphasis given to quality and to change the college management structure so that the college is better able to serve its community. They have recognised that if changes are to be made, the understanding and support of the majority of the staff is required. However, there is a need to improve communication so that the vision of the college held by senior managers is shared and understood by all staff. For example, the determination to continue to provide the extensive range of courses and programmes and improve the college's image to meet increased competition from other post-16 providers have left some members of staff uncertain as to the future focus and direction of the college.

26　The corporation regularly receives a significant range of data on the performance of the college including examination results and teaching costs as a percentage of total costs. Such information helps the corporation to make judgements on the effectiveness of the college. However, there are no formal performance indicators and the corporation has not monitored its own performance.

27   There is a range of strategic and operational plans for the college as a whole, for each faculty and for each section. The second cycle of strategic planning since incorporation has benefited from a review of the first-year's achievements and from faculty and section plans to which staff have contributed. The objectives of these plans are consistent with those of the college. The operating statements for the college's strategic plan do not have explicit time scales for the achievement of objectives and there is no assignment of responsibility for ensuring that they are achieved. It is not clear how the objectives will be monitored and reviewed during the lifetime of the plan to ensure that the desired progress is made. The faculty and section plans are more specific in these respects.

28   The assessment of the risks identified in the strategic plan is not sufficiently rigorous. There is no numerical assessment of the impact of a range of external factors on student enrolments. For example, the effect of increased competition from local secondary schools and the transport policies of the LEA. The extent of the decline in full-time student enrolments in 1994-95 came as a surprise. As yet, little additional action has been taken to strengthen the college's marketing to influence next year's student enrolments.

29   There is an effective faculty and section management structure. It is clear and well understood by staff. There are five senior managers who report directly to the principal. Four of these, three assistant principals and the head of tertiary education, are responsible for the management of teaching and pastoral support. The fifth, the college secretary, has overall responsibility for the management of support functions. Assistant principals carry responsibility for a number of cross-college functions in addition to their roles as heads of faculty. Curriculum delivery is the responsibility of course teams, grouped into 16 teaching sections, each led by a section head who reports to one of the heads of faculty. Recently, the co-ordination of cross-college activities has been strengthened by the appointment of co-ordinators who manage programmes delivered across faculties. In most cases, the sections within the faculties work well together to share resources, to prioritise and allocate the purchase of new equipment and to share best practice.

30   The college has some effective arrangements to ensure that all staff are informed about college developments and have the opportunity to express their views. The main lines of communication are through the assistant principals, section managers and course leaders. There are frequent team meetings at most management levels. In some cases there are whole faculty staff meetings. The college produces a staff newsletter and some teaching sections provide weekly briefing notes. Subcommittees of the academic board enable wider debate of faculty and cross-college developments. The current committees are: the faculty boards and committees for curriculum, staff development, equal opportunities and

information technology. There is scope for improved communications and sharing of good practice between faculties.

31   Regular financial reports are made to the corporation who agree the annual budget and monitor financial forecasts throughout the year. The corporation's intention is, firstly, to ensure that expenditure is matched by income and, secondly, to build a financial reserve so that investments can be made to improve the infrastructure of the college. Budgets are partially devolved. Faculty heads receive a budget allocation for part-time staffing costs and for small items of equipment and materials. The equipment and materials budget allocated to faculties is further devolved to teaching sections. Monies for large items of equipment are bid for by sections and distributed according to priorities identified in the strategic plan. These bids undergo a rigorous system of scrutiny before approval. Budget allocations are clear and understood by budget holders.

32   The college's income and expenditure for the 16 month period to July 1994 are shown in figures 5 and 6. In 1994-95 the average level of funding is £18.52 per unit. This compares with the median for general further education and tertiary colleges of £18.17 per unit. The college does not calculate unit costs.

33   At present, the college's computerised management information system is not able to meet internal and external demands for information. The college has computerised systems to support financial, personnel, library and student-related administration. However, there is no sharing of data between the various functions. Managers do not have direct access to student-related information by computer terminal. There is some effective use of student information at college level to plan and review provision. For example, student applications, enrolments, retention rates and examination results are monitored and there is some effective monitoring of students' absences. Although staff requests for information are speedily met they do not automatically receive reports from the system. Staff have limited awareness of the data that are available and the reports which can be produced. The college has developed an information technology strategy to attempt to correct some of these deficiencies.

STUDENT' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

34   The college's access unit provides prospective students with comprehensive information on college courses and the availability of financial assistance. The staff are helpful and welcoming. Some of the information they provide is available in local community languages. There is a centralised admissions process for all full-time students which is well organised and effective. The progress of their applications is carefully tracked. Admissions staff provide initial guidance for prospective students who are unsure which course to choose. They are then referred to course tutors for advice on the specialist content of courses and for interview. The admissions unit communicates the result of the interview to the

prospective student and keeps track of the progress of their application.

35   In 1994, the college introduced arrangements to provide additional learning support in basic skills for all full-time students and some part-time students. These involve training tutors in the administration of the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit diagnostic tests. The completed test papers are marked by the basic education staff who invite students who require additional help for an interview. On the basis of an agreed action plan students are referred to workshops where tutors are available to help them. In practice, only half of the test papers were returned by the tutors to the basic education staff for marking and, in many cases, students' attendance at workshops has been poor. The present arrangements are not working satisfactorily.

36   The college is developing an induction framework. Although, the quality of existing arrangements for induction is uneven across the college, there is some good practice. For example, in health and social care, there is a range of activities, including quizzes, treasure hunts and other imaginative small group activities which help to develop students' self-confidence while introducing them to information on the college and their courses. Students receive course handbooks which give them useful introductions to their courses. Information on the facilities and services available in the college is provided in a number of individual leaflets, but some of these offer only brief details. Information on the range of student support services is not well publicised. Induction for part-time students is less effective than that for full-time students.

37   The international students' admissions staff help overseas students settle into their courses and adjust to their unfamiliar surroundings. The staff liaise with students prior to their arrival in this country, meet them on arrival and introduce them to their temporary homes. Students attend a specially-designed induction programme.

38   In 1995, the college introduced a policy on the accreditation of students' prior learning. Procedures have been developed in business administration and on some other courses, but the opportunity to gain recognition of prior achievement is not available in all curriculum areas and students' awareness of it is limited.

39   Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive effective pre-entry guidance and support during their studies.   There is comprehensive assessment of those known to have learning difficulties and/or disabilities before they enrol on a college course.   Detailed discussions are held with schools, parents and other agencies. Students receive a good introduction to their course and appropriate levels of specialist support while they are on it.

40   Standards of tutorial support for students on courses are uneven. The college has no tutorial policy or guidance for tutors on the management of tutorial time. On some courses, the identified tutorial period is only a

brief meeting between students and their tutor and is concerned almost exclusively with administrative matters. In other courses, the tutor negotiates a tutorial programme with the students which may include the development of group work skills, study skills or individual tasks. There is limited implementation of the recently-introduced college policy on records of achievement. On the GCE A level programme full-time students are given the opportunity to update their records of achievement four times a year. On other courses, records of achievement are not always maintained.

41　The college is aware that students' attendance on some courses is poor. However, it does not have common procedures for monitoring and following up poor absence and persistent lateness. Registers are collected daily but absences are not routinely reported to course tutors or to section heads.

42　Students value the support they receive from student services staff. The services provided by staff include help with accommodation, counselling, and emergency health treatment. Staff respond well to requests for help from individual students. The nursing staff give emergency treatment where required and are also increasingly involved with health promotion programmes in such areas as weight control, smoking and HIV/AIDS. Two officers from the local careers service each work for one day a week in the student services suite and provide individual careers guidance interviews. They are also asked to give more general careers talks to groups of students but owing to the limited amount of time that they have available they are unable to meet the demand fully. There is no other specialist careers guidance for students. The head of student services gives talks to students on the process of applying for higher education.

43　A student liaison officer employed by the college supports the students' union. His help is valued by students' representatives. The students' union committee seeks to support students' activities and to represent students' views within the college. However, the range and quality of recreational and social activities are uneven. Sporting facilities are good and there is a wide range of sporting activities. There are few other clubs and societies. Students are represented on the quality standards review committee and on the staff and students committee.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

44　In 59 per cent of teaching and learning sessions the strengths outweighed the weaknesses. In 9 per cent the weaknesses outweighed the strengths. The grades given to the teaching sessions inspected are shown below.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	8	22	10	7	0	47
GCSE	2	11	4	4	0	21
GNVQ	7	25	21	7	0	60
NVQ	6	22	10	0	0	38
Access	1	8	4	3	0	16
BTEC	0	14	8	2	0	24
Other vocational	13	22	17	3	0	55
SLDD/basic education	3	11	13	2	1	30
Higher education	4	4	3	0	0	11
Other	2	6	12	1	0	21
Total	**46**	**145**	**102**	**29**	**1**	**323**

46   In some of the good lessons in mathematics and information technology, students were well motivated and engaged in an interesting range of activities. Teachers questioned students frequently and helped them to develop their understanding. Generally, students responded well. In a good computing practical session, second-year BTEC national diploma students were working on individual projects based on real problems which students could describe clearly and with understanding. In some of the weaker sessions, students were inattentive and the pace of the work was too slow. In one practical session, several students sat and chatted, having finished all the work that had been set for them.

47   Science staff displayed a sound knowledge of their subject and teaching was competent. Learning programmes were well planned, lessons were effectively organised and students experienced a variety of methods of working. Homework was set regularly and marked promptly. Teachers maintained records of students' achievements. There was a good rapport between students and their teachers who were supportive and encouraging. Work was related to the students' experiences wherever possible. Useful handouts were often provided for summary notes, practice exercises or trial examination questions. Practical sessions were well organised and there was effective support from technicians. In some classes, however, students spent too much time copying from the board, or questions were rarely addressed to particular individuals. There was little evidence of stimulating learning material in laboratories and no display of students' work. There was insufficient use of information technology in the teaching of science.

48   Construction teachers displayed sound knowledge and experience of industry but the quality of teaching varied considerably. Some lessons were well organised and effective and there were good working relationships between teachers and students. However, in a significant

minority of lessons, teachers appeared unenthusiastic, the work was presented in a dull manner, and students were not provided with adequate support materials. In a few instances, teachers arrived late for their classes. On NVQ programmes, the tracking of students achievements was comprehensive and thorough. Workshops were provided with industrially-relevant training and assessment facilities, and students' progress charts were openly displayed. Some project assignment work was good, but generally there was insufficient attention to core skills and the knowledge required to underpin activities. Assessment procedures are consistent and standards are appropriately aligned with the requirements of the external bodies, such as BTEC and the Construction Industry Training Board.

49   In engineering, a good portfolio of courses comprises programmes from BTEC first awards to higher national diploma. Lessons were generally well planned. Many staff prepared detailed schemes of work which helped to ensure that programmes were covered in the time available. Mature students were catered for in terms of subjects, levels and modes of attendance and opportunities for open learning. Relationships between students and staff were good and students appeared to enjoy their courses. Most projects and assignments were designed to promote effective acquisition of subject knowledge and skills and to encourage the development of core skills including planning, problem solving and communication. However, students did not receive enough practical work and the written briefs were sometimes unclear. Marking schemes were often not provided and some teachers failed to provide adequate feedback to students on their performance in assignments. Course documentation, and in particular student guides and assessment schedules for the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) electrical installation programme, either do not exist or are ineffective.

50   Business studies staff, working as a team, produced a range of useful learning materials. Schemes of work and lesson plans ensured that students were set appropriately challenging tasks and understood the context in which they were working. Students were encouraged to work on their own and teachers supported this method of working by providing them with appropriate materials, demanding high standards and giving advice where required. Some of the coursework was innovative and exciting. Courses were designed to develop a range of core skills and study skills including the use of the library and central learning-resources area. There were appropriate standards of assessment. Assessment procedures met NVQ requirements and the regulations of the examination boards. The small size of some classes meant that some of them had to be merged.

51   There were good schemes of work for leisure and tourism courses. Lessons were well planned and there was effective use of a range of learning resources. Teachers were knowledgeable in their subjects but their expectations of advanced level students were too low and in several lessons the work was not demanding enough. Some classes were held in

inappropriate accommodation and this adversely affected the quality of teaching and learning.

52   In health and caring courses, teaching was well structured and learning objectives were clear. Systematic schemes of work and lesson plans provide clear links between teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers were well informed. The material used in lessons was up to date. There was effective use of the whiteboard and video and students were provided with good-quality handouts. The variety of learning activities helped to sustain students' motivation during long sessions. Students worked well in small groups, particularly where the tasks required of them were well defined. Good links were made between theory and practice and teachers were adept at persuading students to make use of the experience they had gained in their work placements.

53   In art, design and the performing arts, the relationships between staff and students were generally good. Programmes were well balanced and met the objectives of syllabuses. Additional units on the GNVQ programmes were introduced at a stage which was inappropriate for the development of students' skills. Most lessons were well planned and effectively delivered. In a few sessions, the work was not demanding enough for the students. Some sessions took place in poor accommodation. For example, the workbenches in a studio designed for three-dimensional work were unsuitable for a drawing class which was held there and the teacher was unable to set appropriate professional standards.

54   Some humanities courses, for example English and foreign languages courses, were well planned and schemes of work were comprehensive and detailed. Schemes of work in other subjects were less well developed, particularly in respect of learning methods. Lesson planning also varied in quality. Teacher education classes were properly prepared and had precise learning objectives. Some social science lessons were well organised and teachers' notes were of good quality; others were planned less effectively. The working relationships between most staff and students in most humanities lessons were good. Teachers valued students' opinions. This was a particular strength in sociology, psychology and law. In one English literature class, students worked with great enthusiasm in groups, discussing the qualities of a central character and providing evidence based on a sound knowledge of the text. Islamic studies students were set learning targets and encouraged to make links with their previous work, and their progress was carefully monitored. However, in many humanities classes the pace of work was too slow and activities were not intellectually demanding enough for the students. Aimless and ineffective discussion, the use of anecdotal evidence and excessive dictation were too prevalent. In some language lessons there was a heavy emphasis on grammatical work and not enough opportunity for students to interact and develop their communication skills. Across humanities subjects, there were insufficient attempts to encourage students to develop the ability to work

on their own. In many instances, humanities students were failing to develop adequate higher level skills, such as evaluation and interpretation, and this was reflected in their coursework and ultimately in their examination results. The work set for humanities students was of an appropriate standard but the quality of marking varied. Languages and English work was carefully marked and there were constructive comments from teachers to help students improve. In a number of other subjects the marking was less helpful to students. The marking of GCE A level sociology is not explicitly related to the skills assessed in the final examination. In teacher education the summative profile on students is too limited in scope.

55   The teaching of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was undertaken with enthusiasm and enterprise and there were good relationships between teachers, care assistants and students. Lessons were purposeful and the approaches used by teachers enable students to feel confident about their ability to succeed. In basic and adult education the staff operated to schemes of work in which aims and objectives were clear and the individual needs of students were taken into account. However, there was some inconsistency in record keeping, individual action planning and marking. Most lessons contained a mix of individual and group work, and the work was appropriately demanding for students. In a session for English for speakers of other languages, the teacher used oral presentations to improve students' grammatical structure and pronunciation, to build self-confidence and to get them to consider body language. This was done in a way which addressed individuals' learning needs and which allowed the students to participate at their own level.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

56   Engineering students demonstrated good study skills working both individually and in groups, although the communication skills of a significant minority were weak. Mature students attending evening or day classes or those who follow open-learning programmes are supportive of each other and are highly motivated. Open-learning students enrolled on the BTEC national certificate in electrical engineering have highly-disciplined attitudes to study. In business studies, students are developing an understanding of the requirements of competence-based courses, but some of their work is poorly presented. Assignments and projects in health and care, in contrast, are well presented. Core skills for the intermediate GNVQ programme in leisure and tourism are insufficiently integrated with vocational aspects of the work. In art and design these skills form an integral part of assignment work, although information technology and numeracy are taught separately. In GNVQ construction, students lacked confidence in using information technology; only two made effective use of the available resources to complete their assignments.

57   Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well motivated and enthusiastic. They work for approved qualifications, have

their progress regularly monitored and achieve timely moves to mainstream classes. Work placements provide them with valuable experience.

58   Science students carry out their practical work competently and safely. They work co-operatively with the teacher and with other students and maintain accurate notes and diagrams. Some excellent work was produced by art foundation students, but on other art and design courses there was little evidence of broad-ranging work in a variety of media and materials and in many cases, students' drawing ability was poor. The work carried out in the engineering workshop was of a high standard. However, in some areas of engineering, the amount of laboratory work was too low. Safety standards in construction were generally high. The exception involved students working in a steel-framed structure built originally as a covered area for large-scale project work. It included a mezzanine storage area built on top of training cubicles which had restricted access. The accommodation was cramped and untidy and there were safety hazards caused by protruding nails in waste timber which was left lying around.

59   Because there was some evidence that staff industrial action may have had an adverse effect on student attendance, punctuality and behaviour during the specialist inspections, a more detailed study of registers was made during the team inspection week. In an analysis of the percentage attendance of each teaching group during the team week, figures varied from 64 per cent to 100 per cent attendance. The percentage attendance of individual students throughout the first term or throughout the whole course was also analysed. The lowest attendance figure for a single student was 52 per cent, though the majority of students attended between 80 per cent and 90 per cent of their classes. In one department during the autumn term, registers showed that only 29 students out of 258 had recorded 100 per cent attendance. During the specialist inspection, students' timekeeping, attendance and, in a few instances, classroom behaviour required attention. In mathematics and in engineering, several sessions had relatively high numbers of absences or students arriving late. Some students arriving late for a business studies class were noisy and disruptive. In art and design, many students had poor records of attendance and were not called to account for this.

60   In 1993-94, GCE A level examinations candidates taking business studies, scientific and mathematical subjects performed better than their counterparts studying humanities subjects. Students aged 16-18 entered for GCE A level examinations in 1993-94 scored, on average, 3.8 points per entry (where A=10, E=2). This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education. College figures show that all students who entered for GCE A level biology and all full-time history students passed their examination. All candidates were similarly successful in GCE A level

mathematics, applied mathematics and statistics, and pure and applied mathematics, though the number of candidates was small. Full-time students aged under 19 achieved 100 per cent pass rates in GCE A level environmental science, physics and pure mathematics and in GCE AS mathematics. Pass rates in all modes of study were above the national average for sector colleges other than sixth form colleges in GCE A level business studies, environmental science, fine art (painting), law, physics, pure mathematics and statistics, psychology and Urdu and in the part-time mode in French. Students under 19 years of age achieved pass rates higher than the national average in English language and English literature. In a number of subjects where pass rates were high the number of higher grades achieved was lower than the average nationally. Full-time students achieved below national average GCE A level pass rates in French. Part-time students achieved below average GCE A level pass rates in human biology and sociology.

61 The proportion of passes at grades A-C in GCSE examinations is low in the majority of subjects. No full-time students achieved grades A-C in art and design (drawing and painting), chemistry, geography or history. Small numbers of part-time students did better in some of these subjects, for example in chemistry and history. Part-time students did well in English literature, French, psychology, sociology, and Spanish and there were some good results from those studying Urdu or Bengali. In art and design (photography), human biology and mathematics, GCSE pass rates were poor.

62 Significant numbers of GCSE and GCE A level students fail to complete their courses. For example, less than 75 per cent of students who initially enrolled on the daytime part-time human biology course completed it. There are also relatively high withdrawal rates on some computing courses. Student retention rates on GCE A level and GCSE photography courses are between 50 and 55 per cent this academic year. When taken as a percentage of those who initially enrol, ultimate examination success rates in GCE A level English language, English literature, psychology and sociology are all at 50 per cent or below.

63 Completion rates on vocational programmes are also variable. There are poor retention rates on some two-year programmes in construction. About 50 per cent of full-time electrical engineering students who started courses in 1992-93 completed their target award. On most full-time engineering courses, the proportion of students who do not complete their course or who fail to achieve an award is high. In contrast, 30 out of 33 students on the BTEC higher national certificate in engineering gained the full award in 1994 and retention rates and examination results are generally good for part-time courses in engineering. On many business studies courses, the continuation rates from year one to year two of a programme and overall retention rates are low. Course completion rates for GNVQ leisure and tourism students have fluctuated over the last two years between 66 per cent for part-time advanced students and 87 per

cent for full-time intermediate students. Completion rates for BTEC and National Nursery Examinations Board (NNEB) programmes in health and social care courses are generally at or above national averages. In art and design, retention rates for BTEC programmes are significantly better than those for GCE A level and GCSE. BTEC foundation art has a retention rate of 80 per cent, whilst in GNVQ programmes 69 per cent complete the intermediate programme and 85 per cent the advanced.

64   Eighty-four per cent of students in their final year of study on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education's 1994 performance tables were successful. This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. All students achieved their target qualification on the BTEC national diploma in media studies, social care and nursery nursing in 1994. In BTEC foundation and in BTEC first and national diplomas in art and design, target qualifications were achieved by between 80 per cent and 89 per cent of candidates. In health and social care courses the percentage of students sitting their examinations who were successful ranged from 75 per cent to 100 per cent. In business studies, examination results are near or slightly above national averages. The BTEC national diploma in business and finance recorded an 86 per cent pass rate in 1994. All 41 students who entered the National Examining Board of Supervisory Management diploma and certificate examinations passed. Students entered for the RSA Examinations Board certificate in office technology were successful, with 12 obtaining the full diploma and one achieving 11 units. Of nine students who completed the NVQ level 2 in business administration, two gained a full award and five students obtained unit accreditation. In contrast, only two students at NVQ level 1 gained a full diploma and seven obtained unit accreditation.

65   Destinations of students are monitored efficiently at course and college level. Course teams analyse the data by age, gender and ethnic background of students, though targets are not set. There were fewer than 15 per cent of unknown destinations for the 1993-94 cohort of full-time students leaving college. Twenty-four per cent went on to higher education and a further 36 per cent continued in full-time or part-time further education or training. Slightly over 17 per cent went directly into employment, including a small number into self-employment.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

66   The college's self-assessment report is concise and follows the format of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. It gives the background to the college's history and the industrial and social context of the locality. Evidence presented in the report is supported by references to both college and external documents. There are no judgements in the self-assessment report that are in conflict with the findings of the inspection team, but some strengths are neglected and not all the weaknesses identified by inspectors are included.

67   A quality policy statement and developmental plan were formulated in August 1993, but systems and procedures are not yet fully established. There is also a plan to produce manuals of standards and procedures but work on these has just begun. A quality manager was appointed in May 1994 and procedures have been developed with the intention of providing a uniform approach to quality assurance. The co-ordination of processes for the internal verification of NVQ and GNVQ programmes has started but needs further development. At the time of inspection, an effective strategy was emerging. The college youth training managing agency has achieved the European quality standard ISO 9002.

68   Course review and evaluation are central to the quality system and were applied to all full-time courses in 1994. The reviews are based on standardised documentation, and use performance indicators, the outcomes of a student questionnaire, minutes of course team meetings and external moderators' reports. The review process leads to an action plan. Some course teams produced realistic action plans which were effectively implemented. Other reviews were superficial and little action resulted. Processes were not implemented consistently throughout the college in 1994, and some part-time courses were not reviewed. The review mechanisms are less effective in subject-based programmes such as GCE A level and GCSE. The course review and evaluation process is now being reviewed. New procedures are being introduced which will establish timetables for action throughout the year and provide audits of the implementation of action plans.

69   The students' evaluation of college provision is assessed through the use of a questionnaire. In 1994, 50 per cent of full-time courses and less than 10 per cent of part-time courses were sampled. Responses were received from 30 per cent of the students involved. Questionnaires have now been revised so that they focus more on particular issues. For example, in October 1994 a sample of students was asked questions about admissions interviews and induction. There is no systematic collection of the opinions of employers and parents.

70   Performance indicators used in course reviews include admissions, course completion, progression and examination results. For the admissions process, there are quality standards and procedures which are closely monitored, but in many curriculum areas the process of quality monitoring is less well developed. Course and departmental teams meet regularly and discuss quality issues but they need to undertake further work on quality improvement targets, standards, action plans, and on procedures for monitoring and evaluation. There is no formal system for the evaluation of teachers' performance by managers. However, the college has recently introduced a useful voluntary scheme in which teachers' classroom performance is appraised by their peers. It has been taken up by a large proportion of the staff in three departments.

71   The college is making good progress towards achieving Investors in

People status. Staff-development policy and procedures are comprehensive and apply to all teachers and support staff. Priority areas for training are defined and activities are monitored by a staffing and curriculum group involving representatives from each department. There is a well-planned staff induction programme and a system of individual staff reviews which identifies training needs. Recent staff-development activities have included Training and Development Lead Body training, customer-care training for service team leaders, computer training for art and design staff, a one-day classroom management course and a governor training day. Staff are expected to disseminate information to colleagues following a training event. Some evaluation reports are rather superficial but an improved system of evaluation has been recently introduced which involves line managers in discussion of the outcomes of staff training. Resources allocated to staff development are sufficient to meet currently identified needs and the training budget is well managed. Records of staff training needs, activities and evaluation are held manually but there are plans to transfer the data onto a computer. The college is piloting a staff-appraisal scheme. A comprehensive system of appraisal has yet to be established.

72 The college has a leaflet setting out, in clear statements, charter commitments for students. The college charter has a low profile. Many students are not aware of its contents. The college charter does not meet all the requirements of the national further education charter. For example, there are no specified commitments for employers. However, the college is delivering commitments beyond those explicitly stated in the college charter. Charter standards are not stated in quantitative terms and there is only limited monitoring of the delivery of all charter commitments. The college has a student grievance procedure but it is not well publicised and there is no central monitoring of students' complaints. The college is aware of current deficiencies and a working group has been established to develop the existing charter and accompanying procedures for monitoring its commitments.

RESOURCES

Staffing

73 The numbers of teachers and support staff are sufficient to deliver the courses which the college offers. There is an awareness among staff of the strategic issues facing both the college and the sector. Morale is generally high. Staff are enthusiastic about their subjects and work together well in departmental teams, although there is little sharing of practice across departments. Staff are well deployed. There is good forward planning for contracting part-time staff. This includes a formal registration process.

74 Teachers are generally well qualified. Almost all full-time teachers have a teaching qualification, and half the remainder are working towards one. Most part-time teaching staff also have a teaching qualification, and

are appropriately qualified. With some exceptions full-time teachers have appropriate, up-to-date experience of industry and commerce. The college provides opportunities for teachers to update their experience, as required. Technician staff are well qualified or are working towards industrially-relevant qualifications. There is a shortage of technician support in a few areas of work. Otherwise, the number of support staff is adequate. Administrative support is good.

Equipment/learning resources

75   The quantity and condition of most general and specialist equipment are acceptable and the level of classroom equipment is good. Most teaching rooms have basic items such as overhead projectors, whiteboards and window blinds. Some of the older audio-visual equipment is unreliable and the standard of language laboratory equipment is poor. Staff are supported by comprehensive and efficient reprographic services. There is good, well-used specialist equipment for computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing facilities in engineering. There is a rolling programme for the systematic replacement of equipment in many, but not all, programme areas. Strenuous efforts are made to obtain value for money through standardised purchases, contracts and tight specifications, but there is some confusion of responsibility for specifications. Materials required by students, including textbooks, are often supplied by the college or are available at subsidised rates.

76   The purchase of information technology equipment takes good account of curricular needs. There are adequate numbers of computer workstations and work is continuing to install fibre-optic cabling to provide networking facilities throughout the main campus. More than half the computers are able to run the latest windows-based software and efforts have been made to standardise applications. Choice of software is linked to local needs. There are extensive computer facilities for a variety of purposes, including resource-based learning, computer-aided design and adjacent computer-numeric controlled machines. In a few departments, information technology facilities remain poor.

77   The library is adequately funded and resources are well used. There is a good stock of periodicals, a videotape collection, and a growing number of project files. Students increasingly use compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases. There is a poor range of reading materials for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and adult basic education. The art bookstock is poor and many of the English texts are out of date. Social science and teacher education students have access to a good library collection. A computerised catalogue is not yet available; suitable equipment has been purchased and work has started in entering information. Some departments hold good stocks of books and related learning resources but there is no centralised record of these.

Accommodation

78   The design of the older buildings on the main site makes efficient use of space difficult. This is also true of the Padiham site. Signs around the sites and in buildings are of poor quality. There is a large maintenance backlog. One building was re-roofed recently because of its unsafe structure and other major structural problems are being addressed as finance permits. In the older buildings, rooms are of an inappropriate size, or are inconveniently located. The computer-aided technology centre and the newly-furnished science laboratories provide high-standard accommodation, but health care accommodation is bare, dispiriting and suffers from poor acoustics. Most classrooms and corridors have little in the way of display. The library does not provide a stimulating learning atmosphere. Communal areas such as the refectory and student common room are adequate. Much furniture is of poor quality.

79   Access for students with restricted mobility is generally poor, although the introduction of ramps has brought some improvement. One building has a suitable passenger lift, but first-floor access to other buildings by a linking bridge is denied to students. The new science laboratories have no access for wheelchair users. Similar limitations apply to the annexe buildings. Recent fire doors and some narrow corridors and doorways restrict access for students with restricted mobility.

80   There are computerised systems for tracking accommodation defects, and formal procedures for reporting these. The main site has been extensively surveyed. Action plans are being systematically implemented. A few areas have so far been fully refurbished and these provide accommodation of a high standard. Good use is being made of the opportunities which refurbishment offers to install computer network cabling and to undertake related works. Although energy efficiencies are difficult to achieve, a longer-term view of energy conservation is being taken and savings are already being effected. The college tries to obtain value for money by maintaining an approved list of local contractors who work to well-defined performance criteria. Site security is effective.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

81   The college is making progress towards achieving its mission. Its strengths are:

•   the wide range of courses and subjects and good opportunities for progression

•   good links with schools, higher education and the community

•   responsiveness to the needs of industry and commerce

•   an energetic and effective governing body

•   a well-established strategic planning cycle

•   sound pastoral support and effective advice and guidance on careers

•   enthusiastic, well-qualified staff, who have good working relationships with their students

•   good GCE A level results in some subjects

•   appropriate levels of general and specialist equipment.

82   In order to make further progress, the college should:

- develop further the accreditation of students' previous achievements on entry to the college
- undertake systematic diagnosis of students' abilities in literacy and numeracy
- improve retention rates
- raise levels of performance in GCSE examinations
- further develop the quality assurance system
- ensure that the course review and evaluation procedures are operated consistently
- continue to improve the quality of accommodation.

FIGURES

Note: the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.

Figure 1

Burnley College: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

Figure 2

Burnley College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)

Figure 3 27

Burnley College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994–95)

Figure 4

Burnley College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994–95)

Figure 5

Burnley College: income (for 16 months to July 1994)

Figure 6

Burnley College: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)