Stanmore College

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE

1997-98

Contents

Grade Descriptors

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

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

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision, curriculum areas and lesson observations, for colleges inspected during 1996-97, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	9	59	30	2	–
Cross-college provision	18	51	27	4	–
Lesson observations	19	42	31	7	1

Source: Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report. Grades were awarded using the guidelines in Council Circular 93/28, Assessing Achievement.
Sample size: 122 college inspections

Retention and Pass Rates

Where data on students' achievements appear in tables, levels of achievement are shown in two ways:
- as a retention rate, which is the proportion of students who completed a course in relation to the number enrolled on 1 November in the first year of the course
- as a pass rate, which is the proportion of students which passed examinations in relation to the number entered. Pass rates for GCE A level are quoted for grades A to E unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for GCSE courses are quoted for grade C or above unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for vocational and professional awards are for successful completion of the full award.

Summary

Stanmore College

Greater London Region

Inspected May 1998

Stanmore College, a tertiary college in north-west London, produced a self-assessment report which had been prepared as part of an established course review and evaluation process. Its judgements were supported by evidence and inspectors agreed overall with these. The college has recently introduced a system of lesson observation as part of its self-assessment process. However, the report failed to emphasise some strengths and understated some weaknesses. Since the last inspection, the college has improved significantly its provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The college offers courses in nine out of the FEFC's 10 programme areas. Provision in four of these programme areas was inspected, together with aspects of cross-college provision. The college offers a variety of courses to meet local needs and has increased the range of courses for adults. Teaching is generally good but it is less than satisfactory in a few areas. The proportion of lessons graded good or outstanding by inspectors was approximately the same as the previous inspection. However, the proportion of lessons considered less than satisfactory rose. Students benefit from effective advice and guidance, and well-organised enrolment and induction procedures. There have been improvements in general resources since the last inspection. The college's quality assurance system has been revised recently and is not yet fully established. Governors have an appropriate range of expertise and work well with senior managers. The college is managed effectively and there are good communications between managers and other staff. Changes to the management structure are proving effective. The college should address: poor achievements by students on some courses; some weaknesses in teaching and learning; the uneven quality of tutorials; poor attendance and lack of punctuality by students on some courses; the lack of rigour in course reviews; low attendance by governors at corporation meetings; and weaknesses in curriculum management.

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

Curriculum area	Grade
Computing and mathematics	3
Business	2
English and social sciences	2
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2

Cross-college provision	Grade
Support for students	2
General resources	2
Quality assurance	3
Governance	2
Management	2

The College and its Mission

1   Stanmore College in the north-west London Borough of Harrow was established as a tertiary college in 1987. The college operates mainly on a single site but uses rented accommodation, mostly in local schools, to deliver its part-time, adult education programme. The college's business development unit, which provides full-cost courses, is housed in the centre of Stanmore, a quarter of a mile from the main campus.

2   The college draws students from a densely-populated, multicultural area. The full-time student population has a higher proportion of students from minority ethnic groups than the population of Harrow as a whole. The local economy is diverse; 80 per cent of enterprises in the borough have fewer than 10 employees. The unemployment rate in Brent and Harrow has been falling since 1993 and is currently 6 per cent. There are less than 1,200 young people eligible for the New Deal programme.

3   The mission of the college is, 'to provide high-quality education and training through an innovative curriculum delivered within a supportive environment'. Since the last inspection, the college has been reorganised to provide a clearer focus for the needs of students. Programmes are provided through three centres which cater for the needs of three different groups of clients, namely the sixth form centre for full-time 16 to 19 school-leavers, the adult and continuing education centre for part-time adult students and the professional development centre for individuals and companies seeking professional qualifications. The business development unit was established in 1991 and continues to expand.

4   The college, along with two other tertiary colleges and a Roman Catholic sixth form college, provides post-16 education for students from Harrow and a wide area beyond. It attracts 60 per cent of its full-time students from Brent, Barnet and Hertfordshire. The staying-on rate for pupils in Harrow is one of the highest in the country; currently around 80 per cent. The college has effective links with the nearest secondary school, Park High School. These links have led to joint activities in evaluating teaching and learning, and in curriculum management. These activities are supported by a joint staff development programme.

5   The college and the high school are part of a collaborative group which includes all the Harrow high schools and colleges. Collaboration between the schools and colleges has led to harmonisation of post-16 progression routes, adult education, arrangements for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and more constructive marketing of post-16 opportunities in the borough. Stanmore College played a leading role in the establishment of the North West London Colleges Consortium, originally funded through the Competitiveness Fund.

Context

The Inspection

6   The college was inspected during the week beginning 11 May 1998. In planning and carrying out the inspection, the team studied the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other divisions of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The college's data on students' achievements for the three years 1995 to 1997 were checked against class registers and results issued by examining bodies. The college was notified of the sample of its provision to be inspected about two months before the inspection. The inspection was carried out by nine inspectors and an auditor working in the college for a total of 37 days. Inspectors observed 55 lessons, examined students' work and a variety of documents, and held meetings with governors, managers, teachers, support staff and students.

7   Of the lessons inspected, 56 per cent were judged to be good or outstanding, and 18 per cent were less than satisfactory. These figures are below the average of 61 and 8 per cent, respectively, for all colleges inspected in 1996-97, according to *Quality and Standards in* *Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*. The average level of attendance in the lessons inspected was 76 per cent. The following table shows the grades awarded to the lessons inspected.

Lessons*: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	3	4	5	4	0	16
GCSE	0	3	2	0	0	5
GNVQ	4	6	6	2	0	18
Other vocational	2	4	1	2	0	9
Basic education	1	4	0	2	0	7
Total	10	21	14	10	0	55

includes eight tutorials

Computing and Mathematics

Grade 3

8   Inspectors observed 11 lessons covering general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) courses, the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) advanced course in information technology (IT) and the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) course in mathematics. The college's self-assessment report identified the key strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Inspectors concluded that the report overemphasised the strengths of the retention and achievement rates on GCE A level courses.

Key strengths
- good range of part-time courses in computing and IT
- effective lesson management by teachers
- stimulating and challenging project work on the GNVQ advanced course in IT
- well-planned, effective work placements for students
- good pass rates on GNVQ courses in IT

Weaknesses
- some inadequate schemes of work and lesson planning
- the inconsistent approach to the management and delivery of courses
- poor use of visual aids in teaching
- some low pass and retention rates
- low attendance on many courses

9   Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report's identification of the range of computing and mathematics courses, and the progression of many students to other courses within the college, to higher education or employment, as

strengths. Students on full-time vocational computing courses participate in well-organised and vocationally-relevant work placements.

10   The curriculum is well managed and lesson planning is satisfactory. Students are informed about course content and assessment. Assignments and assessments are varied and set at an appropriate level. The self-assessment report did not identify as a weakness the variable quality of schemes of work and lesson planning or the lack of consistency in course documentation across the programme area. For example, while there are opportunities for staff to meet informally, there are few records of course team meetings.

11   Most teaching is satisfactory and objectives are clearly established at the start of most lessons. Many students spoke positively about their studies. IT project work on the GNVQ advanced IT course stimulated the students and extended their knowledge and skills. In one lesson, students set up and operated a helpdesk to support the resource centre. In another GNVQ advanced lesson, groups of students were successfully building and programming process control models. A few lessons in the curriculum area were not well planned. The college has actively promoted and developed the use of IT in the teaching of mathematics.

12   Portfolios of students' work are well presented and demonstrate good coverage of the work required by the performance criteria. There are arrangements for identifying students' additional learning needs in mathematics when they join the college. The self-assessment report identified poor retention on some courses. Retention rates are low on GCSE and GCE A level mathematics courses, on the GCE A level computer studies course and on some part-time computing courses. The average level of attendance for the classes observed was low at 64 per cent. The pass rate in GCSE mathematics is above the national average. Some good pass rates are achieved by students

on GNVQ IT courses. GCE A level mathematics and computer studies pass rates are below the national average.

13   Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced although in a few lessons they use poor-quality visual aids. Most of the teaching takes place in rooms which are bright and spacious. Computer hardware and software is generally appropriate and up to date. The self-assessment report recognised the need to provide students with experience in using modern, industrial-standard software and hardware and some improvements have been made.

Examples of students' achievements in computing and mathematics, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level computer studies	Retention (%) Pass rate (%)	67 89	66 43	70 50
GCE A level pure mathematics and statistics	Retention (%) Pass rate (%)	53 61	67 48	69 53
GNVQ advanced IT	Retention (%) Pass rate (%)	* *	* *	70 57
GCSE mathematics	Retention (%) Pass rate (%)	65 29	56 36	68 33
GNVQ intermediate IT	Retention (%) Pass rate (%)	75 41	78 39	69 45
Other vocational courses (C&G)	Retention (%) Pass rate (%)	92 79	55 69	57 70

Source: college data
*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Business

Grade 2

14   Inspectors observed 11 lessons, covering full-time and part-time courses in accounting, business studies and finance. Inspectors agreed generally with the judgements in the self-assessment report, though they did not agree with the college on some matters of detail.

Key strengths

- carefully-planned and well-managed courses
- helpful marking of students' work
- clear strategies for checking what students have learnt
- high standard of students' work
- good pass rates, retention rates and progression to further and higher education

Weaknesses

- inadequate development of students' numerical skills
- narrow range of teaching methods in a few lessons

15   Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that business courses are well organised and managed. There are good schemes of work, lessons are generally well planned and assessment is thorough and effective. GNVQ courses are particularly well planned with students provided with a course outline and precise aims and objectives. Assessment procedures are clearly documented.

16   Most teaching is good. In the best lessons observed, teachers used an appropriate variety of teaching methods to engage and sustain the interests of students. Strategies for checking that learning has taken place are well developed. Teachers had high expectations of their students who participated well and were

stimulated to achieve high standards in their work. A few lessons observed were less than satisfactory. In these lessons, teachers failed to vary their methods appropriately and relied too much on merely disseminating information. There are few opportunities for group work and, at times, the work is too easy for the more able students.

17   Students' portfolios contain work of a high standard and show that assignments are accurately marked by teachers. Feedback to students on their performance is good and they are informed of ways of improving their work. The inspection team agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that students are positive about their courses. GNVQ advanced students were able to describe in detail their progress throughout the two years of the course. Students' portfolios contain evidence of the effective integration of key skills into vocational work. However, students' numerical skills are not developed enough.

18   In its self-assessment report, the college indicates that students' achievements are generally good. Pass rates and retention rates are higher than national averages on GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses and on Chartered Institute of Marketing courses. Pass rates in GCE A level business studies, and accounts and on Association of Accounting Technicians courses are broadly in line with national averages.

19   Some GNVQ students are able to use their experiences in part-time employment as evidence of learning achievements. However, there are few opportunities for work experience within the business studies courses.

20   Facilities and accommodation are satisfactory. There is an appropriate range of computing equipment and software. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that teachers are appropriately qualified, have substantial teaching experience and have a good range of expertise in business. They have good classroom management skills.

Curriculum Areas

**Examples of students' achievements in
business, 1995 to 1997**

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level accounts (full time)	Retention (%) Pass rate (%)	63 89	50 44	42 100
GCE A level business studies (full time)	Retention (%) Pass rate (%)	91 64	83 32	72 73
GNVQ advanced business	Retention (%) Pass rate (%)	* *	72 47	69 68
GNVQ intermediate business	Retention (%) Pass rate (%)	88 57	67 71	73 68
BTEC national diploma business and finance	Retention (%) Pass rate (%)	87 83	* *	* *

Source: college data
*course not running

Curriculum Areas

English and Social Sciences

Grade 2

21 Twelve lessons were observed, covering GCSE English, sociology and psychology and GCE A level English, sociology, psychology, history and law. Inspectors agreed with the judgements outlined in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths
- well-organised courses
- a good range of teaching and learning methods
- clear aims and objectives of lessons
- good range of practical work

Weaknesses
- poor timekeeping by some students
- teachers' failure to sustain students' interest in a few lessons
- some inadequate marking of students' work

22 Inspectors agreed with the college's own assessment that courses are effectively organised, schemes of work are comprehensive and that most lessons are well planned. Occasionally, lesson plans failed to take account of the different abilities of students. Some course review documents lack specific targets for improvement.

23 Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are clearly in control of lessons, convey their enthusiasm for the subject and use a variety of methods to sustain students' interest and stimulate them to achieve high standards in their work. In a psychology class observed, the teacher used a series of games to enliven a revision session and successfully encouraged students to recall previously acquired knowledge. The best teachers are flexible and adaptable, altering their approach and methods depending on the ability of the students. In the best lessons, teachers had high expectations of students, focused their attention on the subject and gave them tasks that clearly challenged them to think and apply their knowledge. Most teachers regularly check that learning is taking place. However, in a few lessons there was an over-reliance on a single teaching method and the teacher paid insufficient attention to whether the students had learned anything substantial. The late arrival of students was sometimes allowed to disrupt lessons.

24 Most students are well motivated, and prepared to contribute to discussion, answer questions and complete the tasks given to them. Whenever students are involved in group work, their attention remains focused, even when the lecturer is dealing with other groups. Surveys indicate that students are very satisfied with the college and their courses.

25 As indicated in the self-assessment report, students' achievements are generally good; retention is high and progression to higher education continues to improve. Pass rates in GCE A level English literature, psychology, politics and sociology are well above national averages. The retention rate for GCE A level sociology has improved significantly over the last three years; from 58 per cent to 86 per cent. However, pass rates in GCE A level law and history are below national figures and the GCSE English literature pass rate has declined steadily over the last three years.

26 Learning is supported effectively by an appropriate range of equipment and materials. Handouts, containing course notes, are well produced and teachers make good use of visual teaching aids. Library resources are good for English, history, law and sociology courses. The bookstock in these subjects is extensive and up to date. Psychology resources are inadequate. Classrooms designated as subject base rooms are well equipped and have displays which encourage students' learning.

Curriculum Areas

Examples of students' achievements in English and social sciences, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level English (full time)	Retention (%)	64	85	67
	Pass rate (%)	84	81	87
GCE A level humanities and social sciences (full time)*	Retention (%)	81	53	73
	Pass rate (%)	75	69	66
GCSE (full time)	Retention (%)	87	69	70
	Pass rate (%)	34	54	48
Access to higher education	Retention (%)	100	100	100
	Pass rate (%)	100	100	100

Source: college data
*history, law, politics, psychology

Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Grade 2

27   Inspectors observed 13 lessons which covered the two full-time courses for a closely-defined group of students with learning difficulties. The self-assessment report included many of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision which were identified by inspectors.

Key strengths

- well-planned and appropriate range of accredited courses
- good range of practical and paper-based tasks
- high retention rates and good students' achievements
- opportunities for students to develop skills for learning on their own
- effective deployment of staff

Weaknesses

- the failure of some students to complete tasks
- insufficient monitoring of students' progress
- little sharing of good practice in teaching and learning

28   The college has improved the quality of provision significantly since the last inspection. Courses are managed effectively and most lessons are well planned. The college now offers good provision for students with learning difficulties who are capable of progressing to other vocational or academic courses. A link course with local schools provides pupils with opportunities to experience the range of options that the college offers. An additional full-time course, starting in September 1998, will offer a further progression route for students. Courses provide students with a range of skills that prepare them for the next level of study, or for work. However, the monitoring of students' needs and achievements is not detailed enough.

29   Most teaching is good. Most teachers involve students in an appropriate variety of activities involving individual and group work which enables them to develop their practical skills effectively. Basic literacy, numeracy and IT skills are integrated effectively with students' work. Students have regular opportunities to acquire the skills needed to work productively on their own. In one workshop session observed on the GNVQ foundation course, students brought in the assignments they were working on. The teacher was familiar with the tasks and the individual students' needs. He effectively supported each student so that they were able to complete their work. In another session, students from the pre-vocational bridging course were using the learning resource centre to carry out research for a project. Supported by a welfare assistant, they used the internet and wordprocessed work. Occasionally, some students become distracted when the task is too complex, or not broken into sufficiently small steps.

30   All students were successful in meeting primary learning goals for both courses in 1997 and obtained externally accredited qualifications. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the opportunities for assessment and for accreditation are appropriate. The courses have high retention rates.

31   Inspectors agreed with the college that support staff are skilled and effectively deployed. However, a lack of technical support staff sometimes means that teachers have to carry out non-teaching tasks that detract from their main duties. The self-assessment report does not recognise the lack of sharing good practice in teaching and the promotion of learning as a weakness.

Support for Students

Grade 2

32   Inspection concluded that the self-assessment report identified most of the weaknesses and the key strengths of support for students. The college's action plan indicates that progress has been made in addressing the weaknesses.

Key strengths

- well-organised recruitment and enrolment arrangements
- good recruitment information and guidance
- effective monitoring of attendance
- good briefing materials for tutors
- effective support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Weaknesses

- failure to ensure that all students who need learning support are receiving it
- few arrangements for developing key skills on some courses
- some ineffective tutorials

33   There are effective procedures for recruiting and enrolling students, and good arrangements for providing students with information and guidance using standards agreed with the training and enterprise council (TEC). The college collaborates with other colleges in the borough of Harrow to provide information to secondary school pupils on opportunities for post-16 education. Open evenings, advice sessions and an induction evening for parents provided effective introductions to what the college has to offer.

34   In its self-assessment report, the college identified the improvements made since the last inspection and inspectors agreed with these. There is a well-organised induction programme and the tutorial system has been improved since the last inspection. Tutors are supported by training and a useful manual containing a range of guidance notes. Students appreciate the support they receive from their tutors, and value the individual action-planning and the opportunities they have to discuss their progress with tutors. Inspectors agreed with the college's view that the quality of some tutorials is poor. The college recognises that tutorial support for part-time students is inadequate, and has instituted some special advice sessions for these students.

35   Students are encouraged to complete personal records of achievement, which are validated through the borough of Harrow's record of achievement scheme. The number of records of achievement completed by students in the current year has more than doubled. There is an effective system for monitoring the attendance of full-time students.

36   The college provides support for students who need additional help with literacy and numeracy. The self-assessment report acknowledges that the arrangements are not fully effective, and that attendance by students at additional support sessions is poor. Other methods of providing support for students through specialist teachers working alongside subject teachers, or by developing teachers' skills in supporting literacy and numeracy, are mainly employed at foundation level. Not all students have the opportunity to develop the key skills of communication, application of number and IT.

37   Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Individual support needs are identified through discussions with students, their parents, previous schools and other agencies. The support available includes providing communicators to work with individual students who have hearing and visual impairment. Some specialist resources, such as a voice-activated computer, are also available. Students spoke

highly of the support they receive, although the support which is provided is not always clearly recorded. Individual action plans to help students improve their learning skills are not in use.

38   Assistance is available for students who need welfare advice and support. There is a qualified counsellor, who provided personal counselling for 40 students during 1996-97. Access funds of £5,700 were made available during 1997-98, and helped 50 students, including two who received help with childcare costs. Six students aged under 19 were assisted by a college fund. The college recognised in its self-assessment report that there is a well-stocked careers library, and that good careers education and guidance are provided by college staff and a local careers company.

39   Sporting activities are available for all students. There are a number of activities to enrich the students' curriculum, such as societies, lunchtime sporting activities and educational trips. There is a programme of work experience which has provided placements for 300 students in the current year.

General Resources

Grade 2

40   Inspectors agreed with the college's judgements about the strengths and weaknesses of its general resources. Since the college submitted its self-assessment report some weaknesses had already been addressed.

Key strengths
- attractive well-maintained accommodation and estate
- the well-equipped learning resource centre
- comprehensive range of IT facilities
- the professional training facilities in the business development unit

Weaknesses
- some teaching areas not accessible to students with restricted mobility
- few social areas for students

41   The college is situated on an attractive site with well-maintained grounds and buildings. The accommodation is divided between three centres of activity; the sixth form centre, the adult and continuing education centre and the professional development centre. There are brick-built buildings and six huts. As indicated in the self-assessment report, changing accommodation needs have been met effectively by a continuous programme of adapting buildings. Teaching rooms are well furnished and in good decorative order. A computerised room utilisation system is being developed to help the college monitor the use of classroom space. The college recognises that access for people with restricted mobility is limited. The business development unit, which handles the college's full-cost course provision, is located in Church Road, Stanmore. This accommodation provides a professional training environment to prospective clients.

42   The library is situated on the first floor of one of the accommodation blocks. The bookstock is satisfactory in most curriculum areas and in some of the new subject areas a short loan system is effectively used. Students have access in the library to multimedia personal computers and a new learning resource centre that incorporates English and mathematics workshops. There is an adequate number of computers available to students on a bookable basis. The college is planning to merge the library and the learning resource centre which, at present, are in different buildings. This will improve students' access to information, reduce duplication of facilities and help teachers in delivering a changing curriculum.

43   Since the last inspection, some improvements have been made in the provision

of IT resources. Good progress has been made in the use of IT in the curriculum for mathematics and science subjects. The college has a comprehensive strategy for IT provision, involving the updating of all computer systems by summer 1999. This includes the provision of new hardware, the selection of a new operating system and updated provision to meet management information needs. Action to deal with issues associated with the millennium is included.

44   There are few social facilities for students. There is a well-equipped sports hall and fitness room. The refectory, which provides students with a good service, is to be refurbished.

Quality Assurance

Grade 3

45   The self-assessment report identifies the improvements made to its quality assurance procedures since the last inspection. However, the report overestimates the impact of some of these improvements. Inspectors considered some weaknesses in quality assurance were insufficiently emphasised.

Key strengths
- a commitment by the college to continuous improvement
- a comprehensive, well-documented, course and service review system
- effective moderation of the review process
- the self-assessment process
- regular surveys of students' views about the college and their courses

Weaknesses
- insufficient attention to students' achievements in the quality assurance process

- some inadequate course reviews and action plans
- review outcomes insufficiently reflected in strategic planning
- insufficient attention given to assuring the quality of teaching and learning
- weak links between appraisal and staff development

46   The self-assessment report identifies the well-documented system for annual course review and evaluation. Course reviews include targets for student enrolment, attendance, retention and progression and also involve the monitoring of student ethnicity, gender and disability. However, there is no requirement within the process for course leaders to monitor college pass rates against national figures and targets for pass rates are not set. Following reviews, course leaders complete action plans which are agreed with and monitored by programme area managers. Course leaders present their reviews to a group of senior managers and, when appropriate, make presentations to governors. The college recognises in its self-assessment report that the new quality assurance systems are not fully established and that the quality of some reviews and action plans is poor.

47   A quality assessment group, made up of staff selected from different areas of the college, meets regularly to moderate a sample of course reviews. The group has had some success in providing an overview of the process. However, it needs to focus on issues raised in the self-assessment report, particularly the inconsistencies in completing review documents and weaknesses in teaching and learning. Courses judged to be performing below expectations are required to produce actions plans which are monitored by the director of curriculum and planning. The different elements of reviewing courses are not well integrated.

48   Students contribute to course reviews. Four surveys are conducted each year to seek students' views on the quality of courses and cross-college services. Results are analysed and fed back to staff who record their responses in course review documents. Students receive feedback on the outcomes of surveys in tutorials and through their representatives in the student association.

49   The college has recently introduced a system of lesson observations by curriculum managers. Observations are carried out against agreed criteria. Feedback is given to teachers and the process is generally welcomed across the college as a contribution to staff development. However, at the time of the inspection the process had not yet contributed to the college's overall assessment of the quality of teaching and learning. All staff have been appraised and the college aims to have the second appraisal cycle completed by the end of 1998. The college has an appropriate staff development policy that outlines staff entitlement and opportunities. Inspectors considered that the self-assessment report gives insufficient attention to the weak relationship between appraisal and staff development.

50   Some elements of the college's strategic plan relating to quality assurance have been achieved. However, while information obtained from the course review process influences some curriculum planning, the outcomes of reviews are not evident in strategic planning. This weakness was identified during the last inspection.

Governance

Grade 2

51   Inspectors agreed with most of the findings on governance in the college's self-assessment report.

Key strengths
- governors' involvement in strategic planning
- an effective search committee
- governors who have an appropriate range of expertise
- good clerking arrangements and efficient procedures for conducting corporation business
- effective financial monitoring by governors

Weaknesses
- governors limited appreciation of curriculum issues
- low attendance by governors at corporation meetings

52   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.

53   The corporation has determined its membership as 20 governors. There are currently seven vacancies, for five independent governors, the TEC nominee and a community governor. An appropriate range of expertise is provided by the 13 governors currently serving. The corporation's search committee is taking appropriate action to fill these vacancies. It has identified the skills required in recruiting new governors, including the gender and ethnic balance of the corporation. All prospective

governors are interviewed by the search committee. However, the high level of recent vacancies on the corporation has placed extra demands on governors and, in order to achieve a quorum, all business governors must attend every meeting of the corporation. The search committee has set a demanding target of 80 per cent for attendance by governors. However, this has not been achieved and in 1996-97 attendance at corporation meetings was 66 per cent.

54   The vice-principal acts as clerk to the corporation and is responsible for clerking all committees. Corporation and committee agendas and papers are prepared to a high standard. The corporation has approved standing orders and a code of conduct and these require minor updating. The register of interests has been completed by all governors but has not been extended to include senior members of staff who have significant financial responsibilities in the college.

55   There is an appropriate committee structure. The resources committee gives detailed consideration to the college's finances and is aware of its financial position. Financial reports considered by managers are distributed in full to all governors. However, the level of detail in the reports reduces their usefulness to governors. The audit committee recommends approval of the college's annual financial statements to the corporation. In order to maintain the audit committee's independence this responsibility should be discharged by the resources committee.

56   Governors are effectively involved in the development and monitoring of strategic plans and their planning committee is closely linked to the college's management planning team. The self-assessment report identifies improvements in dealing with strategic issues. The corporation has made progress in evaluating its own performance. A policy for governor training has been adopted and new governors receive

support through a mentor. Seminars have been organised and led by a governor with expertise in training. Inspectors agreed with the college's identification of these developments as strengths.

57   Some governors have a limited understanding of the issues affecting the curriculum and the corporation wishes to improve links between governors and staff. The college has recognised this weakness in its self-assessment report. Some governors have increased their knowledge of the college by attending managers' training days and by participating in college events.

58   There is an appropriate procedure in place for governors to assess the performance of the principal which is carried out by the chair of the corporation. Governors monitor the performance of the college satisfactorily, although staffing, resources and accommodation issues are given a higher priority than issues relating to the curriculum. Governors understand the distinction between their roles and those of managers and this results in a successful working relationship.

Management
Grade 2

59   Inspectors broadly agreed with the judgements on the quality of management made in the college's self-assessment report.

Key strengths
- clear management structure
- good communications
- good support for teachers from centre and programme managers
- readily available financial management information
- the effective use of task groups to improve recruitment and retention

60   The college has been reorganised to meet local needs more effectively and to consolidate the management of the curriculum and centres of activity. The senior management team meets fortnightly to discuss strategic, resource and financial issues. Managers work well together. Sixteen programme managers have responsibility for managing groups of courses. Teaching staff are well supported by centre and programme managers. However, there is a lack of clarity in the management roles for some programme managers. The college identified this issue in its self-assessment report and is consulting managers and staff. The effectiveness of committees, including the academic board, is also being reviewed.

61   Communications with staff have improved since the last inspection. Lines of communication are clear and teachers and support staff are kept well informed. Directors, and centre and programme managers make good use of meetings to keep staff informed. A well-designed, monthly newsletter celebrates students' achievements, and provides information on relevant developments. Managers summarise meetings in a 'factfile' distributed to staff every three weeks.

62   The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. The college is working to clear an accumulated deficit by 31 July 1999 and has maintained its solvency. Financial reports are generated every month and distributed to senior managers and budget holders. The financial reports to management

and governors contain short-term cashflow forecasts and are accompanied by a summary which reports variances by exception. However, the summary does not describe the overall financial position of the college. Because of difficulties in completing the internal audit for the college, the annual financial statements for 1997-98 will not be accompanied by a single internal audit annual report covering the full year.

63   The college's planning team is responsible for the development of the strategic plan and the promotion of links with external organisations. It reports to the governors' planning committee. The operational plans for some programme areas are not sufficiently detailed and are not always closely linked to the college's strategic plan. The college has significantly increased its efficiency in meeting its funding targets during the last two years. Task groups have been successful in improving student retention, obtaining additional funding to improve support for students and developing provision for adults.

64   The college has revised and updated its policies on equal opportunities, staff training and the college environment. It has increased the number of staff from minority ethnic groups. A disciplinary code of practice is applied to all staff and students. The disability statement is coherent and comprehensive. Equal opportunities is given a high priority in the college charter and publicity materials. Recent equal opportunities initiatives include the development of materials to support an anti-bullying campaign.

65   The self-assessment report recognised the need to address weaknesses in programme management and the principal has raised the issue in his latest consultation document sent out to all staff. Since the last inspection the college has made some progress in addressing weaknesses in its management information systems. Reliable information on finance, applications and enrolments is provided to

senior managers. There is rigorous monitoring of expenditure on teaching and speedy decisions are made on whether classes should continue if student numbers fall below a certain figure. There is effective daily monitoring of full-time students' attendance. The information on students' achievements held centrally is often different from and in conflict with that held by some programme managers. The college's action plan indicates the intention to extend training on collating and using data to course managers and teachers.

66   The college has fostered productive working relationships with external educational organisations. It has well-established links with Middlesex University and other Harrow colleges. There are positive links with Park High School for provision for students aged 16 to 19. This has resulted in the appointment of a teacher of art and design who manages the subject area in the college and the high school. Funding from the North West London TEC has supported a number of initiatives, including work with eight TEC-sponsored companies. The college has made progress in addressing the underdeveloped strategic links with the TEC, identified as an issue in the previous inspection.

Conclusions

67   The college's self-assessment report is clearly a working document which has involved most staff in the assessment process. This is the first year in which programme and service managers have been responsible for producing sections of the self-assessment report. The college's quality assessment team played a useful role in the moderation of judgements. The report has a coherent structure and covers all areas of the college's work. It provided a useful basis for planning and carrying out the inspection. Inspectors agreed with all of the college's gradings except in one cross-college activity where inspectors concluded that the college had overestimated its strength.

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

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (July 1997)

Age	%
Under 16	4
16-18 years	24
19-24 years	11
25+ years	61
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 1997)

Level of study	%
Foundation	1
Intermediate	51
Advanced	12
Higher education	0
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	36
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (July 1997)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	224	556	11
Agriculture	6	2	0
Engineering	5	185	3
Business	171	1,537	24
Hotel and catering	45	188	3
Health and community care	199	1,218	20
Art and design	238	442	10
Humanities	223	1,539	24
Basic education	56	305	5
Total	1,167	5,972	100

Source: college data

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (April 1998)

	Perm-anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	58	18	0	76
Supporting direct learning contact	6	3	2	11
Other support	46	5	2	53
Total	110	26	4	140

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£5,346,000	£5,243,000	£5,847,000
Average level of funding (ALF) Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£17.22	£17.15	£17.33+
Payroll as a proportion of income	77%	94%	70%
Achievement of funding target	95%	90%	*
Diversity of income	21%	19%	19%
Operating surplus	£34,000	-£1,022,000	-£217,000

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)
ALF – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), Funding Allocations 1996-97 (1996-97)
Payroll – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)
Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96)
Diversity of income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)
Operating surplus – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)
+not yet finalised
*data not available

Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

Qualifications		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
GCE A level	Number of candidates	232	223	191
	Average point score per entry	3.5	3.7	3.5
	Position in tables	middle third	middle third	middle third
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	151	135	106
	Percentage achieving qualification	75%	905%	73%
	Position in tables	middle third	top 10%	middle third
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	106	87
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	75%	52%
	Position in tables	*	top third	bottom third

Source: DfEE
Note: the majority of the college's students are 19 years of age or older
The achievements of these students are not covered in published DfEE performance tables
*1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available

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