

**Stroud College of Further Education  
Reinspection of Management: November 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.*

*Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry CV1 2WT  
Telephone 02476 863000  
Fax 02476 862100  
website: <http://www.fefc.ac.uk>*

© FEFC 2001

*You may photocopy this report and use extracts in promotional or other material provided quotes are accurate, and the findings are not misrepresented.*

## **Stroud College of Further Education South West Region**

### **Reinspection of management: November 2000**

#### **Background**

Stroud College of Further Education was inspected in November 1999. The inspection findings were published in inspection report 30/00. A grade 4 was awarded for management and the FEFC audit opinion was weak.

Inspectors identified the following strengths: effective team-working fostered by line managers; the involvement of staff in operational planning and target-setting; productive external links and collaboration with a wide range of partners. These strengths were outweighed by the following weaknesses: inadequate response to important strategic issues facing the college (finance, recruitment, retention and achievement); weak financial management; insufficient provision of reliable information to inform corporation decision-making, and weaknesses in the management of franchised provision.

Inspectors and auditors reinspected the provision over four days in November 2000. Meetings were held with managers and staff. Documentation including the self-assessment report, strategic plan, recovery plan, policies, procedures and minutes of meetings were scrutinised.

#### **Assessment**

The college has made progress in addressing some of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report. An interim senior management team currently manages the college. Curriculum provision has been rationalised. Courses duplicated across the college or with persistent low numbers have been discontinued. An effective course viability model has been devised and is used to inform decisions to withdraw or subsidise provision and combine groups. Most GCE A levels have been withdrawn. Full-time teachers are more effectively deployed which has reduced expenditure on part-time staff.

The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. Following the last inspection consultants were employed to support the financial function. A director for resources was appointed in August 2000. The college remains in a weak financial position. Forecasts indicate that the situation will improve during 2000-01 and beyond. Contingency plans are in place to address any failure to meet funding targets. The format of the management accounts is good and they now include a 12 month rolling cashflow forecast. Financial regulations were last updated in April 1999 and are in the process of being redrafted.

The college produced a new strategic plan for 2000 to 2003. It involved staff and governors and is an improvement on the previous plan. However, it is not based on a current needs analysis. The college attributes this to the urgency of getting a workable plan in place and the absence of a marketing specialist. A needs analysis is planned by the new marketing officer, who has produced a marketing strategy and marketing plan. The recovery schedule doubles as the operating statement for this year. As a result it is not always easy to see which strategic objectives are being addressed by particular actions. The strategic plan does not include a risk assessment. The weakness relating to student recruitment remains. The college only

achieved 89% of the target for full-time students in 2000-01. Plans to address this decline are not yet fully developed.

The availability and quality of management information has improved since the last inspection. Monthly reports enable clear scrutiny of retention and performance. As a result governors are better informed. However, the acting principal does not produce a termly report to update governors. Franchised provision has been reduced this year and is now more closely monitored.

**Revised grade:** management 3.