

Uxbridge College
Reinspection of Mathematics and Computing: April 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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**Uxbridge College
Greater London Region**

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Background

Uxbridge College was inspected in March 1999. The findings were published in the inspection report 68/99. Mathematics and computing was awarded a grade 4.

The main strengths of the provision were well-planned lessons and the modern equipment available for students. These strengths were outweighed by significant weaknesses which included low retention rates on some courses, inadequate teaching strategies and poor examination results on many courses.

The provision was reinspected in April 2000. Twelve lessons were observed. The inspector examined a range of students' work, held meetings with college managers, teachers and students, evaluated student achievement and retention data and examined a range of documentation relating to the college and its courses.

Assessment

The college's most recent self-assessment report on GCE A level and GCSE courses in mathematics and computing identified the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. The college has responded positively to issues identified in the previous inspection and has taken actions to address weaknesses. The actions include revising the way the provision is managed, strengthening the tutorial support, monitoring more closely the progress students are making, and introducing modular courses in mathematics. There has also been an increased emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Lesson planning and course management continue to be effective. Most lessons observed were good and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Most staff now use an effective range of teaching methods. However, in some lessons inspected, teachers spent much of their time helping one or two students to the extent that the more able students were not fully challenged and did not make as much progress as they could have done. Students continue to have good access to modern IT facilities, although little use is made of these facilities in mathematics. Students' attendance is now monitored effectively and absences are investigated rapidly. Most students produce good-quality work and the more able students produce some outstanding work. Students' work is marked carefully and teachers provide useful feedback to students on how the work could be improved. There is a greater emphasis than previously on ensuring that students complete assignments on time. Retention on some programmes has improved and is now above the national average in GCSE mathematics, the C&G 7261 course and the intermediate GNVQ IT programme. Retention figures this year on level 3 courses show an improvement over previous years. There have been significant improvements in achievement rates in GCE A level mathematics, and on the BTEC national diploma and national certificate courses in computer studies. Achievement rates on some other courses, including GCSE mathematics, are still below national figures.

Revised grade: mathematics and computing 3.