

**East Devon College**  
**Reinspection of Humanities: March 2000**  
**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. In these circumstances, 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.*

*Satisfactory provision may also be reinspected if actions have been taken to improve quality and the college's existing inspection grade is the only factor which prevents it from meeting the criteria for FEFC accreditation.*

*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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## **East Devon College South West Region**

### **Reinspection of humanities: March 2000**

#### **Background**

East Devon College was inspected in March 1999 and the findings were published in inspection report 65/99. Provision in humanities was graded 4.

The strengths of the provision were: good retention and achievement rates on counselling courses; mostly good teaching on counselling and teacher education courses; and an effective GCE A level general studies programme. The main weaknesses identified at inspection were: many courses with poor retention and achievement rates; poor progression to higher education from access courses; insufficient checking of students' understanding in some lessons; inadequate course reviews not addressing retention and achievement issues; and insufficient sharing of good practice.

The provision was reinspected in March 2000. Inspectors observed 19 lessons, held meetings with managers, teachers and students. Students' work was examined, together with a wide range of documentation prepared for the reinspection.

#### **Assessment**

The college has responded positively to the outcomes of the previous inspection. The weaknesses identified are being addressed and the provision has improved. There has been a successful bid to the standards fund, an external quality audit of humanities and a further round of self-assessment. Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report. Teaching groups are generally larger than at the previous inspection, although there are still a few small groups particularly in modern foreign languages.

The standard of teaching remains slightly below the national average for humanities as at the previous inspection. Teaching is particularly effective on the counselling and teacher education programmes. In some humanities lessons teachers do not check students' understanding sufficiently. Many lessons follow a predictable routine and teachers often miss opportunities to use IT to improve students' learning. Staff development is arranged to share good practice and to prepare staff for the introduction of curriculum 2000. However, it is too early to identify many direct effects on the quality of teaching. All first year full-time students take a diagnostic assessment to determine whether they need additional learning support. Few students identified as needing this support take up this opportunity. There is no systematic development of key skills for GCE A level students.

Retention and achievement rates on most courses have improved. Nearly all courses now have retention and achievement rates that are above national benchmarks. However, pass rates on evening courses in modern foreign languages are declining steeply. Retention and achievement has remained good on teacher education and counselling programmes. Weaknesses in the access to higher education programme have been addressed. Achievement

rates on this course are now 20% above the national benchmarks, and the majority of students now progress to higher education.

Course review and evaluation procedures are improving. Staff are more aware of the need to address retention and achievement issues. Review and evaluation is now linked to self-assessment, but does not encourage teachers to assess their performance in other key areas such as inclusive learning, key skills and the use of IT. Monitoring of action plans at regular intervals is not yet taking place. Some course review documents remain incomplete. Reports on students' attendance are now regularly supplied to course tutors. Students' attendance at lessons has risen substantially since the previous inspection.

Accommodation is well maintained. There are attractive displays of students' work and relevant posters. Library and resource stock is still not up to date, but additional funding is now available. Some staff have decided to await the arrival of new course specifications before selecting new materials.

**Revised grade:** humanities 3.