

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT
MARCH 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION
NOVEMBER 2001

Exeter College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- ◆ work-based training for all people over 16
- ◆ provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- ◆ the University for Industry's **learndirect** provision
- ◆ adult and community learning
- ◆ training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Grading

In summarising their judgements about the quality of provision in curriculum or occupational areas and about the quality of leadership and management, including quality assurance and equality of opportunity, inspectors use a five-point scale. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- ◆ grade 1 – outstanding
- ◆ grade 2 – good
- ◆ grade 3 – satisfactory
- ◆ grade 4 – unsatisfactory
- ◆ grade 5 – very weak.

SUMMARY

The original inspection of Exeter College was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for construction, hospitality, hair and beauty, equal opportunities, trainee support and quality assurance. These areas have been reinspected against the requirements of the *Common Inspection Framework* by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, which replaced the Training Standards Council on 1 April 2001. The sections of the original report dealing with construction, hospitality, hair and beauty, equal opportunities, trainee support and quality assurance have been replaced with the findings of the reinspection. Also, the report summary, report introduction and introduction to the inspection findings have been updated and reflect the findings of the reinspection. Sections of the report, dealing with areas which have not been reinspected, have been left in their original form. The amended inspection report is published on the Adult Learning Inspectorate's website (www.ali.gov.uk).

Exeter College provides good training in the making of hand-crafted furniture and satisfactory training in business administration and engineering. Its training programmes in construction, hospitality and hair and beauty (hairdressing) were not satisfactory at the time of the original inspection, because assessment processes were poorly managed, arrangements for the initial assessment of learners were inadequate and training in key skills was inadequate. Good initial assessment processes now exist, and most assessment practices are satisfactory or good. Considerable work has gone into developing key skills training and assessment, and in most areas these are now satisfactory or good. The college has good policies and procedures for equal opportunities and learner support, but at the time of the original inspection these were not applied well to learners in the workplace. There are now well thought-out arrangements for the work-based learners, and the learner support arrangements ensure equality of opportunity for all learners. The management of work-based learning is satisfactory. Since the time of the original inspection, the college has undergone radical reorganisation and has carried out an extensive rebuilding programme to improve teaching and training resources in most areas. At the time of the original inspection, quality assurance arrangements did not cover all aspects of work-based learners' learning experience. Comprehensive, new quality assurance measures are in place, although some have not yet been tested as they had not been in operation for long enough.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	4
Engineering	3
Manufacturing	2
Business administration	3
Hospitality	4
Hair & beauty	4

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	4
Trainee support	4
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	4

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Construction	3
Hospitality	2
Hair & beauty	3

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Equal opportunities	2
Trainee support	2
Quality assurance	2

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ good off-the-job training programmes in many areas
- ◆ good resources for off-the-job training in most areas

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of training officers in construction
- ◆ insufficient integration of key skills with vocational training in some courses

INTRODUCTION

1. Exeter College (the college) is a tertiary college which also serves as a general further education college for the surrounding region. It has seven sites near the centre of Exeter. The college works in partnership with the five secondary schools in the city to ensure that prospective learners make the right choice of course. In 1999, in Devon as a whole, the proportion of 16 year olds who achieved at least five general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 48.4 per cent, slightly above the national average of 47.9 per cent. In 2001, the proportion in Devon rose to 51.3 per cent, still slightly higher than the national average of 50 per cent. The proportion in Exeter's five high schools is lower at 38.2 per cent.

2. At the time of the original inspection, there were 598 learners in training funded by the Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Most of these were contracted through PROSPER, the TEC for Devon and Cornwall. In addition, there were seven New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option, subcontracted through PROSPER, and two others on the subsidised employment option. Sixteen learners were funded by the National Training Partnership (NTP). At that time, the work-based learners were managed by a separate part of the college, known as Training South West (TSW). The TSW team consisted of a manager and 14 training officers, eight of whom were full time and six were part time. There were also four administrative staff. By the time of the reinspection, the college had begun a restructuring to ensure that responsibility for the work-based learners lay clearly with the relevant college departments. The number of work-based learners is now 631. There are 17 training officers, who now have overall responsibility for the work-based learners, and who are accountable to the heads of the relevant vocational department. There is also a recruitment team of three, and an administrative support and contract management team. The college's vocational education and training directorate is responsible for developing, maintaining and reviewing the support systems for the work-based learners across vocational departments. At work, learners receive training from their training officer and their employer. In most cases, they are also assessed in the workplace by their training officer. Some learners are assessed by work-based assessors in their own workplaces. All learners attend the college for their off-the-job training. Some learners are assessed in college using evidence from the workplace. Training in the college is carried out by occupational specialists, including the training officers and key skills specialists.

3. Most of the employment opportunities in Exeter are in small and medium-sized enterprises. The unemployment rate in Exeter was 2.4 per cent in December 1999, compared with 3.8 per cent in England as a whole. In September 2001, the unemployment rate in Exeter was 2 per cent, compared with 2 per cent in Devon and 2.9 per cent in England as a whole. The proportion of people from minority

ethnic groups in the local population was very low at the time of the last census in 1991. In Devon overall it was below 1 per cent. In Exeter itself the proportion was 1.4 per cent. The national average for England as a whole was 6.2 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. The self-assessment report the college prepared for the original inspection was the third it had produced. All members of the college are involved in the self-assessment process, through course and support team reviews, which provide evidence for the departmental self-assessments. Information from surveys of students and employers is also used. The TEC advised that a separate self-assessment report for Training Standards Council (TSC) purposes would be easier for the TSC to use, but as the college was to be subject to a joint inspection, the self-assessment report was prepared for both the TSC and the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) inspectors. The college prepared a short self-assessment report for the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) before the reinspection.

5. The original TSC inspection took place jointly with the FEFC inspection. The TSC team consisted of seven inspectors, who spent a total of 32 days on the inspection. They observed training sessions, reviews and assessments. They interviewed 96 learners and spoke to 39 supervisors or employers. They visited 42 work placements, including hotels in Milton Keynes and Coventry, where most of the NTP learners were working. They also interviewed 34 members of the college staff. The grades they awarded for the training sessions they observed are shown overleaf. They also worked closely with the FEFC inspectors in construction and management, and with the FEFC on aspects of cross-college training provision.

6. The reinspection was carried out by six inspectors from the ALI, who spent a total of 24 days at the college in November 2001. They observed training sessions, assessments and reviews. They spoke to 47 learners, 20 workplace supervisors, visited 18 work placements, and carried out 67 interviews with members of college staff. They also examined 31 portfolios of evidence, 37 individual learning plans, the post-inspection action plan, the pre-inspection report, the draft new self-assessment report and other relevant documents.

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT: EXETER
 COLLEGE MARCH 2000 ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE
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Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the original inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction		4 (FEFC)	4 (FEFC)			8
Engineering		5	4			9
Manufacturing		1 (FEFC)	1 (FEFC)			2
Business administration		4		1		5
Hospitality		1				1
Hair & beauty			2			2
Total	0	15	11	1	0	27

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the reinspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction			5	1		6
Hospitality		2				2
Hair & beauty		2	5			7
Learning support		2	3	1		6
Total	0	6	13	2	0	21

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 3

7. In construction, the college provides foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships and training towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 to 4. There are 206 learners. One hundred and forty-one are advanced modern apprentices, 50 are foundation modern apprentices and 15 are NVQ learners. Most learners are employed and attend the college for one day each week. Occupationally competent tutors provide off-the-job training. Most are qualified teachers and assessors. Training officers, who are occupationally competent and employed as instructors in the college's workshops, provide support to the teaching staff. Four staff are qualified internal verifiers. Staff in the recruitment section work with employers and prospective learners. The training officers then take over responsibility and review learners every 12 weeks, assess them in the workplace and liaise with companies providing their employment. At college, learners receive instruction in background knowledge and training in practical skills, as well as some assessment. College workshops are based at two different sites. All training in construction takes place at the main site, with the exception of trowel trades and wood occupations. Employers, mostly small and medium-sized businesses, give learners on-the-job training.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ little co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ no assessments in the workplace
- ◆ trainees' low achievement rate on some programmes
- ◆ insufficient key skills training
- ◆ poor workshop facilities for some courses

8. Since the original inspection, the construction team has changed significantly. There is a new head of department and two work-based assessor/instructors have been appointed in response to an identified weakness. The work-based assessor/instructors also carry out learners' progress reviews, which have helped. These staff have forged links with employers to improve co-ordination and employers' understanding of NVQ requirements. However, there is still not enough promotion of this to some front-line supervisors. Training in key skills is being provided, however, in some areas key skills training is not an integral part of training leading to the NVQ. There is a delay in modern apprentices' achievement of their full frameworks due to the late introduction of key skills training. An additional delay in framework completion for electrical installation learners is caused by the need for a skills test, which they take after their work experience. A test rig has been installed at the college and learners who have not passed the skills test are allowed to practise, prior to taking the test, to improve success rates. However, most of the learners in this area are on three- or four-year advanced modern apprenticeships or two-year foundation modern apprenticeships,

so it is too early to assess the effects of recent changes. Retention rates are improving, from 51 per cent in 1998-99 to 76.5 per cent in 2000-01, and are 96.9 per cent in the current academic year. The self-assessment report identified most of the new strengths and weaknesses found during the reinspection. However, inspectors identified an additional weakness. The grade awarded is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-planned on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ strong links with employers
- ◆ good monitoring of learners' progress

GOOD PRACTICE

There is some reluctance by learners to attend the basic skills support sessions. They do not wish to be identified as needing support, especially with writing and spelling. To overcome this, specific classes for communication key skills have been time-tabled for all learners in the group. The assignments are being developed to allow the opportunity for these skills to be developed and then practised.

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of training officers
- ◆ poor workshop facilities for some courses
- ◆ no use of work-based evidence in wood occupations

9. The college has worked hard to develop more effective co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training. Staff share schemes of work and timetables with employers and publish them in the learners' course handbook. At progress reviews, training officers agree targets with learners and then communicate these to employers. This enables employers to allocate the most appropriate work to learners and to maximise assessment and evidence-gathering opportunities in the workplace. Learners on work placements are given a wide range of good work experience and employment opportunities. The recruitment officers use a workplace checklist to identify any gaps in NVQ training, before the learner starts on the programme. Unfortunately, this practice is not consistent across all craft areas and two learners are not working towards NVQs appropriate to their work placements. The off-the-job training is well planned and allows learners to simulate any assessment for which they are unable to gain work-based evidence.

10. The college's links with employers are productive. Most employers are supportive of learners and want to be involved in training activities. Training is planned on the job and, subject to workloads, learners have a wide variety of work placements. Regular contacts with occupationally competent training officers and experienced college tutors have increased employers' confidence. The college gives employers regular reports on learners' progress, attendance and timekeeping. A number of employers attend an advisory group, actively influencing decisions on course design. For example, until recently, some units were optional for the NVQ in plumbing at level 2, but as a result of employer consultation there are now two options, with a third in development. The college uses professionals in the industry as guest speakers on construction training programmes. To give learners a wider experience, employers are asked to take learners from other employers for short work placements. Several newly appointed staff in the college department have recent industrial experience. There are plans for employers to offer work

placements to college staff who have not worked in industry recently. The college participates in a scheme to promote the idea of work-based recorders to employers and encourages supervisors to train for this role.

11. There is good continuous monitoring of learners' progress. The appointment of work-based assessors, who are also instructors in their craft areas, promotes a co-ordinated approach to the training and assessment process. These assessors also carry out the role of training officers and conduct the 12-week progress reviews. The assessor/instructors use their knowledge of industry to provide a strong occupational focus for the progress reviews. Actions for learners to take, with targets set in previous reviews, are discussed and learners' progress towards them is recorded. New or revised targets are then set for the next 12-week period, which can be monitored weekly, between reviews, by the assessors/instructors at the college. The tutors use well-presented progress monitoring sheets and learners keep copies. A change to the planned training in plumbing is making unit-by-unit achievement possible and easier to monitor. Most learners are aware of their progress through the scheme. Assessment, in both the workplace and college, is generally thorough. Learners are starting to contact the work-based assessor to arrange assessment visits at times when they are carrying out appropriate work. Effective use is made of feedback to identify areas for improvement. Internal verification follows awarding body requirements, is well planned and a range of units and evidence is sampled. Verification of work-based assessment is included in the process.

12. There is currently a high learner to training officer ratio in construction. A vacancy exists for a work-based assessor, which is due to be filled soon. To reduce the effect on learners, members of the college's recruitment team are carrying out progress reviews. However, some learners have still missed or received late reviews. The recruitment staff brought in to help do not always have the same occupational competence as the learner being reviewed, so these progress reviews are more pastorally than vocationally focused. Some of the delay is due to most learners starting in September, the start of the college's academic year. An examination of the situation is taking place.

13. There are poor workshops and classroom accommodation in many areas, especially brickwork and carpentry, and cramped facilities in plumbing. There is not enough storage space in most practical-work areas. Many tools, and some machinery, are out of date. The college has additional funding to improve resources for all trades. Replacement tools and equipment are currently being delivered. The college is making a joint application, with another local college, for a new building to accommodate the whole construction department.

14. There is no use of work-based evidence to help learners progress towards their qualification in wood occupations. Both trowel trades and wood occupations have introduced a work evidence-recording diary, but these are not regarded as acceptable evidence by some staff. An assessor/instructor has been appointed to this area, but has not yet started. For both plumbing and electrical installation,

work-based evidence is used and work-based assessment takes place. There is little sharing of good practice across the two college sites offering training in construction.

Engineering (motor vehicle)

Grade 3

15. Engineering provision at Exeter College which includes motor vehicle training, is jointly managed by the head of Engineering responsible for off-the-job training in the college, and TSW which is responsible for the trainees in the workplace. There are 216 trainees on the scheme. Of the 86 engineering trainees 93 percent are employed. There are 44 modern apprentices, 17 national trainees and 25 work based trainees. The college provides the trainees with a wide range of training opportunities in engineering as well as training in motor vehicle, including production, technical services, electrical, machining, manufacturing or maintenance. Initially trainees either work for an NVQ at level 2 on a day release basis over two years or they study for an NC or HNC. They can progress to a higher national diploma (HND) course, which is run in partnership with the University of Plymouth. Trainees who achieve an NVQ level 2 or an NC can work for an NVQ at level 3 through workplace activities. The college has contact with many good quality small to medium sized engineering companies. The TSW training officer regularly visits the trainees in these companies to monitor and assess their progress. The retention rates on engineering programmes have increased over the last year from 83 per cent to 92 per cent

16. Of the 130 motor vehicle trainees, 41 are modern apprentices, 28 are national trainees, and 61 are on other work-based training programmes. Fifty-three are being trained as light vehicle mechanics, 24 as heavy vehicle mechanics, 36 in vehicle body repair and refinishing, and 17 in retail operations. Fifty-four per cent of these trainees are employed. All trainees on motor vehicle related programmes work towards achieving an NVQ at level 2 or 3, and some trainees study for other qualifications. All trainees are trained and assessed in their work placements. On motor vehicle programmes, college staff who are assessors carry out some assessment of trainees in the workplace.

17. The self-assessment report did not cover the area inspected and did not identify any strengths or weaknesses relating to the work-based engineering provision. It gave a grade for the occupational area and this was higher than that awarded by the inspectors.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ frequent work based assessment
- ◆ focus in reviews on trainees' progress towards the NVQ

- ◆ enthusiastic and motivated trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ trainees' low retention and achievement rates on motor vehicle programmes
- ◆ trainees' and employers' poor understanding of key skills
- ◆ inadequate resources for off-the-job motor vehicle training

18. Off-the-job training in the college is well planned and it is carried out by a team of enthusiastic lecturers. The trainees' work is of a good standard. Their progress in college is monitored closely and trainees are encouraged to progress beyond their initial goal. Trainees' work placements are varied, but all are good. They range from the largest heavy vehicle repairer in the South West, to small specialist engineering companies, including a vehicle body repair centre that has won a number of awards for quality. Most employers show a strong commitment to high quality training. They are very complimentary about the standard of training received by their trainees, and work closely with TSW staff to ensure trainees make continuous progress in the workplace. They co-operate fully in planning the training programme and ensuring that assessment can take place in the workplace. Staff in the companies are aware of the importance of health and safety and they are committed to observing health and safety regulations fully. The range of work available is varied. It includes toolmaking, design, sheetmetal work, the manufacture of wood and oil burning stoves. Trainees can cover a wide range of motor vehicle skills. Some of the work produced by the trainees in the workplace reaches very high standards.

19. Trainees receive frequent assessment of their work-based activities. The TSW assessment process is thorough, and it is well recorded. Assessors provide excellent feedback to the trainee and employer, and the process fully meets the requirements of the national training organisation and awarding bodies. External verifier reports praise the continual improvement in the assessment process.

20. Trainees receive regular reviews of their progress. These reviews focus on trainees' progress towards achievement of the NVQ. Where appropriate, the views of the college tutor and the employer are taken into account in the reviews. These reviews are helpful in reminding the trainees of the work they have to do, and the targets they have to meet in order to obtain their NVQ.

21. All trainees are enthusiastic and committed to achieving their goals. They enjoy their training at college as well as at work. College staff have worked hard to provide sound programmes and the trainees appreciate this. However some retail trainees expressed concern that they never attended the college. They said they felt isolated in the workplace, and felt deprived of the opportunity of sharing experiences with other trainees at the college. They said they would have liked some opportunity for group work.

22. Most engineering and motor vehicle trainees and employees have little knowledge and understanding of key skills. They do not understand their

importance or how key skills training can be incorporated into the programmes of work. The college has recently introduced key skills training into its courses, but at present it is not an integral part of training in the workplace. Some engineering trainees and employers have a poor understanding of their modern apprenticeship or national traineeship framework. Some trainees are unsure which programme they are on and what they have to do to succeed.

23. The college has a separate training centre for motor vehicle work based in an old, three story building in the city centre. It is virtually impossible to take vehicles into the mechanical workshop because there are legal restrictions on their crossing of the pavement. Lack of access to the single vehicle hoist, little modern garage repair equipment, outdated training resources and a shortage of basic consumables result in these workshops being inadequate for NVQ training. The college is investing heavily in purpose-built motor vehicle repair workshops that are expected to be open by September 2000 and which they plan to be fully equipped to provide NVQ training for all aspects of motor vehicle repair.

24. The trainees' overall NVQ achievement rate is only 28 percent. A large number of trainees leave in the first few weeks of their training programmes. The overall retention rate for motor vehicle trainees is only 45 percent. Trainees' retention and achievement rates improve significantly in the second and third year of training. Nearly all third year starters achieve their NVQ.

Manufacturing

Grade 2

25. Exeter College has 13 trainees on manufacturing programmes, of whom five are in year one and eight are in year two. All are work-based trainees working towards NVQ level 2 in the production of handcrafted furniture. This is a relatively new course that started two and a half years ago. During this time, three trainees have achieved their qualification and seven have left. Trainees' workplaces range from small domestic furniture manufacturers and fitters, to large manufacturing operations specialising in antique reproduction furniture 80 per cent of which is exported to the United States. Most assessments take place while the trainees are doing their off-the-job training at the college. Employers, however, provide evidence, in the form of witness testimony, of trainees' attainment of requisite competences for some of the NVQ units. They also allow the trainees to carry out their final assignments in the workplace. The self-assessment report did not refer to the training programmes in manufacturing.

GOOD PRACTICE

Companies value the training to the extent that they are prepared to contribute to the cost of the materials for trainees' final piece of work, their 'masterpiece'. They carry this out in the workplace at the end of their training.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effectiveness of off-job training in meeting the requirements of industry
- ◆ effective training links with employers
- ◆ highly motivated trainees
- ◆ financial support for trainees to enable them to go on manufacturers' courses

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient teaching and training space
- ◆ poor retention rates

26. The training at the college provides trainees with the skills they need to start working in the industry. After they have acquired the basic skills, they move on to develop more specialised skills. Employers and the college work together to support trainees and to emphasise the importance of health and safety and the use of personal protective equipment. Employers are able to use the trainees' skills and give them opportunities to practise them while they are working. Trainees and employers value the opportunities to be able to acquire these specialist skills in the safe environment of the college. Trainees are very employable once they have gained these skills, and employers are anxious to take them on and keep them. Some trainees are able to command a full wage. One trainee is provided with a company car, and is given considerable responsibility within the company while his employer is on holiday. The college tutor is highly respected by the trainees. He and the workplace training officer have close connections with the industry. Employers are invited twice a year to an open evening, to examine the work which is being produced and discuss trainees' progress. They are prepared to contribute to the cost of trainees going on courses provided by manufacturers, and encourage their trainees to take time away from the workplace to experience learning with colleagues from other types of furniture manufacturing. The college organises these events, and secures the necessary funding from the local TEC for them.

27. A large proportion of trainees who started the course when it was first offered, abandoned it early on. A third of the people who started the programme, identified that it was not for them and left. However, those who are left on the course, are highly motivated, and keen to complete their programme. They know how much they still have to do, and participate in negotiating realistic targets, bearing in mind their work pressures from their employers. The two cohorts of trainees did not have any initial assessment, either for their suitability for the occupational area, or for their basic skills, or key skills. The accommodation where training is provided in the college is too small. Trainees' bags and belongings take up workshop space. One of the classrooms is not big enough for the size of class using it.

Business administration

Grade 3

28. There are 45 trainees on the accounting programme. They are working towards NVQs at levels 2, 3 and 4. There are 27 modern apprentices, one national trainee and 17 work-based trainees. Accounts trainees may also be prepared for professional qualifications. Off-the-job training is provided through day-release and evening classes where trainees study with college students. Most work placements are with small or medium-sized employers. Training officers from TSW visit trainees in the workplace every 12 weeks to monitor their progress and help them compile their portfolios.

29. There are 25 administration national trainees, and three information technology national trainees. There are eight administration modern apprentices, all working towards their level 3 qualification, and two information technology modern apprentices. Both the IT modern apprentices are working towards an NVQ at level 2. One trainee is working towards an NVQ in administration at level 3 outside the modern apprenticeship framework. All but eight trainees are employed, although some are employed on fixed-term contracts with 'trainee' status. Trainees work in companies throughout the city and further afield. They usually come to college one day a week for off-the-job training sessions. The IT trainees, and the administration trainees at levels 2 and 3 are taught in separate groups. Separate sessions on key skills are provided for the information technology trainees. Administration trainees develop key skills through their NVQ work. Assessors visit trainees in the workplace to advise on portfolio building and to carry out observations. When each unit is completed, the assessor takes that section of the portfolio away to assess it.

POOR PRACTICE

A modern apprentice in information technology was asked to produce a scale drawing for an application of number key skills exercise. He asked if he could do it on the computer, as it was a large part of his job at work. The tutor encouraged him to complete the exercise on computer, instead of using the trainee's wealth of workplace evidence.

30. The self-assessment reports prepared by the department of business and computing and the business school do not refer to the work-based training programmes. The self-assessment report gives separate grades for administration, information technology and accounting. The grade the inspectors awarded for business administration was lower than any of these.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-planned training programme
- ◆ opportunities for trainees to gain extra qualifications
- ◆ good learning resources and facilities
- ◆ trainees' above average achievement rates in accountancy
- ◆ able and motivated modern apprentices

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ trainees' slow progress towards achieving NVQs at level 2 in administration and IT
- ◆ mechanistic approach to assessment
- ◆ undemanding targets for trainees
- ◆ failure to make key skills training fully integral to programmes
- ◆ little involvement of employers in training

31. In accountancy training sessions, trainees acquire knowledge and skills and carry out tasks under simulated workplace conditions. All tutors work from comprehensive schemes of work and lesson plans. Trainees have detailed course programmes. These specify the dates when they will be assessed and by which they must complete NVQ units. Training sessions are carried out well. Tutors make good use of a variety of teaching methods. Good handouts and recommended texts provide a source of reference for trainees. Trainees participate fully in their

POOR PRACTICE

One particularly able trainee took two and a half years to obtain her NVQ in administration at level 2 before being able to work at level 3. She had already gained a general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) in business studies at an advanced level with distinction.

training sessions. There is obvious rapport between the tutors and the trainees. Trainees work well with each other in groups. There are few opportunities for trainees to gain experience of the real world of work on employers' premises. Trainees work through practical exercises and their performance in these is assessed. Key skills are incorporated into the scheme of work and whilst a fully integral part of programmes, they are learnt assignments which are relevant to the accountancy programme. Much preparatory work has been undertaken to ensure key skills training is integral to the programmes. Internal verifiers use an effective sampling process that aims to ensure that they sample the work of every trainee. Internal verification is carried out as trainees complete NVQ units.

32. The majority of accountancy trainees enter training as employees with the support of their employer. The accountancy trainees are committed to their programmes, and there are very low levels of absenteeism. Tutors go to great lengths to ensure trainees are aware of their availability to provide additional support and guidance. Tutorial time is programmed at the end of each accountancy training session.

33. The administration training programme run at the college is well planned. It covers all the theory which trainees need to know, in order to strengthen their competence in the workplace. Trainees are given good handouts. The college tutors follow a clear scheme of work, and trainees know what they have to do each week. Assessors attend some of the sessions, to give trainees advice on portfolio building. Tutors provide reports on trainees' progress at the end of each term. They send copies to the trainee, the employer, and the assessor.

34. Trainees spend much of the time in administration training sessions developing keyboard skills, and preparing for information technology, text and word processing examinations. All administration trainees have the opportunity to work towards these qualifications. Assessors are kept informed of trainees' progress at college, and understand their training programmes. They are also aware of training which trainees receive in the workplace, and whenever possible, they assess trainees as they carry out work-based tasks. They work with trainees to help them gather evidence of their competence in the workplace, and wherever possible, they assess their performance across a range of NVQ units, rather than unit by unit. The administration modern apprentices are able and highly motivated. They welcome the demands work for their level 3 qualification makes upon them, and enjoy the responsibilities of their job roles.

35. Neither tutors nor assessors for accountancy make workplace visits. Employers are fully aware of the difficulties encountered in providing the range of work experience to meet the assessment criteria. They are supportive of the college programmes and teaching methods and some would welcome the opportunity to make a contribution to the programmes.

36. Level two trainees, in administration and information technology, are taking a long time to achieve their qualification. Trainees expect their level 2 programme to

last at least 18 months, and are aware that their national traineeship can last for two years. The shortest length of time it has taken a trainee to achieve an NVQ at level 2 is 15 months. Several trainees with the ability to start a modern apprenticeship at level 3, are inappropriately placed on level 2 programmes. Most are on national traineeships rather than modern apprenticeships, because their job roles do not give the level of responsibility a modern apprentice should have. When trainees are making slow progress towards achievement of the qualification, assessors visit them more regularly. They do not, however, set them demanding targets. Level 2 trainees are polite rather than enthusiastic about their programme, and do not feel that they are being stretched. Some trainees waste time in their college sessions, and do not exhibit the same degree of commitment as they show at work.

37. Assessors take the lead in structuring the portfolio, positioning and cross-referencing the evidence, and completing the cumulative assessment record to show how the evidence meets the performance criteria and range statements. Trainees at level 2 do not take the initiative in the assessment process. Assessors prescribe the evidence the trainees should collect for each unit but they do not necessarily explain to the trainees how the evidence relates to the NVQ specifications. They also carry out observation of the trainees' performance in the workplace on occasion. Although assessors sometimes observe trainees' performance in the workplace, the evidence in the portfolios consists mainly of work the trainees have produced. Portfolios are only assessed when they have been completed. There is no ongoing verification of portfolios.

38. Although administration and information technology trainees who have started their programmes recently have begun work on their key skills, there has been no attempt to plan the NVQ work to take account of key skills requirements. Key skills training is not an integral part of the programme. Some trainees who have been on programme for some time, are aware that they have done little or no work in developing key skills. Trainees learn key skills almost exclusively through assignments. Employers are not given information about key skills, and do not contribute to any planning of opportunities for assessing key skills.

39. The achievement and retention rates for modern apprentices have been low. Of the 30 modern apprentices in administration who began their programme between 1996 and 1999, 19 have failed to complete it. One has achieved certification in key skills. Nineteen have achieved an NVQ at level 2, and one achieved an NVQ at level 3. In accountancy, 30 modern apprentices have completed their programme and two modern apprentices in information technology have also completed their programmes. The retention rate for national trainees is higher, at 76 per cent. Only one national trainee, however, has achieved an NVQ at level 2 and none has achieved certification in key skills. Thirty-six of the 56 work-based trainees who began programmes between 1996 and 1999 have obtained their NVQ at level 2, an achievement rate of 64 per cent.

Hospitality

Grade 2

40. At the time of the original inspection, there were 63 learners on the hospitality programme. There are now 56 learners. Forty are foundation modern apprentices and 16 are advanced modern apprentices. The college offers training towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in hospitality and bakery. Most learners are working towards food preparation and cooking qualifications. During their training programme, all learners are expected to achieve a basic food hygiene qualification. Training leading to this qualification runs throughout the year. All learners receive an induction to the college from their course tutor, as well as a separate company induction at their workplace. Seventy-one per cent of the learners are employed. The establishments used for training are varied and include hotels owned by national chains, family-owned hotels, small to medium-sized restaurants, residential homes, hospitals, colleges and bakeries. All the learners attend college one day a week for off-the-job training and assessment. Most assessments and verification take place at the college by staff who are vocationally qualified and hold the relevant assessment and verification qualifications. There are three qualified and occupationally experienced training officers. Between April 2000 and April 2001, 28 per cent of advanced modern apprentices achieved their framework. In the same period, no foundation modern apprentices achieved their framework. The retention rate, so far, for 2001-02 is 87 per cent. Since the original inspection, retention rates have improved, although 2000-01 showed a decline for foundation modern apprentices. During that year, ineffective induction and recruitment procedures led to high numbers of foundation modern apprentices leaving the programme early.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ some poor assessment practices
- ◆ failure to make key skills training an integral part of the programme
- ◆ trainees' lack of awareness of programme requirements
- ◆ failure of modern apprentices and national trainees to meet framework requirements
- ◆ ineffective links between on-the-job and off-the-job training
- ◆ failure to plan training to meet the individual needs of trainees.

41. Since the original inspection, the college has made good progress in remedying these weaknesses. Poor assessment practices have been improved by better management of the working environment. Key skills training is now an integral part of the NVQ training programme, and learners fully understand their training programmes. Some requirements of the training programme are still not being met. More basic food hygiene courses are scheduled, but health and safety certification is inadequate. Links between on- and off-the-job training have improved. Training officers now organise the programme in the college, which has eliminated communication problems between tutors and training officers. The self-assessment report, produced in August 2001, identified additional strengths, some

of which the inspectors agreed with. They did not agree with the weaknesses in the report and identified further weaknesses.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ flexible use of good work placements
- ◆ good support from employers and supervisors
- ◆ good integration of key skills with NVQ training programme
- ◆ good continuity of training on and off the job

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ incomplete planning of individual training and assessment
- ◆ insufficient staff knowledge of framework requirements

42. The college has good links with local industry, providing a wide range of flexible work placements. Some employers are very flexible, allowing learners to move to different work placements as their skills develop and a more challenging working environment is needed. For example, one learner started working in a hospital kitchen with a limited menu and moved on to a restaurant with an extensive menu. Since the original inspection, the college has trained over 20 work-based assessors, although not all are actively involved with assessment due to work pressures. There are a further 12 employers registered to carry out assessor training. The training officers visit learners at least monthly to conduct assessments or progress reviews. The employers are sent copies of the menus their learners will be preparing at the college. This has allowed learners to practise their skills at work before assessments take place. Most employers are very supportive of their learners and change their menus to provide different assessment opportunities. One employer encourages learners to train widely, not just to do the minimum required for the framework. This is to prepare learners for better jobs. The employer has used his contacts in the industry to provide learners with further career opportunities.

43. Training in key skills is an integral part of the training programme and good work-based evidence is used for assessment of key skills. One-hour training sessions are scheduled each week during the off-the-job training to assess learners or to provide additional support where a need has been identified. Colour-coded work packs have been developed to support learners' key skills training. Assessment is carried out by a newly appointed key skills co-ordinator who is occupationally competent.

44. The college has a good range of facilities for off-the-job training, including training kitchens with an extensive range of equipment. The college opens a restaurant to the public on four days and two evenings a week. There is a number of classrooms available for the department to use. Learners attend college once a week for training given by their own training officer, who is responsible for the learners' off-the-job training, reviews and workplace assessments. This has

improved continuity between on- and off-the-job training. At the time of the original inspection this area was a weakness, but is now a strength.

45. The college fails to identify specific targets for individual learners when planning training. Learners often do not know if they are to be assessed until they attend the training day. Most learners know which units they are working towards but action plans do not specify training or assessment schedules. Although learners receive the necessary training in health and safety, individual learning plans do not meet the framework requirements as they do not specify the detail of the health and safety certification requirements. Basic food hygiene courses take place frequently, which has led to an improvement in framework achievement rates.

Hair & beauty (hairdressing)

Grade 3

46. There are currently 82 learners on hair and beauty training programmes. There are 73 foundation modern apprentices and nine advanced modern apprentices. All first-year learners attend the college for one day a week for background knowledge, practical training and assessment. Second-year learners usually attend every second week. Two full-time training officers, who have recently worked in the industry and have teaching qualifications, and a full-time hairdressing lecturer provide training for the modern apprenticeship programmes. They are all qualified assessors. The college is currently recruiting additional staff to support training and assessment. To support IT training in key skills, there is a dedicated IT instructor. The college plans to have a maths specialist to teach the application of number key skill. At the original inspection, there were four work-based assessors. By the time of the reinspection, eight additional employers had completed the assessor award. Learners work in a variety of salons in the Exeter area. All advanced modern apprentices are employed. Over a quarter of the foundation modern apprentices are employed.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ missed opportunities for trainees to gather evidence in naturally occurring situations
- ◆ little understanding of the programme requirements by trainees and employers
- ◆ insufficiently demanding targets
- ◆ insufficient sampling of assessment practice in the workplace
- ◆ failure to make key skills training integral throughout the programme
- ◆ trainees' poor achievement rates

47. Most of the weaknesses identified at the original inspection have been rectified. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training has improved. Assessment opportunities in the workplace are more frequent and employers are more involved. Employers and learners have a better understanding of the NVQ

programme and learners' targets are closely monitored by the training officer at each review. Learners' achievement rates have improved for both the advanced modern apprenticeship and foundation modern apprenticeship programmes. Key skills training arrangements are still incomplete. The self-assessment report, produced in August 2001, identified strengths and weaknesses, most of which inspectors agreed with. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ excellent salon facilities
- ◆ good retention rates
- ◆ good certificated training courses
- ◆ good employer involvement

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ incomplete key skills training
- ◆ uninspiring training environment in some classrooms
- ◆ insufficient clients for off-the-job training and assessment

GOOD PRACTICE

The learning support team provided a strategy for a hairdressing learner with dyslexia. The learner was unable to remember the order of the stages for winding a perm. A small laminated card was produced with the correct sequence of actions, which the learner could refer to when necessary.

48. The hairdressing training at the college has recently moved to a new site. A product manufacturer has sponsored one of the new hairdressing salons. The new training salons have up-to-date equipment and hairdressing products. The salons have the capacity for 12 workstations in each room, with a dividing door which can be pulled back to join together two rooms to accommodate larger groups.

49. The original inspection report stated that learner retention and achievement rates had been poor. In 1996-97, 59.5 per cent of learners left the programmes early and did not achieve an NVQ. In 1997-98, 60 per cent of learners left early. In 1998-99, 61 per cent of leavers left early and no learner had completed a foundation modern apprenticeship or advanced modern apprenticeship framework. In 1999-2000, 43 per cent of leavers left with no qualification, however, over 43 per cent completed the framework and the remaining 14 per cent left with an NVQ at level 2. For the foundation modern apprenticeship, 51 per cent achieved the framework, 36 per cent of leavers left early, and 6 per cent achieved the NVQ at level 2. Those remaining are still in training. Of the next year's eight advanced modern apprentices who started the programme, only one learner has left early. Another has already completed the framework, and the remaining six are still in training. The foundation modern apprentices retention rate for 2000-01 is currently 60 per cent. One learner has already achieved the foundation modern apprenticeship. All of the most recent year's advanced modern apprentices are still in training, as are 87 per cent of the foundation modern apprentices.

50. Good opportunities are available at the college for the learners to work towards additional qualifications. Learners can also attend a number of in-house workshops for which the college awards certificates. These include an introduction to Indian head massage, a specialist fashion workshop, specialist make-up,

photographic techniques and hairdressing techniques including straightening, crimping and plaiting.

51. Employers and college staff work successfully together to meet learners' needs and create a stimulating environment for the learner to train in. Employers have a good understanding of the NVQ process and, since the original inspection, eight additional salons have work-based assessors. The internal verification process has been adapted to incorporate verification of work-based assessors. An internal verifier plans to visit salons twice a year and work-based assessors will attend assessor meetings and observe college assessors to ensure consistency. The college provides a training scheme for the employers as well as the learners. This has all helped to co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training and assessment. Employers have attended a number of college meetings to discuss the working partnership. From these meetings employers have become involved in a number of joint training activities, including the demonstration of technical commercial skills and giving talks as part of induction. Future activities include colour workshops, setting up competition activities and providing prize money for celebrating learner achievement.

52. Learners can make good progress in the salons where they work. At the start of the training programmes, most learners perform hairdressing services competently in the salon. Within the first few weeks of joining, learners carry out services such as shampooing, conditioning, neutralising and blow-drying, and some learners are trained in colouring techniques.

53. An induction programme takes place both in the salon and the college. The training officer visits the workplace on the day a learner starts their training, to complete paperwork and an induction checklist. The training officers are responsible for their own caseloads of learners, both in the workplace and the college. This has helped to strengthen the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. The individual learning plan sets individual targets to encourage and motivate the learner. The learning plan is monitored at progress reviews, which take place every six to eight weeks, to ensure continuity between training and assessment on and off the job.

54. At the time of the original inspection, there was little integration of key skills training with the occupational training for the NVQ. The college had provided learners with some particularly good assessment plans. However, these were not used to plan evidence-gathering of learners' competence in key skills through their NVQ work, causing learners to fall behind in their training programmes. Some of the learners had almost completed their level 3 NVQs but had not received any training or assessment in key skills. Key skills training is now partly integrated with the hairdressing training programme. New assignments have been developed which relate to hairdressing and will enable learners to collect evidence across three of the key skills areas. The training officers provide training in communication and there are dedicated learning sessions for IT. Currently, application of number is not being taught. A maths specialist has been contracted

to teach sessions starting in January 2002. Owing to the delay in the coaching for application of number learners in their second year have missed opportunities for gathering evidence for this part of their key skills.

55. Learners are offered well-structured training in background knowledge. Comprehensive schemes of work are broken down into each specific area of the NVQ, and workbooks are used to support learning. Trainers and lecturers use a range of training methods in the classroom, and encourage learners to participate in a variety of learning activities. However, some of the rooms used for teaching background knowledge are uninspiring. In one room the walls are bare, with no posters or other resources to complement the subject being taught, or to stimulate learners. Transparencies were used in a background knowledge session. There was a large amount of text and diagrams on the transparencies. They were projected onto a whiteboard which overlapped onto the surrounding wall and across some posters, making them difficult to read. Within the group of learners there were some with additional support needs. The use of the transparencies with no additional handouts slowed down the pace of the session for the rest of the group.

56. Since the move to new premises there have been fewer clients, making it difficult for learners to be assessed in college. For learners with no assessors in the workplace, this has reduced their assessment opportunities further. The college is currently trying to rectify the situation by distributing leaflets in the local area.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

57. The college has had an equal opportunities policy since its incorporation in 1993. Its equal opportunities statement is included in learners' induction booklets. The college has been developing a new policy which, after consultation with staff, is in the process of being ratified by the relevant committees. It is based on the policies of organisations which are seen as models of good practice. People with mobility problems can access most of the college's sites. There is a procedure for dealing with complaints. Equality of opportunity is closely linked to learner support issues and is monitored by the college's quality assurance department, as are other college policies and procedures. For example, principles of equality of opportunity underpin the inclusive learning strategy, to encourage teaching staff to use appropriate techniques in the classroom to support all learners. The quality assurance department has a role in monitoring the systems which are used to develop and support teaching staff. Before the original inspection, the college produced a separate self-assessment report on equal opportunities to meet TSC requirements. The strengths and weaknesses it identified, however, related to the promotion of equal opportunities across the college as a whole, rather than for work-based learners in particular. The self-assessment report, produced for the reinspection, focused on the needs of learners in the workplace as well as at college. It identified most of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ trainees' and employers' poor awareness of the importance of equal opportunities
- ◆ failure to apply the college's equal opportunities procedures fully to trainees
- ◆ no recent equal opportunities training for staff or trainees
- ◆ failure to make use of equal opportunities data relating to trainees
- ◆ no systematic checking of employers' equal opportunities policies

58. Since the original inspection, considerable effort has been put into dealing with these weaknesses. Those weaknesses relating to training in equal opportunities and learners and employers' awareness have now been turned into strengths. The one remaining weakness has only been partly remedied. This will impact on potential future learners rather than current learners.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good understanding of equal opportunities among learners
- ◆ extensive staff training in equal opportunities
- ◆ strong involvement of employers in equal opportunities awareness-raising
- ◆ good application of equal opportunities to recruitment of training staff

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ incomplete use of equal opportunities data
- ◆ no systematic evaluation of equal opportunities policy

59. Learners are now well informed about equal opportunities issues and confident in their knowledge. They spend about a quarter of their college induction day in an equal opportunities training session. They watch a video on stereotyping, prejudice and harassment at work, and discuss the issues in small groups. Learners in the workplace have clear memories of the training and understand the implications of equal opportunities for their own situations at work and college. Their understanding is reinforced by positive images in course materials, for example, pictures which challenge gender stereotyping.

60. All staff involved in work-based learning have had recent and extensive equal opportunities training. Some training is given by external training organisations to ensure staff are brought up to date. Equal opportunities discussions appear regularly in the minutes of meetings, usually as the principle behind measures to ensure that all learners are given the individual support they need to succeed in their training.

61. Employers are increasingly involved in activities to raise awareness of equal opportunities issues. When a new learner starts training, the training officer checks that the employer has an equal opportunities policy. If they do not, they are required to adopt the college's equal opportunities statement. The statement is

printed on heavyweight card and is also signed by the college principal. The employer is required to display the statement and the learner has to know where it is displayed. Some employers, who already have their own policy, have asked to be allowed to sign up to the college's statement as well and to have the certificate showing their status as a partner employer. The college has recently started producing a newsletter every two months for employers, which includes a brief statement about equal opportunities. The newsletter, and other communications with employers, parents and the wider community, places equal value on work-based learning and academic learning. However, the college does not promote use of the advanced modern apprenticeship as a potential route to university entrance. The three-monthly progress review forms include a section on equal opportunities, which has to be completed each time. To make it easier for learners and training officers to understand possible problems and relate them to the workplace, there are a series of well-worded questions which the training officer can ask.

62. The college has applied its principles of equality of opportunity to its own recruitment practices. It has recently appointed a number of staff who are not conventionally academically qualified but who have recent relevant industrial experience and who have themselves progressed through the work-based learning route.

63. The college collects equal opportunities data about its work-based learners, but makes little use of them. The number of people from minority ethnic communities in the college's catchment area is low. The college is aware that there are local minority ethnic communities whose members are not participating in any of the programmes the college has to offer. There have been some attempts recently, particularly through the lifelong learning department, to reach some of these potential learners. However, so far there have not been attempts to reach them through work-based learning. In terms of achievement rates and finding employment, the data show that women on construction training programmes are more successful than men. The college attempts to attract women into non-traditional areas including construction and engineering, and has had some success. Similarly, the small number of men on hairdressing training programmes have better rates of achievement and of finding employment than women. The college is not yet collecting data to show if the proportion of initial enquiries, analysed by gender, ethnicity and disability, is different from the proportion of people who start on each of the training programmes.

64. The college plans to adopt a new equal opportunities policy and strategy. It includes a section on how it will measure the success of its strategy through regular audit and review of processes and procedures. However, it does not include a plan to review and evaluate the policy itself, and there is no arrangement for this to take place regularly. The policy also includes a commitment to equality of opportunity, recommending that a board member monitors the effectiveness of the strategy.

Trainee support

Grade 2

65. The college provides support for learners throughout their training. It invites all learners to a pre-enrolment interview. Impartial guidance and support is provided during the interview to assist learners in making choices about training programmes and occupational routes. Learners carry out a range of initial assessment tests to identify their key skills levels, any literacy or numeracy support needs and their preferred learning style. The results of the additional learning needs assessments are recorded on the individual learning plans. Training officers take into account information about learners' key skills levels and preferred learning style when planning their training. Learners with additional learning and support needs are identified at this stage and are referred to an inclusiveness tutor. Each department has an inclusiveness tutor to provide both pastoral and learning support. In addition, a learning support tutor is allocated to learners with individual learning support needs. Nearly 13 per cent of current learners have been identified as having individual learning support needs. Induction days are organised during July and the induction process is spread over three months. During this period most learners receive six-weekly training reviews, which is more frequent than the requirements of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) contract. Learners who start at a different time of year receive an individual induction, without the group work sessions at the college. Most learners are visited in the workplace, when individual learning plans are monitored, reviewed and updated. Workplace supervisors generally contribute to learners' progress reviews.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor arrangements for the poor initial assessment of trainees
- ◆ poor use of individual training plans
- ◆ poor conduct of trainees' progress reviews in most areas
- ◆ insufficient accreditation of trainees' prior learning

GOOD PRACTICE

A training officer attended a disciplinary hearing in the workplace as a learner's friend. There was a positive outcome and the learner continued with both employment and training.

66. In the action plan published after the original inspection, the college identified how to improve the quality of support for students. The weaknesses have all been rectified. Learners now carry out a range of assessment tests to identify learning and support needs. Individual learning plans, are now regarded as key by both staff and learners. They are reviewed regularly and used to monitor learners' progress. Accreditation of prior learning is still not routinely carried out for all learners, but takes place for some learners in response to individual needs. The self-assessment report produced before the reinspection identified most of the strengths found by inspectors. The weaknesses in the report had either been remedied by the time of the reinspection or were seen as being more relevant to the individual areas of learning than to trainee support. Inspectors found a different weakness and more strengths and awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good initial assessment of learners

- ◆ well-structured approach to individual learning support
- ◆ well-planned and comprehensive induction
- ◆ well-planned and thorough progress reviews

WEAKNESS

- ◆ insufficient learning support materials at remote sites

67. There is a good initial assessment of learners when they join the college. It includes occupational and aptitude tests as well as tests of learners' basic and key skills levels. Learners welcome the immediate feedback from these tests, which boosts their confidence and motivates them in their introduction to work-based learning. Training officers value the level of detail provided in the initial assessment when they come to plan learners' training programmes.

68. There are effective systems to identify, provide and monitor individual support. This is offered in a sensitive way and is wide ranging. An holistic approach to learning support is applied to cover learners' social, learning and occupational needs. The college has a large learning support team with more than 90 staff members, including specialist staff for specific learning needs such as dyslexia. This support is provided in a flexible manner to meet learners' needs, and includes evening, early morning and Saturday morning support. Learners benefit from the wide range of specialist staff who use vocationally relevant material for learning support to overcome individual learners' difficulties. A constant link is maintained between the specialist tutors and the vocational staff, ensuring that all support is relevant to learners' training. Learners can take advantage of support at any stage of the training. Some learners seek help after comparing their own progress to that made by other learners. This integrated approach removes any concerns that reluctant learners have about seeking support. All individual support is carefully recorded.

69. There is a well-planned and comprehensive induction process. Good preliminary information about the modern apprenticeship is available to potential and new learners. Induction at the college links effectively with the employers through initial visits and the sharing of both training programme details and the individual learning plan. In hairdressing, employers are invited to talk to the learners during the induction period. There is a well-planned and monitored handover period, from the staff, who have done the initial assessment and the first part of the induction, to the training officers who draw up the individual learning plans and start learners on their training programmes. Employers and learners receive a detailed and well-planned course handbook. This includes details of the college, NVQ units and quality assurance procedures. This thorough induction process for work-based learners was introduced for new learners this year. Learners who were already in training have yet to benefit from the process.

70. Progress reviews are well planned. There is a thorough system for recording and monitoring individual learners' progress. The review process involves the employer and targets are set with both the learner and the employer. The review

documents contain useful, detailed and appropriate health and safety and equal opportunities questions. Staff development for the college's vocational training officers has recently included sessions on conducting effective learner-focused reviews. Some learners have assessments in the workplace and the relevant paperwork contains evidence of encouragement and praise when learners make progress. There are good links with employers. These include a monthly report on learners' attendance and timekeeping. Training officers and employers take joint action to ensure that the learner remains focused on their learning agreement.

71. Learning support on the main college site is fully resourced. However, work-based learners attending college for only a few hours each week are unaware of the resources available. Learning resource centres at other college sites do not contain enough learning support materials. In one learning centre, there is a lack of materials on display to enable learners to integrate their communication key skills work with their vocational assignments.

GOOD PRACTICE

TSW has a small fleet of cars, branded with the TSW logo, for assessors' use when travelling to visit trainees. The provider has a large rural catchment area, and the use of these cars makes it possible for assessors to visit their trainees without having to use their own vehicles.

Management of training

Grade 3

72. The college's strategic direction is described in its three-year plan. It also has a one-year operating plan and policy and procedure statements for the curriculum, cross-college activities, and business support. All teaching staff have a copy of the handbook for tutors. TSW is a department of the college and is responsible for liaison with employers and the monitoring and assessment of trainees in the workplace. Eight full-time and six part-time training officers, directed by a manager and supported by four administrators, are responsible for modern apprentices, national trainees and work based trainees throughout their programme. Training officers are responsible for checking that work placements are suitable for trainees and that appropriate health and safety standards are upheld in them. They make monitoring visits to work placements at least once every six weeks. In some instances, they also assess the trainees during these visits. Records of trainees' progress reviews are copied to the appropriate tutors and assessors. The self-assessment report identified some strengths and few weaknesses but these related to the management of college courses rather than work-based training. The self-assessment report did not award a grade for the management of training.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive administrative procedures in the work-based training department
- ◆ good communications
- ◆ effective staff development programme

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ ineffective working relationship between TSW and the other college

departments

- ◆ inadequate systems for monitoring trainees' progress
- ◆ failure to offer 'roll-on roll-off' programmes to all new deal clients

73. Procedures covering the recruitment of staff, induction, appraisal and professional development are clearly stated in the tutor handbook. TSW has comprehensive policies and procedures for the administration and monitoring of TEC-funded programmes. These procedures have been produced in line with external quality assurance measures such as ISO 9000. Many of the procedures had been updated shortly before the inspection.

74. A new structure of senior management and departmental management groups has been introduced. Communications across the college are good. Information is disseminated to staff through weekly information bulletins, circulars, full staff meetings and seminars. Staff are encouraged to assist in the setting of strategic goals and operating targets. The roles and responsibilities of tutors, assessors and training officers for the work-based trainees are undergoing change. Many job descriptions no longer reflect these developing roles and responsibilities accurately. The working relationship between TSW and the rest of the college is not clearly defined. Training officers are unsure of their authority to enter college departments and influence the off-the-job training. College tutors and lecturers in some departments are not allowed to assess the trainees they teach. It is often not clear who has responsibility for ensuring the co-ordination of on and off the job training. Similarly, it is not clear who has overall responsibility for the welfare and progress of each group of trainees.

75. Throughout the college staff meetings are held regularly. Decisions taken at them are recorded, acted upon and reviewed. In some areas, these meetings are becoming less frequent, as participants do not appreciate their value. Some departmental meetings have yet to address a number of key issues within the provision of work-based training, particularly relating to the development of key skills training, assessment and internal verification.

76. Staff receive an annual appraisal. Professional development programmes meet the needs of individual staff. Staff who undertake training and development activities evaluate them afterwards. All members of staff may attend college courses free of charge to enable them to further their professional and personal development.

77. There is no college-wide system for monitoring trainees' progress and achievements. Individual departments have designed and maintain their own systems and those in the engineering and construction departments are particularly effective. The systems in some of the other departments do not enable staff to spot when trainees are taking a disproportionate length of time to achieve their targets. Some trainees do not know how far they have progressed towards achievement of their qualification.

78. New Deal clients are entitled to 'roll-on, roll-off' provision. This is difficult for the college to arrange for some areas, and there have been few examples of provision derived or adapted specifically to meet the needs of New Deal clients. Staff expect that some New Deal clients will meet their targets easily. Some of the targets for New Deal clients' achievements, however, are insufficiently demanding.

Quality assurance

Grade 2

79. Quality assurance is the responsibility of the college's senior quality committee, which consists of the principal, vice principal and the manager of the quality and development team. This team reports to the senior management committee of the college. The college board provides strategic direction and three board members have specific responsibility for quality assurance. Staff representatives from all areas of the college participate in the quality assurance reporting structure through a consultative committee. Everyday quality assurance arrangements are the responsibility of the manager of the quality assurance and development team. The manager works with a team of six assistant managers, who spend around a quarter of their time on quality assurance matters. The roles of the assistant managers include quality assurance and development of systems, standards, assessment, internal verification, vocational education and training, teacher education, teaching and learning and staff development. There are policies and procedures setting out the college's quality assurance arrangements, which are published in two documents. One covers the curriculum and the other business support. The college is currently in the process of simplifying these policies and procedures. Evidence about the quality assurance of training is collected through learner and employer surveys and ongoing course reviews and evaluations. There are records of teaching and non-teaching meetings, training officers' liaison meetings, vocational managers' meetings and all quality assurance committees. Following the original inspection, the college drew up an action plan to remedy the weaknesses in work-based learning. In August 2001, the college revised its self-assessment report and outlined progress towards the goals in the action plan. Inspectors found that this was an accurate assessment of progress and that further actions had taken place since the revised report to rectify remaining weaknesses.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ insufficiently rigorous internal verification
- ◆ failure of course reviews to focus on problems in work-based training programmes
- ◆ failure of self-assessment process to identify strengths and weaknesses in work-based training

80. The college has taken effective action to remedy these weaknesses. Since September 2001, the college has undergone reorganisation, including its provision

of work-based learning. All quality assurance systems now reflect the needs of work-based learners, although some improvements are too new to judge their impact on learner achievements. A revised quality assurance system has been introduced for course review and evaluation. This involves course reviews throughout the year and forms part of the self-assessment process. The internal verification system is much improved since the original inspection. Guidance now includes reference to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) 'common accord', and meets the needs of all the awarding bodies. Internal verification takes place in the college, and attention is given to the frequency of workplace assessment monitoring. A system is in place to deal swiftly with external verifiers' reports. This system is still being improved and recent changes have taken place to improve the standard of assessment in the motor vehicle department by providing effective internal verification over the full range of assessments. Further changes to meet the new occupational standards include relevant measurable targets for monitoring visits and improving the monitoring of the registration of candidates with examining boards. Self-assessment now focuses on work-based learning, with a new self-assessment report being provided for the vocational education and training department.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good management and staff involvement in continuous improvement
- ◆ good overall approach to quality assurance
- ◆ effective links with employers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ untested quality assurance systems for work-based learners
- ◆ insufficient overall targets and performance indicators

81. Management and staff are fully involved in continuous improvement. Quality assurance arrangements are developed by staff. A recent review and rationalisation of all the paperwork used in work-based learning has taken place. Vocational managers and training officers were fully involved in simplifying existing forms and developing standard forms for all work-based activities. A new culture has developed in work-based learning in which staff understand the management information they collect about learners and realise the importance of the data to improving the quality of the learning experience.

82. Quality assurance at the college operates at a strategic, operational management and delivery level. The college is currently introducing a quality assurance model in an accessible and understandable way to enable staff to relate quality assurance activities and processes to the needs of the learners. Existing policies are currently being simplified to support this model. Board members are actively involved in quality assurance and they recently updated the college's complaints procedure. There is an effective forum for representatives from across the college staff to become involved in the quality assurance reporting and process system through the quality assurance consultative committee. There are good

methods to gain feedback from learners and employers. Regular surveys of employers and work-based learners take place. The college has recently surveyed learners who have left their training early. Survey results are quickly analysed and reported back to managers and training officers, who use the information to improve the training arrangements. For example, following feedback from learners, the college has moved a key skills workshop to a more appropriate time. A revised annual quality assurance system has been introduced for course and programme reviews. This enables ongoing evaluation and improvement to take place at fixed points throughout the year instead of at the end of the training programme. Staff and managers review data and information from all sources, enabling effective action to be taken to improve training programmes. This ongoing review is part of the self-assessment process. There is good support for vocational and educational managers and training officers. Regular team meetings take place. Staff use a programme of effective and accessible training and share good practice.

83. There are effective links with employers at all levels. At the strategic level, the principal and senior managers work in partnership with the local community to ensure that the existing and developing needs of local industry are met. A recent event for employers has forged closer links and an employers' forum is being developed for the motor vehicle department. On an everyday basis, employers are notified of learners' progress through receiving certificates of achievement, participation in progress reviews and notification of absences.

84. Many of the quality assurance systems for work-based learners have only recently been revised to meet the needs of this group of learners more fully. There has not been any evaluation so far, and therefore no evidence as yet to indicate the effectiveness and impact of these systems on the experiences of work-based learners.

85. At the time of the reinspection, the college's vocational education and training directorate had only existed for three months. Benchmarks and overall targets for the department have yet to be developed, although individual areas of learning have their own targets.