

North Lincolnshire College

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1998-99

THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL***

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education according to a four-year cycle. It also inspects other further education provision funded by the FEFC. In fulfilling its work programme, the inspectorate assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Inspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work they inspect. A member of the Council's audit service works with inspectors in assessing aspects of governance and management. All colleges are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

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Grade Descriptors

Inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the report. They use a five-point scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1997-98, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	9	60	29	2	–
Cross-college provision	18	54	24	4	–

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*
Sample size: 108 college inspections

Student Achievements

Where data on student achievements appear in tables, levels of achievement are shown in three ways:

- as expected completions, which is the number of initial enrolments on qualifications where the student expected to complete the qualification in a given year. For example, a student on a two-year programme who began their programme in October 1995, would appear in the results for 1996-97 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which the students have completed as expected (or are continuing with the prospect of late completion). For programmes of study of two years or more, retention is calculated across the whole programme, that is, from the start to the end of the qualification
- as an achievement rate, which is the number of qualifications students have fully achieved as a percentage of completed qualifications with a known outcome. Partial achievements are not shown.

Summary

North Lincolnshire College

East Midlands Region

Inspected May 1999

North Lincolnshire College is a general further education college with three main centres in the northern part of Lincolnshire. The college produced its first self-assessment report in 1998. The report covered all aspects of the college's operations. It used a range of evidence to support the judgements made. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but concluded that there was insufficient emphasis on the assessment of teaching and learning and student retention rates. For the inspection the college produced a useful update of the self-assessment action plan. This indicated that progress had been made in addressing weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.

The college offers courses in all FEFC programme areas and some full-time and part-time higher education courses. Work in six programme areas was inspected, for which seven grades were awarded. Aspects of cross-college provision were also inspected. There is a wide range of effective central guidance services. Learning support for students who take up the provision offered is effective. Most programmes of study are well planned and organised effectively. Vocational courses are

closely aligned to industrial requirements. Most of the teaching is good or outstanding. Systems for monitoring students' progress are usually thorough. Overall, students' achievements are good. The well-maintained and refurbished accommodation in Lincoln and Gainsborough provides a good learning environment. There are well-resourced learning centres and good social, sports and refectory facilities for students. An active student union makes a positive contribution to college life. The corporation conducts its business effectively and openly. There are clear policies and procedures for the process of governance. Governors have effective oversight of the college's strategic direction. Management of the college is good. Financial planning and monitoring is effective. There is effective implementation and monitoring of the equal opportunities policy. The college has productive links with a wide range of local organisations. The college should improve: retention rates on some courses; the range of appropriate learning methods to take account of the needs of the full range of student ability on some courses; the implementation of some aspects of the quality assurance process; the attention given to key weaknesses in some action plans; the take-up of learning support; some weak tutorial practice and the standard of accommodation at Louth.

The grades awarded as a result of the inspection are given below.

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Construction	2	Support for students	2
Manufacturing	3	General resources	2
Business	2	Quality assurance	2
Hotel and catering	2	Governance	1
Health and social care	2	Management	2
English	2		
Psychology and sociology	2		

Context

The College and its Mission

1 North Lincolnshire College is a general further education college. It provides courses in all Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas and some full-time and part-time higher education courses. The college has three main centres in the northern part of Lincolnshire. The largest site is in Lincoln where 85% of college activity, including all advanced work, takes place. The sites in Gainsborough and Louth are approximately 20 miles from Lincoln. In addition, to make courses more locally accessible, a programme of courses is taught at approximately 20 venues in rural towns and villages in the northern part of the county. The college also provides training through a high street information technology (IT) and business administration training centre in Lincoln, customised programmes on employers premises, and by training organised in partnership with employers. The college is currently developing distance learning material for use through computer terminals as part of a 'virtual centre of excellence' and University for Industry pilot projects.

2 Lincolnshire has one of the lowest population densities in the country. The local economy is characterised by low wages, declining employment in manufacturing industries and a slow growth in employment in the service sector. The college is in the top 10% of employers by size in the county. The unemployment rate for the county is 3.5% which is below the average for the East Midlands. However, 60% of the county's unemployed live in the college's catchment area. Unemployment in Gainsborough for example is 6.4%. In 1998, the percentage of 16-year-old pupils in the local education authority (LEA) area, excluding independent schools, gaining five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects at grades A to C was 48.4% which is 1.1% above the national average.

3 The college had enrolled 13,872 students by May 1999. Most full-time students were

following national vocational qualification (NVQ), general national vocational qualification (GNVQ), general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level), GCSE and higher education courses. The majority of part-time students were enrolled on NVQ courses. The average age of the students was 32 and 83% of students were aged 19 or older. Students from minority ethnic groups account for 2% of the total enrolment. This figure is the same as that for the local population. About 15% of students receive means tested benefit. The college operates the largest youth training agency in the county with over 450 clients. The college employs 300 full-time staff, half of whom have direct learning contact with students.

4 The college implements its mission of meeting the needs of its community through partnerships. Current partnerships include those with employers, other further education colleges, private trainers, and local authorities. The college is a major associate college of Nottingham Trent University. Partnership activities cover areas such as the Engineering Training Centre, three University for Industry pilot projects, Lincolnshire Enterprise, and the Construction Industry Training Initiative. The college has been particularly active with partners in obtaining funds from the single regeneration budget and European development projects. Nearly 40% of the college's income is received from non-FEFC sources.

The Inspection

5 The college was inspected in May 1999. Inspectors had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. The college submitted data on students' achievements for 1998 and individualised student record (ISR) data for the three years 1995 to 1997. Data on students' achievements were mainly reliable, except for those on manufacturing courses. The college was notified approximately two months before the inspection

Context

of the sample of its provision to be inspected. The inspection was carried out by 13 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 56 days. They observed 93 lessons, including lessons in collaborative provision and examined students' work and college documentation. Meetings were held with governors, managers, staff and students. Inspectors reviewed the contacts the college has with the training and enterprise council (TEC).

6 This college was one of 30 in the current cycle of inspections which agreed to participate in the joint Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and FEFC assessment of careers education and guidance. The joint assessment was guided by the inspection

framework, with careers education assessors contributing to judgements made by inspectors. The emphasis in this report on careers education and guidance will help colleges and careers services to improve the quality of the careers education and guidance they offer and help the DfEE to disseminate good practice.

7 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. Of the lessons inspected 73% were judged to be good or outstanding and 4% were less than satisfactory compared with 65% and 6%, respectively, for all lessons observed during 1997-98.

Context

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	3	8	6	1	0	18
GCSE	0	6	2	0	0	8
GNVQ	1	9	3	1	0	14
NVQ	7	12	5	0	0	24
Other vocational	3	10	4	2	0	19
Other	3	6	1	0	0	10
Total (No.)	17	51	21	4	0	93
Total (%)	18	55	23	4	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98 (%)	19	46	29	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*

8 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1997-98.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
North Lincolnshire College	11.3	75
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98	10.4	77

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*

Curriculum Areas

Construction

Grade 2

9 Inspectors observed 15 lessons covering college-based and collaborative provision. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment. They identified some further strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- extensive range of craft and technician courses
- effective teaching in most lessons
- high achievement rates on most courses in 1997 and 1998
- productive links with schools and employers
- effective monitoring of students' progress

Weaknesses

- low retention rates in 1996 and 1997
- some poor health and safety practice

10 The building and civil engineering section offers an extensive and appropriate range of courses at craft and technician level. There are clear progression routes from foundation to higher education levels. Short courses allied to appropriate qualifications are run with collaborative partners and have proved very popular. As the self-assessment report recognised, the flexible enrolment arrangements have widened the range of students participating in craft courses. There are strong and productive links with employers, local schools and special schools. The section receives approximately a quarter of its income from full-cost courses designed for industry. There are regular team meetings which are carefully minuted. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. The annual development plan lacks detail. Students'

progress is reviewed and recorded regularly. Students have individual progress sheets and plans for future actions. Student records kept by staff are accurate. Wall charts also show how students are progressing as a group. Induction packs are useful and meet the needs of students. These strengths were not identified by the college.

11 Most teaching is good or outstanding. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment that teachers use an appropriate range of teaching methods. Schemes of work are of good quality and take into account the standards required by industry lead bodies. Most students have a clear understanding of the aims and objectives of each lesson. Learning materials are produced to a high standard. They are well written and presented. Teachers regularly question students to check they understand the topic being taught. Teachers give useful individual support and guidance for students within lessons. However, teaching does not always fully take into account the varying abilities of all the students in a group. In many lessons, teachers make constructive use of their own experience to provide industrially relevant material. Some good industrial projects are undertaken by students both in the college and in the local community. Some students' practical work is outstanding. Proper attention is not always paid to health and safety regulations in workshops. Some inappropriate footwear is worn. Some bricklaying students do not always wear eye protectors while cutting bricks. Workshop risk assessment records are not always available in the construction craft workshop. Teachers' marking of students' assessment work is fair and consistent. However, teachers' comments on students' work do not always indicate how the work could be improved. The teaching of key skills is insufficient.

12 Teachers are appropriately qualified for the courses they teach. Many have vocational assessor and verifier qualifications. However, their recent industrial experience is often dated

Curriculum Areas

as noted in the self-assessment report. Most workshops have been refurbished recently. They are well designed and offer realistic simulated work environments in which to develop craft skills. The carpentry and joinery, and bricklaying workshops are too small for the number of students using them but a new assessment centre is being developed. The plastering workshop is small with little storage space for materials and students' work. Most classrooms provide a pleasant learning environment and have been refurbished recently. There are effective wall displays of students' work alongside informative trade posters and components. The resource areas provide good opportunities for students to study on their own. They are generally well stocked with learning materials but some of the textbooks are dated. The main library has a good stock of textbooks and relevant periodicals.

13 The punctuality of some students is poor. Since 1996, student retention and achievement rates have shown an improving trend. In 1996 and 1997 retention rates were below average on all courses except for short courses. They were substantially below average on higher vocational courses in 1996 and foundation and advanced vocational courses in 1997. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report. Retention rates in 1998 were generally good. For most courses they were an improvement upon previous years. Student achievement rates were uneven in 1996. Some achievement rates were at or above the national average and some, including those for higher vocational courses, were significantly below the national average. In 1997 and 1998, most achievement rates were at or above the national average except for advanced vocational courses in 1997 which were below average. Achievement rates in higher and short vocational courses have been good in the last two years.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in construction, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Foundation vocational	1	Expected completions	64	109	124
		Retention (%)	68	59	71
		Achievement (%)	63	70	75
Intermediate vocational	2	Expected completions	48	123	201
		Retention (%)	*	68	78
		Achievement (%)	60	67	74
Advanced vocational	3	Expected completions	54	121	97
		Retention (%)	*	68	90
		Achievement (%)	59	56	93
Higher vocational	4	Expected completions	65	82	89
		Retention (%)	58	84	95
		Achievement (%)	42	83	81
Short vocational	Various 1 to 4	Expected completions	41	1,005	2,121
		Retention (%)	100	92	83
		Achievement (%)	100	95	97

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Manufacturing

Grade 3

14 Inspectors observed 10 lessons covering all aspects of manufacturing. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths identified by self-assessment. Inspectors identified different weaknesses.

Key strengths

- courses closely aligned to the requirements of local industry
- thorough monitoring of students' progress
- frequent references to industrial applications in lessons
- high retention and achievement rates
- the high-quality industrial training environment at Gainsborough

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped schemes of work
- failure of teachers in many lessons to involve all students
- environment in the mechanical engineering workshop at Lincoln

15 Manufacturing provision is located on the Lincoln and Gainsborough sites. Courses are closely aligned to the needs of local industry. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that this is a strength. Subjects covered are machining, fitting, fabricating, welding, and computer-aided engineering. Courses include a full-time initial craft training course, day-release craft and technician courses, and a part-time degree course. Curriculum managers have developed three-year plans covering detailed operational points. They relate closely to action points identified in the self-assessment report. Course administration is effective and there are comprehensive student entry and progress records. Courses have been updated but

curriculum development has not always been sufficiently thorough.

16 Most teaching is satisfactory. There are schemes of work for most courses but many are no more than a list of topics. Teachers make frequent and appropriate references to industrial applications in lessons and draw upon students' experience of working practices. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. In a lesson on grinding wheels students were shown examples from a range of industrial wheels. They were able to handle the wheels and to discuss key points in their use, including safe working practices. Teachers often develop topics by posing relevant questions to students. However, in many lessons they fail to ensure that all students remain attentive and involved in the work. Some teachers have high-quality printed notes prepared to a common format with spaces left for students to make their own notes and to undertake further work. However, a few teachers require students to copy notes written on the board or to take down dictated notes and such practice does not help students to learn how to make their own notes. In a significant number of lessons the work lacked pace and teachers failed to sustain students' interest. These weaknesses in teaching were not recognised in the self-assessment report. Assignments are of an appropriate standard. Where necessary teachers write constructive comments to help students improve their work.

17 All classrooms on the Lincoln site are adequate and appropriately equipped with whiteboards and overhead projectors. However, there is little use of display material to reinforce learning. This site also has a number of facilities for manufacturing courses. Students benefit from using some new equipment, including industrial standard computer controlled machines and up-to-date welding equipment. Inspectors agreed with the college that the computer-aided drawing suite has modern computers and industrial standard software. The mechanical workshop is

Curriculum Areas

equipped with a range of machines which are appropriate for their purpose but dated. In contrast to the other facilities it provides a poor learning environment. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. The college also has the use of a well-equipped engineering training workshop provided by a local engineering company which offers a good working environment. The industrial training centre at Gainsborough is located in a modern building which houses a suite of high-quality classrooms and a well-equipped engineering workshop. These resources were not recognised as a strength in the self-assessment report. Technician staff provide close support for teachers.

18 Students at Lincoln and Gainsborough are nearly all employed; many are apprentices. Students in Lincoln are predominantly from one local high technology manufacturing company. Inspectors agreed with the college that useful

meetings are held regularly with staff from local companies to discuss the progress of their students. Most students are highly motivated and industrious. Many are capable of working with a minimum of supervision. Attendance is good. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment that the ISR data are not a true reflection of retention and achievement rates on many courses. Most retention and achievement rates are above average on craft and technician courses as identified in the self-assessment report. The overall achievement rates on craft courses have been consistently above the national averages in the benchmarking data published by the FEFC for engineering courses. The overall achievement rates on technician courses have fluctuated but remained above the national average. The overall retention rates for technician courses have reduced to just below the national average.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in manufacturing, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Craft	1, 2 and 3	Expected completions	*	*	380
		Retention (%)	*	*	85
		Achievement (%)	*	*	77
Technician	2 and 3	Expected completions	*	*	112
		Retention (%)	*	*	73
		Achievement (%)	*	*	95
Other	1, 2 and 3	Expected completions	*	*	129
		Retention (%)	*	*	83
		Achievement (%)	*	*	84

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Business

Grade 2

19 Inspectors observed 13 lessons covering GNVQ business studies and NVQs in administration and secretarial studies.

Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and some of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They also identified some additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- a wide range of appropriate teaching methods and materials
- good retention rates on the majority of programmes
- effective assessment and monitoring of students' progress
- strong personal tutor system supporting academic progress
- high-quality equipment and accommodation
- productive industrial and commercial links

Weaknesses

- declining achievement rates particularly at level 1 and for short courses
- poor achievement rates on some programmes
- lack of planned work experience for GNVQ advanced students

20 The college offers a broad range of business, administration, secretarial, management and professional courses. There are good opportunities for progression up to higher certificate and diploma level. A particular feature is the large number of NVQs delivered in the workplace through the partnership arrangements, including some with national companies. Industrial and commercial

links are used to improve courses. Course induction programmes are effective and comprehensive and valued by students. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the personal tutorial system works well to support academic progress. All students are assigned to a personal tutor and have timetabled tutorials which are used to monitor and encourage individual students' progress. There are clear procedures for reviewing students' attendance. Students play an active part in the quality review process as recognised in the self-assessment report. Students report that actions are taken in response to their comments.

21 The quality of teaching is mostly good. The majority of lessons are carefully planned and structured. Inspectors agreed with the college that teachers use an appropriate variety of teaching methods and materials. In one lesson, teachers effectively used group work, internet research and analysis of questionnaire results in work on one GNVQ assignment. Many teachers are knowledgeable about current business and economic developments and use this knowledge effectively in their teaching. For example, in private secretaries courses each lesson begins with a review of the latest, relevant developments in the field. Industrial and commercial links are used to add realism to course assignments. For example, the personnel manager from a local company provided company materials for a 'behaviour at work' assignment. Several lessons are of three hours duration and some teachers find it difficult to sustain students' interest for this length of time. Inspectors agreed with the college that key skills are appropriately integrated with unit assignments. There are clear assessment procedures. Assessment documentation is used effectively by teachers to provide a detailed commentary and constructive feedback to students. Planned work experience has not been offered to GNVQ students. The self-assessment report recognised this weakness.

Curriculum Areas

22 Accommodation and equipment is of high quality. Much of the accommodation is modern and well appointed. Classrooms are appropriately furnished with whiteboards and overhead projectors and there is access to television and video players. Students have access to good-quality IT facilities with modern business software. The internet is readily accessible and its use is supported by internet addresses provided by staff. Staff also use the internet to obtain up-to-date information and teaching materials. A recently opened 'learning shop' in the centre of Lincoln is an excellent facility. It houses a large modern IT and business administration workshop. The facilities on the Gainsborough site are of a high

standard for business and administration courses and are attractive for use by business clients. Teachers have appropriate knowledge and experience. They have the relevant qualifications for the provision and assessment of GNVQs. There is a systematic procedure for identifying the development needs of individuals and teams.

23 There are good retention rates on the majority of courses. While it is recognised by the college that several achievement rates are above national averages, the decline in achievement rates overall was not identified in the self-assessment report. Retention and achievement rates on collaborative NVQ programmes are high.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in business, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
NVQ	1	Expected completions	918	1,051	439
		Retention (%)	83	81	81
		Achievement (%)	79	75	59
GNVQ/NVQ	2	Expected completions	495	436	856
		Retention (%)	75	87	91
		Achievement (%)	79	80	73
GNVQ/NVQ	3	Expected completions	472	589	470
		Retention (%)	73	79	77
		Achievement (%)	73	72	71
Short courses	Various 1 to 4	Expected completions	773	496	1,089
		Retention (%)	97	97	88
		Achievement (%)	84	78	62

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Curriculum Areas

Hotel and Catering

Grade 2

24 Inspectors observed 15 lessons. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They identified further weaknesses.

Key strengths

- comprehensive induction to courses
- comprehensive schemes of work and detailed lesson plans
- effective teaching in both theory and practical lessons
- high-quality and well-equipped realistic work environment
- above average retention and achievement rates on NVQ food preparation courses
- well-managed work experience for NVQ students

Weaknesses

- below average retention and achievement rates on a minority of advanced courses
- underuse of realistic work environment of restaurant

25 The section offers a narrow range of courses in hospitality and catering. The main full-time provision is at NVQ levels 1 and 2. The GNVQ advanced in hospitality and catering has low numbers of students. Short courses are popular but part-time courses have recruited poorly. The 'door supervisor' course and the licensees certificate courses have recruited substantial numbers of students. The Hotel and Catering Institutional Management Association certificate course did not recruit any first-year students in September 1998. A fast-track route from NVQ level 1 to level 2 qualifications has been followed by some students. Industrial links are informal as noted in the self-assessment

report. They have been effectively developed to provide work experience and opportunities for visits to caterers but they have not been used to invite speakers from the industry to address students or to publicise any job opportunities that may arise.

26 Most teaching on hospitality and catering courses is good. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the comprehensive schemes of work and good lesson planning are a strength. Induction is viewed positively by students. It is well constructed. It provides students with a comprehensive introduction to their course and to the hotel and catering industry. In lessons teachers use appropriate teaching methods to sustain students' interest and to extend their knowledge and skills. High standards of safety and food hygiene are maintained in the food preparation areas, although some part-time students do not always wear protective clothing. Students have little experience of planning menus and few know the cost of the materials used. Industrial visits are used effectively to relate theory to practical situations and are enjoyed by students. The GNVQ advanced course includes a number of such visits. Two visits contrasted the operations at a local hotel with those of an industrial catering establishment. Such visits also serve to foster the continuing good relationships with industry. The work experience for NVQ students involves hotels and restaurants in a number of locations including Scotland and the Lake District. Feedback from employers on the quality of students' work is positive. Some students have been offered full-time jobs after their placements. Attempts to develop foreign exchange trips for students have not been successful.

27 The self-assessment report recognised the high quality of the specialist teaching accommodation. The recently-refurbished catering facilities are in an imaginatively and tastefully converted grade II listed ex-court house. The production kitchen, public training restaurant and bar provide realistic work

Curriculum Areas

environments of a high standard. However, there are some occasions when the lack of customers in the restaurant affects the realism of the work. The restaurant is open mainly at lunch times. The restricted opening times prevent students gaining a broader experience of restaurant work. Changing facilities for students are of high quality. The library bookstock is small but there is a reasonable range of books for the courses on offer. Suitable trade magazines are also available. Most full-time staff have appropriate, although sometimes limited, industrial experience. The section makes a substantial use of part-time staff with current industrial experience.

28 Students on full-time courses are well motivated and work hard. The self-assessment report identified the strengths and weaknesses in the retention and achievement rates. Retention rates on the NVQ level 1 course in

food preparation and cooking are high and increasing but are below average on the NVQ level 2 in food and beverage service. Retention rates are also below average and decreasing on the NVQ level 3 in food preparation. The retention rate on the GNVQ advanced has decreased to be significantly below the national average in the benchmarking data. Retention rates on part-time courses are above average on the NVQ level 1 but below average on the NVQ level 2. Achievement rates on the NVQ level 1 course in food preparation and cooking are above average and have improved on the level 2 course to be just above the national average. Achievement rates are significantly below the average on the NVQ level 2 course in food and beverage service. The achievement rates on the GNVQ advanced are well above the national average, although the number of students is low. The achievement rate on the NVQ level 2 in food preparation is 100%.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of achievement and retention rates in hotel and catering, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
NVQ food preparation and cooking	1	Expected completions	9	12	8
		Retention (%)	53	80	89
		Achievement (%)	78	67	88
NVQ food preparation and cooking	2	Expected completions	25	29	32
		Retention (%)	52	58	76
		Achievement (%)	48	52	67
NVQ food and beverage service	2	Expected completions	11	18	14
		Retention (%)	44	75	64
		Achievement (%)	32	42	32
NVQ food preparation	3	Expected completions	4	4	2
		Retention (%)	80	67	40
		Achievement (%)	100	25	100
Hotel and Catering Institutional Management Association certificate	3	Expected completions	6	4	3
		Retention (%)	100	36	75
		Achievement (%)	100	75	100
GNVQ advanced hospitality and catering	3	Expected completions	14	8	5
		Retention (%)	75	53	50
		Achievement (%)	100	100	83

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Curriculum Areas

Health and Social Care

Grade 2

29 Inspectors observed 16 lessons including some in collaborative provision. Inspectors agreed with the strengths identified in the self-assessment report but identified additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- broad range of courses attracting a wide range of students
- high level of learning evident in the majority of lessons
- high level of attention to individual students' needs
- work experience contributing strongly to learning
- good achievement and retention rates on most courses
- predominantly good standards of students' work

Weaknesses

- low retention and achievement on NVQs
- some ineffective curriculum management
- uneven development of students' key skills

30 The section offers a good breadth of provision which attracts a wide range of students, as recognised in the self-assessment report. Courses have been developed which attract and effectively provide for students who would not otherwise have benefited from further education. The higher national certificate and NVQ early years courses attract employed students who work with children. Partnership arrangements provide courses directly for students in the workplace. A wide variety of short courses provides qualifications for students who cannot study for long periods. The recruitment of a wider range of students

has not led in most areas to a decline in retention and achievement rates. Good team cohesion and regular meetings have brought about some changes to the curriculum. However, there is a lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities of staff. For example, the responsibility for implementing action and monitoring progress is not defined clearly. The management of the curriculum is not systematic. The quality of schemes of work, lesson planning and end-of-year course evaluations is not always good.

31 Teaching in the majority of lessons is good. The expected learning outcomes of lessons are made clear to students. Teachers help students to understand new material by linking their learning to other parts of the course, to their work experience and to their personal experiences. Students' good relationships with each other and with teachers make them willing to ask questions and to contribute during lessons. A high level of learning is evident during lessons. Equal opportunities are an integral part of the curriculum. Issues are raised and addressed sensitively in the majority of lessons. For example, during a higher national certificate early years lesson a focus on cultural diversity was well maintained. Through some demanding group work, students raised and explored a variety of issues, learning from each other's responses as well as from the teacher's input. Teachers regularly pay attention to the needs of individual students during lessons. Feedback to individuals on their progress is very good and is a particular feature of the tutorial process. Recent developments to teach key skills have been implemented with varying degrees of effectiveness. The college identified this weakness in its self-assessment. Inspectors agreed with the strength identified in the self-assessment report that work experience is effective and well organised. The learning experience of students is carefully monitored through the strong links with employers. Students' experiences are used effectively by teachers during lessons. An individual work

Curriculum Areas

placement book records the work undertaken and it is used in the assessment of students. Equal opportunities issues form a part of many assignments. Teachers provide constructive written feedback comments on students' assignment work.

32 Courses are taught in good accommodation. Displays of students' work give the classrooms an identity and create an appropriate learning environment. Application of IT is the most developed key skill and has the highest profile, although in IT lessons the materials used were not linked to health and social care topics. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

33 Inspectors agreed that the predominantly good standards of students' written work are a strength. Portfolios are well organised and presented. GNVQ foundation students produce some very good assignment work. Students on national diploma and certificate courses in childhood studies demonstrate a good grasp of central concepts. Nursery nursing diploma students present sound evaluative work. Some level 3 NVQ portfolios have well-presented evidence and demonstrate a high standard of knowledge. Students' oral contributions in class often show understanding, clear thinking and analysis. There are good retention and achievement rates on most courses, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Achievement rates on level 2 long courses are very good. The higher national certificate in early years, which has only completed one year, has higher than national average retention and achievement rates. Achievement rates on most short courses are better than national averages. NVQ achievement rates at level 2 were just above national averages in 1997, but dropped below average in 1998.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of achievement and retention rates in health and social care, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Care	1	Expected completions	*	26	20
		Retention (%)	85	69	75
		Achievement (%)	52	39	100
Care and early years NVQs	2	Expected completions	90	60	*
		Retention (%)	27	48	75
		Achievement (%)	58	46	53
Other care and early years courses	2	Expected completions	124	113	53
		Retention (%)	81	76	79
		Achievement (%)	73	90	88
Care and early years NVQs	3	Expected completions	67	80	*
		Retention (%)	85	63	81
		Achievement (%)	51	64	56
Other care and early years courses	3	Expected completions	154	162	142
		Retention (%)	70	77	78
		Achievement (%)	91	77	87
Additional qualifications short courses	All levels	Expected completions	1,988	2,335	4,093
		Retention (%)	95	93	98
		Achievement (%)	86	95	95

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

*data not available

Curriculum Areas

English

Grade 2

34 Inspectors observed 11 lessons and agreed with most of the strengths in the self-assessment report. Additional weaknesses were identified in teaching and learning and students' achievements.

Key strengths

- well-prepared and thorough teaching
- a high level of individual guidance and support
- regular and careful assessment of students' work
- good GCSE and GCE A level pass rates
- strong teamwork

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates, particularly on GCE A level courses
- insufficient use of IT
- lack of separate classes for part-time adult students on the GCSE course

35 A good range of English courses is offered. Curriculum organisation allows for different enrolment times and flexible modes of attendance to suit students. Distance learning courses are being introduced. Most English classes contain a combination of full-time 16 to 19 year old students and part-time adult students. Teachers manage this mix with sensitivity and, in many cases, it works well. However, on some GCSE courses, such mixed classes make it difficult to provide an appropriate learning environment for adults who, as mature students, have learning styles and needs which are different from those of the younger students. The self-assessment report did not identify this weakness. Inspectors agreed that there is strong teamwork which makes curriculum planning and teaching

particularly effective. Courses are carefully organised. Teaching resources are prepared collaboratively. However, schemes of work do not always pay sufficient attention to learning objectives.

36 Teaching is of a high standard as stated in the self-assessment report. Lessons are well planned and prepared. The purpose of each lesson is made clear to students and learning objectives are identified. There is a strong emphasis on developing the skills required for the examination. In a minority of lessons, teachers fail to manage the time available effectively so that key parts of the lesson are rushed. There is an appropriate variety of activities in lessons. In a GCE A level English language lesson, after a brief link back to previous learning, students worked in small groups comparing the texts from two advertisements. This was followed up by a discussion led by the teacher to share the findings from each group with the whole class. In another lesson, following an exploration of an extract from a nineteenth-century novel, students produced their own twentieth-century version. Routinely, teachers involved all students in lessons. They use question and answer sessions well to ensure that most students take part in discussion. Group work is well managed. Students in a GCE A level communication studies lesson worked effectively as a team devising a political campaign. The teacher ensured that all students had a role and that tasks were assigned for preparation for the next lesson. Teachers are enthusiastic and lively and in all lessons create friendly, constructive relationships with students which encourage learning. Most students contribute well to lessons, showing an enthusiasm for the activities set. However, a small number of the younger students are easily distracted when involved in work in pairs or groups.

37 Students value the high level of individual guidance and support they receive which helps them to improve their work. During lessons

Curriculum Areas

teachers use every opportunity to check students' understanding and to help individuals. They are sensitive to the different needs and abilities of their students. Adult students particularly appreciate the encouragement and help they are given. Assessment of students' work is regular and careful. An assessment policy ensures the regular setting and return of work. The feedback on written work is detailed and clearly identifies areas for improvement. Work is assessed to examination board criteria which are shared with students. Moderation and standardising processes are rigorous, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. The use of information learning technology is underdeveloped. Students perceive little link between such technology and English.

38 Teachers are well qualified and experienced. They keep up to date with subject and syllabus developments. Lessons are generally taught in spacious, pleasant classrooms although these rooms are spread

throughout the college. Students are provided with useful materials. For example, in GCSE English there are good-quality handouts on a variety of grammatical topics. As yet, there are few study aids to enable students to study on their own outside the classroom.

39 Students' written work demonstrates a sound knowledge of texts and concepts. When exploring texts, students are developing good analytical skills. Inspectors agreed that pass rates in GCE A level and GCSE English are good. The percentage of students achieving grades A to C in GCSE is high and significantly above the national average for further education colleges. Pass rates in GCE A level English literature are also high. The proportion of students achieving high grades in GCE A level literature has exceeded national averages for two of the last three years. Retention rates are poor, a weakness not acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in English, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE English	2	Expected completions	285	184	210
		Retention (%)	68	70	71
		Achievement (%)	55	63	66
GCSE English literature	2	Expected completions	24	16	14
		Retention (%)	88	75	50
		Achievement (%)	76	83	86
GCE A level English	3	Expected completions	117	125	82
		Retention (%)	56	55	59
		Achievement (%)	92	88	96
GCE A level communications	3	Expected completions	24	14	16
		Retention (%)	50	64	50
		Achievement (%)	60	100	75

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Curriculum Areas

Psychology and Sociology

Grade 2

40 Inspectors observed 13 lessons. Inspectors agreed with some of the judgements in the self-assessment report and identified additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good pass rates in GCE A level sociology and psychology
- effective development of students conceptual knowledge and transferable skills
- carefully-planned courses
- high-quality course material and handouts
- high standard of students' written work

Weaknesses

- poor retention in some areas
- lack of appropriate learning methods for the full range of students' abilities
- falling achievement rates on GCSE course

41 In psychology and sociology much of the provision caters for 16 to 19 year old students but in many classes there is also a significant number of more mature students. Staff are sensitive to the needs of these students. Adult students feel well supported and encouraged to participate. These strengths were not identified in the self-assessment report. Curriculum management is effective. Carefully-planned courses meet the requirements of examining boards and cover a range of relevant contemporary issues. Course documentation is extensive and comprehensive. Course and lesson planning is effective. Most schemes of work and lesson plans are detailed and help to promote good teaching.

42 Most teaching is good. It develops students' abilities to understand difficult concepts. Students develop skills which though gained in studying one topic are easily transferred to other topics and related areas of work. Students are encouraged to formulate their own views and opinions, especially in the second year of GCE A level courses. Students are required to apply critical thinking and conceptual analysis to current issues. In one psychology lesson, a teacher made skilful use of the overhead projector to record students' evaluations of stimulus material and simultaneously used a whiteboard to construct an intellectual map recording complex theories of personal identity. In a sociology lesson, tins of food were critically assessed by students in terms of the students' perceptions of their taste, price, value and consumer acceptability. The concepts which they had identified in relation to the food were then creatively translated into an analysis of issues surrounding educational achievement and social differentiation. In GCE A level lessons, students demonstrated considerable ability to think for themselves. In many lessons teachers organise small group work tasks and attempt to incorporate students' views in a general summary of what they have learned from the exercises. This method works effectively in most lessons but, in a few weaker lessons, some students are unresponsive and teachers fail to involve them in the work and the pace of learning is sometimes slow. Teachers do not use a wide enough range of appropriate teaching and learning methods which takes account of the differing needs and abilities of students. These weaknesses were not recognised in the self-assessment report. Work is set regularly and marked and returned with helpful comments and suggestions for improvement. The standard of coursework is satisfactory. Students receive clear guidance on assessment criteria.

43 Teaching staff are well qualified; many have higher degrees. Many teachers have close association with examining boards and use this

Curriculum Areas

experience in their teaching. Classrooms are reasonably well furnished. The Gainsborough site provides an environment which is particularly appropriate for adults. Course materials and handouts for students are of high quality. However, other specialist resources are not well developed. Library books are often in heavy use and demand outstrips supply. The use of IT is not integrated with courses. Most students are able to wordprocess their assignments but the wider use of IT in teaching and learning has not been developed. This weakness was recognised in the self-assessment report.

44 In many lessons students work purposefully and diligently. Students' written work is of a high standard. Students who remain into the second year of GCE A level courses are well motivated and enthusiastic. These strengths were recognised in the self-assessment report. A significant proportion progress to higher education. There are good pass rates in GCE A level sociology and psychology. GCE advanced supplementary (AS) psychology results are well above the national average for further education colleges. Falling levels of achievement in GCSE courses were recognised as a weakness in the self-assessment report. Retention rates are poor on all courses.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in psychology and sociology, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE psychology (grades A to C)	2	Expected completions	86	94	81
		Retention (%)	47	65	53
		Achievement (%)	50	56	45
GCSE social studies/ sociology (grades A to C)	2	Expected completions	78	73	71
		Retention (%)	67	85	56
		Achievement (%)	60	73	40
GCE AS psychology (grades A to E)	3	Expected completions	59	48	30
		Retention (%)	63	54	67
		Achievement (%)	92	85	75
GCE AS sociology (grades A to E)	3	Expected completions	36	26	24
		Retention (%)	83	73	75
		Achievement (%)	63	84	50
GCE A level psychology (grades A to E)	3	Expected completions	76	88	58
		Retention (%)	61	55	50
		Achievement (%)	91	91	90
GCE A level sociology (grades A to E)	3	Expected completions	90	60	46
		Retention (%)	66	45	57
		Achievement (%)	85	96	85

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

45 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements on support for students in various sections of the self-assessment report. Some additional strengths and weaknesses were also identified.

Key strengths

- a wide range of effective central guidance services
- effective learning support for students
- effective counselling service
- responsive welfare services and effective accommodation service
- positive contribution by an active student union

Weaknesses

- weak tutorial practice on some courses
- lack of take-up of additional learning support

46 The college publicises its provision effectively through clear course leaflets and a programme of promotions through the local media. A college 16 to 19 magazine is distributed widely. Good contacts are maintained with Royal Air Force stations, community organisations, job clubs and other organisations to promote college courses. There are restricted opportunities to visit schools to talk to pupils about further education in general. College open evenings provide extensive information and advice and guidance to prospective students. Central guidance services organise and provide comprehensive and impartial pre-entry guidance for prospective students. Induction programmes are well structured. They help to make students sure that they have made the right choice of course and to settle into college life quickly.

47 The customer services unit offers a wide range of well-publicised and effective guidance services as identified in the self-assessment report. Staff and students have a high regard for the quality of the services provided. The use and effectiveness of the different aspects of the service are carefully monitored. The professional counselling service gives constructive support to students experiencing difficulties. Welfare services are comprehensive and responsive to students' needs. Access funds, the corporation hardship fund and various trusts are efficiently administered. Accommodation services are efficient and effective. There are appropriate and well co-ordinated arrangements for guidance and support services to meet the needs of students based on the Gainsborough and Louth sites.

48 All full-time and some part-time students undertake a screening test during induction. The test identifies those needing additional support for basic literacy and numeracy. The screening is well managed as stated in the college self-assessment report. Results are returned quickly. Learning support is skilfully delivered and very effective. It is provided mainly on an individual basis. Students construct individual action plans. Short and long-term goals for improvement are set and their achievement is monitored. Careful records are maintained of each individual's progress. The service is available in the evenings and is used by students for whom daytime attendance is difficult. However, a significant number of students identified as requiring additional support do not receive it. Attendance is voluntary and many do not take-up the offer. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. The needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified at an early stage of the application process. Assessment of their requirements is thorough. Appropriate support is put in place from the start of their course.

Cross-college Provision

49 Each full-time student is allocated a personal tutor who provides good pastoral and personal support. Tutors are also responsible for monitoring the academic progress of their students during tutorials. There are examples of good tutorial practice. In these tutorials, there are detailed schemes of work and rigorous monitoring of students' academic progress and achievement. Students are supported in developing their records of achievement. Tutors also make appropriate and timely use of central services to make appropriate inputs to group tutorials. However, there is some weak tutorial practice. Here, the tutorial programmes lack structure and there is a lack of rigour in the monitoring of individual students' progress and achievements. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. A standardised college-wide tutorial programme is being developed. Tutorial support for part-time students is uneven.

50 The partnership agreement with Lincolnshire Careers and Guidance Service is thorough. Resources for the support of careers education and guidance are good. Students have easy access to careers information. Careers education is well embedded in many subject areas. Careers advisers make inputs into some tutorial programmes. However, individual students are not always referred for a careers interview at the appropriate time. Nor are they always introduced to materials, such as computer programmes, which are useful for making decisions about their future progress. The college recognises the need for a more structured careers education and guidance programme. Where work experience is required as part of a vocational programme, it is well organised and its effectiveness is evaluated. Where work experience is offered to students on a voluntary basis, for example, with GCE A level students, the take-up is low and the evaluation is less rigorous.

51 Students benefit from the positive contributions to college life made by the active

student union. The college funds a sabbatical officer. Student union representatives play a constructive part on a range of committees and working parties. The union is energetic in promoting a wide range of sporting and leisure activities. It raises money for charity. The union also provides support and advocacy for students experiencing difficulties. Students value its contribution as an additional source of welfare advice.

General Resources

Grade 2

52 The college identified strengths and weaknesses for general resources in various sections of the self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the report but found some additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- realistic and effectively-implemented accommodation strategy
- well-maintained and refurbished accommodation at Lincoln and Gainsborough
- good social and refectory facilities for students
- excellent sports facilities
- well-resourced and well-managed libraries and resource centres
- comprehensive and accessible IT facilities

Weaknesses

- some poor accommodation at Louth
- restrictive aspects of the main Lincoln site
- lack of access for students with restricted mobility in some buildings

Cross-college Provision

53 In 1994, the college developed a realistic 10-year accommodation strategy which identified three long-term aims. Progress towards realising these aims has been good, as recognised in the self-assessment report. In Lincoln, activities are now predominantly located on the main Monks Road site. The aim of owning the freehold of property has been largely achieved. Utilisation of space is improving.

54 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the accommodation at Lincoln and Gainsborough is generally well maintained, appropriate to its use and has been successfully refurbished. The Monks Road site has nine main teaching and administration blocks. A hall of residence has 117 study bedrooms. Two of the buildings are grade II listed. An old court house has been renovated to an extremely high standard. The general level of decoration is good. An appropriate 10-year maintenance programme has been developed. The college recognises that there are problems caused by the restrictive nature of the Monks Road site. A public road dissects it and this presents a safety risk and causes difficulties in integrating the two areas. The nine teaching blocks are not linked, resulting in some problems with communications and the delivery of goods. The accommodation at Gainsborough is of a very high standard. It was purpose-built in 1995. The buildings and grounds are well maintained and provide an attractive and stimulating learning environment. The accommodation at Louth is located in a redundant school building which has had a more recent extension. The general level of decoration is poor. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. Utilisation of the accommodation is low.

55 There are attractive and welcoming refectories and social areas for students in Lincoln and Gainsborough. An extension to the recently converted court house on the Monks Road site contains a suite of student facilities,

including a common room, meeting rooms, a bar and student union offices. Several other buildings on the Monks Road site also have small social areas for students. The refectory serves an extensive range of meals and refreshments. Vending machines are available when the refectory is closed. There is an attractive and comfortable refectory at Gainsborough and a student common room. These social and refectory facilities were not highlighted as strengths in the self-assessment report. The excellent sports facilities in Lincoln are used primarily by sports students. The facilities include a large playing field with five pitches, a cricket pitch, three grass tennis courts, coaching grids and a pavilion. The sports studies building on the Monks Road site includes a sports hall, a fitness suite, exercise areas and assessment laboratories. There are no college-based sports facilities at Gainsborough but public recreational facilities are readily accessible. The excellent sports facilities were not identified as a strength in the self-assessment report.

56 The self-assessment report recognised as a strength the well-resourced and efficiently-managed libraries and resource centres. The stock of learning materials is relevant and suitably catalogued. Library staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Close liaison with teachers in curriculum areas is maintained through the learning resources group. Library budgets are tightly controlled and allocated to curriculum areas according to an accepted formula. The use of the resource centres is systematically monitored. The weekday opening hours are extensive.

57 The comprehensive computing facilities are easily accessible to students and staff. The majority of the computers are appropriate for curriculum requirements. The ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students is 1:5.4. Computers on the Monks Road site are networked. Computers in classrooms are available for students to use when not required

Cross-college Provision

for teaching purposes. The learning centres at Lincoln and Gainsborough provide computers which are freely available during weekdays and into the evenings from Monday to Thursday. The use of IT equipment is well managed and monitored. Access to the internet is available, although there are sometimes delays due to the intensive use of the system.

58 Inspectors agreed with the college that access to college sites for students and staff with restricted mobility is unsatisfactory. This issue was identified in the last inspection report and some improvements have been made. Parts of the Monks Road site are inaccessible in wheelchairs. Some accommodation is only accessible with the use of lifts intended for transporting goods. In some buildings, access to the upper floors by people with restricted mobility is dependent on the use of stair climbers and this relies upon the availability of an experienced operator. The upper floor at the Louth centre is not accessible to wheelchair users.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

59 Inspectors broadly agreed with the judgements in the college's self-assessment report but identified additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- comprehensive range of quality assurance procedures
- the quality assurance procedures and standards in all business support areas
- systematic programme of classroom observation
- thorough internal verification system
- effective systems to respond to students' views

- strong and effective links between staff development, appraisal and operational priorities

Weaknesses

- failure to implement some aspects of the quality assurance processes rigorously
- insufficient use of data to set and monitor targets for continuous improvement in some areas
- insufficient attention to key weaknesses in some action plans

60 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that there is a strong commitment to quality improvement. A comprehensive quality assurance policy is actively implemented through an appropriate range of well-documented procedures covering all aspects of college operations. The college recognises that some aspects of the procedures are not rigorously implemented in all areas of the college. The quality standards committee of the academic board meets regularly to review the performance of college operations. The board reviews students' achievements in examinations but it does not review attendance or retention. The quality assurance system has led to significant improvements. The quality of collaborative provision is closely monitored through teaching audits that include classroom observation, internal verification and through external verification reports. College staff scrutinise evaluative reports on each of their visits to external providers. Providers are not required to produce self-assessment reports.

61 The quality assurance system involves all staff teams in the annual review of their performance. Performance is reviewed against appropriate and comprehensive quality statements and standards. For example, the quality statements for curriculum teams are those set out in Council Circular 97/12,

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Validating Self-assessment and the standards are the appropriate benchmarks for students' achievements and students' responses in the college and subject questionnaires. The views of staff, students and employers are gathered through a variety of methods including questionnaires, focus groups, and visits to employers' premises. The self-assessment reports from teams form a part of the evidence base for the overall college self-assessment report. After validation, each section of the report is presented to the quality standards committee by the relevant manager. The action plan is also reviewed.

62 The college completed its first annual cycle of self-assessment in preparation for inspection. A range of evidence was used to support judgements. Within curriculum reports, students' achievements are frequently compared with national benchmarking data. However, some curriculum areas do not make effective use of the data available in order to set and monitor targets and trends. Some curriculum self-assessment reports were insufficiently self-critical. They did not clearly identify the key strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. The action plans resulting from self-assessment did not always address all the key weaknesses identified. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report. There are quality assurance procedures and standards in place in all business support areas. Inspectors agreed with the college that quality standards are used effectively for self-assessment and maintaining or improving standards. They are having a positive influence on the operations of business support teams.

63 There is a systematic programme of classroom observation which the college recognised as a strength in its report. All teaching staff are observed. The consistency of observation practice is monitored. Standards are also compared with two other colleges. A written summary of the key strengths and weaknesses is produced for each curriculum area and provides a profile against which year-

on-year improvements can be measured. The profile of grades awarded by the college was higher than that of inspectors in most of the curriculum areas inspected.

64 The system of internal verification is thorough. This strength was not identified in the self-assessment report. At course level, there is regular sampling of work. Useful recording systems identify the level and source of the sample. External verification reports are circulated and any issues dealt with promptly. Verification procedures are extended to the self-assessment reports. Evidence supporting the assessment is sampled before its presentation to the quality standards committee.

65 There are effective systems for obtaining the views of students. The college is responsive to the issues raised. There is a system of college-wide questionnaires to obtain students' views on a range of subjects, including aspects of the college charter. Many curriculum areas supplement these with questionnaires to obtain subject specific information. Responses are analysed in detail and discussed at team meetings at which students are present. Students value such involvement. Issues raised are dealt with promptly. The system of obtaining views from students on collaborative provision is less effective. The college have identified this as a weakness and have taken appropriate action.

66 There are strong and effective links between staff development, appraisal and operational priorities. Appraisal and staff development are constructive as identified in the self-assessment report. All staff are appraised. Teachers can choose to use the evidence from individual classroom observation in their appraisal. Appraisal leads to the creation of an individual staff development plan that is monitored by the appropriate line manager. College priorities for the year are built into the development plan. Teachers can obtain 10 days of allocated time each year to develop a curriculum area. The roles and responsibilities

Cross-college Provision

of all the section heads has been significantly extended. The associated training implications have not been recognised in any formal training programme.

Governance

Grade 1

67 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report. They identified one weakness. The college had not identified any weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good mix of skills and experience of governors
- governors' oversight of the college's strategic direction
- clear policies and procedures for the process of governance
- wide range of methods for evaluating the board's performance.
- effective clerking
- openness of corporation business
- regular and extensive overview of college financial performance

Weaknesses

- procedures for detailed monitoring of students' retention and achievements only recently developed

68 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is good. The corporation substantially conducts its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC.

69 Governors provide a wide range of skills and experience which contribute to the work of the corporation. This strength was not

identified in the self-assessment report.

Corporation and committee meetings are well attended. Formal arrangements to recruit new governors are well documented. They include the use of advertising. There are good induction procedures. Governors are regularly informed of training opportunities, for which funds are set aside, and internal training workshops are also provided. There is no structured approach to identifying individual training needs. Inspectors did not agree that training procedures are a strength.

70 The corporation effectively oversees the strategic direction of the college as recognised in the self-assessment report. Governors have a clear understanding of their role. They are very clear about the distinction between governance and management. Governors oversight of the college's strategic direction is strong. The corporation has actively engaged in strategic development. Governors have discussed in detail the mission statement and the broad response strategies to be adopted. Any changes to strategies are debated at workshops and meetings. The corporation has set guidelines and limits the extent of different types of activity. For example, a limit of 15% of units has been set for franchised activity.

71 A particular strength of the corporation is that it has in place a series of clear policies and associated procedures for governance. These set out how governors conduct their business and the frequency of reporting requirements. This approach has developed a structured and timely cycle for meetings. Business has been progressed efficiently. The corporation has appropriately delegated its work to five committees: finance; audit; remuneration; search; and property. Each has an appropriate remit and membership. The audit committee has not always considered audit plans on a timely basis. The audit committee has taken the initiative to provide an annual report to the corporation on the effectiveness of the college's system of internal control.

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72 Clerking arrangements are effective as recognised in the self-assessment report. The college secretary acts as the clerk to the corporation. Agendas and minutes are produced to a high standard. Papers are generally circulated in good time. Governors receive a regular and extensive overview of college financial performance. A monthly information pack includes management accounts, financial performance indicators and other non-financial information on college activities. Detailed commentaries on variances are attached to papers presented to the finance committee meeting. These financial statements receive detailed and informed scrutiny at each finance committee. All governors are given the opportunity to raise issues at corporation meetings. Governors are provided with an annual summary of franchise contracts but do not receive interim progress reports.

73 The conduct of corporation business has been made as open as possible. Agendas, papers and minutes are made available within the college. There is little use of confidential items. All governors have completed the register of interests, which has been extended to key staff of the college. Staff and students are represented on the corporation and union representatives are invited to all meetings. Information on the corporation is available on the college internet website. The college holds an open annual general meeting.

74 Inspectors agreed that governors have developed a wide range of methods for evaluating their own performance. External auditors undertook a report on the operation of the board in May 1998. Individual governors contributed to self-assessment by questionnaire. In addition, a workshop was organised. A self-assessment report was approved by the board. The outcome of the external review and the action plan from self-assessment set specific target activities for improvement during 1998-99. Performance is monitored by progress reports considered at meetings.

75 Inspectors did not agree with the college that the monitoring of the college's overall performance is regular and systematic. However, inspectors agreed that governors receive regular reports through monthly briefings and papers. They undertake an annual review of progress against corporate objectives. However, the level of information provided in many cases, does not compare actual quantitative performance against targets to show progress achieved. Governors receive regular reports on aspects of quality including the annual review of quality systems and the review of students' responses to the major entitlements for students set out in the college charter. Until recently, the procedures for reporting and monitoring students' achievements and retention have been underdeveloped. Annual performance indicators and brief reports on examination success have been presented and discussed. The board has recently undertaken a detailed exercise in response to Council circulars by setting targets for courses against individual benchmarks.

Management

Grade 2

76 Inspectors agreed broadly with the key strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Inspectors found that weaknesses in the report were being addressed.

Key strengths

- well-managed college with a clear management structure
- good communications
- operating plan monitored systematically
- productive links with a wide range of local organisations
- effective implementation and monitoring of equal opportunities policy

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- effective financial planning and monitoring

Weaknesses

- the strategy to address poor retention rates not effective in all areas
- ineffective use of management information by some course teams
- market research underdeveloped

77 As the college stated in its self-assessment, the management structure is clear and well understood. The senior management team comprises the principal and the three directors for corporate services, operations and resources, respectively. Working relationships between governors and senior managers are good. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that managers work closely and effectively as a team and that there is a clear allocation of roles and responsibilities. The senior management team meets weekly. Key managers for finance, personnel, information systems, marketing, estates and divisional managers attend these meetings in accordance with a planned but flexible schedule. The college management team of the directorate and middle managers meets twice a term. Courses are efficiently managed and administered. Minutes of meetings are well written and specify responsibility for action. Collaborative provision is well organised with clear lines of communication. Arrangements for the management of the provision at Gainsborough and Louth work well.

78 Inspectors agreed with the college that communications within the college are good. There are regular meetings of managers with staff at all levels. Staff regularly receive an informative newsletter. They are apprised of developments through regular briefing sessions held in both divisions and sections. Senior managers hold a termly meeting on each site. Management and staff from Gainsborough and

Louth are appropriately represented on cross-college committees. Electronic mailing and intranet facilities are used at Lincoln and Louth and will be installed at Gainsborough shortly.

79 The college's mission and vision are clearly understood by staff, and inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that this is a strength. Strategic plans are reviewed and updated annually. Clear corporate objectives are stated in the strategic plan and these form the basis of a detailed operational plan. Performance against targets is monitored systematically by senior managers. Some of these targets are not sufficiently quantitative. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. The strategy to address poor retention rates is not effective in all areas. Action is now being taken to address this. A formal benchmarking approach setting year-on-year targets for student retention and achievement at course level has been agreed.

80 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college has effective partnerships with a wide range of local organisations. There are good links with the Lincolnshire TEC. Links with employers are particularly productive, giving rise to both full-cost and collaborative work. The Engineering Training Centre has been funded from a partnership bid involving a local large engineering company, the city council and the TEC. Other projects include the establishment of IT access centres and funding for company training. The college is an associate college of Nottingham Trent University through which a wide range of higher education programmes are franchised. There are some productive partnerships with other higher and further education establishments in Lincolnshire. There are some good examples of constructive links with special schools. The college has a marketing plan but has recently set up a working group to review its marketing strategy. It recognised in its self-assessment report the need to be more active in undertaking its own market research.

Cross-college Provision

81 Staff are efficiently deployed. Viability analysis has resulted in a sharper focus on the need to match staffing and other costs to income. Payroll costs are below the sector average. There is a relatively large number of part-time staff, some of whom are undertaking substantial teaching and administrative duties.

82 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college is effective in promoting equal opportunities. Responsibilities for the implementation of the equal opportunities policy are clearly understood and implementation is monitored and reviewed and an annual report made to the corporation. The equal opportunities committee has representation from all areas of the college. It actively addresses a wide range of relevant issues. Staff recruitment policies follow best practice in equal opportunities.

83 The management information system is able to provide managers and governors with appropriate information on recruitment and funding. The college has made significant progress in reconciling the data held centrally with that recorded by divisions. Managers and staff do not have on-line access to student records. Some course teams do not make effective use of management information. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report. The college is collaborating with two neighbouring colleges to implement a new computer-based management information system.

84 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The college finance team has appropriate qualifications and experience. Budgets and financial forecasts are developed with staff involvement. Timely budget and management accounts are prepared monthly. The management accounts contain detailed financial reports of college performance. They are not prepared on an accruals basis and do not include progress reports on the delivery of franchised units.

Spreadsheets are used extensively to provide management information. Payroll and agency costs are closely monitored throughout the year. Financial performance indicators are regularly reported and the solvency of the college is monitored well. The level of internal audit provision is high and has been used to good effect. Management has been responsive to issues raised by internal and external auditors.

Conclusions

85 The college produced its first self-assessment report in 1998. It provided a useful basis for planning and carrying out the inspection. Before the inspection, the college provided helpful information on the progress made in addressing weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, and in implementing the action plan which accompanied it. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but concluded that there was insufficient emphasis on teaching and learning and student retention rates. Inspectors also found some strengths and weaknesses which the college had not identified. For two of the areas of cross-college provision the college had identified strengths and weaknesses in various sections of the report. Inspectors agreed with the majority of the judgements in these areas but in one awarded a grade different from that given by the college. In the four other areas of cross-college provision, inspectors agreed with the grades awarded by the college. Inspectors agreed with all but one of the grades awarded by the college for curriculum areas.

86 Strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection are listed under each section of this report. The main strengths and weaknesses are identified in the summary.

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (November 1998)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	0
16-18 years	17
19-24 years	16
25+ years	66
Not known	1
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (November 1998)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Foundation	39
Intermediate	28
Advanced	21
Higher education	7
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	5
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (November 1998)

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	205	3,705	33
Agriculture	55	27	1
Construction	86	317	3
Engineering	133	450	5
Business	257	2,390	22
Hotel and catering	207	180	3
Health and community care	223	1,616	15
Art and design	111	16	1
Humanities	284	1,120	12
Basic education	176	357	5
Total	1,737	10,178	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 18% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (November 1998)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	147	2	0	149
Supporting direct learning contact	58	9	0	67
Other support	129	0	8	137
Total	334	11	8	353

Source: college data, rounded to nearest full-time equivalent

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1996	1997	1998
Income	£13,502,000	£14,592,000	£13,702,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998	£18.61	£16.62	£17.28*
Payroll as a proportion of income	73%	62%	58%
Achievement of funding target	93%	108%	101%
Diversity of income	39%	37%	37%
Operating surplus	-£601,000	£26,000	£67,000

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

ALF – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1998)

Payroll – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

*provisional data

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1995	1996	1997	1995	1996	1997
1	Expected completions	525	898	916	691	1,210	1,474
	Retention (%)	79	81	79	77	76	79
	Achievement (%)	47	66	45	31	58	51
2	Expected completions	1,432	1,251	1,073	1,328	1,145	1,528
	Retention (%)	81	73	72	79	71	76
	Achievement (%)	58	59	53	55	66	67
3	Expected completions	–	1,198	990	–	964	1,473
	Retention (%)	–	73	67	–	69	78
	Achievement (%)	60	73	72	52	71	63
4 or 5	Expected completions	–	49	24	–	467	601
	Retention (%)	–	84	71	–	75	79
	Achievement (%)	81	88	88	53	62	61
Short courses	Expected completions	40	250	1,192	880	3,466	10,037
	Retention (%)	75	97	98	98	97	98
	Achievement (%)	45	90	76	58	87	79
Unknown/unclassified	Expected completions	159	1,206	1,101	1,177	1,082	934
	Retention (%)	87	88	81	95	83	77
	Achievement (%)	52	68	77	77	79	74

Source: ISR

–ISR data not collected

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