

**Kidderminster College**  
**Reinspection of Quality Assurance: November 1999**  
**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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**Kidderminster College  
West Midlands Region**

**Reinspection of Quality Assurance: November 1999**

**Background**

Kidderminster College was inspected in October 1998. The inspection findings were published in college inspection report 06/99. Provision in quality assurance was graded 4.

The strengths were the effective arrangements for the internal verification of assessments and procedures for handling student complaints. These strengths were outweighed by weaknesses. The strategy for developing quality assurance was inadequate and responsibilities in this area were not clear. There was no clear policy or systematic quality assurance process. Arrangements for gathering students' views were unsatisfactory. The contribution of employers to quality assurance was limited. There was insufficient monitoring of standards and targets. The self-assessment process was flawed, and its final stages rushed. Arrangements for staff development were generally ineffective. The implementation of staff appraisal was slow.

The provision was reinspected over five days from 29 November to 3 December 1999. The inspector held 12 meetings with students, staff and managers, and inspected documentation relating to quality assurance and staff development. The new self-assessment report was studied together with the action plan in response to the last inspection.

**Assessment**

The college has taken some steps to improve quality assurance since the last inspection. There is a detailed annual cycle of quality assurance activities for 1999-2000 linked to strategic planning, although it is too early to judge the extent to which it will be effective. Guidelines for quality assurance are understood and supported by staff. A teaching and learning improvement team has been created. There is a process for tackling low achievement and retention that is producing some success. Flaws in the self-assessment process have been corrected. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and inspectors broadly agreed with its conclusions. Arrangements for obtaining students' views have been improved but require consolidation.

There is insufficient attention to setting goals for quality improvement across the college. Service standards are underdeveloped in all areas. The cycle of setting targets for achievement and retention and then monitoring progress has not yet been satisfactorily completed. Targets for achievement and retention in 1999 were set too late to be of any value, and faults in the process led to some targets being unrealistically high. Target-setting for 2000 had not been completed at the time of the reinspection.

The college acknowledges that arrangements for staff development remain weak. The staff development policy, created in September 1999, refers to a staff development advisory committee that does not exist. The staff development report for 1998-99 is behind schedule and insufficiently evaluative. The draft staff development plan for 1999-2000 is limited in scope and not costed. However, there has been some well-planned and effective staff training. The implementation of staff appraisal has been slow, although the process is now underway.

**Revised grade:** quality assurance 4.