

Inspection Handbook

August 1998

THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL

THE INSPECTORATE

The Council has a duty to ensure that provision is made for assessing the quality of education in institutions in the further education sector. Its aim is to promote improvements in the quality of students' learning. It achieves this aim in part through regular inspection of college provision.

In order to meet its responsibilities for quality assessment, the FEFC established the inspectorate. Its terms of reference are:

- a. to assess standards and trends across the further education sector and advise the FEFC, its committees and working groups on the performance of the sector overall;
- b. to prepare and publish reports on individual institutions;
- c. to identify and make more widely known good practice and promising developments in further education and draw attention to weaknesses that require attention;
- d. to provide advice and assistance to those with responsibility for, or in, institutions in the sector, through day-to-day contacts, its contribution to training, and its publications;
- e. to keep abreast of international developments in post-school education and training.

Grading

Inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect, and their assessments are set out in inspection reports. Their judgements on the balance between strengths and weaknesses are also summarised using a five-point scale, on which grade 1 represents provision of the highest quality:

- *grade 1 – outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses*
- *grade 2 – good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses*
- *grade 4 – less than satisfactory provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- *grade 5 – poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses.*

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Inspection Handbook

FOREWORD

In September 1997, the Council introduced a revised framework for inspection, set out in Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*. A companion circular, 97/22, *Joint Working: Audit and inspection*, established procedures for joint work by the audit service and inspectorate in planning and carrying out college inspections. The introduction of these revised arrangements and experience of completing the first inspections provided an opportunity for the inspectorate to review its operational procedures. This *Handbook* is an important outcome of that work. It provides guidance for college staff, governors, inspectors and auditors on the planning, organisation and practice of inspection.

The publication of the *Handbook* reflects the inspectorate's wish to be open and transparent about the way in which it operates. Publication should also assist colleges to prepare for inspection and understand the process. The *Handbook* takes into account college evaluations of inspections as well as more informal views expressed about inspection by college staff and others.

The *Handbook* covers the process of inspection including: preparation for the inspection; information about the organisation of the inspection week; roles and responsibilities of members of the inspection team; team week activities; feedback after the inspection and some other related matters. The *Handbook* should be regarded as a set of procedures normally governing inspection rather than a set of unbreakable rules. Its contents will be reviewed from time to time in the light of experience, developments in the sector and any changes in the Council's approach to assessing quality. The inspectorate would welcome comments on the *Handbook* and there is a form at appendix 1 for this purpose.

Inspection is an important feature of the Council's work and the sector's accountability. It has been well received in colleges. The great majority find it a useful and constructive experience. Its outcomes are taken seriously and there is substantial evidence that colleges both celebrate the strengths of their provision identified in inspection reports and address the weaknesses.

The primary purpose of inspection is to be specific to the enhancement of performance. It will provide information and judgements that will promote continuous improvements in standards and in the quality of learning provided in further education. It is to be hoped that colleges and other providers of further education will share this purpose with the Council and recognise that ensuring the value of inspection as a means of securing quality improvement is a joint responsibility. I am sure that this *Handbook* will help all college staff, and colleagues in the inspectorate and audit, to ensure not only the smooth running of inspections but, more importantly, those improvements in quality and standards which we all seek for the benefit of students.



Sir Bob Reid

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook provides guidance for inspectors, auditors, colleges and other organisations funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) on the implementation of the framework for assessing the quality of post-16 education and training, described in Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*, Circular 97/13, *Self-assessment and Inspection* and Circular 97/22, *Joint Working: Audit and inspection*. Much of the guidance in this handbook relates to four-yearly college inspections. The inspectorate also carries out surveys of aspects of the further education curriculum.

Making the handbook widely available should ensure that all institutions are well informed about the process and procedures of inspection. An attempt has been made to balance the need for consistency in the way inspections are carried out with the flexibility required to respond to the individual circumstances of each institution. This handbook should therefore be regarded as an account of the procedures normally governing inspection rather than as a set of unbreakable rules. Those aspects of guidance which all inspectors will observe without fail are made plain in the text.

References to specific arrangements for external institutions, which are not maintained by a local education authority, and independent specialist colleges are given in shaded boxes throughout this *Handbook*. These reflect differences in the inspectorate's, and the Council's relationship with these organisations compared with sector colleges. The inspectorate's general aim is to treat all those inspected in a similar way, as far as is practical.

To help the reader, some sections repeat or summarise information found elsewhere in the handbook. The handbook will be reviewed from time to time in the light of experience, developments in the sector and any changes in the FEFC's approach to assessing quality.

Queries from colleges on the content or interpretation of this handbook should be addressed through the college nominee to the appropriate regional senior inspector. Suggestions for revision can be sent using the form provided on page 67.

Part I

Before Inspection

Notifying Colleges About Inspection

1.1 The arrangements for notifying colleges about forthcoming inspection are designed to ensure that colleges have sufficient time to brief staff and prepare their SARs. They are also designed to ensure that the inspectorate and other divisions of the FEFC take full account of the findings of the college's self-assessment in planning the inspection.

1.2 The process normally operates as follows:

- a. each year, the FEFC's quality assessment committee approves a list of colleges to be inspected in the coming year;
- b. the regional SI writes to each college on the approved list informing them of the period during which their inspection is scheduled, the date their SAR is due and of forthcoming FEFC briefing events. The precise date of inspection is confirmed as soon as it is possible to do so;
- c. the college will be asked to provide its SAR to the regional office of the FEFC on a date specified, which is normally at least three months before inspection;
- d. CIs will arrange to visit colleges as soon as possible after the notification of inspection dates.

In the case of external institutions and independent specialist colleges, the RI will contact the establishment, but will not normally visit before inspection takes place.

Briefing Colleges

1.3 The inspectorate offers briefings on the inspection framework to help colleges prepare for inspection and to inform them about inspection procedures.

1.4 Briefings for college representatives will mainly take place regionally. Regional SIs will ensure that a briefing is offered in each region, although it is for colleges to decide how to brief their staff. CIs may offer to visit the college to brief groups such as senior managers and governors.

Briefings for external institutions and independent specialist colleges will take place at national events.

1.5 Inspectorate briefings will cover aspects such as:

- key features of the inspection framework
- college self-assessment
- the roles of the CI, college nominee, FEFC auditor and RI
- the documentation required to support the inspection
- organisation of the inspection week
- inspection grades
- data on student achievements.

Role of the College Inspector in Self-assessment

1.6 Circular 97/13, *Self-assessment and Inspection* states that CIs will monitor self-assessment in their respective colleges and provide feedback to the college. However, it is not the responsibility of the CI to validate self-assessment. Validation will be undertaken through the inspection process as a whole.

In the case of external institutions and independent specialist colleges, normally the RI or another nominated inspector will discuss self-assessment during inspection briefing events, rather than on separate visits.

1.7 In order to provide feedback to a sector college on its self-assessment, the CI will need to:

- meet those responsible for self-assessment
- review self-assessment documentation
- check evidence used to support judgements.

1.8 The CI has additional time during the period leading up to inspection and will use some of this time to make additional visits to the college. Colleges are advised to discuss with their CI an appropriate programme of activities to be carried out during these visits. These might include:

- gathering information about the college (for example, its internal organisation and the distribution of students between and within FEFC programme areas)
- reviewing the college procedures for quality assurance and self-assessment
- attending meetings of college committees or groups responsible for co-ordinating the process of self-assessment.

1.9 The CI will provide verbal comments before the inspection. These should help the college to

identify strengths and weaknesses in its self-assessment process, the quality of its data and the robustness and organisation of evidence. The CI's comments will not, however, amount to an endorsement of the self-assessment.

1.10 The information collected by the CI will subsequently inform the team inspection agenda and the CI, together with the FEFC auditor, will assist the RI in planning the inspection.

Evaluating the SAR

1.11 Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*, states that ‘college SARs will provide the starting point for assessments by inspectors and be referred to in the inspection report’. It also states that ‘inspectors will make a judgement about the effectiveness of each college’s self-assessment, based on an evaluation of:

- a. the comprehensiveness of the self-assessment;
- b. the consistency with which self-assessment has been carried out;
- c. the rigour of the arrangements to assure the college’s procedures for self-assessment;
- d. the accuracy of the findings expressed in the report; and
- e. the effectiveness of the action plan in building on strengths and remedying weaknesses in provision.’

1.12 After the SAR has been sent to the FEFC, inspectors and auditors will use it to draw up an inspection agenda.

1.13 Colleges may provide supplementary information to update their SARs between the date when the SAR is sent to the FEFC and the start date of the inspection. However, the RI will not normally be able to accept any changes to the grades recorded in the SAR unless they are based upon fresh evidence. For example, information on student achievements is a likely source of an update which might cause a college to reconsider a self-assessment grade. Any proposed changes to grades, along with supporting evidence, will normally have to be considered before the meeting at which the RI presents the inspection agenda to the college. Additional information not related to a proposed change in self-assessment grades may be sent to the RI after the presentation of the inspection agenda, preferably on one occasion only.

1.14 Table 1 gives examples of the questions the RI and CI will consider when making an initial evaluation of the SAR. These are based on the features of SARs identified in Circular 97/12 and Circular 97/13.

Table 1. Evaluation of the SAR by CI and RI

<i>Features of SARs identified in Council Circular 97/12</i>	<i>Questions for RI and CI or lead inspector when making an initial evaluation of the SAR</i>
SARs should:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be comprehensive and evaluative 	Does the SAR cover all major curriculum and cross-college areas? Are the strengths and weaknesses of provision clearly identified?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incorporate an action plan to address weaknesses in provision 	Is there an appropriate plan with clear timescales and responsibilities? Does it indicate progress achieved in tackling issues identified in previous inspections or reviews?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be concise and written under the standard headings of the inspection framework set out in Circular 97/12 and Circular 97/22 where appropriate 	Have the guidelines for self-assessment and inspection been applied to the evaluation of quality of provision?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be integral to strategic/operational planning and other quality assurance arrangements 	Does the SAR reflect strategic aims and priorities? Is the self-assessment process linked to other planning and review cycles?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • address students' learning experiences 	Does self-assessment include an evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning and other aspects of students' learning?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate and take into full account the views of students and other customers 	Are there effective mechanisms for the views of students and other customers to influence provision?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be based on evidence, which is explicitly referenced and includes internal and appropriate national performance indicators 	Is the evidence for judgements accessible for scrutiny by inspectors, auditors and other external groups? Is performance, particularly in the areas of retention and student achievements, related to performance indicators?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify strengths and weaknesses of provision 	Are judgements made about strengths and weaknesses clear and supported by evidence?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • result from a consultative process 	To what extent has the self-assessment process involved staff, governors and other agencies?

Checking the Data on Student Achievements

1.15 Circular 97/13 provides guidance on the evidence used by colleges to support the judgements made in their SARs. For student achievements, the circular indicates that this evidence should be factual, objective and where possible quantified. It might include:

- analysis of student retention, completion and progression
- analysis of data on student achievements, including an analysis of added value
- performance measures over time and comparisons with other providers
- colleges' own targets for retention and completion.

1.16 Until 1996-97, colleges were invited to send data on student achievements using a spreadsheet devised by the inspectorate. The spreadsheet allowed data on enrolment, retention, pass and continuation rates to be summarised for groups of students on different courses. From 1998-99, the spreadsheet will be replaced by a similar analysis prepared from the FEFC individualised student record (ISR) which will reduce the need for additional information from colleges. Information on student achievements should normally be sent with the SAR to support judgements made in each programme area. In some cases, the information will need updating nearer to the inspection.

1.17 With the assistance of the college, the CI or RI will arrange to check a sample of the data on student achievements against primary sources, such as student registers and results provided by awarding bodies.

1.18 Inspectors will record the outcome of checks as they may form part of the inspection evidence. They will be shared with the college and will be made available to other staff at the FEFC.

1.19 The results produced from the ISR will need careful interpretation by colleges and inspectors before being used for inspection or other purposes. Colleges may wish to discuss the interpretation of the ISR results with their college inspector, and may wish to provide supplementary information from college systems.

Preparing the Draft Inspection Agenda

1.20 With the help of the CI and an auditor, the RI will produce a draft inspection agenda. The agenda will be subject to review and moderation by inspectors and audit managers before it is finished. It will be presented to the college verbally.

In the case of external institutions and independent specialist colleges, the RI will prepare an inspection agenda in consultation with staff from other divisions of the Council.

1.21 In addition to the SAR, the draft inspection agenda draws on the following:

- the published report on the college's previous inspection
- comments from the CI on the process of self-assessment
- issues raised by the college's own auditors based on internal and external audit reports on the college, and the FEFC's audit service reviews

This would not normally apply to external institutions and independent specialist colleges.

- data on student achievements and on the breakdown of student numbers between and within programme areas
- background information on the college provided by the CI and other divisions of the FEFC.

1.22 The draft inspection agenda will include a recommendation about the curriculum areas to be inspected and the inspectorate and audit resources required for carrying out the inspection.

Auditors are not usually involved in the inspection of external institutions and independent specialist colleges.

1.23 In recommending curriculum areas for inspection, the RI will normally take account of the following factors:

- the college's priorities as expressed in its strategic plan and SAR
- the need to include areas assessed by the college as relatively strong and weak in the inspection
- the quality of student achievements in different curriculum areas
- the grades awarded in the previous inspection report
- national priorities for inspection.

1.24 There will be an inspection of all of the cross-college aspects identified in Council Circular 97/12.

1.25 In identifying the resources required for the inspection, the RI will take into account:

- the size and complexity of the college
- the size of the programme areas and the specialist subjects to be inspected
- the overall budget for inspections agreed with the SI for the region
- the time to be committed by the FEFC's auditors.

Presenting the Inspection Agenda

1.26 Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*, states that ‘a college’s self-assessment report will help to determine the scope of the college’s inspection by informing a joint planning meeting . . . during which the inspection programme will be finalised.’ At this meeting with college representatives, the RI will present the agenda for inspection verbally.

1.27 The meeting will normally take place eight to 10 weeks before the inspection and, in addition to the RI and normally the CI, it will usually involve the college principal and college nominee. Where appropriate, other members of the college senior management team nominated by the principal may attend. An auditor will also attend the meeting, if appropriate.

1.28 The meeting will provide an opportunity for the RI to:

- explain which aspects of provision are likely to be inspected
- discuss the operational aspects of the inspection; for example, the proposed timetable
- take into account any new information provided by the college which may affect the inspection process.

1.29 Following the meeting, the RI will:

- work with the college nominee, CI and auditor to finalise the arrangements for the inspection week
- liaise with inspectorate support staff and other FEFC divisions to ensure that appropriate administrative and technical support is available for the inspection
- update the inspection agenda in the light of any additional information provided by the college
- confirm to the principal in writing the details of the inspection week, the documentation that will be required by the

team, including audit requirements, in advance and the documentation which should be available during inspection week

- send a copy of the letter outlining the inspection arrangements to the chair of the governing body.

In the case of external institutions and independent specialist colleges, there is not usually an agenda meeting. The RI will arrange for the inspection agenda to be sent to the institution and will discuss any points arising, as well as the arrangements for planning the inspection, by telephone.

Information for College Inspections

1.30 Inevitably, inspections rely to a significant extent on documentation prepared and made available by colleges. Well-organised and clear documentation does much to help an inspection run smoothly. Inspection teams will try to keep their demands on colleges to a minimum and, where it is appropriate to do so, will refer to standard documents used by the college.

1.31 The following paragraphs summarise the general documentation needed to support inspection. The list should be regarded as illustrative. It will be confirmed with the RI at the inspection planning meeting. The FEFC's audit service will deal directly with sector colleges to arrange to scrutinise their internal audit arrangements.

1.32 In general, three types of documentation will be required:

- general information which enables all inspection team members to familiarise themselves with the college and establishes a basis for more detailed work
- information which helps each member of the inspection team to assess a curriculum or cross-college area
- information which supports the college's self-assessment.

1.33 Some information will be required before inspection starts, and should be sent at least two weeks before it takes place. Additional documentation may be requested during the inspection week. The review of sector colleges' internal audit services will usually take place well in advance of the inspection week and information will be requested by auditors separately for this review.

1.34 It would be helpful if documentation is kept in the base room and is cross-referenced to the college's self-assessment report.

Arrangements for keeping documentation elsewhere should be discussed with the RI prior

to the inspection. Inspectors will wish documentation to be conveniently placed and clearly identified on a list provided in the base room.

Indicative documentation

1.35 Table 2 shows documentation required for all inspection team members, and additional requirements of specialist curriculum and cross-college inspectors.

1.36 For its review of internal audit, the auditor is likely to require the documents shown in table 3. It would be helpful if copies could be sent to the auditors at least two weeks in advance of their visit.

1.37 In college inspections, auditors and inspectors work together to assess governance

and management. Useful documentation for such inspections is also shown in table 3. This should be made available to the inspection team in the base room.

Inspections of external institutions and independent specialist colleges do not usually involve auditors, and inspectors are responsible for assessing governance and management.

Table 2. Documentation required for inspection

<i>All inspection team members</i>	<i>Specialist curriculum inspectors</i>	<i>Cross-college provision inspectors</i>
Management structure, including names of postholders	Organisation structure of the curriculum area, including the names of key postholders	Organisation structure for the area, including the names of key postholders
Corporation and college committee structures and, in the case of external institutions and independent specialist colleges, details of a management committee or company board may be required	Relevant policies, development plans, operating and position statements	Relevant policies position papers and operating statements
Maps showing how to get to college sites	Course list for curriculum area	Relevant job descriptions
Room plans	Course/subject timetables; staff/student timetables indicating availability	
Parking, security and health and safety arrangements	Information on student achievements from ISR	
Strategic plan and operating statements	Enrolment data (by age, sex, ethnicity) for current and previous two years; destination data for previous two years	
College charter	Staff grades, numbers, and job descriptions	
College SAR		

1.38 The auditor will ask the college to complete pre-visit questionnaires, in respect of their reviews of internal audit, and of their financial management and governance, two weeks before the respective visits.

Table 3. Audit documentation required for inspection

<i>Review of internal audit</i>	<i>Financial management</i>	<i>Governance</i>
Internal audit needs assessment, strategic and annual internal audit plans**	Organisational charts of SMT and finance department**	Membership of governing body, with names, dates of office, CVs and type of membership**
Annual internal audit report and external audit management letter**	Terms of reference and papers for college SMT meetings (agendas, minutes, action records)**	Dates and minute references for governor appointments*
Internal audit assignment reports**	Financial regulations and dated minute of approval by corporation*; financial procedures	Job description for clerk to corporation*
Invoices and fee notes from the college internal and external auditors**	Periodic financial reports to SMT, finance committee and corporation with copies of the most recent three**	Date and corporation minute for any redetermination in the size/numbers in each type of corporation membership*
	Budget preparation instructions and examples of reports to budget holders	Structure of college committees, working groups etc. that involve governors**
	Job descriptions for principal, members of SMT and head of finance**	Committee/working group membership, terms of reference, current membership and quorums (and date of corporation minutes approving these)*
	Details of training and expertise of clerk to corporation, or details of service provider and terms of engagement if provided externally	Papers for corporation and committee meetings (agendas, papers and minutes)**

Table 3. Audit documentation required for inspection (continued)

<i>Review of internal audit</i>	<i>Financial management</i>	<i>Governance</i>
	Arrangements for storage of corporation minutes and other papers	Standing orders for the corporation*
	Brief details of members of the finance team, their qualifications, experience and responsibilities*	Code of conduct for governors*
	For any CP, percentage of the college's income (funded units and money)* [†]	College policy on payments to governors*
		Details of governors who are members of a trust that has control of assets used by the college*
		Up-to-date register of governors' interests and staff with significant financial responsibilities; policies for its completion*
		Definition of relationship between governing body and executive*
		Any modifications made to the college's instruments and articles of governance

Notes

* required for audit files

[†] for inspections of external institutions and specialist independent colleges

[§] for current financial year or most recently available financial year

⁺ for previous and current financial year

[‡] for previous 12 months

Part II

The Inspection

Organisation of the Team Inspection Week

2.1 The purpose of the team inspection is to validate the college's self-assessment and to inspect and report upon the quality of provision. The inspection will focus on the curriculum areas selected and wider cross-college themes.

2.2 Inspection teams will normally consist of:

- the RI
- the CI
- an auditor
- a senior member of the college, nominated by the principal
- other full-time and part-time registered inspectors as required
- the audit manager, at least for one day of the inspection
- the regional SI or his/her nominee, for at least the final day of the inspection.

Auditors do not normally attend inspections of external institutions or independent specialist colleges.

2.3 Although the make-up and deployment of inspection teams can be expected to vary according to the college and the agenda for inspection, inspections will normally be organised as follows:

- inspections last one week (normally between two and four days for external institutions and independent specialist colleges)
- CP will normally be inspected during the inspection week. In exceptional circumstances, for example when CP takes place at a substantial distance from the college, some inspection of CP may be carried out before the inspection week in order to enable findings to be fed into the team inspection week.

2.4 The CI and RI will normally be present for the whole inspection period. Other members of the team may be present for all or part of the period. Inspectors may contribute only to either the grading of a curriculum area, or the grading of a cross-college area. Alternatively, they may work on both cross-college and curriculum areas. In sector colleges, an auditor will be present for between three and five days.

2.5 The team will normally need, for the duration of the inspection:

- a base room capable of accommodating meetings of the whole team and their documentation, with sufficient electrical points, a telephone and space for inspectors to work
- additional meeting rooms other than the base room
- access to a photocopier
- car parking within reasonable distance of the base room and on all college sites which inspectors may visit.

Team Meetings and Moderation

2.6 Inspectors and auditors work as members of a mutually supportive team and their judgements are moderated at meetings held during the inspection period. All inspection team members share a responsibility for making sure that judgements are well founded and secure.

Auditors are not usually directly involved in the inspections of external institutions and independent specialist colleges.

2.7 The inspection will usually start with a team meeting to confirm the inspection arrangements and the schedule for the week. The college nominee, who may attend team meetings, is expected to assist inspectors by clarifying issues.

2.8 After this meeting, the principal will be invited to make a brief presentation on any aspect of the SAR or the college's work which he or she wishes the team to consider.

2.9 The RI may hold further team meetings to check on progress, or to share inspection findings. Alternatively, the RI and college nominee may discuss findings with individual inspectors.

2.10 Inspectors of cross-college provision will normally review, with the appropriate cross-college managers, the evidence base from which judgements have been made before the moderation and grading meeting.

2.11 The inspection will normally conclude with a moderation and grading meeting. All inspectors and auditors still taking part in the inspection, the college nominee and the regional SI or his or her nominee attend this meeting.

2.12 At the moderation and grading meeting, the findings of curriculum inspections completed earlier in the inspection will be considered by the team as well as the findings

of inspectors, and where appropriate the auditor, working on cross-college areas. Judgements about strengths and weaknesses, including provisional grades, will be discussed and confirmed or, if necessary, moderated by the team. The moderation and grading meeting will aim to ensure that:

- judgements are in accord with the guidance in Circular 97/12 and Circular 97/22
- clear judgements emerge about the validity of the college's self-assessment
- the RI has draft sections for the inspection report, including a record of the strengths, weaknesses and provisional grades for all areas.

2.13 The purpose of the moderation and grading meeting is to award provisional grades. Where specialist curriculum inspectors are proposing to award a grade 1, 4 or 5 for the curriculum area, they will contact the SI or lead inspector for this curriculum area, during the team week if possible, to ensure the balance of strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection is consistent with similar grades awarded nationally. All inspection grades, and therefore final judgements about the validity of self-assessment, remain provisional until agreed by the chief inspector.

Confidentiality and Security

2.14 All team members, and in particular RIs, will seek to ensure that a satisfactory balance is maintained throughout the inspection between confidentiality and openness.

2.15 Sensitive information of two kinds is generated by inspection: information provided by the college, and notes made by inspectors. In addition, some documentation such as the work of students, may be irreplaceable.

Consequently:

- inspectors are responsible at all times for the security of information provided by the college, and for maintaining the confidentiality of their own work
- inspectors will check with the college nominee before removing any sensitive material from the base room or from other parts of the college
- some information and some elements of discussion within the inspection team may need to be kept confidential to the team; the college nominee in attendance during such discussions will be asked and expected to maintain such confidentiality.

2.16 Inspectors can be expected to account for the sources of their evidence by referring to documentation, meetings, students' work and the observation of lessons. They will not name individual staff or students and will endeavour to ensure that they cannot be identified.

2.17 Inspectors' and auditors' working notes and the database on which they are stored will remain confidential to the inspectorate.

2.18 Confidential information provided by the college will be regarded by inspectors and auditors as confidential to the college and the FEFC, but this confidentiality does not compromise the FEFC's ability to fulfil its duties and responsibilities. Colleges should note that information gathered during inspection will be available to other staff of the FEFC.

2.19 RIs will endeavour to ensure at the end of the inspection that no sensitive or confidential information, including draft report sections, is left in the college.

Part III

Roles and Responsibilities of Team Members

Code of Practice for Inspectors and Auditors

3.1 The primary purpose of inspection is to be specific to the enhancement of performance. It will provide information and judgements that will promote continuous improvements in standards and in the quality of learning provided in further education. It is to be hoped that colleges and other providers of further education will share this purpose with the Council and recognise that ensuring the value of inspection as a means of securing quality improvement is a joint responsibility.

3.2 All stages of the inspection process will be carried out with impartiality, integrity and courtesy:

- a. all those involved in inspection need to recognise that it is rigorous and demanding, both for inspectors and for college staff, students and managers. Inspections should be planned, prepared for and carried out in such a way as to minimise disruption and stress, and maintain confidence and morale;
- b. it is important that both college and inspectorate understand and accept the importance of independent and objective judgements in identifying strengths on which to build improvement and weaknesses to be addressed;
- c. all those involved in inspection including inspection team members and college staff have the right to be treated with respect, and in a courteous and professional manner;
- d. those involved in inspection must try so far as possible to avoid allowing their position, personal opinions or work in other professional capacities to influence or undermine the inspection process.

3.3 All stages of the inspection process will be undertaken objectively, according to an open and shared framework of practices and procedures, and avoiding bias or preconceptions:

- a. when approached to take part in an inspection, inspection team members must declare any interests, associations, or involvements with the college that might reasonably be considered to preclude their participation in that inspection;
- b. inspection team members must so far as reasonably possible be impartial and objective, and be seen to be so in carrying out each stage of inspection whether dealing with people or data;
- c. inspection team members must base their judgements on sound evidence, and as far as possible from a range of sources, and be prepared to justify the judgements, referring to supporting evidence;
- d. inspection team members must make appropriate use of the documentation provided and only ask for additional information when they consider it to be necessary to make a proper judgement;
- e. inspection team members must base their judgements primarily on the here and now, while taking into account so far as is relevant the aims, context and progress of the college;
- f. the process of inspection will follow the procedures for inspection outlined in the *Inspection Handbook*, unless there are sound reasons to justify any departure from the procedures.

3.4 Inspection will result in honest and fair judgements:

- a. within the framework for inspection and other published guidance, inspection team members must do all that they reasonably can to ensure that they have obtained an adequate, representative and accurate evidence base for their judgements;
- b. inspection team members must provide appropriate feedback on the emerging picture to the college and ensure that the college has a reasonable opportunity to query judgements;

- c. inspection team members must seek to report on their findings without fear or favour, identifying strengths and weaknesses without exaggeration or avoiding difficult messages;
- d. inspection team members must communicate as clearly and effectively as is reasonably possible with those involved in inspection activities. Every reasonable effort must be made to ensure that oral and written reports made at the conclusion of inspection are consistent;
- e. judgements must be moderated as appropriate during the inspection process to ensure that they are sound, that they are those of the team as a whole, and that they are consistent with the published criteria.

3.5 The confidentiality of the inspection process must be respected:

- a. inspection team members must provide appropriate feedback, but in doing so they must not compromise the confidentiality of individuals, except where there is a serious issue such as fraud, abuse or breach of health and safety. Where an inspection team member thinks that an issue is sufficiently serious that confidentiality cannot be maintained, he or she should where at all possible advise the individual concerned that confidentiality cannot be maintained;
- b. save to the extent that it may restrict the FEFC from carrying out its duties and responsibilities, inspection team members must not disclose information obtained through inspection to any other party than the college or the FEFC without first obtaining agreement from the college;
- c. it should be understood that no discussion with an inspection team member during the course of inspection can be 'off the record'. Inspection team members have the right to use any information (including information printed or obtained orally) provided or obtained as part of the inspection.

3.6 All those involved in inspection need to recognise that the role of the college nominee is a difficult and demanding one, and one that is essential to the success of the inspection:

- a. all involved in the inspection process should respect the college nominee's position, and show appropriate tact and understanding;
- b. inspection team members must do all that they reasonably can to avoid making undue demands and unrealistic requests of the college nominee.

Reporting Inspector

3.7 The inspection team for sector colleges is led by an RI, a full-time inspector other than the CI.

In the case of external institutions and independent specialist colleges, the RI also undertakes the main functions of the CI.

3.8 Before the inspection of sector colleges, the RI works closely with the CI and auditor to draw up the inspection agenda, to present it to the college and to decide on the inspection team. The RI continues to consult the CI during the inspection week.

3.9 The RI assembles the inspection team in consultation with the CI and regional SI and provides the college with brief career and personal details of the proposed team. Colleges do not have the power of veto over the membership of inspection teams, but may express concerns about potential conflicts of interest.

3.10 If there is any doubt as to whether or not an inspector should be assigned to an inspection, the RI seeks the views of the college and makes alternative assignments to the team where necessary.

3.11 The RI ensures that members of the inspection team are adequately briefed before the inspection begins.

3.12 The RI ensures that appropriate arrangements for the inspection are made with the college. The RI liaises with the college nominee over the use of college facilities.

3.13 The RI calls and chairs meetings and ensures that, as far as is possible, all members of the inspection team contribute to the formation of judgements and, with the exception of the college nominee, to the award of grades.

3.14 Individual inspectors are likely to gather evidence and form judgements which are useful

to other team members. The RI is responsible for ensuring that such information is communicated to the team as appropriate.

3.15 The RI is responsible for ensuring that, as far as possible, inspectors keep the college nominee and other college staff informed of emerging issues and judgements throughout the inspection.

3.16 The RI is responsible for ensuring that, as far as possible, the final moderation and grading meeting:

- reaches clear, shared judgements
- establishes consistent and coherent conclusions
- establishes the team's collective responsibility for all inspection judgements
- is thorough, effective and economical of time.

3.17 Before the inspection, the RI arranges an appropriate level of support for the inspection by the FEFC's administrative staff. During the inspection, the RI will oversee the work and welfare of those staff.

College Inspector

3.18 Each college has an assigned CI. CI assignments are changed from time to time but not normally during the year before an inspection.

There is not an equivalent role for external institutions or independent specialist colleges.

3.19 Before the inspection, the CI (or in the case of external institutions and independent specialist colleges, the RI) liaises with the college over the production of its SAR. The CI helps the RI to draw up the inspection agenda and helps present it to the college.

3.20 Responsibility for managing the inspection and reporting inspection findings will lie with the RI. However, the CI will be consulted both by the RI and by other team members during the inspection week because of the CI's particular knowledge of the college and its self-assessment.

3.21 The CI is normally present throughout the inspection and usually inspects an area of the college's provision. In order to distinguish between the CI's role in supporting the college and validating its self-assessment, the CI will not be responsible for inspecting quality assurance, governance or management.

3.22 The RI normally consults the CI on the production of the draft inspection report.

3.23 The CI normally joins the RI in feeding back inspection findings to the principal of sector colleges in the week following inspection.

3.24 Outside the period of planning for and conducting an inspection, CIs visit their colleges regularly in order to build up an in-depth knowledge of their work and of the local context. They also act as the college's first point of reference with the inspectorate. CI visits will be agreed in advance with the college and will result in a written note to the college of the

main conclusions reached by the CI during the visit, unless the visit is only for updating and informing the CI of college developments.

3.25 After the college inspection report has been published, the CI will visit the college to monitor its response to the findings of the inspection.

This does not usually apply to external institutions and independent specialist colleges.

Auditors

FEFC auditors are not normally involved in the inspection of external institutions or independent specialist colleges. Paragraphs 3.26–3.33, therefore, do not apply to these institutions.

3.26 Each college inspection team will include a member of the FEFC's audit service. The auditor will contribute to the work of the inspection team and work towards the production of an audit report. In particular, the auditor will contribute to the inspection of governance and management, and may also contribute to the assessment of other aspects, such as quality assurance, if it is appropriate to do so. The audit service's conclusions on whether governance and financial management at the college is good, adequate or weak, will be included in the published inspection report. As a member of the inspection team, the auditor will be working to the same inspection procedures, and to the RI as project manager for the whole inspection. These working arrangements do not compromise audit independence.

3.27 In order to minimise the burden on colleges, the RI, auditors and inspectors will work together to ensure that demands for documentation and meetings with college staff do not result in unnecessary duplication of activity and effort.

3.28 The auditor and the inspectors assessing aspects of governance and management will jointly consider the evidence in order to reach agreed inspection judgements, particularly about the college's governance and management. Both the auditor and inspectors will be guided by appropriate sections of Circular 97/12 and Circular 97/22.

3.29 The auditor will contribute to agreed grades for, and summary inspection judgements about, the overall quality of governance and

management and the accuracy of the college's self-assessment in these areas. These judgements will be expressed using the five-point scale and grading criteria described in Circular 97/12 (and printed on the inside of the front cover of this *Handbook*).

3.30 The auditor will attend the moderation and grading meeting in order to take part in discussions on grades, particularly those awarded to governance and management. The auditor is included in the inspection team's collective responsibility for the judgements and grades at which they arrive and will contribute to writing the sections on governance and management in the draft inspection report.

3.31 The auditor feeds back to the principal during the inspection week. The auditor will usually be accompanied by the RI, or another inspector. The feedback is a summary of the auditor's findings that may be included in the unpublished report provided to the college by the FEFC's audit service. An FEFC audit manager will normally review the audit findings and conclusions before the moderation and grading meeting and the auditor's final meeting with the principal. The audit manager will conduct a detailed review of working papers after the inspection week.

3.32 The RI will report the inspection findings jointly arrived at by inspectors and the auditor to the feedback meeting with the principal and the chair of governors in the week following the inspection. If appropriate, the auditor may also attend this meeting.

3.33 Auditors will work with college inspectors in building and maintaining links with colleges. This role will be reflected in the auditors' involvement as appropriate in briefing colleges, inspection team weeks and follow-up and monitoring of the results of inspection.

College Nominee

3.34 Each college will be invited to nominate a senior member of staff to join the inspection team. It is recommended that whenever possible the nominee be identified far enough in advance of an inspection to play a full part in generating the college's SAR, discussing it with the CI and RI, and in working with them on planning the inspection.

In smaller external institutions and independent specialist colleges it may not always be appropriate to have a specific nominee.

3.35 The role of the college nominee is demanding and it contributes significantly to the inspection process. It is suggested that as far as possible the nominee combines these characteristics:

- a detailed understanding of the college's programmes and operations
- knowledge of the college's quality assurance system and involvement in the self-assessment process
- a sufficiently senior position to ensure the co-operation of college staff at all levels before, during and after the inspection week
- the confidence of the principal in carrying out the role with an appropriate degree of autonomy. This might involve for example, taking responsibility for overseeing the production of accurate college data, or liaising with the inspection team and college staff.

3.36 The college nominee may take part in all team meetings and will be able to participate in all aspects of the inspection but will not contribute to decisions on grading. The RI will ensure that the college nominee has the opportunity to test the evidence for these. It is important that the college nominee takes the opportunity to register any disagreements or concerns he or she has with inspection findings

at the grading meeting, so that the team can address them before provisional grades are agreed and feedback is given to the principal.

3.37 Inspectors expect to use the college nominee's knowledge in carrying out their schedule of meetings and inspecting the college's documentation. The RI will look to the college nominee to ensure that college staff are available for meetings as scheduled and that documents are available as indicated in the SAR.

3.38 The college nominee should discuss with the RI any emerging concerns about the inspection process and seek to resolve them. Concerns should be raised promptly. He or she will be kept informed of developing issues and findings as the inspection proceeds and may be called upon to supply additional evidence, including arranging further meetings with staff and students.

3.39 The college nominee will be asked to make arrangements for the feedback of inspection findings to the principal in the week following the inspection.

Feedback to principals of external institutions and independent specialist colleges will normally be at the end of an inspection.

3.40 The RI will liaise with the college nominee over the team's use of college facilities.

3.41 The college nominee will be expected to observe the same conventions of confidentiality as other team members.

General Responsibilities of Inspectors and Auditors

3.42 Inspection teams will consist of a number of full-time and part-time registered inspectors in addition to the CI, RI, auditor and college nominee.

There will normally be two or three inspectors, but no auditor, involved in the inspections of external institutions or independent specialist colleges.

3.43 Inspectors and auditors have a responsibility to make known to the RI any potential conflict of interest which may arise if they are assigned to the inspection of a particular college. Reasons for potential conflicts of interest include, but are not exhausted by:

- consultancy, examining or verification work with the college or a neighbouring college
- past or current employment at the college being inspected or a neighbouring college
- a personal or professional relationship with a member of staff at the college being inspected or at a neighbouring college.

3.44 Inspectors and auditors are required to produce a brief biographical note which RIs will give to the college they are to inspect. This note should summarise the inspector's relevant experience, as the example in figure 1 shows.

Figure 1. Inspector's biography

Name: A N Other

Status: Part-time inspector

Additional information: Inspects provision in FEFC programme area 9 (humanities); registered with the FEFC June 1994. He has been assistant principal in a general further education college, in which he was formerly a head of department of humanities.

Additional experience as an examiner for GCE A level English literature and an Open University tutor.

3.45 Inspectors are not obliged to supply information to colleges beyond this level of detail. If colleges wish to make further enquiries, the RI will invite the principal to write to the head of personnel at the FEFC.

3.46 Before the inspection, inspectors and auditors will work on documentation supplied by the college and the RI, such as:

- introductory information about the college
- information relevant to the area they are inspecting
- the SAR
- data on student achievements.

3.47 Inspectors will aim to arrive at the college base room in good time for the start of the inspection. At the initial team meeting, they can raise queries and issues concerning the inspection agenda and schedule and the documentation provided by the college. Inspectors assessing curriculum areas will have considered any issues they wish to follow up during the inspection after reading the SAR. They will have prepared a draft timetable of observations before the inspection.

3.48 Throughout the inspection, inspectors will use direct observation of teaching and learning, inspection of the work of students, documents, and meetings with staff and students to compile a secure evidence base for grading, identifying

strengths and weaknesses of provision and making judgements about the validity of self-assessment. Activities will be conducted in accordance with the guidance in Circular 97/12 and other guidance on inspection published by the FEFC, such as this *Handbook*, the *Inspectors' Statistical Handbook* and the National Survey and Good Practice reports.

3.49 Inspectors and auditors will, within time constraints, maintain contact with the college nominee and other college staff to ensure that they are kept informed of emerging inspection themes and issues. This information will not be in the form of feedback, and has no status beyond its updating function.

3.50 Inspection team members share evidence and judgements during inspections. Inspectors and auditors will follow the RI's guidance to ensure this takes place, and will liaise with other members of the team as appropriate.

3.51 Inspectors and auditors will liaise throughout the inspection with the RI. They will normally ensure that the RI has had the opportunity, before any feedback is given and before the final moderation and grading meeting, to examine with them the conclusions they have reached in relation to:

- strengths and weaknesses
- provisional grades
- judgements on the validity of self-assessment.

3.52 Before leaving the college, each inspector will provide written evidence to clarify and substantiate their judgements, and other information as required by the RI.

3.53 The auditor will contribute to writing the text on governance and financial management.

3.54 All inspectors will seek, as necessary, the guidance of the RI on any aspect of the inspection.

This does not usually apply to external institutions and independent specialist colleges.

Part IV

Team Week Activities

Observing Teaching Sessions

4.1 Circular 97/12 states that inspection to validate college self-assessments will involve the direct observation of teaching and learning. Quality statements and indicative sources of evidence for teaching and learning are given in the appendix to annex B of the circular.

4.2 Inspectors working on curriculum areas will endeavour to select a representative sample of sessions to observe in the time available. They will not necessarily observe every teacher working in the curriculum area. They may observe a teacher more than once, particularly if that teacher takes different groups of students. Observations are likely to include a variety of activities, such as:

- whole-class teaching
- group work
- practical work; for example in workshops, laboratories, studios, kitchens, salons, sports halls
- tutorials
- students working on their own in college
- students working away from the college.

4.3 Inspectors will not normally seek to grade a curriculum area on the basis of fewer than 10 direct observations of teaching and learning.

4.4 Inspectors should not be expected to list in advance exactly which sessions they will observe, because the length of observations may vary depending on the nature and conduct of the session. They may also need to revisit sessions.

4.5 Inspectors may enter a session after it has started and leave before it finishes. How they begin their observations will vary according to the nature of the session. In general, they will:

- try to minimise disruption to the class
- introduce themselves to the teacher when appropriate
- ask the teacher for a plan for the session and a copy of any supporting material, and a register

- arrange to feed back to the teacher as soon as possible after the observation is complete.

4.6 In order to allow them to concentrate on objective assessment of sessions, inspectors will not take an active part in any teaching and learning. For example, they will decline to answer questions, join discussion groups or take part in any practical activity as a participant.

4.7 Inspectors will seek opportunities to discuss with the students their work and to look at samples of it during sessions, but will try not to deflect students' attention from learning.

4.8 Inspectors will always make written notes during the session.

In independent specialist colleges, inspectors will observe FEFC-funded students in whatever activities are taking place at the time of their visit. These activities may not be sessions as set out on a typical college timetable.

4.9 Inspectors who have observed teaching and learning sessions will provide feedback directly to teachers and to others supporting learning according to the following guidance:

- inspectors will seek to provide feedback as soon as possible after the session
- feedback to teachers will be brief and concise, will focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the session, and will not involve advice
- feedback will not include any grades or grade descriptors
- if inspectors are concerned about poor-quality teaching and learning they may encourage teachers to seek further advice and support
- feedback on sessions is confidential to the teachers concerned.

4.10 Feedback to teachers is not teacher appraisal, which is a matter for the college. Nor can an inspector provide the kind of detailed debriefing which a teacher might expect of a teacher training programme. The intention is that the inspector should comment on the main strengths and weaknesses of the lesson.

Inspecting the Work of Students

4.11 The inspection of students' work has two purposes:

- to evaluate the standard of work achieved by students in relation to their qualification aims and the quality of work required in employment contexts
- to evaluate the quality of setting and marking work for students achieved by teachers.

4.12 Inspectors will make judgements on the standard of students' work in each curriculum area inspected, based on evidence gained:

- during the observation of students at work
- by inspecting samples of completed work.

4.13 During the observation of teaching and learning, inspectors may wish to:

- look through written assignments and notes in students' files
- discuss files with students and teachers
- observe students' practical work in progress
- inspect displays of students' work.

4.14 Before the inspection, the college nominee will have been asked to arrange for a sample of work completed by students to be available to inspectors. The sample should include:

- marked work from the top, middle and bottom of the ability range of students on each major course or programme being inspected
- the project brief, essay title or other assignment format as appropriate, for all student work made available
- teacher assessments and grades, and the comments and guidance given to students on their work
- a variety of work covering different topics being studied
- an adequate volume of students' work, allowing for the limited time available for inspection.

4.15 Students' work may be inspected in any appropriate form or media, including:

- essays and other written work
- completed and marked test and examination papers
- the product of any practical work, such as computer programs, video- and audiotapes, artwork in two or three dimensions, and engineering and construction artefacts.

4.16 Students' work may, when convenient, be stored in the base room and be collected after the inspection, or it may be left in the appropriate teaching area, with guidance provided for inspectors on its nature and location. Inspectors will need convenient access to appropriate facilities for examining work stored electronically, such as tapes or computer disks.

4.17 Judgements about the standards of students' work observed during the inspection and about the levels of student achievements as recorded in examination pass, attendance and retention rates and information on student destinations will form a primary part of the final grade for the curriculum area, along with that for teaching and learning.

Student Achievements

4.18 Inspectors will give the most weight in their assessment of curriculum areas to teaching and learning and student achievements. Evidence of the standards achieved by students will be gathered from the results of examination and other formal assessments and from observations of students' work during the inspection. The guidelines in Circular 97/12 provide the indicative sources of evidence for inspectors.

4.19 Before the inspection week, the RI will ensure that an analysis of student achievements and accompanying notes are sent to the inspection team. These will be based on the analysis of data the college provides using the ISR and any additional information agreed by the CI and the RI; for example, examination results notified to the college since the most recent full ISR analysis.

4.20 Inspectors working in curriculum areas will make judgements about the standards of work achieved by students in that area. Judgements, based on student achievements in examinations and other formal assessments, will take account of:

- course and subject pass rates compared with national and sector comparators, whenever possible
- retention rates for the whole course compared with college and sector comparators, whenever possible
- the college's analysis of the value added to students' achievements during their time in college, where these are available
- student destinations, including progression to other further education courses, to higher education and to employment
- the college's own targets for retention and completion.

4.21 As well as using examination and assessment data, inspectors make judgements based on the standard of work produced by students:

- during the observation of students at work in lessons
- by inspecting samples of students' completed work.

4.22 Inspectors working in each of the curriculum areas being inspected will produce a table of pass and retention rates to support their judgements. The tables will represent a sample of results in each programme area. They may refer to individual courses, or to aggregations of courses, for example by subject, or level, or mode of attendance, or a combination of these. Tables will usually be prepared in discussion with the college nominee and inspectors will normally check data accuracy with the appropriate curriculum manager. The published inspection report will normally include a table, showing pass and retention rates for each curriculum area inspected. It will also include a table in which indicators of overall retention and achievement are summarised for the whole institution. Tables are not always used for programme area 10 where students may be following courses for which results cannot be presented in this way.

The SAR and Other College Documentation

4.23 A chief aim of the inspection is to reach judgements about the validity of the college's self-assessment. The SAR will initially shape the inspection agenda and during the inspection, the team will test the SAR by conducting their own assessments and measuring the findings in the SAR against their own.

4.24 Circular 97/13 suggests that colleges should identify clearly the evidence base on which self-assessment judgements are made. Inspectors will wish to check a selection of this evidence. Supporting evidence will need to be easily available in the college, though it need not necessarily be in the inspection base room. The availability and location of documentation should be clearly identified.

4.25 In addition to the evidence they gain from activities such as observing sessions, assessing the work of students and holding meetings, inspectors will be expected to be able to demonstrate that they have consulted appropriate and identifiable documentary evidence in reaching their judgements.

4.26 Inspectors will keep a written note of the documentary evidence they have consulted. It is helpful if colleges produce a list of the evidence they have made available to inspectors in the base room. Inspectors will need to keep a note of the individual documents they have consulted; for example, the minutes of a particular meeting, if these are essential to the forming of a significant judgement. Inspectors may wish to photocopy such documents.

4.27 The records of documentary and other evidence consulted by individual inspectors will be passed to the RI at the end of the inspection.

Meetings with Students, Staff and Others

4.28 The purpose of meetings with governors, staff, students and other interested parties during inspections are mainly to:

- follow up issues arising from self-assessment
- clarify inspectors' and auditors' understanding of the college and its programmes
- explore the perceptions of students and clients on the quality of provision.

4.29 Some meetings will be planned before the inspection week. Depending on the inspection agenda, these may include meetings with groups external to the college, such as employers, community groups and representatives of the local TEC and of local schools.

4.30 The RI and the auditor will advise the college at the inspection team's planning meeting of those meetings required during the inspection. The college may need to contact external groups and arrange such meetings.

4.31 Inspectors will need to meet corporation members, students and college staff.

Meetings in external institutions and independent specialist colleges may involve governors, voluntary management committee members, the principal's line managers, and owners as well as staff and students.

4.32 The auditor is likely to require the meetings shown in table 4 during the inspection week.

Table 4. Meetings required by audit during inspection week

<i>Person</i>	<i>Timing</i>
Principal	Opening meeting; working meeting; final meeting
Chair of corporation	Early in visit
Chair of finance committee	Early in visit
Chair of audit committee	Early in visit
Clerk to corporation	First day and probably later
Head of finance	First day and probably later
A budget holder	Early in visit

4.33 Auditors will share some meetings with inspectors, but some meetings on particular aspects of governance and financial management may be held by auditors on their own.

Auditors are not usually involved in the inspections of external institutions and independent specialist colleges.

4.34 In addition to the meetings planned before inspection begins, the need for others may arise during the inspection week. College staff, including managers, may expect to be asked by the RI, acting through the college nominee, to be available for meetings at short notice.

4.35 Whatever the purpose of a meeting and the identity of those taking part, there are some procedures which inspection team members will normally seek to follow:

- inspectors and auditors will introduce themselves and explain the purpose of the meeting
- inspectors and auditors will try to ensure that the needs of those with any disability

are adequately met so that they can play their full part in the meeting

- meetings on the last day of the inspection will be avoided
- meetings can be normally expected to last between 30 and 60 minutes
- inspectors and auditors will normally offer the opportunity for people attending meetings to ask questions and make points
- inspectors and auditors will not normally refer to the identity of individuals in relation to any views they express, outside the meeting.

4.36 Inspectors do not normally hold meetings with complainants without the knowledge of the principal and involvement of the college nominee.

Feedback of Inspection Findings from Curriculum Inspections

4.37 The RI will agree the arrangements for feedback on curriculum areas with the college nominee and/or the principal. There will normally be one feedback session on each curriculum area, involving the relevant curriculum manager(s), the principal or his or her nominee and the college nominee.

4.38 Feedback and the grades allocated will indicate general areas of strength and identify weak practice which requires attention. Inspectors will seek to ensure that in reporting to managers they do not identify individual teachers or students.

In the case of external institutions and independent specialist colleges, one overall grade is usually awarded for all aspects of FEFC-funded provision. In these institutions, feedback on curriculum areas usually forms part of an overall report on the quality of provision.

4.39 The inspection findings and provisional grades for curriculum areas will be communicated verbally when the inspection of areas of work is complete. Feedback from inspectors working in curriculum areas will normally:

- have been discussed and moderated by the RI or a nominated full-time inspector, and in the case of an indicative grade 1, 4 and 5, have been discussed with the programme area SI or team leader
- include the profile of grades assigned to teaching and learning sessions
- take the form of a report on strengths and weaknesses and a provisional grade
- involve a comparison of the inspector's evaluation of the curriculum area with the evaluation contained in the college's SAR.

4.40 The RI, or a nominated full-time inspector, will normally be present at each feedback session.

4.41 The grade for a programme area will be based primarily on the quality of teaching and learning and student achievements. It will also take account of curriculum content, organisation and management, and staffing and specialist resources and, in particular, the effect of these on the opportunities for learning and achievement experienced by students.

4.42 During their feedback, inspectors will, if asked, provide verbal information about the evidence underpinning their judgements.

Feedback of Audit Findings

4.43 An FEFC auditor will work as part of the inspection team at sector colleges. This auditor will provide a verbal report of audit findings and an audit opinion at the final meeting with the principal held at the end of the inspection week. The auditor will express the audit conclusions using the terms 'good', 'adequate' or 'weak' in so far as they apply to the scope of the audit visit. These descriptors apply to the audit service's conclusions in both the unpublished audit report and the inspection report. At this stage, no grade for governance or management will be given. The findings of auditors will contribute to those of the inspectorate. Grades for governance and for management will be agreed jointly by the inspection team at the final moderation and grading meeting, together with all other grades.

Part V

After the Team Inspection

Feedback to the Principal and Corporation

5.1 Wherever possible, the RI will inform the principal of the provisional grades directly after the grading meeting on the last day of the inspection week. The college nominee will also be in a position to inform the principal of the provisional grades and to provide an outline of the emerging inspection findings, including judgements on the validity of the college's self-assessment. It is advisable that this information is kept confidential to the principal, nominee and senior managers until the formal feedback to the principal is delivered by the RI. Disseminating inspection findings throughout the college at this stage places very considerable pressures on the college nominee and his or her perceptions of inspection findings, and may cause difficulties and misunderstandings for the college if reported findings are out of line with those provided in the formal feedback session due to additional moderation.

Feedback to external institutions and independent specialist colleges is provided at the end of the inspection at a meeting with the principal, and by his or her invitation, other senior managers and/or representatives of the management committee.

5.2 The RI, normally accompanied by the CI and when appropriate the auditor, will normally return to the college on the Friday following the end of the inspection week to report the inspection findings to the principal.

This arrangement does not normally apply to external institutions or independent specialist colleges.

5.3 The principal will be asked to invite to the feedback session the chair of the corporation or the chair's nominee. The college nominee may also be invited to attend. The RI's presentation at this meeting will be the only account of the inspection findings provided for the college and

the corporation prior to the college receiving a draft copy of the inspection report shortly before its publication.

5.4 The RI will normally give:

- a summary of judgements related to curriculum areas
- the main strengths and weaknesses of each cross-college area
- the provisional grades for each cross-college area
- the inspection team's judgements on the validity of the college's self-assessment.

5.5 Those inspectors involved in the feedback will keep notes of any discussion arising from the feedback and will, if asked, verbally provide information about the evidence underpinning the inspection team's judgements, in particular on aspects of cross-college provision. Colleges should note that RIs cannot be expected to have comprehensive expertise in all curriculum areas. Any discussion of the evidence underpinning judgements about curriculum provision should have taken place during the feedback to the principal by curriculum specialists during the inspection week. The feedback of the main inspection findings concludes the assessment phase of the inspection.

5.6 Normally on the same day as the feedback session, the principal and the college nominee will be asked to check the draft inspection report. The purpose of this check is to ensure the accuracy of the information in it. The draft inspection report will not be left with the college at this stage. However, the college will be provided with an opportunity to check the factual accuracy of the final draft of the inspection report shortly before its publication.

The arrangements for external institutions and independent specialist colleges are different because feedback is provided at the end of the inspection week; clearance of the draft inspection report is carried out by correspondence.

Publication of Inspection Reports

5.7 After the feedback of the inspection findings to the principal, the inspection report on the college is edited to ensure reasonable national standards are maintained in the quality of writing and the clarity of expression. The chief inspector also moderates all inspection findings nationally. Colleges must accept changes to the text but should expect general consistency with the feedback.

5.8 Each college inspection report is circulated to members of the FEFC executive team and to relevant members of the inspectorate. The main purpose of this circulation is to ensure that inspection reports do not inadvertently conflict with agreed FEFC policies.

5.9 Approximately two weeks before publication, drafts of the inspection report are sent to the principal so that they may be checked for any factual inaccuracies. In the case of sector colleges, a copy of the draft report is also sent to the chair of governors.

5.10 The inspectorate aims to publish inspection reports on sector colleges approximately 10 weeks after the feedback to the principal. On publication, copies of the report are sent to the principal and chair of governors. The college receives 100 copies for its own use. Further copies of the report are sent to regional and educational press, local libraries and careers offices, sector college libraries and those principals who have asked to receive copies of all inspection reports.

In the case of external institutions and independent specialist colleges, multiple copies of the inspection report are sent to the principal and copies are circulated within the FEFC. They are not published or circulated to external agencies.

5.11 Once the inspection report has been published, the CI will offer to arrange feedback to the corporation board. The purpose of this session is to summarise inspection findings in the light of possible actions to be taken on the issues raised by the inspection. It is intended to assist colleges in developing an action plan in response to the findings of the inspection.

5.12 It is a FEFC requirement, as described in Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*, that the college provide a written response to the report, outlining plans for addressing any weaknesses identified in the report. The college is expected to send its response to the inspection report to the regional director four months after the date of publication of the report.

This arrangement does not normally apply to external institutions and independent specialist colleges.

Part VI

Quality Assurance and Evaluation

Terms of Reference of the Quality Assessment Committee

Department for Education and Employment and other organisations with an interest in quality assessment.

6.1 The *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* requires that the FEFC shall:

- a. 'secure that provision is made for assessing the quality of education provided in institutions within the further education sector; and
- b. establish a committee, to be known as the 'quality assessment committee', with the function of giving advice on the discharge of their duty under paragraph (a) above and such other functions as may be conferred on the committee by the FEFC.'

6.2 The terms of reference of the quality assessment committee are:

- a. to advise the FEFC on the quality of education provided:
 - i. in institutions within the sector
 - ii. in institutions for whose activities the FEFC provides, or is considering providing, financial support (in which respect, it will be necessary to have regard to the advice from local education authorities, the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools and the Higher Education Funding Council for England);
- b. to recommend to the FEFC and keep under review methods for assessing quality;
- c. to receive assessment reports on the quality of education and advise on any necessary action;
- d. to report annually to the FEFC, including an evaluation of the overall quality of education in the sector;
- e. to advise on other matters as requested from time to time by the FEFC.

6.3 Membership of the quality assessment committee includes college principals, governors, industrialists and a student representative. The work of the committee is observed by a representative from the

Assuring the Quality of the Inspectorate's Work

6.4 The programme of college inspections is approved by the quality assessment committee and carried out in accordance with the framework for inspection and guidance included in:

- Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*
- Circular 97/13, *Self-assessment and Inspection*
- Circular 97/22, *Joint Working: Audit and inspection.*

6.5 The inspectorate also operates within the scope of the FEFC's general principles of openness, transparency and accountability which are set out in various FEFC publications, including its *Annual Report* and in:

- Circular 96/24, *Conduct of the Council's Business*
- Circular 96/25, *Complaints about the Council's Administration.*

6.6 In order to carry out its work, the inspectorate deploys inspectors in regional teams. Each regional team is led by a senior inspector. In addition to the full-time inspectorate workforce, a national register of trained part-time inspectors has been compiled. Part-time inspectors are used to supplement full-time inspection teams, as required. All inspectors, whether full-time or part-time, are required to complete a systematic training programme before they are assigned to an inspection.

Monitoring quality and consistency

6.7 The inspectorate has a range of working groups which help it to assure the quality and consistency of its work. These include:

- **chief inspector/senior inspector's committee** this committee agrees policy, sets strategic priorities for the inspectorate and monitors the inspectorate's progress in meeting its operational objectives

- **inspection and reporting group** this group keeps operational matters under review and develops guidance on inspection practice. The group includes representatives from each regional inspection team, and from the inspectorate's support staff and the part-time registered inspectorate
- **quality monitoring group** this is a working group of the inspection and reporting group which has a specific remit to monitor consistency and develop an action plan each year for the inspectorate.

6.8 In addition, inspection teams meet regularly to plan and moderate inspection activities. There is also a programme of meetings for inspectors with specialisms within each of the FEFC's 10 programme areas, and all grades 1, 4 and 5 in a programme area are moderated by a senior inspector with responsibility for a programme area. Each programme area team provides training for part-time registered inspectors annually.

6.9 Some of the procedures which are used to ensure consistency are:

- training events for all full-time and part-time inspectors
- training for full-time and part-time inspectors in subject areas
- question and answer papers on aspects of inspection for full-time inspectors
- inspectors regularly working across regions
- the use of a national database of evidence, judgements and grading
- college evaluations of inspection
- moderation processes and an appeals procedure which culminates in a review by the chief inspector when necessary.

6.10 The inspectorate also contributes to the FEFC's strategic and operational plans. Its performance is measured annually against agreed and published objectives. The inspectorate is also subject to internal audit by the FEFC's audit service.

6.11 The work of the inspectorate is closely scrutinised by colleges which provide both formal and informal feedback regularly. The measures which encourage feedback include:

- circulation of all sector college inspection reports to colleges and a range of other organisations with an interest in further education
- evaluation of its inspection by each college inspected
- regular meetings with college associations
- regular attendance at the FEFC's external institutions' consultative group
- attendance at events organised by colleges, training organisations and other associations which enable issues to be raised by college managers and other staff.

6.12 The inspectorate publishes an annual evaluation of its work. This results from an analysis of its internal operations, its assessments of college provision and evaluations by colleges of its work.

6.13 In addition, through more general scrutiny of the FEFC's business, the inspectorate is answerable to the sector and the public through:

- public correspondence appearing in *Council News*
- the quality assessment committee and other working and advisory groups
- the National Audit Office
- parliamentary select committees and the Public Accounts Committee
- independent external review, from time to time.

Assuring the Quality of the Audit Service's Work

6.14 The audit service has its own methods for assuring the quality and consistency of its work. It contributes to inspectorate working groups as appropriate.

6.15 The audit service is required to comply with audit standards promulgated by Her Majesty's Treasury in the *Government Internal Audit Manual*. Its terms of reference are set out at annex C to Circular 98/15, *Audit Code of Practice*. The audit framework for colleges is also set out in Circular 98/15. Guidance on joint working between the audit service and the inspectorate during inspection is contained in Circular 97/22, *Joint Working: Audit and inspection*. During and after inspection, an audit manager undertakes a detailed review of the findings of the auditor. In addition, another audit manager, who has not been directly involved in the inspection, reads audit reports critically. The chief auditor also critically reviews draft reports, including a 'weak' opinion. Judgements contained in final audit reports are signed off by the FEFC's chief auditor.

College Evaluations of Inspection

6.16 Colleges are given the opportunity to evaluate their inspections. At the end of the inspection, the college principal is sent an evaluation questionnaire and asked to comment on the planning of the inspection, on the team week and on the feedback of inspection findings. This should be returned to the appropriate regional SI as soon as possible. The college has another opportunity to comment on the usefulness of the inspection and the clarity of the published report when the principal receives, with the draft of the inspection report, another evaluation questionnaire. This questionnaire should be returned to the appropriate regional office.

Part VII

Reinspection and Appeals

Reinspection

7.1 The FEFC requires the inspectorate to reinspect curriculum area provision which has been graded 4 or 5 because these grades affect funding arrangements.

In the case of external institutions and independent specialist colleges, if the single grade awarded for FEFC-funded provision is a grade 4 or 5, the institution will be reinspected.

7.2 Reinspection will assess:

- whether the college has met targets for improvement it has set itself
- whether there has been sufficient improvement to shift the overall balance of strengths and weaknesses to justify a grade 3 or better.

7.3 Judgements leading to the allocation of a reinspection grade take into account the whole of the provision originally inspected, not only progress in those areas of weakness identified in the original inspection.

7.4 Preparation for reinspection should begin as soon as possible after the end of the inspection. CIs will encourage colleges to pay particular attention to the weaknesses identified in those areas graded 4 or 5 and to set realistic targets covering all the weaknesses identified.

In the case of external institutions and independent specialist colleges, the RI will usually make arrangements with the institution for a reinspection.

7.5 The CI will normally seek to establish a timetable for reinspection of provision in a sector college at the earliest opportunity. However, the principal may delay reinspection if the college does not expect to improve the provision sufficiently before the next funding round. Table 5 illustrates the normal schedule followed for reinspection.

Table 5. Reinspection schedule

<i>Reports published</i>	<i>Deadline for reinspection</i>	<i>Date of funding meeting</i>
Apr 1996 – Mar 1997	mid-Feb 1998	Mar 1998
Apr 1997 – Mar 1998	mid-Feb 1999	Mar 1999

7.6 Arrangements for reinspection will be confirmed by the CI in a letter to the principal. This letter will make clear the extent of the reinspection. Copies of the letter will be sent to the regional SI and the chief inspector's office.

In the case of external institutions and independent specialist colleges, the RI will write to confirm arrangements for the reinspection and inform the relevant sector inspector.

7.7 CIs will normally take over the role of RI in sector colleges for reinspections. They will support and advise colleagues involved in the reinspections and help moderate judgements on strengths and weaknesses and inspection grades before feedback.

In the case of external institutions and independent specialist colleges, the RI for the original inspection normally carries out this role.

7.8 Where there is more than one curriculum area in a college to be reinspected, inspections should be carried out at the same time, whenever possible. The college nominee will be invited to participate in the inspection in the same way as during full college inspection weeks.

7.9 Inspectors will provide feedback at the end of the inspection as for full college inspections. The CI or another nominated inspector will normally attend these feedback sessions. The grade awarded will be provisional and subject

to moderation by regional and programme area SIs, and will be confirmed in writing as soon as possible after the inspection.

Feedback will be given at the end of the reinspection of external institutions or independent specialist colleges.

7.10 Inspection findings will be recorded in the same way as for full college inspections. Reinspection reports on particular provision will form part of an annually published report covering all reinspections.

Copies of the reinspection report of an external institution or independent specialist college will be sent to the institution and circulated within the Council. They are not published.

7.11 Reinspections arising from college inspections held during the first four-year cycle (September 1993–July 1997) will be carried out according to the criteria and grade descriptors in Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Reinspections arising from college inspections carried out after July 1997 will be carried out according to Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*.

7.12 There is currently no requirement for the reinspection of cross-college areas graded 4 and 5. Progress in addressing issues associated with cross-college aspects of provision will be followed up by CIs during their regular visits. Assessments of progress will be noted and fed back to principals. Under exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the chief inspector, it may be appropriate to reinspect cross-college areas.

Appeals against Inspection Judgements

7.13 Inspectors make professional assessments of college provision with due regard to:

- the framework for inspection, described in Circular 97/12, Circular 97/13 and Circular 97/22
- other information which helps them measure the performance of the college and its students
- the college's mission.

7.14 All judgements by inspectors are:

- made on behalf of the inspectorate as a whole
- subject to moderation and the approval of the chief inspector.

7.15 During the week following the inspection, the RI will visit the college to feed back the inspection findings and judgements to the principal. The principal will be asked to invite the chair of the corporation or the chair's nominee to this feedback session.

Feedback to external institutions and independent specialist colleges is provided at the end of the inspection at a meeting with the principal, and by his or her invitation, other senior managers and/or representative at the management committee.

7.16 Whenever possible, differences of opinion about grades will be dealt with during the inspection. Inspectors will:

- seek to ensure that they are able to justify their judgements with reference to the underpinning evidence
- be prepared to consider additional evidence brought to their attention.

7.17 Colleges are expected to raise any such differences of opinion promptly, and during inspection whenever possible.

7.18 Inspectors will consider appeals made against their judgements and respond to these in accordance with the procedures described in paragraphs 7.19 to 7.23 below.

7.19 When differences of opinion about grades cannot be resolved during the inspection, colleges must initiate any appeal promptly and without avoidable delay following the feedback session to the principal. The following procedures will apply:

- a. the principal will be invited by the RI to write to the regional SI no later than one week after the feedback of the inspection findings setting out the basis for the appeal against the inspectorate's judgement, enclosing any additional evidence that the college wishes to bring to the attention of the regional SI and requesting a reconsideration of the judgement;
- b. the regional SI will review all the evidence relevant to the inspectorate's judgement, referring to the inspectors who carried out the inspection and other inspectors with appropriate expertise, as necessary. If it is considered appropriate, additional inspection meetings and/or activity may be arranged with the college to clarify, verify or extend the evidence. A record of all activities associated with the review will be kept;
- c. after the review, which will normally take no more than 15 working days, the regional SI will respond in writing to the college principal, setting out the reasons why the appeal has been upheld, or not, and whether as a result of the review the inspection grade will be changed. An appeal will not succeed unless the regional SI is satisfied that inspectors have made an identifiable mistake or valid new evidence has been brought forward.

7.20 If, as a result of this regional review, the college is still not satisfied that the inspectorate has fairly considered the evidence, the principal will be invited to write to the chief inspector providing a detailed response to the regional

SI's letter and requesting a further review. In these circumstances, the chief inspector will appoint a SI, not formerly associated with the inspection, to consider all the evidence and correspondence associated with the appeal. No new evidence will be considered at this stage and the appeal will be confined to specific allegations of errors in the earlier judgements. The SI will be asked to prepare a report which recommends one of the following for consideration by the chief inspector:

- that the grade for provision should remain
- that statements or judgements made in the report should be amended
- that the grade should be changed
- that provision should be reinspected.

7.21 The college will be notified of the chief inspector's decision normally within 20 working days of receipt of the request for a review. If the chief inspector decides that reinspection is appropriate, a team of suitably experienced inspectors will be scheduled to carry out a fresh inspection of provision. Responsibility for organising the reinspection schedule will be allocated to the appropriate regional SI.

7.22 The chief inspector can authorise publication of the inspection report whether or not a college accepts his decision or a reinspection is scheduled. The inspection report may include or exclude the inspectorate's judgements which have been the subject of appeal.

7.23 Each year the chief inspector presents a report to the quality assessment committee which includes the number of written appeals received and their outcomes.

Appeals against Audit Conclusions

7.24 The audit service has a procedure for dealing with appeals against audit conclusions which largely reflects the procedure for appeals against inspection grades. This involves initial review by the audit manager and, where the college is still not satisfied that the audit service has fairly considered the evidence, the chief auditor, acting on behalf of the chief inspector, will appoint an audit manager, not formerly associated with the audit work, to prepare a report for consideration by the chief auditor and chief inspector.

Matters Related to the Conduct of Inspectors

7.25 Inspectors endeavour to act in a professional manner at all times. Any complaints about the conduct of an inspector should be addressed through the college nominee to the inspector concerned and to the RI. It should be the aim of the inspectorate and the college to resolve the situation during the inspection with the minimum of disruption. If, after a mediation meeting with the inspector concerned and the RI, issues of conduct are still unresolved, the principal should write to the regional SI, setting out the concerns with supporting evidence and requesting the FEFC to consider the evidence presented in the light of the FEFC's code of conduct for employees.

Appendices

COMMENTS

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this form.
Please complete it and fax it to the chief inspector's office on
01203 863160.

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

Institution name

Your name

Position

Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 01203 863000
Fax 01203 863100

Please tick as appropriate

1 How useful is the *Handbook*?

Very useful Useful Not very useful

2 Which members of staff have received a copy of the *Handbook* or sections of it, as far as you are aware?

Senior staff only All managers All staff Students

3 Has the *Handbook* been used for internal staff development events?

Yes No

4 Are there topics which need clarification or more detail?

Page and paragraph Aspect needing clarification

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

5 Are there any new topics which you would like to see included? If so, please give details.

Your comments will be used to inform improvements and additions to the *Handbook*.
Thank you for your help.

GLOSSARY

The following abbreviations and terms are used in this handbook:

Abbreviations

CI	college inspector; that is, the inspector designated for the role described in paragraph 6 of Circular 97/12
CV	curriculum vitae
CP	collaborative provision
FEFC	Further Education Funding Council
ISR	individualised student record
LEA	local education authority
QAC	quality assessment committee
RI	reporting inspector; that is, the inspector charged with managing a college inspection and drafting the report on the inspection outcomes, as described in paragraph 15 of Circular 97/12
SAR	self-assessment report; that is, the report a college prepares on the quality of its provision before inspection
SI	senior inspector; that is, in most cases, the inspector who manages a regional team of inspectors responsible for carrying out college inspections
SMT	senior management team

Terms

college	all institutions, including non-LEA maintained external institutions and independent specialist colleges, unless otherwise stated
sector college	all institutions including designated colleges, other than non-LEA maintained external institutions and independent specialist colleges
external institution	non-LEA maintained external institutions

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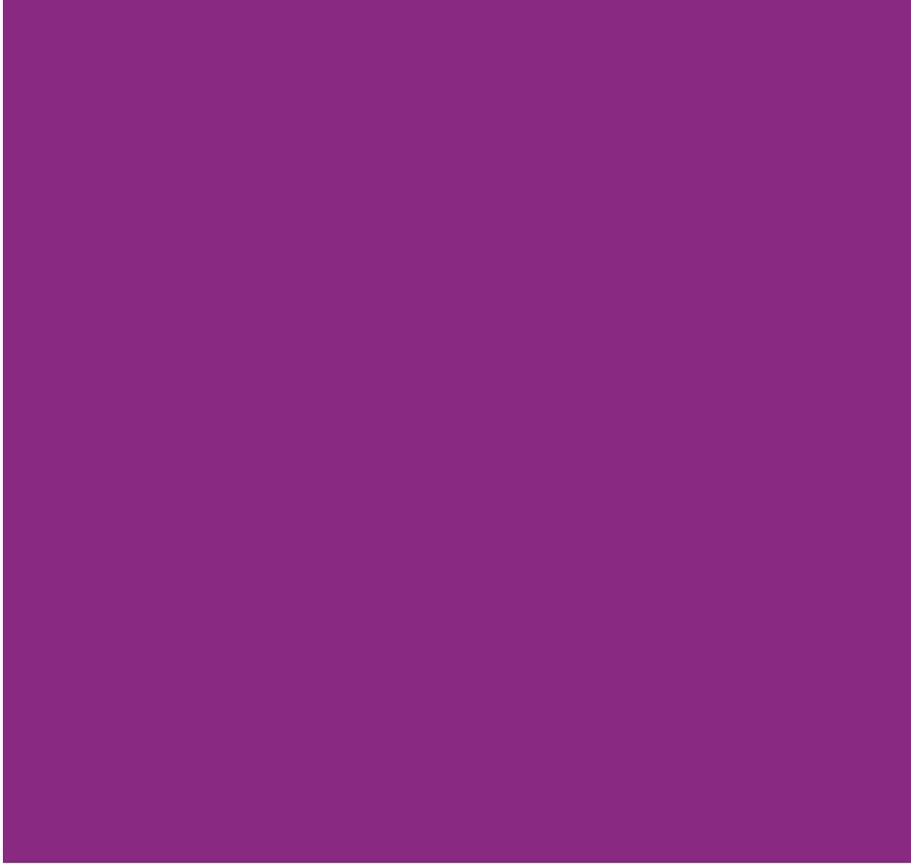
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