OFFICE FOR STANDARDS IN EDUCATION

Inspecting post-16

psychology

with guidance on self-evaluation

THE OFFICE OF HER MAJESTY'S CHIEF INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND

HMI 728

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Document reference number: HMI 728

The post-16 subject guidance published in 2001 comprised: art and design; business education; classics; design and technology; drama and theatre studies; engineering and manufacturing; English; geography; government and politics; health and social care; history; information and communication technology; law; mathematics; media education; modern foreign languages; music; physical education; religious studies; science; sociology.

Further booklets published in 2002: agriculture; basic skills in literacy and numeracy; construction; dance; English as a second or other language; hairdressing and beauty therapy; hospitality and catering; leisure and tourism; psychology.

Contents

Introduction

This booklet aims to help inspectors and staff in schools and colleges to evaluate standards and quality in psychology for students post-16. It complements the ***Handbook for Inspecting Secondary Schools*** (1999), the supplement ***Inspecting School Sixth Forms*** (2001) and the ***Handbook for Inspecting Colleges*** (2002).

This guidance concentrates on issues specific to psychology. General guidance is in the ***Handbooks***. Use both to get a complete picture of the inspection or evaluation process.

This booklet focuses on evaluating standards and achievement, teaching and learning, and other factors that affect what is achieved. It outlines how to use students' work and question them, the subject-specific points to look for in lessons, and how to draw evaluations together to form a coherent view of the subject.

Examples are provided of evidence and evaluations from college and school sixth-form inspections, with commentaries to give further explanation. These examples are included without any reference to context, and will not necessarily illustrate all of the features that inspectors will need to consider. The booklets in the series show different ways of recording and reporting evidence and findings; they do not prescribe or endorse any particular method or approach.

Inspectors and senior staff in schools and colleges may need to evaluate several subjects and refer to more than one booklet. You can download any of the subject guidance booklets from OFSTED's web site (***www.ofsted.gov.uk***).

Our Inspection Helpline team, on 020 7421 6680 for schools and 020 7421 6703 for colleges, will respond to your questions. Alternatively, you can e-mail ***collegeinspection@ofsted.gov.uk*** or ***schoolinspection@ofsted.gov.uk***.

OFSTED's remit for this sector is the inspection of education for students aged 16–19, other than work-based education. In schools, this is the sixth-form provision. In colleges, the 16–19 age group will not be so clearly identifiable; classes are likely to include older students and, in some cases, they will have a majority of older students. In practice, inspectors and college staff will evaluate the standards and quality in these classes regardless of the age of the students.

This booklet concentrates on the most commonly found courses in psychology for students 16–19. However, the principles illustrated in this guidance can be applied more widely.

This guidance applies to General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced-level (A-level) psychology courses. It has relevance for General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) psychology as well as for other courses for which psychology is a contributory discipline, notably General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) or Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) health and social care. Some students taking AS and A-level courses may have studied the subject for GCSE, but this is likely to be the exception rather than the rule, and teachers will assume no previous knowledge. Nonetheless, where AS and A-level groups comprise a mixture of beginners and those who have studied the subject previously, inspectors should consider the effectiveness of the teaching in accommodating the needs of both groups of students.

Common requirements

All inspectors share the responsibility for determining whether a school or college is effective for all its students, whatever their educational needs or personal circumstances. As an inspector, you must ensure that you have a good understanding of the key characteristics of the institution and its students. Evaluate the achievement of different groups of students and judge how effectively their needs and aspirations are met by any initiatives or courses aimed specifically at these groups of students. Take account of recruitment patterns, retention rates and attendance patterns for programmes and courses for different groups of students. Consider the individual goals and targets set for students within different groups and the progress they make towards meeting them.

You should be aware of the responsibilities and duties of schools and colleges regarding equal opportunities, in particular those defined in the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. These Acts and related codes of practice underpin national policies on inclusion, on raising achievement and on the important role schools and colleges have in fostering better personal, community and race relations, and in addressing and preventing racism.

As well as being thoroughly familiar with subject-specific requirements, be alert to the unique contribution that each subject makes to the wider educational development of students. Assess how well the curriculum and teaching in psychology enable all students to develop key skills, and how successfully the subject contributes to the students' personal, social, health and citizenship education, and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Judge how effectively the subject helps prepare students aged 16–19 for adult life in a culturally and ethnically diverse society.

1 Standards and achievement

1.1 Evaluating standards and achievement

From the previous inspection report, find out what you can about standards and achievement at that time. This will give you a point of comparison with the latest position, but do not forget that there is a trail of performance data, year by year. Analyse and interpret the performance data available for students who have recently completed the course(s). Draw on the school's ***Performance and Assessment*** (PANDA) report or, in the case of a college, the ***College Performance Report.*** Also, analyse the most recent results provided by the school or college and any value-added information available. When numbers are small, exercise caution in making comparisons with national data or, for example, evaluating trends. For further guidance on interpreting performance data and analysing value added, refer to ***Inspecting School Sixth Forms***, the ***Handbook for Inspecting Colleges*** and the ***National Summary Data Report for Secondary Schools.***

Where you can, form a view about the standards achieved by different groups of students. For example, there may be data which enable you to compare how male and female students or different ethnic groups are doing, or how well 16–19-year-old students achieve in relation to older students.

Make full use of other information that has a bearing on standards and achievement, including success in completing courses, targets and their achievement, and other measures of success.

You should interpret, in particular:

- trends in results;
- comparisons with other subjects and courses;
- distributions of grades, particularly the occurrence of high grades;
- value-added information;
- the relative performance of male and female students;
- the performance of minorities and different ethnic groups;
- trends in the popularity of courses;
- drop-out or retention rates;
- students'destinations, where data are available.

On the basis of the performance data and other pre-inspection evidence, form hypotheses about the standards achieved, whether they are as high as they should be, and possible explanations. Follow up your hypotheses through observation and analysis of students'work and talking with them. Direct inspection evidence tells you about current standards, and whether students are being sufficiently stretched. If the current standards are at odds with what the performance data suggest, you must find out why and explain the differences carefully.

The specifications for GCSE and GCE psychology courses and units within AVCE make clear what students are expected to learn. In broad terms, you should look for evidence of the following knowledge and understanding, skills and intellectual attitudes.

Knowledge and understanding

Students should have a sound grasp of:

- key philosophical positions, for example, determinism; reductionism; individual versus situational explanations; nature versus nurture;
- principles and issues underlying aspects of normal and abnormal mental operations and their application to everyday life;
- primary and secondary evidence related to mental processes;
- contemporary issues; concepts and theories drawn from different psychological traditions;
- ethical principles and empirical practices relating to different approaches to research methodology.

They should be able to apply their knowledge and understanding; that is, be able to:

- use a range of evidence to generate and support generalisations about psychological perspectives;
- support and develop arguments and set these alongside personal experiences, opinions and ideas, and be able to assess the value of different types of evidence;
- use concepts and theories to clarify and sharpen accounts and explanations of aspects of psychological functions.

Investigative skills

Students should be able to:

- identify appropriate research hypotheses;
- collect empirical data systematically;
- analyse and present findings;
- produce tenable conclusions.

Intellectual attitudes

Students should have developed to a high level their objectivity, which will be shown in:

- a critical attitude towards psychological and ethical issues;
- a critical attitude towards sources and validity of evidence;
- an understanding of the variety of standpoints and perspectives held by psychologists;
- a recognition of the social and educational consequences that relate to these different psychological standpoints.

1.2 Analysis of students'work

Notes and assignments in students'files provide substantial evidence of attainment. The analysis of work is important for judging the nature of the demands made on the students and their progress over time. Hence, it can give valuable insights into their achievement. In addition, it raises questions for further investigation, notably about the quality of teaching, curriculum, assessment and resources. The following example demonstrates the kinds of judgement that can be derived from the analysis of files.

Example 1: evidence from analysis of Year 12 AS and Year 13 A-level (A2) students'files in a school sixth form

Files are generally well organised and comprise a valuable learning resource. Good use is made of graphs, diagrams, spidergrams and mental maps to summarise ideas and information. Few files contain detailed indexes or consistent pagination that would have helped students to cross-refer within the often substantial volume of material. Students are able to make clear and comprehensive notes from a variety of sources. The teacher's handouts and individuals'notes from class are clearly annotated to suit personal study needs. Additional materials have been taken from personal reading, the Internet and tutorials. The work from early in Year 12 has been systematically scrutinised by teachers, who have added guidance comments to encourage more effective note making. Annotation is economical and shows an ability to identify key issues, important illustrative points, evaluated comments and cross-references to other work. Research study notes and drafts leave a clear audit trail indicating how hypotheses and procedures have been refined. The file of a student with a serious hearing impairment has been adapted to include word-processed notes taken by his mentor. These have been extended/annotated during additional weekly support sessions and are of a similar quality and coverage to those from other students.

The standard of essays and shorter examination style answers ranges from good to very good. In Year 12, students are already competent at selecting relevant evidence in order to focus on the objectives of questions. In Year 13, there is more substantial evidence of skills of synthesis enhanced by carefully selected exemplars. Higher attaining students confidently use aptly chosen specialist vocabulary and writing conventions to produce work that meets the

criteria of elegant academic discourse. Work from most students is characterised by effective use of evidence to support judgements. Higher graded pieces do so by reference to original research, indicating how particular examples do or do not fit selected viewpoints. By Year 13, most have made good progress in essay writing skills and many students have made very considerable progress. For example, some students embarking on the AS course have little idea how to gather selections of evidence or form mature conclusions. By Year 13, they are producing work at least of grade C standard and the best pieces are models of good practice. Spelling of specialist subject vocabulary is generally good and writing is accurate in references to published work. There are occasional errors in spelling and syntax but, overall, students have made very good progress in developing their literacy skills.

Coursework assignments from Year 12 are generally of a high quality. They reveal sophisticated arguments and excellent understanding of methodological and ethical issues. Pilot research has been elegantly designed, conducted competently and reported very well. Practical work is linked to published studies; limitations, both in design and reliability are clearly understood. Grades awarded accurately reflect the quality of work. There are a few examples of the use of information and communication technology to present coursework. With one exception, this work is word-processed with effective use of font and layout choices to make the text accessible and it includes occasional presentation of data in table form. Only one example presents spreadsheet data as a distribution with lines of best fit.

[Attainment well above average (2)]

Commentary

The evidence suggests that achievement is very good, as a result of very effective learning. In their essays, students demonstrate that they can marshal evidence and explain theoretical questions. Year 13 students have made at least good progress in their essay-writing skills in just over a year, and the majority of students have made very considerable progress, now weighing evidence and reaching well-balanced conclusions. Files are well organised. Comprehensive and clear notes taken in class, from personal reading and the Internet, highlight important points relating to theoretical work or a research study and link the material to work covered in class. It is reasonable that notes from classwork are relatively but not unacceptably similar. If they were mostly identical, it would indicate excessive copying or dictation, thereby prejudicing the development of students'selection and note making skills. The steps taken to secure the full involvement of a student with special educational needs (SEN) has been particularly effective.

The substantial number of research studies in Year 13 files shows that the teaching is paying proper attention to developing the necessary evidence base, thereby making theory and principles concrete and real. That students are noting links between sections of the course specification also reflects a high order of subject knowledge on the part of the teacher.

Coursework assignments are of high quality because students understand the procedural and ethical principles of methodology used in psychology, can conduct investigations, relate their findings to other work, and evaluate its limitations.

Although this section of the guidance is concerned primarily with students'attainment and achievement, Example 1 also illustrates how the analysis of work can provide evidence on the quality of teaching (see section 2.3). The standard of the students'notes and essays is likely to be attributable to the quality of the teaching and the demands it makes. Such evidence should help you to see how the teaching contributes to the students' progress over time, their achievement and their standards.

Exercise care in scrutinising students'notes. Compare those in different files in order to establish the extent to which they are similar. Notes that are very similar or identical will provide evidence of the teaching rather than attainment. Where there is heavy use of published materials – for instance, when no suitable course text is available – note the extent to which these are selective and the degree and quality of marginal annotation or additional commentary. Notes which are distinctive, particularly those students have made from their own reading, will provide evidence of attainment. So also will students' essays and other assignments, including coursework modules. In essays, look for indications that students have a grasp of terminology and theoretical explanations, and that they can use evidence to explain and illustrate theories, concepts and principles. In coursework investigations, look for the students' awareness

of the reasons for the choice of data collection and statistical analysis techniques, their understanding of the limitations of what they are doing or have done, and the validity of their conclusions.

Acknowledge students'skills in using information and communication technology (ICT) to present their work, but be aware that the skilful use of ICT can mask poor psychological or methodological understanding. This may happen, for example, in coursework assignments in which students present accounts of their personal research. Note particularly whether the presentation of quantitative information and statistical treatments accords with the type of data collected.

1.3 Talking with students

Talking with students during lessons and in more structured discussions will help you to assess the level at which they are working. There is no need to fire 'test' questions at students. It will often be better for you initially to invite students to tell you what they have been or are doing, what they have found straightforward and what they have found difficult. Subsequently, there are other lines of inquiry you can follow. Your judgements must be made in the light of the expectations for each course, but the following questions are useful to consider when you are talking to students about their work.

- Do students use psychological terminology appropriately, accurately and with confidence?
- Are they able to form and express their own views and theories?
- Can they describe briefly a particular theoretical perspective or the work of a major researcher and explain how it can be used to illustrate and account for a particular standpoint?
- Are they able to summarise some of the main findings of a piece of empirical research?
- Can they discuss the implications of (for example) a learning difficulty for an individual and his/her carers?
- Can they explain concepts such as 'personality', 'perception'and 'learning' and comment critically on the most important issues relating to one of these?
- Can they describe a piece of research which they have conducted: its focus or hypothesis, the methods of data collection, the findings, and its overall adequacy?
- Are they able to transfer ideas from one context to another and trace the connections, for example, in the strands of forensic psychology and criminology?
- Do they show an enthusiasm for the psychology they have studied and a curiosity and desire for further study?

A preliminary examination of the teachers'planning and scheme of work and/or students' notes and assignments will indicate whether films, television programmes, literature and outside visits are used as resources for learning. If so, you can ask students to describe the psychological implications of one of these.

Example 2: evidence from discussion with first and second-year A-level students (late autumn term) in college of further education (FE); their entry qualifications were average overall

First-year students can explain their recent work on characteristics of short- and long-term memory, summarising effectively the links between biological and cognitive components. They are confident in illustrating their points through appropriate reference to a range of case studies that are mostly from bibliographies provided by their teacher. They can also identify the main findings of a piece of empirical research into face recognition and identify the problems and ethical issues involved in replicating such studies. They acknowledge the effectiveness of the induction programme and value particularly the elements relating to metacognition.

Second-year students can compare and contrast alternative theoretical positions within the general context of criminology. They can summarise theoretical explanations of criminal behaviour and relate these to evidence of individual and cultural differences. They are also skilled at showing how parts of their course are interlinked. They draw upon earlier studies of perception and cognition to explain the psychology of the courtroom and crime-victim interaction. Those who also study sociology are able to draw on theoretical knowledge of social structures to relate psychology to the wider criminal justice system. Students display well above average capacity for making and supporting theoretical positions; this shows good progress since GCSE (or the start of the A-level course) and is an indication of the quality of the teaching. Overall, a positive picture, and the students themselves appear confident, thoughtful and perceptive.

The students greatly appreciate the combination of independence and support, the systematic way in which learning is consolidated, the use of diagrammatic representations of ideas, the pace of working in lessons and their variety. They also speak highly of the way all teaching links the work to current situations and issues. They appreciate the way in which independent learning and homework are fully integrated with lessons. Students are anxious to acknowledge the energy and expertise of their teachers. 'You can always find them when you need help and nothing is too much trouble.' They find the marking of their essays and the detailed annotations on them very constructive and well supplemented by oral tutorial comments that assist them in target-setting to improve their work.

[Attainment well above average (2)]

Commentary

This discussion suggests that the students'achievement is very good, since their attainment on entry was only average overall. This is evident from the way that, relative to whether they are in the first or second year, they are confident in describing particular theories and showing how these can be used to illustrate and explain different aspects of social life. Further evidence comes from the way they can summarise some of the main findings of pieces of empirical research. Second-year students are intellectually imaginative: they can show how single studies illustrate different aspects of forensic psychology and its links with criminology. They are able to use this knowledge to support finely tuned judgements. Breadth of reading is evident but does not usually extend beyond the wide-ranging bibliographies provided by teachers. As in example 1, broader comments are included because they highlight possible links between standards and the quality of the teaching. Here, students are attesting to the teachers' management of learning and, particularly, the strengths of the induction programme in encouraging self-analysis of learning and the good balance between independent work and support from the teacher. They can see how their teachers'constructive assessments are helping them to learn.

1.4 Lesson observation

In lessons, you will find evidence of attainment in students' questions, their answers to the teachers'questions, and in interactions among students during group work.

Example 3: evidence from a Year 12 AS psychology lesson in a school; half of the students had below average GCSE results; late spring term

Students individually completing research studies

All the students can use some of the relevant terminology, such as 'hypothesis', 'control group'and 'manipulated variables'and can articulate ethical principles. They are familiar with research methods, such as questionnaires, observation and experimental/psychometric testing, but their understanding is well below the standard expected for this stage of the A-level course. Even the higher-attaining students have a very limited grasp of the general principles of research methodology.

Although all students nominate clear hypotheses for their studies, they are confused by the function of the null hypothesis. Their studies are very general and the form of experimental materials is poorly judged to meet the data needs. Work is mostly related to a rather limited range of exemplars given in course materials. There is little evidence of wider reading. The proposed work is mostly replicative and shows little understanding of the design quality of the original research. Only one student is able to relate his hypothesis to previous findings and theories, using these secondary sources. All have elected to use visual perception tasks and the sizes of their samples are realistic and manageable. However, there is inadequate recognition of the limits that small sample size places on the validity of findings and the students have no grasp of the control procedures. This reflects a poor understanding of the nature of stratified, random or quota sampling, and of the way research can highlight the relationships between variables such as age, sex, ethnicity and expectations. The result is that students'analyses of their findings are very thin and over-generalised. Some of the questions posed are leading or double questions, which will affect the status of the findings.

All students are currently attempting an evaluation of their studies, but they all emphasise only the limitations in sample size. They do not stress the composition of the sample, the design of their research procedures or interview schedules, their own interview techniques, or the general limitations of quantitative evidence. In conversation, students can explain cogently some of the general ethical issues facing researchers, and they are particularly strong on the importance of confidentiality. Yet they have not applied this understanding well to their own studies – for example, by explaining the effects that their own characteristics (age, sex and ethnicity) may have had on their respondent.

Half of these students started the AS course with relatively low previous attainment, but nevertheless this poor level of attainment indicates unsatisfactory achievement at this stage in the course.

[Attainment well below average (6)]

Commentary

The students' attainment is even lower than might be expected. Their understanding of research methodology is weak for this stage of an AS course. Their grasp of different methodological approaches and the associated research procedures is insubstantial. They know insufficient about sampling and fail to anticipate the operational practicalities of conducting a piece of small-scale replicative research. All but one have been unable to use secondary sources effectively to inform their research focus and analysis. They could determine what minimum sample size they needed but had no clear understanding of the limitations of sample size, and most were unaware how to organise their sample in order to explore the effect of particular control variables. The students have a general understanding of sources of data bias and ethical issues, but only one has grasped some of the differences between the major methodological paradigms, and has a sound knowledge of research techniques, which he is able to evaluate.

Poor achievement here probably reflects weaknesses in the teaching. In a situation like this, you should verify, through scrutiny and discussions with the teachers and students, the extent to which there was appropriate teaching of research methodology before the students took this unit.

Example 4: evidence from A2 psychology lesson in a school (late autumn term); average previous attainment in psychology AS (grade C overall)

Unit revision session in which students present oral summaries of characteristics of abnormal (autistic) behaviour gleaned from text and video sources

- ***Students'presentational skills are rather weak. There is little sense of audience, and the level of informality is inappropriate; it reduces the impact of the presentations, which are not well structured, because they lack an overview and obvious focus.***
- ***Examples dominate. Often they are well chosen, but they are not drawn together to create an argument. The language of discourse is limited. Qualifying statements about exceptions that might prove a general rule are generally absent.***
- ***Appropriate examples are identified but mostly as a list without commentary or selectivity. Some students confuse general features of introverted behaviour with manifestations of autism.***
- ***In later conversation, all students are able to describe clearly the main presenting features of autistic behaviours and can relate these to the impact on friends, family and carers. They have a clear appreciation of the concept of 'degree'and understand that autism has many dimensions of form and degree.***
- ***Less clear about the range of remedial responses available to helpers or how each of these might relate to cognitive, as opposed to neurological, explanations of autism.***
- ***Overall, then, their subject knowledge is at an average level. Their skills of presenting to the class are weak but face-to-face their fluency is substantially better. This points to satisfactory achievement in psychology (but apparently unsatisfactory development of the language and structure of formal communication).***

[Attainment average (4)]

Commentary

Weaknesses in the structure and fluency of oral presentation detract from the content of what students have to say and might easily lead to an incorrect judgement on their competence in the subject. In follow-up conversations with students, it became clear that their understanding of autism and its impact was average for this level. In practice, it may not be possible to hold such conversations during the lesson, but you should always try to test the evidence of the lesson against additional evidence from discussions with students, work scrutiny and other lesson observations.

This observation poses a question about the teaching. In principle, such presentations, through which students help themselves and each other to revise their knowledge and understanding, can facilitate learning. In this example, limitations in the ability of students to structure and deliver their analyses using appropriate academic forms needs consideration. This might be attributable to a lack of guidance from the teacher on presenting findings orally. The teacher's planning or discussion with the students could confirm whether this is the case. Examination of examples of discursive writing would indicate the level of competence in constructing formal evaluations.

2 Teaching and learning

2.1 Evaluating teaching and learning

In order to form judgements, we have to apply evaluation criteria to evidence. The Handbook identifies criteria for judging teaching and learning: some of these have a particular application in psychology courses. The following lists are not exhaustive but are illustrative of the ways in which you should base your judgements on clear criteria.

Applying the criteria for effective teaching

The teachers' ***subject knowledge and understanding*** will be good when they:

- clearly and succinctly explain terminology and theoretical principles;
- explain generalisations about psychological models and processes, and are effective in demonstrating exceptions to rules;
- clearly present evidence about psychological models and processes, including any contradictions in the evidence;
- use well-chosen evidence and illustrations from psychological and other sources and contemporary research to illustrate concepts, theories and methods;
- skilfully draw out links and cross-references between the different topics studied.

The teaching of ***skills*** will be effective when students are required to:

- use language accurately, particularly psychological terminology;
- produce and interpret numerical data;
- use ICT to locate and interrogate psychological research and present their own research findings.

The teachers' ***planning*** will be effective when it:

- ensures a balanced and detailed study of different theoretical traditions;
- accurately applies psychological theories and concepts to the study of psychological models and processes;
- incorporates wide-ranging quantitative and qualitative evidence drawn from primary and secondary sources;
- includes a balanced and detailed study of research methodologies and related data-collection and analytic techniques.

The teachers will ***challenge*** and have high expectations when they require students to:

- use theories and psychological terminology accurately to explain psychological phenomena;
- practise for themselves the interpretation of quantitative and qualitative evidence;
- collect data for themselves in ways and for purposes which are manageable and fit for the purpose.

The teachers' ***methods*** will be effective when they:

- stimulate psychological appreciation and students'curiosity in specific and universal aspects of psychological science;
- promote understanding by the adroit use of examples and theoretical models;
- incorporate questioning and discussion which challenge students, whilst consolidating and extending their capabilities;
- require students to apply their psychological knowledge and understanding to a wide range of resources;
- read contemporary psychology texts, and about the history of psychology, for themselves.

The teachers' use of students'personal study will be effective when it includes exercises which:

- reinforce students'understanding of psychological concepts and theories and their ability to apply them;

- develop students' understanding of psychological methodologies and their ability to use them ethically;
- require the analysis of a rich variety of sources, including more recent research and media reports of psychological relevance;
- involve the interpretation of empirical data.

Applying the criteria for effective learning

Students' ***learning*** will be effective when they:

- acquire new knowledge of concepts, theories and methodology appropriately;
- acquire new knowledge of empirical evidence related to a number of substantive areas, such as behaviour, cognition and learning, criminology, personality and social psychology;
- expend intellectual effort in trying to explain concepts and theories in their oral and written work;
- expend intellectual effort in applying their understanding to familiar and unfamiliar problems and situations;
- can use a wide range of texts, including original research studies and other sources in order to learn for themselves;
- can explain what they are currently doing and how it fits into the course as a whole;
- can illustrate the ways in which the parts of the course interlink and how specific pieces of research can relate to more than one part of their course.

The application of evaluation criteria is not always straightforward. This is because there are no fixed rules about which teaching methods should and should not be used. You should look carefully for teaching which may, on the face of it, have positive features but which lacks sound mastery of the subject methods that are fit-for-purpose. Look carefully, too, for the converse. The following are some examples.

- Extensive dictated notes, used to deal with a large knowledge base, may be academically sound but unsuitable for ensuring that students develop understanding in depth. However, not all dictation is inappropriate: brief dictation may be useful in ensuring that definitions are clear and accurate, especially if students are struggling to come to grips with new terminology.
- Use of supplementary research material may be well chosen and increase the range of evidence available to students. However, you will need to judge whether such materials are so tightly focused that they effectively reduce the opportunities for students to develop skills of independent selection and comment.
- Discussion in pairs or in groups does, in principle, break up lengthy exposition and provides students with an opportunity to participate actively. However, you should judge whether discussion is fit for purpose. In psychology lessons, it should enable students to practise the application of terminology, share with each other the outcomes of reading and research and so on. Discussion should be sharply focused and should require students to reflect on, rather than simply describe, their research and personal experiences. It should assist them to develop their critical faculties rather than merely express their individual opinions and attitudes.
- An assumption is sometimes made that extended exposition by the teacher is inappropriate, and that lessons must be punctuated by frequent opportunities for discussion. Apply an open mind to this. Extended exposition can be particularly effective, for example, to map out a topic, to explain difficult material or to introduce material that is not readily available or at the right level in textbooks. Conversely, extended exposition is likely to be ill-advised when it replicates basic material that students could consult and digest for themselves, or when the presentation is neither challenging nor interesting.
- Practical investigations are potentially valuable ways of enabling students to practise data collection and analysis and thereby familiarise themselves with psychological methodology. However, such exercises are not intrinsically worthwhile. First, look for evidence that they have clear and manageable objectives expressed conventionally as hypotheses and null hypotheses. Secondly, look for evidence that they develop students' awareness of different methodological approaches, of ethical considerations, of the strengths and limitations of particular methods of collecting data, and of the validity or otherwise of conclusions based on those data. Thirdly, look for evidence that teaching enables students to develop their key skills sufficiently to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of psychology. These issues are particularly relevant to those courses which include practical research assignments.

2.2 Lesson observation

The evaluation criteria will, of course, provide the basis for your judgements in lessons. Although all the criteria are important, in some lessons particular criteria will assume greater importance in explaining students'attainment and progress. In the following example, it is the teacher's subject knowledge which is decisive.

Example 5: evidence from an AS psychology lesson in an FE college (beginning of spring term)

Preparation for an analysis of Samuel and Bryant's (1984) critique of Piaget's early work on the development of conservation of number

Excellent relationships with students; good-humoured yet industrious working atmosphere creates the right environment for learning. 16–19 and mature students are well integrated.

Teacher has extremely good command of subject knowledge, with up-to-date references to critiques by Hughes & Tizard and related work.

Lucid explanation by teacher, using effective, well-chosen support video material for reference and consolidation. Teacher skilfully emphasises main points and key omissions in students'mini-presentations. Stages in the development of conservation illustrated through elegant demonstrations of seminal features of Piaget's original experiments. Anecdotal evidence from two mature students is accorded worth and astute questioning relates their observational experience with wider methodological considerations. This is achieved to such effect that a short ensuing discussion leads students to grapple with contrasting philosophies of psychology. Teacher adroitly introduces less well-known material. At the end, the teacher challenges students to seek to devise a methodology that would result in an empirically elegant pilot study of children's cognitive skills at the sensorimotor stage.

All students are able to respond to teacher's questions which, on occasions, are addressed to particular students and are cleverly formulated to enable students of different abilities to demonstrate both recall and learning. Thus all students, not least those who are lower attainers or are likely to be reluctant contributors, are able to recall accurately the gist of complex theoretical arguments and important sources of evidence from the previous lesson. Although still only 12 weeks into the course, without exception students take considerable pains to try to explain basic theories to one another and to the teacher, and to cross-refer from other studies in support of their arguments.

The lesson is very good indeed. There are many attributes of second-year (A2) standards because of excellent subject knowledge and presentational skills, very good working relationships, and enthusiastic and effective learning.

[Teaching and learning excellent (1)]

Commentary

This is a record of high quality teaching, characterised by the teacher's excellent subject knowledge. This knowledge manifests itself in the clarity of the teacher's explanation of theoretical Piagetian material which is difficult at this stage of the course. The teacher skilfully uses demonstration, selected empirical data, a carefully prepared video extract and reference to previous studies to illustrate the theoretical analysis. Skilful use of questions matched to students'capabilities ensures that all students are able to make very good progress. The teacher deftly weaves anecdotal contributions from two mature students (about their own children) into the fabric of the lesson and develops general awareness of challenges that Bryant and others make to Piagetian observational methodology. Therefore, not only do students understand the theory but they can also discern its relevance to child studies and to their own experience. They make clear connections with educational theories such as 'learning readiness'and cases of abnormal development. The teacher uses the plenary session to create a scaffold for more sophisticated extension work involving a close methodological analysis of Samuel and Bryant's paper.

Example 6: evidence from Year 13 A2 psychology lesson in a sixth-form college (end of autumn term)

Having drawn from students a detailed appreciation of assessment criteria used by the examination board, the teacher sets an individual study exercise involving use of the Internet. Starting with identified web sites, students select from a range of non-academic reports of recent research. Teacher has chosen a range of material relating directly to personal study areas agreed with students. Downloaded material is subjected to a close analysis of the degree to which it meets examination board assessment criteria. Students use interactive whiteboard to present succinct yet detailed evaluations, indicating how each chosen piece meets or fails to meet examination needs. They justify their judgements in vigorous debate. The downloaded material is added to individual students'growing bank of secondary sources.

[Teaching and learning very good (2)]

Commentary

This short extract illustrates how teachers can set individual study tasks in psychology that are intellectually demanding; that are integral to the way the teacher has planned the course and that have continuing relevance to the students. The students respond to this rigorous teaching with enthusiasm, a determination to get to the bottom of examination requirements and an assertive willingness to express their views. The ICT competence of the teacher and of the students is an important feature in this lesson.

Example 7: evidence from first-year (AS) psychology lesson in college of further education (middle of autumn term); introduction to important concepts underlying the Freudian school of psychoanalysis

Teacher's weak subject knowledge is marked by assertions rather than explanations, the absence of higher level conceptualisation and insufficient examples to bring the material to life and give it relevance.

An over-long introduction results in some loss of interest. Lack of effective stimulus material. Reference to case studies is of insufficient quality to contribute to students'understanding of personality development issues. Teacher laboriously covers simple Freudian theory without clarity or sensible structure, focusing on terminology which students have already mastered. At first, there are contributions from students who are eager to take part in discussion, but these are not extended or encouraged. Teaching opportunities missed. Over-dependence on textbook and reading through information. Slow pace with embarrassing pauses. Questions more a test of retrieval/recall than understanding. Teacher sits at desk and refers to information from previous week, without focus.

Poor organisation does not allow for emphasis on key skills or reinforcement. Students not given sufficiently stimulating examples or challenging questions. Teacher talks approximately 80% of the time. The result is that, after 30 minutes, students have mostly lost their earlier interest. No group work or serious debate. Insufficient progress or direction to give students focus. Lack of key skills development or active approach to learning results in little involvement and unsatisfactory progress in learning. No extension work is provided.

Despite the poor teaching, students initially have a mature approach to learning, with good skills in listening and concentration, but these are stretched to the limit by the lengthy introduction and explanation. The shallow back-up material causes the students some frustration.

[Teaching poor (6); learning unsatisfactory (5)]

Commentary

Exposition by the teacher is meant to play a fundamental role in the learning process, but it is too long and lacks clarity and purpose. It is over-dependent on information from the textbook, much of which is simply read out. Overall, teaching is not fit for purpose. The poor presentation is due to weaknesses in the teacher's own subject knowledge, reflected in limited explanations, lack of familiarity with relevant concepts and case study examples and a slow pace. As a result, students lose interest and do not grasp the main concepts. The learning is graded higher than the teaching because the students are initially

eager to take part in discussion but not given sufficient opportunity to clarify their understanding or to ask questions when uncertain. Poor organisation by the teacher does not allow for the development or reinforcement of key concepts in personality development.

Example 8: evidence from AS class in a sixth-form college (beginning of spring term)

Groups are planning to carry out small-scale replicative research into selected aspects of perception processes and development (face/feature recognition and witness reports)

Aims and objectives not made explicit at the start; no evidence of checking students'recall and understanding of previous work, which had covered some classic research on perception. Teacher's planning notes incomplete.

Students settle to work satisfactorily in their pairs; the teacher exercises her support role well. She provides sound advice to individuals, linking their proposals with published research in respect of research methods to use but less so with hypotheses to investigate. The latter was reportedly covered towards the end of the last lesson but four students need to have their memories refreshed on the need for clarity in hypothesis formation. While circulating, the teacher checks on students'progress and their understanding. As a result, she judiciously interrupts the class on one occasion to draw attention to the broader methodological implications of the classic research studies and to pose questions about them. However, another such opportunity is missed to encourage the two pairs of students who are not considering their hypotheses with the same clarity of thinking as the rest of the class. Instead, the teacher encourages them to work more speedily in order to keep up with the rest. Students have a clear awareness of ethical and pragmatic issues.

One group of male students is initially slow to start work, apparently with an immature interest in inappropriate elements of feature recognition. Teacher quickly notes this and engages them in discussion, drawing out the cognitive principles involved. From this re-direction, they subsequently work well.

The pace of working is good for all but four students: short summarising sessions change the focus at intervals that are sufficiently far apart to encourage stamina. The teacher ensures that most students make effective use of their time. With the exception of some work on hypothesis formation, they do accomplish as much as could be expected, maintaining interest throughout.

Teacher briefly but effectively summarises the progress made, using individual examples, and she gets students to identify progress steps. Notes on flip chart will be used to support the next lesson. Students leave room still discussing their research plans.

[Teaching and learning satisfactory (4)]

Commentary

It would be easy to underestimate the quality of the teaching in this lesson. It does not get off to a focused beginning. The teacher's written planning is weak. For part of their time, four students do not work at the same brisk pace as the others. However, the quality of the teacher's guidance to students is good: it demonstrates that she knows her subject well (both recent perception research and issues in research methodology) and knows, too, what she wants students to gain through the exercise. The brief planning notes, then, do not mean that the lesson has not been adequately planned, only that the recording of the planning is defective.

There is some change in activity during the session. The tutoring role is deftly handled and encourages, rather than reduces, independence. Further, the teacher attempts to ensure that the whole class benefits from important points that are emerging from discussions with individual students or groups. This intention reflects good practice in dealing with group work. It is not invasive and promotes sustained concentration. However, not all students benefit as well as do the majority. This apart, what matters is whether the activities are fit for purpose and whether they enable students to make progress.

This example illustrates how satisfactory quality might not always conform to model practice, and shows why

you must keep an open mind in judging whether what you see works. This example of teaching has some apparent deficiencies but, overall, its strengths ensure that students' learning is satisfactory.

2.3 Other evidence on teaching and learning

Lesson observation is usually the most important source of evidence on the quality of teaching and learning, but the analysis of work and discussions with students can also yield valuable information. This is particularly important when the work includes a coursework component undertaken over time. Under these circumstances, the observation of individual lessons may give a very partial picture of the students' learning experiences and of the support provided by teachers.

The work analysis will give you a good feel for the overall rate of progress, and therefore the pace of the teaching and learning. It will show the range and depth of the work which the students are required to do. For example, the quality of students'notes will help to show whether teachers have spent sufficient time equipping students with relevant study skills. Example 1 illustrates how evidence may be obtained on the range of research studies and practical work that students are expected to undertake.

Discussions with students will give you a sense of their motivation and the range of their experiences. You can ask questions to show whether they understand clearly how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. Caution needs to be exercised in interpreting a fall-off in numbers of students for GCE A2 courses. Many students embark on AS studies in psychology in order to broaden their experience but with no intention of proceeding to A2.

3 Other factors affecting quality

You should mention other factors only in as much as they have a direct bearing on students' achievements and the quality of teaching and learning. The main areas to consider are curriculum, staffing, accommodation and resources. The following are possible examples.

3.1 Curriculum

It is not unusual for A-level classes to be taught by two teachers who plan a division of labour for covering the topics on the course specification. In psychology, however, the links between topics are crucial: they include links between theory (developmentalism and behaviourism) and substantive topics (such as memory mechanisms; research methodology and conservation), as well as links between one substantive topic and another. Furthermore, some empirical studies can be used to illustrate more than one substantive topic. If made effectively, these links add much to students' learning. So what you should look for is whether the teachers ensure that cross-references between topics are drawn out explicitly. The evidence might be found in teachers' lesson plans, in specific comments on students' work or emphasised in the schemes of work.

Note whether teachers draw attention to these links in lessons – for example, ask whether students remember using particular pieces of evidence when studying phobic behaviour with Ms X. Such cross-references would be evidence of good subject knowledge and effective lesson planning, both of which support the quality of teaching. If students themselves are able to cite links between topics, you will have an additional piece of evidence on their achievement.

3.2 Resources

There is a growing range of resources for psychology courses: they include comprehensive and up-to-date textbooks, some examining standard topics and themes in depth, and others which provide source material and/or activities. In addition, departments usually have a range of printed materials which teachers themselves have produced to support teaching and learning. In making a judgement on the quality and quantity of the books and materials available, you should take account of the extent to which they give students access not only to the theoretical and methodological foundations of the subject but also to up-to-date evidence, including relevant research studies.

When judging the quality of accommodation and facilities for psychology, judge how well the provision allows students to learn and make progress. Consider the following questions.

- Are areas available for students'study other than in timetabled lessons? Are students able to work without being disturbed by intrusive noise?
- Are lessons timetabled in dedicated rooms with appropriate space and equipment or are they squashed into small spaces that limit the range of approaches and activities?
- Is there an effective system for booking ICT access and controlling materials, so that staff and students do not waste time trying to locate resources for learning?
- Are additional source materials centrally located, with easy access for students and staff?
- Are opportunities created for students to gain access to broaden their studies – for example, through conferences, use of guest speakers, opportunities for visits/field work, links with appropriate web sites and/or specialist library facilities?
- Where practical work is undertaken, is the environment used conducive to the type of research activity being performed?

4 Writing the report

The following are examples of inspection reports from a school and an FE college. (They do not necessarily reflect the judgements in any or all of the examples given elsewhere in this booklet.) In a college, it is likely that psychology would be reported together with some other subjects whereas, in schools, it would be reported on separately. The summative judgements in these reports use, for schools, the seven-point scale: ***excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor***. For colleges, there is the five-point scale for the quality of provision in a curriculum area: ***outstanding; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; very weak***. The summative judgements ***excellent/very good*** used in school reports correspond to ***outstanding*** in colleges; the judgements ***poor/very poor*** used in schools correspond to ***very weak*** in colleges.

A secondary school (1)

Psychology

Overall, the quality of provision in psychology is very good.

Strengths

- AS results in 2001 were well above average.
- The highly qualified staff have extremely good specialist subject knowledge.
- The teachers' planning is careful and well resourced.
- There are very good relationships between staff and students, resulting in a high level of motivation and progress.
- Highly effective tutorial support results in good learning by students across the ability range.

Areas for improvement

- There could be more systematic sharing of information between departmental staff about the effectiveness of different teaching and learning styles.
- The proportion of A-B grades in examinations needs to be increased by encouraging students to develop more effective written evaluations and by providing them with more detailed individual progress targets.

Psychology was introduced into the sixth form three years ago and the subject has rapidly grown in popularity, with 33 candidates at A-level in 2001 and 35 in 2000.

Standards and achievement

Results at A-level have been mostly above average at A-E and average at A-B. In 2001, AS results were well above average, with all students being successful at grades A-E and half successful at the higher grades A-B; 3 of the 34 candidates achieved a grade A. These results represent good progress for A-level students in 2001 and very good achievement for AS students in relation to their earlier GCSE results.

Much of the work seen on the AS and A-level courses includes high quality responses to carefully selected case studies. In one Year 13 lesson, a selection of short video extracts allowed students to identify key features of autism. In follow-up group discussion, the students demonstrated well their ability to predict accurately how aspects of this condition might affect the family and those working with autistic children. Whilst some students predicted to attain grade A have developed an effective writing style, the work from those predicted to achieve grades C-E lacks evidence of broad enough reading. This results in a tendency to oversimplify some of the more complex psychological viewpoints. Overall, attainment in Year 13 is above average. Students'good achievement reflects the good progress they have made during the course.

AS psychology is a completely new subject for all students in Year 12 and they make very rapid progress. They are very enthusiastic about the subject, which they find challenging and stimulating. Students work well, both in small groups and independently. In class discussions, they listen carefully to the teacher and to each other and contribute willingly. The work seen from these students shows that they have already firmly grasped key psychological and empirical concepts. In the two Year 12 lessons observed, students were working on their individual studies, planning small-scale practical research projects. They understood the need to prepare a testable hypothesis and could discuss

in detail the principles and practicalities of controlling and measuring research variables. Higher attaining students were able to draw on earlier reading. They could relate their pilot studies accurately to a range of published research in cognitive and child development psychology. They clearly understood the ethical considerations associated with experimental research. Lower attaining students in Year 12 have yet to develop the ability to write about the similarities and contradictions between the main approaches to psychology. Overall, however, attainment in Year 12 is well above average, and all students have achieved very well given the abilities they demonstrated on entry to the course.

Relationships between the teachers and students are excellent. Male and female students are equally enthusiastic and successful in their studies. The increasing popularity of the subject has resulted in relatively large teaching groups that are currently limiting the extent to which gifted and talented students are being further challenged. Teachers are aware of this and are providing suitable extension work.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good overall. The subject benefits from being taught by highly qualified and energetic teachers. A strong commitment to students'learning and achievement are features of the teaching. In the best examples seen, careful lesson planning led to activities that were equally challenging for students across the ability range. Lessons have clear, appropriate objectives. They are well structured, with a range of activities which meet the course objectives particularly well. Students experience a range of learning opportunities that include very good formal teaching as well as involvement in purposeful class discussions, paired and other small group work, independent projects and use of case study materials. Particular attention is paid to the consolidation of learning, using effective techniques to aid memory and understanding, such as 'mind maps'and 'spidergrams'. 'Writing frames' are used well to improve students'analytical writing skills. ICT is used effectively for preparing course work but is not yet systematically employed for researching major topics.

Students value the opportunities, provided mostly in Year 12, to undertake practical work and visits. Individual tutorial support is very good and the ready availability of staff is much appreciated by students. Written work is marked rigorously and constructively, using the relevant examination criteria, and includes particularly informative written comments. Students report that they receive additional individual advice directing them to further reading from specialist journals. Whilst the feedback from marking is thorough, students would benefit from more detailed longer-term targets. These could be used to measure progress and give students more accurate feedback on where they are at any given time in relation to the point which they and their teachers want to reach by the end of their course.

Planning is a strong feature of the teaching, both for individual lessons and across sequences of lessons. Independent study periods and homework are used thoughtfully and effectively to support and extend work done in lessons. Medium-term planning is very clear and well structured, reflecting considerable thought and a secure grasp to further progress in learning. This includes good awareness of opportunities for personal, social, moral and cultural development and of the need to develop literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

Leadership and management

Subject leadership and management is satisfactory overall. The very recently appointed subject co-ordinator has not yet had time to develop her role in monitoring and developing teaching styles. As yet, there is insufficient sharing of information among departmental staff about the effectiveness of different approaches to teaching and learning. However, planning in the subject is very thorough and well developed, making good use of detailed performance data. Money for resources has been spent wisely and with considerable thought about its use to support the teaching. An excellent range of supplementary material has been developed.

A college of further education (2)

Psychology, sociology and economics

Overall, provision in this area is good.

Strengths

- Students'written work is of a high standard.
- Pass rates are good in GCE AS economics, sociology and psychology.
- Teaching is lively and purposeful.
- There is effective monitoring of students'progress.
- IT is well used as an integral part of the curriculum

Areas for improvement

- There have been some poor retention rates on GCE A-level courses and in GCSE humanities.
- Further support is needed for the few students who have difficulty expressing themselves clearly in speech and writing.

Scope of provision

The inspection covered GCE A-level and GCE AS courses in economics, psychology and sociology. GCSE humanities and GCSE sociology courses were also inspected.

Achievement and standards

The value-added analysis of GCE A-level and AS results shows that the extent of students' achievements is considerable and that most students achieve higher grades than those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE results. On GCE A-level economics and psychology courses in 2000 and 2001, students' pass rates were high but retention rates were low and declining. In 2001, the pass rates on GCE AS courses in economics, psychology and sociology were high and retention rates were satisfactory. On the GCSE sociology course, the pass rate is high and the retention rate is satisfactory. On the GCSE humanities courses, the pass rates are very high but the retention rates are low. Most students develop good skills of written and verbal communication. They also display good skills in analytical, hypothetical and critical thinking both in class and in their writing. Male and female students attain equally high standards. A few students, for whom English is their second language, find it difficult to join in discussions or work effectively in groups because they lack good communication skills. The use of subject-specific vocabulary was particularly difficult for some of these students. Many students progress to higher education.

Quality of education and training

Teaching is good. It is well planned and effective in promoting good learning. Course documentation shows that priority is given to ensuring that teaching meets individual students' learning needs. Lessons are well organised. Handouts and other learning materials are well produced and students find them most useful. There are guides and unit booklets for each subject which inform students about the structure of their course, assessment methods, and the demands the course will make upon them. Students are encouraged to develop skills of self-analysis and use the guides extensively, finding them particularly useful in helping them to understand the nature and scope of their courses.

Students benefit from lively and purposeful teaching. Teachers ensure that students are given opportunities in lessons to contribute to discussions, explore concepts and exchange ideas. In one GCE A-level economics class, students were given materials on the Treasury model. They were then asked to use the formulae to calculate the likely effect of a base-rate change on the GNP. The students found the exercise in financial modelling stimulating and it excited their interest. The subsequent discussion showed they were developing good thinking skills. Students are often encouraged to assess their own performance. In one GCE A-level sociology lesson, students were given marking criteria and essays to discuss and grade. This exercise was successful in helping students to make objective judgements about their own work. The use of ICT is an integral part of teaching and learning in all subjects. All

classrooms have computers that give access to the Internet. There is also a new research base where students can enter data from investigations on a computer. In an excellent GCE AS lesson, students worked on their own in the research base-room to produce materials on sport psychology. Students make good use of the Internet to carry out research into topics. Students make continual use of the facilities to produce their own work. In most lessons, teachers use a variety of appropriate teaching methods. In a GCE A-level psychology lesson, on the theory of perception, students revised their knowledge of theory and then made hypotheses to test in their own research.

Teachers set relevant and challenging tasks and the students respond with some very good written work. Examples of written work of a high standard are found in coursework by GCE A-level sociology students on 'Secularisation in the city', investigations by GCE A-level psychology students into 'biorhythms' and assignments by GCE A-level economics students on third world economies. In a few instances, students have found difficulty in expressing themselves clearly and their written work is poor.

Teachers mark students' work thoroughly and accurately and monitor students' progress carefully. In addition to giving students written comments on their work, teachers also provide oral feedback during lessons. In psychology and sociology, the teachers enter feedback on a form which is attached to the students'work. The extended comment on this form is useful for students as a record of their progress. All students are aware of the target minimum grades they have to attain. They enter their marks on a chart indicating the extent of their progress towards reaching a particular grade. Students are helped by this useful process in recording their marks and identifying what they need to do to improve their performance. In each subject, students have to complete one assignment on key skills. Students comment unfavourably about key skills and do not regard them as important.

Enrichment activities are a valuable part of the courses and there are many opportunities for students to attend conferences and go on trips to broaden their knowledge. For example, psychology students visit the National Police College to meet forensic crime specialists. Economics students visit banks and larger firms in connection with a unit on international trade. Staff give students valuable help with their applications to establishments of higher education.

Tutorial provision is well organised. The students meet as a group once a week and the rest of tutorial time is used for reviews of individual students'progress. Students value the opportunity to talk to their tutors individually. They are less positive about group meetings. Those inspected were not sufficiently well organised to justify their existence on the timetable. Individual records of attendance are checked at group meetings using management information systems. In addition to asking students who have not attended regularly to explain their absences, tutors are also careful to praise those whose attendance record is good.

Most lessons are timetabled to take place in a room designated for the subject being taught. The subject identification of some of these rooms is strengthened by displays of students' work that are imaginatively and attractively mounted. The library has an adequate stock of books and additional resources are held in the rooms used for the teaching of particular subjects. Subject videos may be borrowed from the bank of teaching resources.

Leadership and management

The provision is well managed. Staff meet regularly to discuss students' progress on courses and plan and develop future provision. Students' pass and retention rates are a focus of discussion and planning. Action is taken to rectify particular weaknesses. For example, workshop sessions have been introduced to help students to improve their assignment work and performance in examinations. Staff are well qualified. They receive training in ICT skills and attend staff development events to bring themselves up to date in their subjects.

Notes

Designed and produced by Matrix Print Consultants Ltd, Rothwell, Northants 01536 713811