

Brighton College of Technology
Reinspection of basic education: December 1998
Report from the Inspectorate
The Further Education Funding Council

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education according to a four-year cycle. It also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

REINSPECTION

The FEFC has agreed that colleges with provision judged by the inspectorate to be less than satisfactory or poor (grade 4 or 5) should be reinspected. A college may have its funding agreement with the FEFC qualified to prevent it increasing the number of new students in an unsatisfactory curriculum area until the FEFC is satisfied that weaknesses have been addressed.

Reinspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Reinspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports and confirm that actions taken as a result of previous inspection have improved the quality of provision. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work they inspect. The opinion of the FEFC's audit service contributes to inspectorate judgements about governance and management.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

Assessments use grades on 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 weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- *grade 5 - poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses.*

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

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**Brighton College of Technology
South East Region**

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Background

Provision for basic education, including provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, was inspected in August 1997 and the findings were published in inspection report 115/97. The provision was graded 4.

The strengths of the provision were: the enthusiastic and skilled team of full-time teachers; some imaginative and creative teaching; access to specialist accommodation for vocational studies; effective learning support for students with physical/sensory impairment; courses that developed the basic skills of students; comprehensive and effective screening by the learning support team. The strengths, however, were outweighed by weaknesses: initial assessment which did not inform teaching and learning; ineffective recording and reporting of achievement; many poorly planned lessons which failed to extend and challenge students; most vocational tutors' lack of specialist knowledge and skills to work with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; poor management of staff leading to lack of consistency and coherence in students' learning; the poor level and inappropriateness of accommodation and resources to support teaching; and the lack of appropriate learning resources, including computers.

The provision was reinspected over three days in December 1998. Ten lessons were observed. There were meetings with managers and staff. Students' work was inspected and a wide range of documentation provided by the college was examined.

Assessment

The provision has improved since the previous inspection. The strengths identified at the time are still evident. The college is now providing courses in which learning is supported through clearly planned lessons. Aims are identified and assessment processes take account of the individual needs of students. Nine out of the 10 lessons observed were good or satisfactory. In most classes, a range of teaching methods are used. This helps students to maintain their concentration and to take some responsibility for their work. Tutors, classroom assistants and communicators have good working relationships with students. They encourage students and praise their efforts and achievements. Teachers have attended staff development courses and events which have helped to develop appropriate skills related to teaching and learning. There has been a reduction in the numbers of part-time teachers and they now work on fewer courses. The college has improved the accommodation. Equipment and learning resources for adult basic education students and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have also been improved. Improvements include the recent provision of networked computers. Some weaknesses remain: in less successful lessons, teaching methods were often inappropriate, learning goals were not clear, or teachers' instructions and questions were too complex. Some individual assessments of students were not detailed enough to be of use in planning learning. The rooms used for two lessons during the reinspection were poor. Part of the curriculum at pre-foundation level needs revising to ensure that it meets the needs of students and prepares them for progression to other courses. There are few established

progression routes into the vocational curriculum.

Revised grade: basic education 3.