

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

**General  
National  
Vocational  
Qualifications  
in the Further  
Education  
Sector in  
England**

**National Survey Report**

**November 1994**

**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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***THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL***

*The Further Education Funding Council has a statutory duty to ensure that there are satisfactory arrangements to assess the quality of provision in the further education sector in England. It discharges the duty in part through its inspectorate, which inspects and reports on each college in the sector every four years. The Council's inspectorate also assesses and reports on a national basis on specific curriculum areas and advises the Council's quality assessment committee.*

*College inspections involve both full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have specialist knowledge and experience in the areas they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member from outside the world of education and a nominated member of staff from the college being inspected.*

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## SUMMARY

This report is concerned with the newly-introduced programmes, leading to General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs), which are offered by colleges in the further education sector in England. In the session 1993-94, GNVQ programmes enrolled over 83,000 students, of whom about 53,000 attended further education sector colleges. Over 1,100 teaching and learning sessions in colleges were inspected during 1993-94. These covered the full range of GNVQ programmes on offer and involved over 15,000 students in 114 colleges.

The standards achieved by students on advanced GNVQs were broadly equivalent to those of students who study on Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma courses or on General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) programmes involving the study of two subjects. The volume of work achieved by students on intermediate GNVQs was equivalent to four good GCSEs at grade C or above in about a third of cases. Over 70 per cent of students produced some elements of work equivalent to GCSE grade C or above.

The majority of GNVQ teaching at all levels was well planned and effective. In 54 per cent of the classes the strengths were considered to outweigh the weaknesses and in 11 per cent the weaknesses outweighed the strengths. The introduction of GNVQs has been most effective where well-informed and committed senior managers have offered a strong lead by allocating appropriate resources, developing a strategy for cross-college co-ordination of GNVQ work and providing support for staff development. Some examples were seen of excellent curriculum innovation, good collaboration between colleges and between schools and colleges, effective work placements for students, and productive working relationships between colleges and local training and enterprise councils (TECs).

However, a number of teething problems are evident. In some colleges, co-ordination of GNVQs across the institution is weak; in others, poor pre-enrolment guidance has resulted in students being placed on inappropriate courses, which in turn has contributed to high drop-out rates. Assessment practices are too variable and the volume of documentation associated with recording assessment is excessive. Some teachers have pitched assignments at too high or too low a level and others have failed to recognise the importance of developing and assessing core skills through vocational work. There are examples of poor standards of students' work on some intermediate GNVQs and poor success rates in some external tests.

Not all of these weaknesses can be attributed to the colleges. The late arrival of some course documentation from the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) and the awarding bodies; specifications which use complex terminology and fail to identify the standards to be achieved; inadequately-briefed verifiers who have given insufficient attention to standards and their moderation; and a belief amongst both

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students and teachers that there is too much emphasis on planning and recording, compared with teaching and learning, have all given rise to concern at some time during the year.

Steps are being taken to tackle these problems. The NCVQ, in co-operation with the awarding bodies, is leading the way in addressing a six-point plan to improve quality and ensure standards. The colleges, too, are seeking ways to improve the quality of GNVQ courses at the point of delivery.

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## INTRODUCTION

1 In the White Paper, *Education and Training for the 21st Century*, CM1536 (1991), the government proposed that a high-quality vocational alternative to the General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) should be developed for the increasing number of young people staying on in full-time education. The characteristics of this alternative qualification were that it should be more relevant than GCE A level to future employment; that it should involve students in more practical activities, and develop core skills and a body of knowledge in order to provide a foundation from which students could progress to employment, further training or further education, including higher education. The new qualification became known as the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) and the government indicated its intention that GNVQs together with National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) would replace other vocational qualifications and become the main national provision for vocational education and training. The National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) was asked to design and co-ordinate the development of a new framework of GNVQs. The new qualifications are intended to have parity with existing GCSEs, GCE A levels and NVQs. Since that time, GNVQs have been designed and phased into schools and colleges at a rapid pace. This report is concerned with programmes leading to GNVQs offered by further education sector colleges.

### **General National Vocational Qualifications**

2 GNVQs are offered at three levels: foundation, intermediate and advanced. Foundation and intermediate programmes normally involve one year of full-time study; advanced programmes normally require two years of full-time study (table 1).

**Table 1: Structure of General National Vocational Qualifications at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels**

<i>Level</i>	<i>Normal entry requirements</i>	<i>Vocational units</i>	<i>Core skills units</i>	<i>Normal duration</i>	<i>Broad equivalence</i>
Foundation	No entry qualifications	3 mandatory units 3 optional units from different vocational areas	Level 1 in communication application of number, and information technology	1 year	4 GCSEs at grades D to G; 1 NVQ at level 1
Intermediate	1 or 2 GCSEs at grades A to D or a foundation GNVQ	4 mandatory units 2 optional units	Level 2 in communication application of number, and information technology	1 year	4-5 GCEs at grades A to C; or 1 NVQ at level 2
Advanced	4 or 5 GCSEs at grades A to C or an intermediate GNVQ	8 mandatory units 4 optional units, additional units, if desired	Level 3 in communication, application of number and information technology	2 years	2 GCE A levels* or 1 NVQ at level 3

*\* The 12 vocational units of the advanced GNVQ were designed to be equivalent to two GCE A levels. In addition, there is the requirement that core skills be included in the GNVQ curriculum.*

3 The first pilot GNVQ courses in 1992-93 involved 115 colleges schools and were offered in five vocational areas: art and design, manufacturing, leisure and tourism, business, and health and social care. Initially, they were offered at two levels, described as levels 2 and 3, to align them with the NVQ framework. They were subsequently renamed intermediate and advanced levels, respectively, to promote parity with GCSE and GCE A levels. Advanced GNVQ is also referred to as the vocational A level.

4 In 1993-94, programmes in the first five vocational areas were fully operative at intermediate and advanced levels and were also being piloted at foundation level. Three further vocational areas (science; hospitality and catering; and construction and the built environment) were piloted at intermediate and advanced levels. Together, in the session 1993-94, these GNVQ programmes enrolled over 83,000 students, of whom about 53,000 attended further education sector colleges. This brought the total registrations for GNVQs to 94,000. The NCVQ, in co-operation with the three awarding bodies, the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) and the RSA Examinations Board, intends to phase in GNVQs in 15 broad vocational areas by 1996-97 (figure 1).

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5 Figure 2 illustrates the three qualification pathways which are now available: the GCE A level, NVQ and GNVQ pathways. The GNVQ awards are intended primarily for full time students post-16, although courses for adults and those wishing to study for a GNVQ qualification part-time are being piloted by some colleges and schools. Since the review of the national curriculum by Sir Ron Dearing, some aspects of GNVQ will be offered pre-16 to pupils in schools as part of their key stage 4 programmes.

6 GNVQs comprise combinations of mandatory and optional vocational units with mandatory core skills units (table 1). Core skills units cover communication, the application of number and information technology. In addition, all courses are expected to develop a range of personal and study skills. Like NVQs, the GNVQ units are described in terms of outcomes and are assessed according to criteria specified by the NCVQ. Colleges are expected to design their own courses to meet the requirements of the awarding body with which their students are registered.

7 Students undertaking GNVQ programmes are assessed internally and externally. In addition to satisfying the assessment criteria in each unit of the course, students are also assessed by their teachers in the mandatory core skills. To supplement the internal assessment of each mandatory unit in their programme, students are also required to pass externally-set tests, where appropriate, to assess their knowledge and understanding of the concepts, principles and relationships which underpin the vocational area. Students must meet the assessment requirements of all the units of their programme in order to gain the full award. However, GNVQ students who achieve at least one unit are entitled to receive a certificate listing the units achieved. The full GNVQ can be awarded the grade of merit or distinction. Students' work is graded against grading criteria which are organised into 'themes'. In 1993-94, there were two themes for the intermediate awards: planning, and information seeking and information handling. For the advanced level award there was an additional theme entitled 'evaluation'. The NCVQ has now decided that grading criteria will be divided into four themes for each of the three GNVQ levels: planning, information seeking and information handling, evaluation, and quality of outcomes.

### **The Inspection**

8 The inspection covered GNVQ provision in 114 colleges, 25 per cent of the further education sector. More than 1,100 teaching sessions involving over 15,000 students were inspected. As well as examining students' work, inspectors held discussions with senior college managers, teachers and students. Inspection visits to colleges occurred throughout the year so that the changing picture in relation to GNVQs could be mapped and assessed. In addition, visits took place to 25 colleges at the end of the academic year to inspect completed portfolios of evidence in order to form judgements on the standards achieved by



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students. Discussions were held with the three awarding bodies: BTEC, C&G and RSA; officers of NCVQ; the Confederation of British Industry (CBI); Her Majesty's Inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED); and representatives of the Further Education Unit (FEU). Account was taken of the reviews of GNVQs carried out by OFSTED, the FEU, the Employment Department, NCVQ and the awarding bodies.

## **ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF GNVQS IN FURTHER EDUCATION**

9 GNVQ programmes are flexible and allow enrolment and testing throughout the year. Commonly, colleges have offered GNVQs in a similar format to traditional courses taught over the academic year, with all students following the same sequence of units linked to internal and external assessment. The GNVQ framework is also being used to extend the range of vocational qualifications available to young people. Teachers are enthusiastic about the new awards and regard them as appropriate for a significant proportion of their students. Their introduction is being tackled enthusiastically. Several colleges are using the advent of GNVQs to initiate an institution-wide review of the curriculum. Some colleges have developed common timetables for all vocational and academic courses which enable students to create their own programmes of study by combining elements of different courses and levels. Many sixth form colleges are using GNVQs to introduce or extend their vocational provision to enable them to attract students from a wider ability range.

10 The introduction of GNVQs has been most effective where well-informed senior managers have provided a strong lead and have allocated appropriate resources and time for staff development. The best practice was observed where there was a strategy for cross-college co-ordination of common issues such as: the induction and support of students, the provision of support for core skills, access to information technology, methods of assessment and review, and the provision of modules common across a range of GNVQs.

### **National Specifications**

11 The original national specifications for GNVQs used in the phase 1 pilot courses have been revised substantially and others have been completely re-written. Such revised specifications were often late in arriving in colleges: some arrived as late as the last week of the autumn term for courses that had started in September. This had consequences for recruitment, the quality of work, and staff morale. It also reduced the time available to the teachers to write and develop courses and put them in the difficult position of starting a course without knowing how best to construct it to meet the needs of students. In the view of many teachers the unit specifications do not identify clearly the essential knowledge required nor the standards to be achieved. Interpretation of

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NCVQ specifications has been more problematic where teaching staff have not previously delivered vocational courses. Teachers regard some of the performance criteria as vague and this makes consistent assessment difficult. Some of the range statements, which indicate the ground to be covered in a unit, are too broad in scope to allow their effective translation into course design.

12 Initial guidance and clarification about the content and standards of GNVQ units were not always consistently available from the awarding bodies or from the external verifiers on their visits to colleges. In some colleges, the involvement of the awarding bodies has been minimal. There are isolated examples of verifiers paying their first visit in March 1994, some six months after the start of courses. In addition, some colleges dealing with more than one awarding body received different guidance about assessment criteria and procedures. This created anxiety and confusion for teaching staff who initially lacked confidence in setting the standards and in dealing with the criteria for assessment. Nevertheless, teachers have coped well, particularly in those colleges that have held effective staff training events and where teachers have developed their own networks with teachers from other colleges and schools. In some regions, effective regional networks involving subject-based training days for teachers from schools and colleges have been developed with support from colleges, the awarding bodies, TECs and regional curriculum advisory councils.

### **Centre Approval**

13 Each of the three awarding bodies had a different approach to the granting of approval to colleges to offer GNVQs and the criteria which had to be satisfied varied. Over 90 per cent of the colleges inspected were appropriately assessed by the awarding body before approval to offer GNVQs was given. However, occasionally, approval was given to colleges to offer courses where, in the opinion of inspectors, the necessary staff expertise was not available. In others, insufficient checks had been made to ensure that colleges had the necessary range, quantity and quality of resources to support the course. A small number of colleges had selected their awarding body because they perceived approval to be more easily obtainable. On the other hand, other colleges have not sought approval from particular awarding bodies since the standards and validation requirements demanded by the awarding body were not perceived to be sufficiently high. The NCVQ is now working closely with the awarding bodies to develop a common framework to ensure consistency in the granting of centre approval.

### **Course Documentation**

14 Teachers and students have had difficulties in understanding much of the documentation from the NCVQ and the awarding bodies, and many staff have found it unwieldy. The documentation needs to be simplified and the standards to be achieved made more explicit. The amount of documentation to be completed for GNVQ courses is

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excessive. One college found that recording the progress of a single student required more than 400 separate written entries during a one-year course. Students do not find the terminology associated with GNVQs easy to understand; teachers often found it necessary to provide a simplified account of GNVQ language (for example, performance criteria, range statements, action-planning) to aid students' understanding. Nevertheless, familiarity with the new terminology is improving with time and colleges are becoming more comfortable with the new ways of describing courses.

### **Course Organisation**

15 Most GNVQs have been developed as free-standing courses with optional and additional units gradually introduced as the awarding bodies have produced them. A minority of students are combining advanced GNVQs with GCE A levels, and there are a few instances of GCE A level students also taking GNVQ units to enhance career prospects. A number of colleges link GNVQs with a European language or a range of GCE A levels such as law, accounting, psychology, biology, human biology or computer studies. In some colleges, intermediate manufacturing is being offered in a package with a BTEC first award in engineering and, very occasionally, with NVQs. In a few colleges, problems have been reported in arranging appropriate programmes of additional studies for GNVQ students. Links between GNVQ and NVQ programmes in business and business administration exist in some colleges but these links are underdeveloped in most other subject areas. A growing number of colleges have plans to develop such links. For example, in the West Midlands, a planned consortium is intending to provide opportunities for GNVQ students to include an NVQ basic unit in care in their programme from September 1994. Colleges have yet to develop adequate systems to enable them to support students on programmes which combine courses with different learning styles, such as GNVQ, GCE A level, GCSE or NVQ.

16 There are some examples of excellent curriculum innovation involving GNVQ delivery. For example, a college in the South West region has converted a youth training (YT) health and social care course into a part-time intermediate programme, with a block of work experience as an integral part of the course. This is working effectively: the students feel valued; they have the opportunity to achieve certification; they are treated as 'partner staff' in their work placements, and the tutorial support they receive from college staff is outstanding. A college in the Yorkshire and Humberside region plans to offer part-time intermediate and advanced business when funding from the local TEC becomes available for youth trainees. Another college, in the north east of England, provides advanced business to students from a large local authority employer on a day-release basis. The employer preferred the wider educational basis of the GNVQ to the job-focused NVQ.

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## **Time Allocation**

17 The amount of time allocated to teaching GNVQ courses varies. One in ten colleges devoted up to 24 hours of taught study time a week. A few colleges devoted less than 10 hours a week. One college began an advanced level course with a weekly allocation of five hours of teaching time. Meaningful comparisons between colleges are often complicated by the different definitions of 'teaching time', 'directed self study' and 'tutorial support time'. Most colleges identified some study time which could take place off-site or within a variety of learning workshops or libraries. At all levels, students are expected to undertake some of their studies during their own time but this work is not always monitored effectively.

18 More than 80 per cent of colleges provided between 10 and 18 hours a week of teacher-supervised work in an advanced GNVQ. This is comparable with the time allocated to a two or three-subject GCE A level programme. Most colleges allocated between 8 and 16 hours a week of teacher supervision to the intermediate level GNVQ. This is less than the 18 to 22 hours of weekly instruction typically devoted to a GCSE programme of four or five subjects.

## **EXTERNAL LINKS**

### **Schools**

19 The introduction of GNVQs has promoted some innovative co-operation between colleges and schools. In some areas, schools and colleges are jointly exploring which core skills are being covered at key stage 4 of the national curriculum. This holds out the possibility of accreditation of prior learning (APL) for pupils who progress to the colleges to take GNVQs. One college is part of a consortium with 18 local schools to offer GNVQs. In the West Midlands another college is part of a consortium, supported by TEC funding, which is working closely with the local Muslim community to encourage Muslim girls to stay on in post-16 education. Many colleges are trying to build upon their links with schools established under the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) which was delivered through consortia arrangements in many areas. A college in the Yorkshire and Humberside region is part of an informal network which is considering how to standardise assessment practices. The college is also providing Training and Development Lead Body (TDLB) training for teachers from schools and colleges in the area. Another college has a compact with local schools to guarantee a place on GNVQ intermediate or advanced courses for suitably qualified school-leavers. In Merseyside, a college has been participating in a project funded by the Employment Department which assists schools to develop suitable teaching materials for GNVQ courses.

20 In some areas, franchise arrangements between colleges and schools have led to colleges delivering part or all of a GNVQ course either

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on school premises or at the college. Some franchise arrangements have ceased after only one year as schools have become more confident in their own ability to deliver GNVQs. Joint ventures seem likely to decrease in localities where schools are planning to expand their own post-16 provision. It would be unfortunate if competition for students between schools and colleges should lead to a weakening of collaboration on matters of mutual interest concerning the curriculum, assessment and progression in GNVQ courses.

### **Employers**

21 Colleges reported that employers were unsure about the aims, content and relevance of the new GNVQs. Links with employers are, as yet, less well developed for GNVQ courses than for other better-known vocational qualifications. In some cases, liaison with employers is informal, or limited to involvement through work experience for students. Colleges with advisory committees that have representatives from employers and the careers service have attempted to raise the level of awareness of GNVQs by discussing their development at meetings of the advisory committee. In one college, the expertise of employers on the advisory committee was used to good effect to contribute to GNVQ courses in the areas of leisure and tourism, and business. Other colleges have drawn on the vocational experience and business backgrounds of members of their governing body. Some teachers involved in teaching GNVQs have used their contacts in industry and commerce to enhance the vocational relevance of their courses. In some art and design courses, for example, commercial artists and designers have provided briefs to ensure that projects are realistic and relate to modern practice. Despite some examples of good practice, much remains to be done. Many colleges are reviewing ways of increasing the contribution of employers and the careers service to their courses, with the aim of raising their level of awareness of GNVQs and increasing employer involvement.

### **Training and Enterprise Councils**

22 Productive relationships are developing between some colleges and the local TEC. For example, in the Midlands, one TEC has provided £27,000 for the schools and colleges in a former TVEI partnership to develop GNVQs. A joint college-TEC venture in south west England aims to develop an intermediate course in leisure and tourism for unemployed adults. In the Yorkshire and Humberside region, GNVQ courses are gradually replacing other foundation level courses and are being used to increase the numbers from groups under-represented in further education. Over 90 per cent of students on these courses are funded by training credits from the local TEC, with the condition that the students spend two days each week in work placements. It has been agreed that a number of the students might take two years to complete the foundation programme, while at the same time continuing to develop their English. A GNVQ course designed to enable unemployed adults to

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gain credit for their previous business experience has been funded by another TEC in Yorkshire and Humberside. The first students will complete the course in November 1994. However, some TECs do not recognise GNVQs as suitable courses for funding.

### **Higher Education**

23 During the year the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) published a survey of the attitudes of higher education institutions to GNVQs for purposes of admission. The response was favourable and in August 1994 UCAS announced that 85 per cent of students working towards an advanced GNVQ who applied to higher education institutions received offers of places. A number of colleges are working closely with local and regional higher education providers to ensure understanding and acceptance of the new awards, while an increasing number have entered compact arrangements with higher education institutions to ensure progression. Some colleges have involved higher education staff in the design of courses to identify the depth of knowledge, styles of learning and appropriate additional units required to ensure that successful students would be able to progress to higher education. However, some students who had successfully completed the advanced GNVQ in health and social care were unable to gain entry to nursing and paramedical training. A survey of the attitudes of higher education and professional training providers conducted by one of the colleges inspected showed that for the same course in radiography offered at three higher education institutions, the GNVQ was deemed by one institution as suitable for entry; suitable if accompanied by a GCE A level in a science by another; and unsuitable by the third.

### **RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT OF STUDENTS**

24 In 1993-94, 1,400 approved centres recruited 83,000 students to GNVQ programmes. A breakdown of registrations by programme area is shown in table 2.

**Table 2: Student registrations by programme area, 1993-94**

<i>Programme Area</i>	<i>Registrations</i>
Business	34,000
Health and social care	18,000
Leisure and tourism	14,000
Art and design	9,000
Manufacturing	1,800
Others, pilot and foundation	6,200
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83,000</b>

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## Entry Requirements

25 For entry to advanced GNVQ courses, students are normally expected to have gained an intermediate GNVQ or four or five GCSEs at grade C or above. For intermediate courses, entry criteria vary. Some colleges operate an 'open admissions' policy, based on students' choice, a demonstrated commitment to the course and a supportive record of achievement or school report. Other colleges require students to have passed two GCSEs, including English, with at least grades A-D. The absence of specific entry criteria and the lack of a range of suitable foundation courses led to some students being inappropriately placed on intermediate programmes. Many left early and failed to achieve the award. Some colleges accepted students from a wider ability range, often with lower standards of achievement than they had previously accepted for vocational courses. For example, on advanced business GNVQs at one college, the 83 students had the minimum entrance qualifications but only 11 had GCSEs in both English and mathematics at grade C or above. Having recognised these problems, most colleges are now developing a wider range of courses at all three levels, are clarifying entry criteria and are offering more guidance to ensure that their students join appropriate courses.

26 The speed with which GNVQs have been introduced has had some unfortunate consequences. At some colleges, students were recruited to a vocational course and only discovered at the start of the course that it had been replaced by a new GNVQ course. For example, at one college, students in health and social care who had applied for entry to the BTEC national diploma courses in health studies or in social care, were subsequently told that these courses would not run and were offered enrolment to the advanced GNVQ in health and social care. About 25 per cent of students felt that they had received insufficient information about the new course but were left with little alternative. In another college, where BTEC national diplomas were being run in parallel with GNVQ courses, students thought that the rationale for allocating students to courses was unclear and arbitrary.

27 There has been a low take-up of the GNVQ in manufacturing. The decline in manufacturing in some regions has discouraged young people from choosing to embark on courses in manufacturing. Some colleges, including a number which had piloted manufacturing courses, are not yet prepared to offer manufacturing because they believe that the underpinning knowledge elements are insufficient to allow students to progress to higher education or to further vocational study.

28 The structure of the GNVQ courses in leisure and tourism has led to recruitment problems. The combination of leisure with tourism has attracted some students interested in sports studies and others who are considering a career in tourism. This programme area had an above average number of entrants with low entry qualifications. One college in

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the South West addressed these problems by effective marketing, recruitment and pre-course advice, setting appropriate entry requirements, and assembling a well-qualified team of staff who were both confident and able to deliver all aspects of the course at both intermediate and advanced levels. The range of options offered to students was sufficient to enable them to put together programmes to meet their individual needs. As a consequence, retention rates remained high.

29 There are many examples of good initial diagnostic assessment of students prior to and on entry which identify the extent of learning support required. A growing number of colleges are providing workshops for students to support their development in English, numeracy and information technology, or facilitating GCSE re-sits where appropriate. As more students work in workshops and study additional subjects, they will require careful guidance from their tutors to identify and use effectively the various support services provided by the college.

30 Little attention is given to APL on GNVQ courses. It is generally not seen by colleges as appropriate for the majority of 16 to 17 year old students who have just completed their schooling. However, if adult students are recruited to GNVQ courses, colleges may need to make more use of their APL services.

### **Induction**

31 The time devoted to induction to GNVQ courses varied widely, ranging from periods of two days to six weeks. Sometimes induction involved a short residential period which students often found to be beneficial in establishing good working relationships with their fellow students and teachers. In the most effective induction practice, students were set assignments which simultaneously provided an appropriate introduction to the college while encouraging co-operation and the development of teamwork skills. In some colleges, joint induction courses have been arranged for students from a number of GNVQs at different levels. These have included sessions on study skills, introductions to work experience arrangements, and advice on how to present a portfolio of work effectively and how to set learning objectives in consultation with tutors. As a result of such induction, students have been well prepared for their studies and have settled more readily onto their courses. In one particularly good induction to advanced science a period of six weeks was used effectively to reinforce students' understanding of the course structure and procedures, and to consolidate the basic knowledge needed to tackle all the units of their course. It also allowed sufficient time for an intensive period of training in information technology. This provided an effective bridge between their national curriculum school work and the advanced GNVQ in science.



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## **Retention**

32 Retention rates on GNVQ courses varied widely. On a few intermediate courses rates were poor, falling, in one instance, to as low as 45 per cent over the year. Withdrawals from intermediate and advanced art and design courses were usually ascribed to course issues, with 'testing' and 'mathematics' frequently cited as reasons for leaving. A small minority of colleges registered students on both an existing vocational course and the new GNVQ. If such students failed the external tests on the GNVQ course or were anxious about them, they discontinued their GNVQ programme and worked towards the other qualification.

33 Some good practice was seen in the monitoring and tracking of students' progress. One college had produced detailed procedures for monitoring every aspect of a student's progress in the form of a 'learner's tracking manual'. The tracking system is computerised and reasons for drop-out, together with exit and destination details, are logged and any required action is identified and followed up by the course team. It was common for teachers to experience difficulties in keeping track of all the evidence that could contribute to the award of merit and distinction grades and much time was spent on retrospective checking and recording.

## **Foundation Courses**

34 In 1993-94, relatively few colleges were involved in piloting the first five foundation GNVQs. Foundation level courses are intended to give open access to a diverse range of clients including: new beginners wishing to taste occupational areas, adult returners, people whose first language is not English and those disaffected or demotivated by their previous educational experience. In an interesting development, one college in the Eastern Region is piloting two foundation courses for students with learning difficulties. The staff are positive about the programme and consider it should provide a recognised qualification for their students. The main barrier to using the GNVQ framework for students with learning difficulties is associated with the standards set in some of the core skills units, especially the mathematics involved in the application of number unit, which are too demanding for some of the students. However, many teachers are confident that course delivery and assessment can be adapted to enable students to obtain the award provided the normal period of study is extended. In one college which has a large number of Asian students, many of whom do not have English as their first language, three foundation courses are run principally to promote language development through a variety of vocational contexts. In their first year of operation these courses were found to be working well.

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## TEACHING AND LEARNING

35 Over 1,100 GNVQ teaching and learning sessions were inspected in the academic year 1993-94. Of these, 54 per cent were deemed to have strengths which outweighed their weaknesses, compared with 62 per cent for GCE AS/A level, 56 per cent for NVQ and 47 per cent for GCSE. About 11 per cent of GNVQ activities inspected had more weaknesses than strengths compared with approximately 7 per cent for GCE AS/A level and NVQ, and 10 per cent for GCSE.

### Teaching Methods

36 The majority of teaching was well planned and effective. In many cases, the teaching approach was clearly an adaptation of previous provision for vocational courses. This is understandable in the light of the speed with which GNVQs have been introduced. Interpretation of the unit specifications often proved difficult for teachers who had not previously been involved in vocational courses, or where there was insufficient time available for them to discuss, plan, moderate and review delivery. Where sufficient development time had been allocated to course teams, some good learning materials had been produced. In over 75 per cent of the colleges inspected, students were well briefed and well supported in their learning by qualified and committed staff, and there were appropriate tutorial arrangements. Where colleges had open-access workshops and literacy and numeracy support to extend students' capabilities beyond their immediate programme some work of good quality ensued. In the colleges where staff had high expectations of students and communicated their enthusiasm for the new vocational courses, the good quality of much of the work was evident.

37 A variety of learning styles were used on GNVQ courses. These included assignments, group work, oral presentations, simulations, case studies, practical work, independent study, role-play, educational visits and work experience. In many cases students took responsibility for organising their own activities and were encouraged to work in groups or, if appropriate, individually. In some classes, students were encouraged to develop and practise oral and presentation skills, and presentations were sometimes made to governors and employers. In practical sessions, students were invariably well motivated and engaged in the task. Much of the work required research and the acquisition of information which was then incorporated into the assignments. This, together with the development of writing skills, meant that teachers had to give more assistance to students than many had anticipated.

38 A wide range of assignments were undertaken by students. In the best practice these were specified to good professional standards, addressed vocational themes which covered all the required performance criteria, range statements and core skills, and challenged even the most able students. However, both staff and students expressed concern that the emphasis on paper-based planning and

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recording was leading to insufficient emphasis on practical outcomes, finished work and good presentation. This affected the motivation of some students. In the early part of courses many students were uncomfortable with the process by which they agreed with their tutor what needed to be done for them to achieve their learning objectives. Where records of achievement had been used effectively in their schools this was less problematic. Students are required to cover all the performance criteria in GNVQ courses. This led to some assignments being artificially designed to fill gaps left by incomplete coverage in earlier assignments and to students undertaking work which was superficial and insufficiently challenging.

39 In most sessions, there was an appropriate balance between presentations by teachers and student-led activities, although staff with little or no previous experience of vocational courses favoured presenting material while students listened.

40 In about 10 per cent of classes, teaching had become too directed towards preparing students for external tests. On occasions, students were not significantly challenged and teachers' narrow interpretation of the knowledge required impoverished the learning experience. In such classes students often copied notes from overhead projectors and were given insufficient opportunity to think for themselves. There was often no evidence of any study packages to help students study on their own or any learning resources other than handouts and unacknowledged copies of texts. The written work of some of the students showed little evidence of their own investigations or research. In other cases, even though learning methods were varied, there was no clear development of vocational themes.

41 In a few colleges, intermediate and advanced students were combined for a number of activities, including induction, external visits, talks from visiting speakers and special projects. In one college in the South West region, advanced GNVQ health and social care students worked collaboratively with students with learning difficulties on the production of a play for local primary school children. This gave the health and social care students direct experience of clients with special needs, which would not have had the same impact had it been presented within a theory class. There were also some good examples of foundation and intermediate GNVQ students being successfully taught together where the groups included students for whom English was their second language and others with moderate learning difficulties.

### **Core Skills**

42 Approaches to the development of core skills varied between courses and colleges. In the best practice, core skills were developed and assessed through the vocational units. Workshops in communication, numeracy and information technology were available as were relevant materials to enable students to study by themselves.

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Teachers staffing the workshops were full members of course teams and advised other teachers on the design of assignments to make the best use of the workshops. Much of the work in core skills was of a high standard and many assignments challenged the most able students. Practical work was a particular strength with many students taking some responsibility for the development of their own skills. Much of their work showed clearly the progress they were making.

43 Not all colleges recognised fully the importance of core skills. Some staff teaching vocational units had not seen the need to develop and assess core skills within assignments, and the core skill records were both inconsistent and incomplete. In a few colleges, those teaching communications, application of number or information technology had been called upon to re-mark assignments in order to assess the core skills elements. Almost all the teachers of art and design who were interviewed expressed anxiety over the relevance and emphasis placed on core skills. The range and standards required by the application of number unit were seen as excessive, inappropriate and often difficult to integrate naturally into design briefs. Within the information technology core unit, the use of spreadsheets and databases was often perceived as unnecessary for art and design students. Overall, the organisation and support for core skills are lagging behind those given to mandatory and optional units and their development is proving difficult to cover fully within these units.

### **Work Experience**

44 Work experience, where colleges provide it, enriches and enhances the vocational relevance and validity of courses. Not surprisingly, since work experience is not a mandatory component of GNVQ, its availability, range, duration and the extent to which it is monitored and assessed vary. Since students do not gain credit for undertaking work experience, many are tempted to opt for additional units rather than placement experience. However, work experience is frequently cited by students who experience it as the most enjoyable part of their course, especially where they have been able to arrange it for themselves. In many cases, students would prefer work experience to be assessed and to become an integral part of their course and inspectors considered that this would be an appropriate development if sufficient places could be found.

## **ASSESSMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT**

### **Assessment and Grading**

45 Coursework and assignments are set and assessed by teachers within the college. Many assignments provided good opportunities for the demonstration of independent research and organisation skills which allowed students to reach merit or distinction standard. Most students could expect their work to be carefully marked with useful comments, and returned within a reasonable period. However, some students of

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modest ability did not always receive helpful comments on how they could improve their work.

46 There was much confusion surrounding the standard of work expected of students. A consequence of this confusion was that teachers had sometimes set inappropriate assignments. Some assignments were not sufficiently stretching whilst others were at too high a level. One college originally designed its advanced GNVQ coursework at a standard just above GCSE level; another used assignments developed for a BTEC higher national award. Colleges with little experience of vocational education, or which introduced courses in areas new to their teachers, experienced most difficulty in identifying appropriate standards. Teachers designing new courses in these colleges also had the greatest difficulty in interpreting the specifications for each award. This was particularly true on some advanced leisure and tourism work where little attempt was made to develop higher level skills through questions requiring students to 'compare' or 'analyse' rather than 'identify' and 'list'. Specifications for the science courses being piloted this year were much clearer and led to less confusion among teaching teams. Clearer guidance on the specifications is required for all awards to assist in the definition of appropriate standards and to ensure parity with other qualifications.

47 There were differences between colleges, and between areas of work within the same college, in the thoroughness of the assessment process. In consequence, the standards set for students' achievement varied. In many colleges, students were provided with two grades for their work: one based upon college criteria and another based on teachers' interpretation of GNVQ grading criteria. As work is completed, it is added by students to their portfolio of evidence. Teachers on many courses were unfamiliar with the preparation of portfolios, how best to use formative and summative assessment and the application of the grading criteria. In some cases, the preparation of the portfolios was not integrated into students' learning programmes and often became an additional assessment hurdle to be overcome. In many colleges, and particularly on art and design courses, portfolios of work were often well organised and contained work of a high standard. Generally, however, portfolio preparation and assessment is underdeveloped and is in need of further attention.

48 To meet the requirements of grading, the students' portfolio of evidence must show that they have met all the performance criteria across the full range of assessed work. Towards the end of the course, students' evidence portfolios are used to award an overall grade. Grading is done by teachers against grading criteria published by the NCVQ. Students can be awarded a merit grade if a third or more of their work meets all of the merit grading criteria and a distinction grade if a third or more of their work meets all of the distinction grading criteria.

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## External Tests

49 Internal assessments are complemented by externally set written tests for each mandatory unit. Students are required to achieve a mark of 70 per cent in each test to achieve a pass. In some mandatory units, colleges reported a mismatch between the achievements of students in their coursework and their results in the external tests which were set and marked by the awarding bodies. One reason for this mismatch is that students are sometimes entered for external tests too early in their course. In advanced business courses, for example, students who entered the external test in financial resources towards the end of the course performed significantly better than those who entered the course early. Many of the technical difficulties identified in earlier reviews of external tests remain. They are not designed to test higher order skills sufficiently, they vary too much from one awarding body to another and some questions are ambiguous. Some teaching to the test occurred, with a disproportionate amount of time being provided for students to prepare themselves. At the time of the inspections, only one of the awarding bodies shared past test papers with colleges; some colleges, therefore, prepared revision exercises with little reference to the test model used by the awarding body. The awarding bodies, having adopted a common code of practice on external testing, are now actively improving test questions by the application of better quality control processes, but more work is still needed.

## Standards Achieved

50 To assess the standards being achieved on GNVQ programmes inspectors examined students' work throughout the year and inspected a sample of completed portfolios of evidence across a range of subjects in 25 colleges in July 1994. They concluded that the amount of work undertaken and the standards achieved by students on advanced GNVQ programmes are broadly equivalent to those achieved by students on vocational courses such as the BTEC national diplomas and on GCE A level programmes involving the study of two subjects.

51 Inspectors were satisfied with the standards achieved by students in advanced art and design and considered that the range and quality of practical work at some centres exceeded that generally achieved by GCE A level students of art, although sometimes students' written work did not compare so favourably. The rigour and depth of analysis in advanced business was comparable with that found in GCE A level business studies and the standard of written work was similar to that produced by students on BTEC national programmes. There were similar findings in advanced health and social care where some of the students who were taking an additional GCE A level in biology found the GNVQ work more demanding in scope and time than the GCE work. Advanced leisure and tourism was more problematic. Too often the students' portfolios of evidence reflected the acquisition of information rather than the interpretation and analysis expected at this level.

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52 Across the country as a whole, the standard of students' work and their achievements on intermediate GNVQ varied widely from course to course and from college to college. It will take some time for national standards to become established. The volume of work achieved by students included in the survey was judged to be equivalent to four good GCSEs at grade C or above, and therefore worthy of consideration for merit or distinction grades, in about a third of cases. Over 70 per cent of students produced some elements of work equivalent to GCSE grade C or above. Many students achieved satisfactory standards in intermediate art and design. At some colleges, the demands placed on students studying for the intermediate GNVQ in business were perceived to be as high as, and sometimes higher than, those required on the BTEC first diploma course which it had replaced. Some excellent work was seen in the portfolios of students in the GNVQ intermediate level course in health and social care at one sixth form college where the presentation and standards of written assignments were high.

### **RESOURCES**

53 Most teachers on GNVQ courses are professionally qualified and have a relevant vocational background. Often this vocational experience was gained some time ago and many teachers would benefit from and welcome some updating. The need for recent and relevant vocational experience was greatest for teachers in sixth form colleges. There was generally a good match of staff expertise to teaching responsibilities. However, some courses in leisure and tourism and manufacturing were not always taught by staff with appropriate vocational expertise. Teachers on GNVQ courses in general further education and tertiary colleges were generally drawn from vocational areas of the college. Few were drawn from those teaching on GCE A level or GCSE courses. In sixth form colleges, staff teaching GNVQs frequently also taught on GCE and GCSE courses. In one college, an intermediate business course was exceptionally well co-ordinated by a member of staff with recent experience of co-ordinating a related NVQ.

54 Part-time teachers were generally used appropriately to bring additional vocational perspectives to the course. Good contributions were made by industrial and graphic designers on some art and design courses, and by specialists from the financial world on business courses. On a few courses, the proportion of part-time staffing was too high, which made effective co-ordination of internal verification and moderation difficult to achieve. Additionally, where a part-time teacher had responsibility for teaching only one unit and left the college at the end of that unit, students who failed the external test often had difficulty in gaining specialist support to prepare them for their next attempt.

55 In the majority of GNVQ courses, colleges have dedicated specialised resources and the students have access to college-wide facilities for further support. All colleges provided adequate access to

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information technology equipment within the timetabled sessions though, outside class time, access was sometimes restricted. Some courses did not have up-to-date software matching industrial standards, particularly in manufacturing and in art and design. Several colleges developed GNVQs in art and design from a GCSE/GCE base and did not possess the range of equipment needed for a vocational course. A small number of courses, particularly in science and manufacturing, were operating with old equipment. Many colleges are actively developing purchase and replacement policies for equipment and are devolving budgets to course teams. Textbooks, and paper and computer-based resources developed specifically for GNVQs are becoming more widely available. However, at the time of inspection most colleges were either using editions produced for previous vocational courses, or producing their own handouts. A small minority of colleges had produced high-quality, sophisticated packs of learning materials covering each unit.

56 Seventy-five per cent of the courses inspected had appropriate base-room accommodation which was usually decorated to a high standard. Many base rooms were flexibly furnished to encourage a range of teaching and learning activities. Good use was made of resources located off-site, such as local libraries, careers offices and local industry and commerce.

57 There are cost implications for libraries and learning resource centres arising from the introduction of GNVQs which are associated with the greater emphasis placed on individual and group projects where students manage and organise their own work. The move in recent years for colleges to provide open-access resource centres equipped with learning materials and equipment for computing and information technology has provided the facilities for GNVQ programmes to enable students to work on their own.

#### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

58 Responsibility for the quality and standards of courses rests with the colleges and the awarding bodies who work within the guidelines established by NCVQ. Much of the emphasis of the early work of internal and external verifiers during the introduction of GNVQs concentrated on the establishment of processes, with too little attention being given to the moderation of standards. Advice and guidance on standards from NCVQ and the awarding bodies have not always been clear to teachers and the use of the same verifiers across different courses has not assisted in developing appropriate vocational standards. Colleges need a clear framework for quality assurance that involves the monitoring, evaluation and review of all GNVQ courses together with a thorough review of assessment methods. Internal verification procedures should include moderation of course standards and sampling of students' work. Internal and external verifier reports were used effectively in about 10 per cent of colleges inspected to review their approach to assessment or to develop quality control procedures to be applied by all GNVQ teams.



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59 The majority of colleges have systems to assure the quality of their courses based on evaluation and review by course teams. These vary in their effectiveness. A few colleges have used the development of GNVQ to put into place an approach to quality assurance across the whole college. This involves internal cross-college moderation of students' work to ensure standards, and internal verification to ensure consistency of assessment practices. One college convened a group which reviewed all assignments used with GNVQ students to ensure they were at the correct level and were valid for learning and assessment. Another used a quality control group to establish standardised procedures across all GNVQ courses which entailed periodic review and evaluation. Many colleges have allocated time for regular meetings of teaching teams. Additionally, some hold regular meetings of team leaders and teachers from all courses to discuss issues of practice and implementation. In these colleges a higher level of consistency of standards and assessment practices was achieved. In about half the colleges inspected the system of quality control was still underdeveloped. In such colleges teachers were less confident about the technical aspects of identifying standards and applying the grading criteria.

#### **Internal Verification**

60 Internal verification is the responsibility of the college offering the GNVQ programme. Internal verifiers are required to check assessment records and to assure themselves that all procedures have been followed correctly. Most teachers were keen to make internal verification work and welcomed a process of cross-college moderation to ensure comparability of standards and to allow the sharing of good practice. Where colleges had established such procedures there were fewer problems with internal verification. One college is co-operating with a non-competing college to moderate assignments and students' work. This arrangement is working well and is one that other colleges might adopt. Few colleges have set in place appropriate mechanisms to moderate assessments for core skills achievement.

61 In a small number of colleges, the GNVQ co-ordinator or members of the college steering group acted as internal verifiers for all GNVQ programmes. These verifiers checked all assignments before use, and moderated students' assignments and assessed work. This system of internal verification, combined with team meetings and the involvement of specialist staff has improved course structures, led to more effective control of standards and increased liaison between members of teaching teams. Across the further education sector as a whole, however, internal verification systems are not yet working well for GNVQ programmes and there are variations in assessment practices between and within colleges.

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## **External Verification**

62 External verification is carried out by external verifiers acting on behalf of each awarding body. They visit centres to look at a sample of assessments in the portfolios of evidence to check that suitable verification processes and procedures are in place. The support provided by external verifiers varied. Many were valued by teachers as extremely useful and supportive whilst others were seen as neither well informed nor helpful. Their initial brief, to check that assessment and grading systems were in place, was a narrow one and their concentration on the processes of assessment, together with the number and range of courses for which each has been responsible, have prevented them from sampling students' work effectively, and from influencing standards sufficiently. GNVQ course teams, particularly those providing vocational programmes for the first time, often had difficulty working with the external verifier to establish the correct level for the course. A small number of external verifiers without relevant vocational experience accepted standards which were too low. Where external verifiers had vocational expertise, a coherent set of courses to visit in different institutions, and where they spent time sampling students' work and advising on standards, staff were appreciative and the quality of the provision was enhanced. This was particularly noticeable on some science and manufacturing courses. The NCVQ has recently organised a series of training events for external verifiers to raise their awareness of standards.

## **Staff Development**

63 Some colleges are devoting significant amounts of their staff-development budgets to GNVQ activities. In most colleges, plans are well advanced to accredit full-time staff with assessor and verifier awards. Colleges are using the TDLB awards to accredit assessors and internal verifiers but some of the training currently undertaken by GNVQ assessors does not directly address matters relating to quality and standards in GNVQs. A number of colleges have incorporated the TDLB awards into 'assessment for learning' courses and, where these were effective, standards were more consistent. However, the majority of colleges were not using the TDLB awards in this way. In a few colleges, staff have received GNVQ awareness-raising and training in induction, specialist unit delivery, assignment writing, core skills assessment and mapping. A number of colleges had built up effective networks with schools throughout the life of the TVEI and were still running some effective joint staff development and training for GNVQ. However, such co-operative initiatives were rare and are decreasing. In order to ensure continued improvement in the quality of GNVQ courses, staff development is now required in the following areas: updating staff by providing relevant vocational experience; better development of assessment skills; identification of appropriate standards, and consistency in the use of the grading criteria. A few colleges have put in

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place imaginative programmes to address these needs with some receiving funding from the local TECs.

## CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

64 GNVQs have become immediately popular with young people. In 1993-94, about one sixth of those 16 year olds achieving the statutory school-leaving age enrolled on GNVQ programmes in schools and colleges. The introduction of GNVQs has been welcomed by teachers and many colleges are using their introduction as an opportunity to review their curriculum and to improve guidance, induction and student support arrangements. Inspectors have found that the achievements of students on advanced GNVQ programmes are broadly equivalent in standard to the achievements of those on the vocational courses which they have replaced and of those on GCE A level programmes involving the study of two subjects.

65 The speed with which GNVQ qualifications have been introduced, although creditable, has stretched the resources of NCVQ, the awarding bodies and colleges. In March 1994 the parliamentary under-secretary of state for further and higher education, Mr Tim Boswell, responding to concerns raised by OFSTED and others, set out a six-point agenda for action for the NCVQ and the awarding bodies to ensure quality and rigour in GNVQs. He called for:

- a tightening up of the external testing regime
- a review of the role of external verifiers to ensure that moderation of standards was the main focus of their work and that they had appropriate subject expertise and better training
- a clarification of the grading criteria
- a clarification of the knowledge and understanding required in each unit, especially the mandatory core skills units at each level
- greater clarity of expression and the avoidance of jargon in guidance to teachers on issues such as marking coursework, grading and setting up and designing courses, with written materials backed up by regional and local support networks
- common criteria and consistency of interpretation over the approval of centres for purposes of offering GNVQs.

66 The findings presented in this report echo the concerns expressed by the minister. In addition, colleges and teachers need to address the following issues:

- cross-college co-ordination of GNVQ provision
- pre-enrolment guidance
- the overall standard of work in intermediate programmes

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- the volume of documentation for recording assessment
  - low completion rates on some courses
  - the vocational experience of teachers and their assessment and grading practices
  - colleges' links with industry and commerce.

67 The ultimate success of GNVQs will depend critically on the speed with which NCVQ, the awarding bodies and the colleges address and find solutions to the issues raised by the minister and by this report. Steps are already being taken to tackle these problems and to find appropriate solutions. Such solutions must be acceptable not only to teachers and students but also to employers, professional bodies, higher education admissions tutors and the public at large, if these qualifications are to be credible and valued.

**Figure 1: The phasing-in of GNVQs**

**GNVQ Levels**

GNVQs are available at three levels: foundation, intermediate and advanced. The two diagrams below illustrate the expected time scale for the introduction of each qualification.

**Intermediate and Advanced**

	1992-3	1993-4	1994-5	1995-6	1996-7
Health & social care	pilot				
Leisure & tourism	pilot				
Business	pilot				
Art & design	pilot				
Manufacturing	pilot				
Science		pilot			
Constr & the built enviro		pilot			
Hospitality & catering		pilot			
Engineering			pilot	(pilot)	
Information technology			pilot	(pilot)	
Distribution			pilot	(pilot)	
Media: communications & prod			pilot	(pilot)	
Management studies (advanced)			pilot	(pilot)	
Landbased & enviro industries					(pilot)
Performing arts					(pilot)

*In addition, advanced GNVQ in management studies will be piloted in 1994-96*

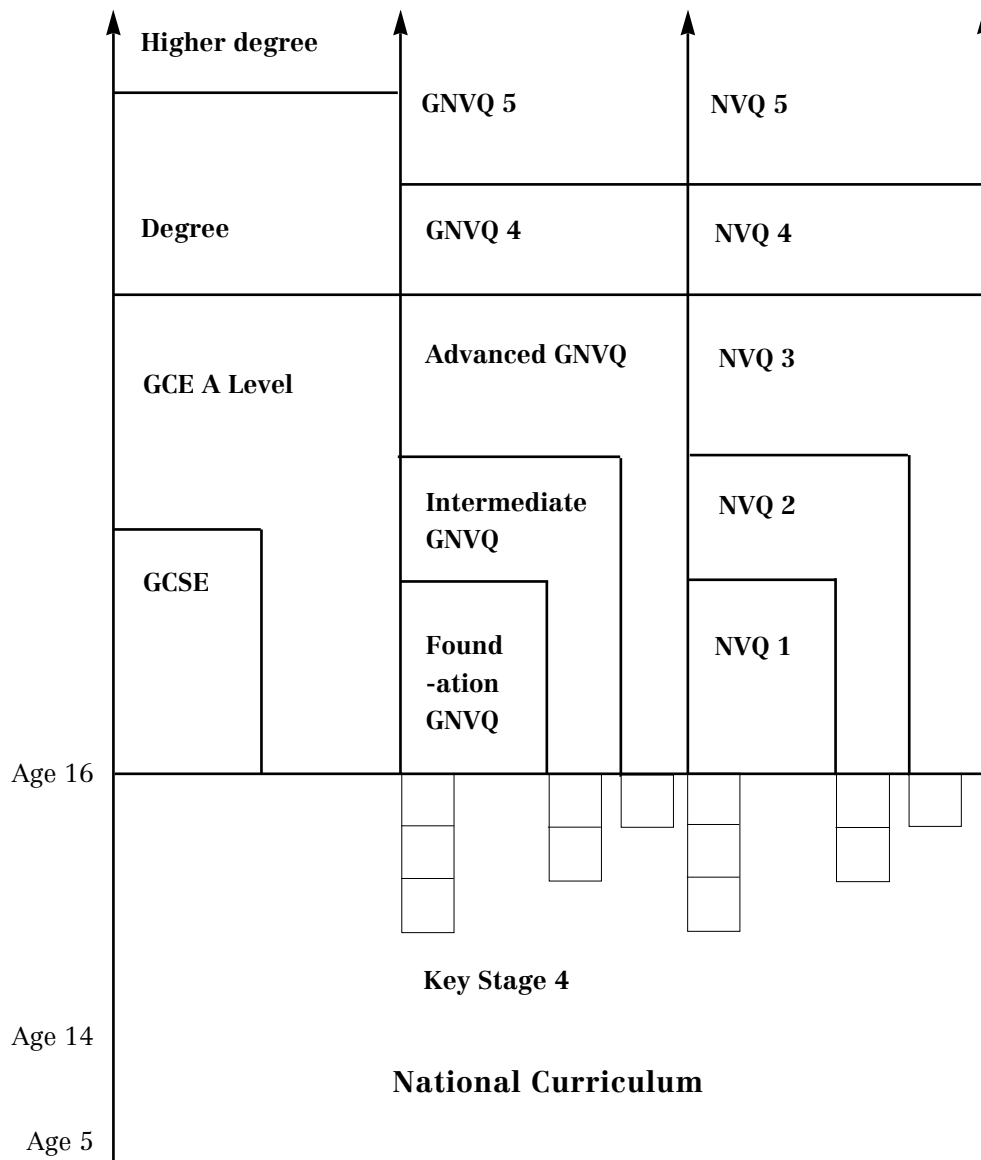
**Foundation**

	1992-3	1993-4	1994-5	1995-6	1996-7
Health & social care		pilot	restricted*		
Leisure & tourism		pilot	restricted*		
Business		pilot	restricted*		
Art & design		pilot	restricted*		
Manufacturing		pilot	restricted*		
Science			pilot		
Constr & the built enviro			pilot		
Hospitality & catering			pilot		
Engineering			pilot		
Information technology			pilot		
Distribution				pilot	
Media: communications & prod				pilot	
Landbased & enviro industries					(pilot)
Performing arts					(pilot)

*\*Restricted take-up (mainly limited to those centres offering intermediate GNVQs in the same vocational areas)*

Source: NVQ Monitor autumn 1994

**Figure 2: National qualification framework**



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# GLOSSARY

## TERMS USED TO DESCRIBE GNVQ COURSES

### **Mandatory units**

These cover the fundamental skills, knowledge and understanding of the vocational area covered by the GNVQ. These units must be taken by each candidate.

### **Optional units**

These complement the mandatory units and extend the range of a student's achievement.

### **Additional units**

These give students opportunities for further specialisation within the vocational area or to broaden their studies.

### **Core skills units**

All GNVQs require students to provide evidence of achievement at an appropriate level in three core skills units:

- communication
- application of number
- information technology.

The development and assessment of core skills should be integrated within the vocational activities which students carry out.

### **Elements**

A vocational unit normally consists of two to five elements which set out in detail the outcomes which must be demonstrated by the candidate.

### **Performance criteria**

Each element has a number of performance criteria. These clarify the activity described by the element and set the standard of performance that must be met.

### **Range**

Each element has a statement of range which gives the main aspects which must be covered by each student.

### **Evidence indicators**

The evidence indicators indicate the minimum evidence a student needs to present in terms of type of evidence and sufficiency.

### **Portfolio of evidence**

All candidates have to gather their assessment evidence for the GNVQ into a portfolio of evidence, which will be unique to each candidate. To meet the requirements of internal assessment the student's portfolio of evidence must show that he or she has met all the performance criteria and understands all the range dimensions as they relate to the appropriate performance criteria.

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### **Internal assessment**

The main evidence for assessment comes from projects and assignments carried out by students and assessed by their teachers. This work is kept in the portfolio of evidence. This portfolio allows both internal verifiers to examine the quality of students' work and to monitor the standards being set and achieved.

### **Externally set tests**

Internal assessments are complemented by externally set written tests for each mandatory unit (with the exception of certain units for which an external test is inappropriate). Students need to achieve 70 per cent in each test to achieve a pass.

### **Verification**

This is the process of monitoring assessment. It involves two parts:

Internal verification is the responsibility of the centre. Internal assessment records are checked by internal verifiers, who oversee assessment within centres.

External verification is carried out by external verifiers, acting on behalf of each awarding body. They visit centres to look at a sample of assessments in the portfolios of evidence and check that suitable processes and procedures are in place.

### **Grading**

Awards are graded pass, merit or distinction according to criteria set by the NCVQ and applicable to the awards of all three awarding bodies. Merit and distinction grades are awarded to students who demonstrate a level of performance above the basic GNVQ requirement based on an assessment of the quality of the overall body of work presented in their portfolios of evidence.

### **Centre approval**

Approval to offer GNVQs given to the college by an awarding body.



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## ACRONYMS

The use of acronyms in this report has been kept to a minimum. Because of their familiarity and frequency of use, the following have been used:

APL	Accreditation of prior learning
BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
C&G	City and Guilds of London Institute
GCE	General Certificate of Education advanced supplementary
AS/A level	/advanced level
FEU	Further Education Unit
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualifications
NCVQ	National Council for Vocational Qualifications
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OFSTED	Her Majesty's Inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education
RSA	RSA Examinations Board
TDLB	Training and development lead body
TEC	Training and enterprise council
TVEI	Technical and Vocational Education Initiative
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
YT	Youth Training