

North Tyneside College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1997-98**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

The Further Education Funding Council 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 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.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision, curriculum areas and lesson observations, for colleges inspected during 1996-97, are shown in the following table.

| | Grade | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------|----|----|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Curriculum areas | 9 | 59 | 30 | 2 | – |
| Cross-college provision | 18 | 51 | 27 | 4 | – |
| Lesson observations | 19 | 42 | 31 | 7 | 1 |

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report.* Grades were awarded using the guidelines in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*.
Sample size: 122 college inspections

Retention and Pass Rates

Where data on students' achievements appear in tables, levels of achievement are shown in two ways:

- as a retention rate, which is the proportion of students who completed a course in relation to the number enrolled on 1 November in the first year of the course
- as a pass rate, which is the proportion of students which passed examinations in relation to the number entered. Pass rates for GCE A level are quoted for grades A to E unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for GCSE courses are quoted for grade C or above unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for vocational and professional awards are for successful completion of the full award.

Summary

North Tyneside College

Northern Region

Inspected May 1998

North Tyneside College is a general further education college located in Wallsend to the east of Newcastle and to the north of the river Tyne. Its first self-assessment report and action plan was produced in 1997. All staff were involved in the process through participation in the many teams set up to assess the effectiveness of the college. This self-assessment process has given a major impetus to the development of the college's quality assurance system and has drawn together many of the existing quality assurance arrangements. The self-assessment report is comprehensive. However, in places it is repetitive and insufficiently evaluative and the evidence cited does not always relate to the judgements made. Insufficient weight is given to students' low pass and retention rates on some courses. The college's plan to address the weaknesses identified in the report is clear and shows where the college has already taken action to address them.

The college offers provision in all of the FEFC's 10 programme areas. Six programme areas were inspected together with aspects of cross-college provision. The six programme areas were awarded seven grades. Teaching is

of a high standard; much of it is outstanding and it has considerably improved since the last inspection. Governors and senior managers provide a clear strategic direction and the curriculum is well managed. Support for students is strong. Inspectors concluded that there is: high-quality accommodation with good access for students with restricted mobility; a strong commitment to quality assurance; effective links between governors and students; a good financial position; and an open and participative management style. The college should: improve attendance; retention and pass rates on a number of courses; ensure tutorial arrangements are consistently good across the college; strengthen the setting of targets at course level; and improve aspects of quality assurance.

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

| Curriculum area | Grade | Cross-college provision | Grade |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Engineering | 2 | Support for students | 2 |
| Business | 3 | General resources | 2 |
| Catering | 2 | Quality assurance | 3 |
| Health and social care | 2 | Governance | 2 |
| Hairdressing and beauty therapy | 3 | Management | 2 |
| Art, design and performing arts | 2 | | |
| English, communications and teacher training | 3 | | |

Context

The College and its Mission

1 North Tyneside College, in Wallsend, is six miles to the east of the city of Newcastle upon Tyne. It also provides training in childcare at the North Tyneside Council's Riverside Early Years Training Centre in North Shields and in performing arts at the Peoples Theatre in Heaton. The college recruits predominantly from its immediate catchment area which includes wards designated as suffering from economic deprivation. In September 1997, the unemployment rate in the North Tyneside area was 9.3 per cent. This compares to a rate of 7.6 per cent for the northern region and to 6.7 per cent for Britain as a whole.

2 The area is undergoing major structural change as a result of the decline of traditional heavy industries and the emergence of service and high technology industries. The main industries now include microelectronics, engineering and tourism. The service sector is growing rapidly. The college has close contacts with employers in the vicinity.

3 There are four other colleges of further education and one sixth form college within a 10-mile radius of the college. The college works co-operatively with other colleges. There are five special schools and 12 secondary schools in the area, of which one is independent and one a Roman Catholic school. Seven of the remaining 10 community high schools have sixth forms. The college works closely with the three schools without sixth forms and with the five special schools to help with the transition to further education for their pupils. The proportion of young people in North Tyneside who stay on in full-time education after the age of 16 is 65 per cent compared with 71 per cent nationally.

4 In November 1997, there were 8,138 part-time and 1,689 full-time students at the college: 84 per cent were aged 19 and over. There are 285 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 119 are full-time equivalent support staff. The management structure of the college comprises:

the principal, deputy principal, director of finance, director of personnel and an assistant principal. The academic work of the college is mainly delivered through six directorates which are themselves subdivided into sections made up of a number of course teams.

5 The college's mission is 'to enable people from the community to develop skills, knowledge and attitudes to compete successfully for employment and places in higher education; to respond to ever-changing workforce requirements; to provide education that encourages lifelong learning and growth'.

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected in the week beginning 18 May 1998. The inspection team had previously examined the college's self-assessment report. The college submitted data on students' achievements for the three years 1995 to 1997 which were checked by inspectors against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. The college was notified of the sample of its provision to be inspected approximately two months before the inspection. This included work in six curriculum areas: engineering; business; catering; care, hairdressing and beauty therapy; art and design; and English communications and teacher training. The curriculum areas not inspected were: science; agriculture; construction; basic skills; and courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The inspection was carried out by 11 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 43 days. Seventy-eight lessons and tutorials were observed, and students' work and college documents were examined. Meetings were held with governors, managers, college staff, students and other local representatives with an interest in the college.

7 Of the 78 lessons observed, 74 per cent were rated good or outstanding and 4 per cent were less than satisfactory. This profile is better

Context

than the average for colleges inspected during 1996-97, according to *Quality Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*. The average level of attendance in the lessons inspected was 59 per cent. This is low when compared to the average of 73 per cent for general further education colleges according to the same report. The average class size was 10.1 compared with the average of 10.8 for all types of college. The following table shows the grades awarded to the lessons inspected.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

| Programme | Grade | | | | | Totals |
|----------------------------------------|-------|----|----|---|---|--------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| GCE A/AS level and GCSE | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| GNVQ | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 9 |
| NVQ | 5 | 11 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 22 |
| Access to further and higher education | 0 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Other intermediate level courses | 3 | 19 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 25 |
| Other | 1 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 11 |
| Total | 13 | 45 | 17 | 3 | 0 | 78 |

Curriculum Areas

Engineering

Grade 2

8 Inspectors observed nine lessons and one tutorial involving electronics, mechanical and electrical engineering subjects at intermediate and advanced levels. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements made in the college's self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- some outstanding teaching
- wide range of provision offering choice and progression
- well-managed curriculum with useful links to industry
- exceptional specialist resources for microelectronics

Weaknesses

- some ineffective tutorial support
- few opportunities for work experience for full-time students
- poor pass rates on advanced level courses

9 Engineering course teams meet regularly and contribute effectively to the directorate's development plans. Each team has a student representative. The college's self-assessment report identified irregular attendance of these representatives at meetings as a weakness. Inspection agreed with this conclusion. The range of courses offered at intermediate, advanced and higher education levels gives students the option to choose different specialisms, modes of attendance, and progression routes. General national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate, national diploma and higher certificate courses in engineering subjects have successfully recruited for a number of years. Additional short courses leading to national vocational qualifications

(NVQs) are used well to supplement students' courses. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the day-release, modern apprentice scheme was a strength. It has been launched successfully and has enrolled approximately 40 students. The directorate is working closely with industrial partners and another college of further education to develop units of study specifically for the microelectronics industry. Staff collaborate closely with some local schools, particularly special schools.

10 Most teaching is good and some of it is outstanding. Students are given many opportunities to learn on their own. Teachers use questioning effectively to stimulate discussions which engage and maintain students' interest. Assignments set by staff are of an appropriate standard and are always relevant to the course. The self-assessment report identified as a weakness the lack of tutorial support for part-time students. It failed to identify the ineffectiveness of some tutorial support within the directorates. One section has an effective programme. This provides structured group tutorials including key skills development and a period in which students review their progress individually with tutors. Students in other sections view their poorer tutorial arrangements with indifference, and attendance at them is low. There are few opportunities for full-time students to have work experience and there are no formal procedures for reporting on its quality.

11 Students and staff show a mutual respect for each other which encourages learning. Some strategies to improve retention rates in this directorate are proving effective. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that retention on most courses is at or above the national average for general further education colleges. Pass rates on higher national certificate courses are excellent but retention over the two years of these courses is less successful and fluctuates

Curriculum Areas

between 50 and 70 per cent. Pass rates on the two-year, full-time national diploma courses are declining and are now below national averages. The achievements on other part-time and short courses follow a similar trend with good retention rates but low pass rates. Most students' portfolios of work are of a good standard and meet the requirements of the accrediting bodies. Presentation evenings which, for example, identify the 'student of the month', celebrate students' success.

12 Most teachers of engineering subjects have maintained close links with industry which have allowed them to keep up to date. They hold sufficient assessor and verifier qualifications to operate NVQ and GNVQ courses. Inspectors and the self-assessment report identified that the 'clean room' is a key, and unusual, facility. It is the only one in a further education college in England. Students are trained in the procedures associated with an exceptionally clean environment for the manufacture and development of semi-conductors. It was developed as part of the college's collaboration with a major microelectronics manufacturing company which has a large plant close to the college. Other microelectronics companies and a college in the region are showing interest in using the facility. Most of the other engineering equipment is appropriate, but much of the heavy engineering and fabrication equipment is old. There are insufficient books on engineering in

the library. The directorate is slow in spending the money allocated to it for books.

Examples of students' achievements in engineering, 1995 to 1997

| Course grouping | | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------|------|------|------|
| GNVQ advanced and national diploma (full time) | Retention (%) | 57 | 45 | 68 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 90 | 89 | 68 |
| NVQ all levels | Retention (%) | 99 | 75 | 86 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 37 | 49 | 46 |
| Other vocational courses | Retention (%) | 90 | 86 | 83 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 63 | 62 | 61 |

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

Business

Grade 3

13 Inspectors observed 15 lessons which covered administration, management, professional and general business courses. Inspectors concurred with most of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report. However, they concluded that some weaknesses were given insufficient weight.

Key strengths

- effective teaching
- valuable work experience placements for students
- strong liaison with a range of employers

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates
- low pass rates
- failure to check students' understanding in some lessons

14 Inspectors agreed with the claim in the college's self-assessment report that the provision of a wide range of courses for full-time and part-time students, from foundation to higher education levels, is a strength. New provision includes a national diploma in business and European studies course for full-time students and a foundation certificate in training telephone call-centre operators. Most courses are well managed and have frequent, minuted team meetings and detailed course files. Schemes of work and lesson plans to a standard format are widely used. Most full-time students undertake a work experience placement, which is well organised and relates closely to their studies. Students on the national diploma in business and European studies course undertake a study visit to Europe. Students' experience of the world of work is enhanced by visiting speakers and an extensive

programme of company visits. Links with industry are well established. A wide range of employers use the college for training their staff.

15 Much of the teaching is of high quality and lessons are well planned. Aspects of business are illustrated by appropriate case studies and students' own experiences of employment. Sometimes teachers do not check sufficiently on students' understanding within lessons. A few students are allowed to dominate discussions to the exclusion of others. Teachers keep adequate records of students' progress, and appropriate performance targets are set for them. Those on secretarial and administration courses gain valuable practical experience in the college's training office, which offers a wide variety of realistic work. Homework and assignments are set regularly and students receive helpful written and verbal feedback on their work. Teachers monitor students on supervisory management and NVQ courses carefully to ensure that they are adequately prepared to plan assignments and complete portfolios of evidence. Students on GNVQ advanced courses have a personal and social development lesson in which they improve their key skills, including planning and problem-solving.

16 There are good pass rates on some courses, for example, NVQ business administration, and the certificate in personnel management courses. Other courses, for example, those leading to GNVQ intermediate, national certificate in business and finance, general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) business studies, typewriting courses and supervisory management courses, have pass rates below the national average for general colleges of further education. The generally poor pass rates are inadequately recognised in the self-assessment report. Retention rates are good on a range of part-time accounting and management courses. They are poor on most other courses.

17 Accommodation is of good quality, particularly for management courses. Most

Curriculum Areas

rooms have modern furniture. There is a wide range of computers and appropriate software. The new telephone call-centre courses have a good specialist training facility. The secretarial training office is of a high standard, but is small and not in a sufficiently prominent position. Many classrooms and corridors contain effective course display materials. Teaching staff have appropriate qualifications. However, their business experience is out of date in many cases, a weakness recognised in the self-assessment report. Few staff have taken the opportunity of work placement to update this experience. Specialist part-time teachers with recent experience of business are used on some of the professional courses.

Examples of students' achievements in business, 1995 to 1997

| Course grouping | | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------|------|------|
| Association of Accounting Technicians, NVQ levels 1 to 4 | Retention (%) | 90 | 86 | 72 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 17 | 16 | 37 |
| GCE A level business studies | Retention (%) | 72 | 83 | 71 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 92 | 77 | 64 |
| National certificate in business and finance | Retention (%) | 78 | 49 | 63 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 82 | 95 | 71 |
| NVQ level 2 business administration | Retention (%) | 66 | 58 | 54 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

Catering

Grade 2

18 Inspectors observed 11 lessons in a range of hospitality and catering provision. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report but concluded that some weaknesses were not identified or were given insufficient weight.

Key strengths

- high-quality teaching and thorough lesson preparation
- safe practice and good hygiene in the food preparation area
- high-quality accommodation and specialist resources

Weaknesses

- poor attendance and retention rates
- a narrow range of full-time courses

19 There is a small range of courses in the hospitality and catering section. The main full-time provision is at NVQ levels 1 and 2. Part-time courses are popular. For example, 'ethnic cuisine' courses over the last three years have attracted approximately 60 students each year. A GNVQ advanced course was discontinued in 1995 having had a low retention rate of 23 per cent in its final year. Links with industry are informal and are insufficiently well established.

20 Most teaching on hospitality and catering courses is high quality. Inspectors and the self-assessment report identified good lesson planning as a strength. Teachers use appropriate teaching methods to sustain students' interest and to extend their knowledge and skills. Industrial visits are used to relate theory to practical situations and are enjoyed by students. Attempts to develop foreign exchange trips for students have not been successful.

A conscientious approach by teachers to practical work helps to develop the skills of students. High safety and food hygiene standards are maintained within the food preparation areas. However, a minority of students do not look after their protective clothing with sufficient care. In some practical sessions, few students know the cost of materials used. They also have little experience of planning menus even though it is a significant part of the course. The absence of an established fast route to NVQ level 1 qualifications has hindered the progress of students. Mature students on full-time courses work hard and set a good example to younger students.

21 Although previously satisfactory, in 1997 the pass rate on NVQ level 1 and 2 courses fell to 43 per cent, partially as a consequence of the difficulties in obtaining the log books used to record evidence of students' achievements. Careful analysis of the reasons for the decline in the pass rate have led to substantial improvements in course materials. The college is confident that there will be a considerable improvement in the pass rate in 1998. Retention rates on these two-year full-time courses are poor. An average rate of 64 per cent retention was achieved between 1995 and 1997. Data provided by the college suggest that the retention rate for the current cohort of students has not improved. Many students join part-time or short courses for personal enjoyment and do not intend to take the final qualification. This has resulted in a declining pass rate. During the inspection, attendance at lessons was 62 per cent which is well below the college target of 90 per cent.

22 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the quality of specialist teaching accommodation is good. The production kitchen and public training restaurant provide realistic work environments of an appropriate standard. However, on occasions a lack of customers in the restaurant affects the realism of the work

Curriculum Areas

that students experience. Students' changing rooms are poor but improvements are under way. A specific area within the learning centre where specialist materials are kept is used effectively by students and staff. However, the stock of books for hospitality and catering is low. Most staff have appropriate industrial experience, although this is not always sufficiently up to date.

Examples of students' achievements in catering, 1995 to 1997

| Course grouping | | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 |
|--------------------|---------------|------|------|------|
| NVQ levels 1 and 2 | Retention (%) | 63 | 69 | 64 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 60 | 70 | 43 |
| Other vocational | Retention (%) | 98 | 92 | 83 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 98 | 68 | 10 |

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

Health and Social Care

Grade 2

23 Inspectors observed 10 lessons, including full-time and part-time provision at a range of levels, in early years training, health and social care and counselling courses. Inspectors agreed with the judgements made in the college's self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- well-prepared and well-taught lessons
- a wide range of courses providing choice and progression
- effective partnerships with external agencies
- high-quality specialist accommodation for childcare training

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates
- insufficient specialist resources on some courses

24 Students are offered a wide range of full-time and part-time courses. They have good opportunities to progress to higher level courses. The well-established partnerships with external agencies, including the local authority and various training agencies, is recognised as a strength in the college's self-assessment report. Inspection evidence supported this. Specifically designed courses are provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities from local schools. Work experience placements are a central feature of all full-time programmes and are valued by students. Useful information on the content of courses and the process of assessment is provided to students.

25 All lessons are well prepared and the teaching is effective. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that objectives for each lesson are clearly explained to students. During lessons teachers change activities to promote

students' understanding and maintain their interest. In one lesson, GNVQ advanced students and those with learning difficulties worked well together. Two teachers carefully arranged the role-play activities which related well to the different needs of the students. Tutorial support is effective on full-time courses; students review their progress and set targets for improvement. Workshops are offered to students who are identified as requiring additional help to complete work on time to appropriate standards.

26 Students are motivated and responsive in class. Mature students confidently discuss their own personal and work experiences. An information technology (IT) lesson gave students on the GNVQ intermediate course the opportunity to work on their own. They showed confidence in the use of computers. Students' assignments are generally well organised and well presented. Assignment schedules are not rigorously implemented on all courses. Most courses have pass rates that are at or above national averages for general further education colleges. Students on full-time courses are able to achieve additional qualifications, for example, in first aid or IT. Retention rates are poor. In 1997, the retention of students on the national diploma in nursery nursing course declined to 50 per cent. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report's identification that some targets to improve retention and pass rates are inappropriate and others are insufficient. There are insufficient data on students' destinations.

27 The Riverside Centre is newly built to support early years education and training. It is owned by North Tyneside Council which runs two 50-place nurseries within the building. The college collaborates closely with staff at the centre by delivering courses and running the library. The centre has good-quality furniture and is comfortable for students and staff. General teaching rooms are good, as are practical areas. However, the library facility is not fully developed and lacks sufficient books for

Curriculum Areas

the number of students using the centre. At the main site, specialist resources in nursing care are available in base rooms. Accommodation for counselling courses has some shortcomings.

Examples of students' achievements in health and social care, 1995 to 1997

| Course grouping | | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 |
|----------------------------------------|---------------|------|------|------|
| NVQ level 3 certificate in social care | Retention (%) | 90 | 100 | 77 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 89 | 79 | 100 |
| BTEC diploma in nursery nursing | Retention (%) | 72 | 58 | 50 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 66 | 70 | 77 |
| GNVQ intermediate | Retention (%) | 59 | 56 | 65 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 69 | 87 | 77 |
| BTEC certificate in nursery nursing | Retention (%) | 59 | 80 | 50 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 90 | 80 | 100 |

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy

Grade 3

28 Inspectors observed 10 lessons in aspects of hairdressing and beauty therapy.

Inspectors generally agreed with the judgements in the college's self-assessment report but identified significant additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good-quality teaching
- well-organised work placements for students
- popular hairdressing and beauty therapy salons providing real work experiences for students

Weaknesses

- low retention rates
- poor pass rates on some courses
- underdeveloped key skills

29 A wide range of hairdressing, beauty and holistic therapy courses are offered to students. These include some innovative and popular short courses. Full-time courses which combine hair and beauty therapy lead to NVQ levels 2 and 3. Holistic therapies and other part-time programmes are increasingly popular. Since 1995, the college has introduced a modular programme. This has been revised, after a thorough evaluation, and provides flexible opportunities for students.

30 The quality of teaching is good. Most course teams use well-prepared schemes of work and lesson plans. However, some of the materials used for teaching are dated; they are not of high quality and show little use of IT in their production. The development of key skills, particularly numeracy and communication, is

underdeveloped. There are opportunities, however, for students to gain introductory IT qualifications. Students are able to extend their experiences at the college by becoming involved in a number of enrichment programmes. These include national competitions, and working with art and design and floristry students on fashion shows and displays. Staff have nurtured strong links with industry. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that these links provide well-organised and monitored work experience places for all full-time students. These placements are valuable to students. Students speak highly of the support they receive from teachers.

31 Most students work competently and confidently in the hairdressing and beauty therapy salons and develop relevant professional skills. A strength not identified in the self-assessment report is the large number of people, of a wide range of ages, who use the hair and beauty salons at the college. This mixture of clients adds commercial realism and increases the rate at which students complete their practical assignments. Although students' portfolios of evidence are adequate, they are not always well organised or presented. Students do not use IT sufficiently in the production of these portfolios. Retention rates on many courses are poor. The retention rate on the two-year full-time course leading to NVQ level 2 in combined hairdressing and beauty therapy has averaged approximately 50 per cent. The beauty specialist diploma course has also had poor retention and pass rates. Less than 45 per cent of those who originally enrolled on the course have successfully completed it in 1995 and 1997. The course did not run in 1996.

32 Most teachers have teaching qualifications and recent industrial experience. Many have gained additional related qualifications through staff development programmes. They frequently update their skills through commercial visits and specialist courses. Inspectors and the college's self-assessment report identify that the

Curriculum Areas

accommodation for practical sessions is good and gives students a realistic working environment. On occasions the beauty salons are overcrowded.

Examples of students' achievements in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 1995 to 1997

| Course grouping | | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|------|------|------|
| NVQ level 2 (two-year courses) | Retention (%) | 50 | 50 | 53 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 100 | 100 | 33 |
| Beauty specialist diploma | Retention (%) | 60 | * | 75 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 68 | * | 58 |

Source: college data

**course not running*

Curriculum Areas

Art, Design and Performing Arts

Grade 2

33 Inspectors observed 11 lessons in art, design and performing arts and two tutorials. They agreed with many of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report but also identified some further weaknesses.

Key strengths

- high pass rates on full-time courses
- high standards of students' individual work
- good progression to higher education from full-time courses
- excellent specialist resources

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on full-time, two-year programmes
- insufficient work experience placements for students

34 Teaching is of good quality. Lessons are planned effectively and teachers make good use of students' own experiences to develop confidence and motivation. Inspectors agreed with the college's claim that students are given challenging work and that their learning is extended through a range of activities which includes visits to galleries and community projects, and theatrical performances. Teachers work hard to develop a valued professional relationship with students. Students work well on their own. They and the college take pride in their work. Their presentation skills, which are consistently high, are developed by the opportunities they have to display their work in a professional manner around the college. Students are involved in productions, such as the fashion show, which develops their confidence. Teachers assess students' work thoroughly. Students receive extended

individual feedback during tutorial sessions. This was particularly evident on the BTEC national diploma in performing arts course. There are insufficient work experience placements arranged for students on art and design courses.

35 Students' written, practical and personal studies are well researched. Students and staff give of their time willingly to mount productions and exhibitions. All students produce work of a high standard. They develop critical skills and are articulate in discussing their work. Pass rates on full-time courses are above the national average for general further education colleges. Some are particularly good, for example, the pass rate for the BTEC national diploma in foundation studies was 96 per cent in 1997. However, retention on national diploma courses has decreased since 1995, and is now low. The self-assessment report did not identify this significant weakness. General certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) pass rates are approximately at the national average for general further education colleges. GCSE courses have low numbers. On the large number of courses accredited by the Open College Network, and on intermediate level courses, retention is generally good. However, many students on these courses choose not to enter the examination and, consequently, the pass rate is poor. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that progression rates from advanced level full-time courses are a strength. They have been consistently high since 1995. However, progression to higher levels from introductory and intermediate level courses are low.

36 Staff are well qualified and enthusiastic. Specialist resources are outstanding. The art and design accommodation is excellent, as recognised by the college. It is new and built specifically for this work. Students are able to use a wide range of equipment and are provided with most materials needed for the courses. Some specialist IT equipment is old and in need of replacement.

Curriculum Areas

Examples of students' achievements in art, design and performing arts, 1995 to 1997

| Course grouping | | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------|------|------|
| BTEC national diploma courses | Retention (%) | 77 | 68 | 64 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 88 | 82 | 90 |
| City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) craft and GCSE courses | Retention (%) | 93 | 69 | 83 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 72 | 50 | 31 |
| Courses leading to Open College Network qualifications | Retention (%) | 93 | 86 | 87 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 50 | 31 | 22 |

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

English, Communications and Teacher Training

Grade 3

37 Inspectors observed 11 lessons in English, communications and further education teacher training courses. Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the college's self-assessment report but considered that some weaknesses were not sufficiently emphasised.

Key strengths

- effective assessment and marking of students' work
- good support for students
- excellent accommodation and other specialist resources

Weaknesses

- low and declining pass rates on some courses
- poor retention rates
- insufficient attention to students' learning outcomes in lesson plans

38 GCE A level and GCSE provision has recently been brought together to form the new general studies directorate. Managers and teachers are making progress towards addressing some key weaknesses in marketing, quality assurance and support for students. The college recognises that there are weaknesses in the numbers of students enrolled, their retention and achievement. Course teams share resources to improve their teaching of courses. They support part-time teachers effectively.

39 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that teaching is well planned and effective. Lesson plans ensure that the syllabus content is covered but they do not identify clearly students' learning outcomes and their development of key skills. Most lessons engage

the students in productive work. Teachers make good use of role-play and video extracts and manage work in pairs, groups and whole-class discussion effectively. Adult students enjoy the experience of working with others to develop their knowledge and understanding of the subject. Teachers on GCE A level and GCSE courses make effective use of the students' ideas and experiences. Teachers develop students' knowledge of technical terminology and their conceptual understanding. Students on the teacher training courses speak enthusiastically of their satisfaction with their course of study, their teachers and the support they receive.

40 Criteria for assessing work are shared with students. Most courses provide students with a handbook which they find valuable. Assignments are carefully marked by teachers, as recognised by the college. Students receive useful advice from their teachers on how to improve their work. Adult learners on access to higher education courses produce high-quality course work. The best students demonstrate insight and sensitivity, writing in a style which is poised and fluent. Students on all courses recognise the value of the support they receive. Students agree targets to improve their performance with their teachers.

41 Results are good on the access to higher education and teacher training courses. In the latter course, there has been an improvement in pass rates over the last three years. Apart from 1997, teacher training and the access to higher education courses have had retention rates which compare favourably with those in other similar colleges in the sector. GCE A level English language results have improved dramatically since 1995, whereas those for literature are decreasing and are now below the national average for general further education colleges. Retention rates are poor on many courses, including GCE A level English literature and GCSE English language courses. Low retention rates are recognised in the college's self-assessment report as a weakness.

Curriculum Areas

42 Staff are well qualified and enthusiastic. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the teaching accommodation used for GCE A level and GCSE courses is excellent. There are large, airy and well-equipped classrooms and specific base rooms for individual subjects. Set texts are available to students. There are appropriate displays on the walls which include students' work. There is a satisfactory range of books, periodicals, newspapers and videos and pleasant, quiet study areas. There is a well-equipped IT workshop to which all students have access. The self-assessment report identified that using IT as a teaching tool is being introduced too slowly. Inspectors agreed with this judgement.

Examples of students' achievements in English, communications and teacher training, 1995 to 1997

| Course grouping | | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 |
|----------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| GCE A level English language | Retention (%) | 55 | 67 | 68 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 60 | 89 | 100 |
| GCE A level English literature | Retention (%) | 80 | 74 | 55 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 76 | 86 | 57 |
| GCSE English language | Retention (%) | 77 | 83 | 72 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 49 | 48 | 59 |
| Further education teaching certificate | Retention (%) | 89 | 82 | 69 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 41 | 63 | 90 |

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Support for Students

Grade 2

43 Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report. However, they found that some important strengths and weaknesses had been omitted.

Key strengths

- sound and impartial guidance for prospective students
- effective induction arrangements
- highly regarded personal support for students
- comprehensive careers advice
- good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Weaknesses

- some less effective tutorial support
- inadequacies in the provision of non-financial counselling support
- shortcomings in some information for students

44 The college provides sound and impartial advice through interviews and discussions with prospective students. Enrolment is arranged at three key periods in the year and at other times for many courses. The centrally located information centre is the main place for students seeking information on academic and support services. Its enthusiastic staff work well together to provide an effective service to students. The centre is not always well advertised in college literature. Its use by students is not effectively monitored. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that college publicity materials contain appropriate information to help prospective students. However, internal leaflets lack a house style and other important details, such as progression routes for students.

45 The college successfully raises awareness of college provision through the work of the 'Junior College'. This offers children between eight and 11 years of age a good range of vocational 'taster' courses on most Saturdays throughout the year. The college works hard to improve its links with schools. The college identifies that making links with local schools with sixth forms is difficult. Inspectors agreed with this judgement. Links with local 11 to 16 schools and special schools are good.

46 Most students experience an effective induction to the college and to their course of study. During this process, students receive a wide range of documents and presentations by key specialists, such as careers staff. Most students enjoy induction and value the experience. The induction programme for full-time students is customised to suit the specific needs of vocational programmes. For example, students in catering require training in food hygiene before embarking on their main courses. Teachers make special arrangements to induct part-time students but their entitlement to induction is not clear and there is no overall analysis of the provision.

47 Full-time students and some part-time students receive personal tutorial support. The content of tutorials is changed to meet the needs of students on vocational courses. However, not all students experience appropriate tutorial support. A task group has reviewed the provision of personal tutorials and made recommendations. Students' progress reviews have been revised in order to increase the retention of students. They have yet to demonstrate their effectiveness. Students value the personal support provided by teachers. The college has significantly developed its support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities since the last inspection. Two senior tutors within the directorate of general education have responsibility for students on specially designed courses. A large team of support workers provides specialist learning support for students on general courses. These

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students make good progress during their time at the college. The self-assessment report understated the quality of this provision.

48 The provision of additional support for students' literacy and numeracy skills has been much improved since the last inspection. In September 1997, the college contracted with the North Tyneside Adult Basic Education Unit to identify need and provide appropriate additional support. A learning resource area, named 'Swotshop', was established after extensive consultation with students to meet these needs. Full-time students' support needs are effectively diagnosed on entry to the college. Support for part-time students relies on tutor referral or self-referral. Overall, the proportion of part-time students benefiting from the provision is low. The entitlement of students to assessment and support for the development of IT is less clear. Although a policy on key skills has been recently introduced, identification of students' needs for these skills and their subsequent development is not effective in all curriculum areas.

49 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that there were some weaknesses in the college's counselling services. The provision of confidential advice and guidance on personal finance and health issues is good. A part-time finance expert provides a comprehensive and well-used service. There are few service standards for the counselling function. Insufficient professional counselling services are available to students. The counselling services have been reviewed and an improvement in the advertising of the service is planned. A significant financial commitment to students requiring childcare support is made by the college. A chaplaincy offers students support on moral and personal issues. The college also provides facilities for the Citizens Advice Bureau which helps the local community and college students.

50 Appropriate comprehensive careers guidance is provided by a full-time careers

adviser from the college and one from Tyneside Careers Partnership. This support is given through the tutorial programme and at the request of students. Course tutors also provide careers guidance. Students use a broad range of careers information provided in the learning resource centre. Computer-based careers information is not easy to use and is not available through the college's network. A dedicated careers room, separated from the information centre, does not always open at convenient times. These weaknesses were not identified in the college's self-assessment report.

General Resources

Grade 2

51 There have been significant improvements to the college's general resources since the last inspection. Inspectors agreed with the judgements made in the college's self-assessment report about the strengths and weaknesses of this provision.

Key strengths

- high-quality accommodation
- innovative use of IT
- a well-maintained site with good security arrangements
- good access for students with physical disabilities
- valued staff work and social areas

Weaknesses

- inadequately resourced learning centres
- poor student common room facilities

52 The college is well signposted and highly visible from the major road between Newcastle and the coast. Since the last inspection, the buildings have been much improved through reglazing, wall cladding and roof repairs. New

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buildings for art and design and a general teaching block have also been built. Energy conservation is good. However, some rooms can become too hot in warm weather and there is insufficient ventilation. The college has welcoming entrances. The safety and security of the site has been dramatically improved through the effective use of security personnel, fencing and closed-circuit television cameras. There are good car parking facilities for students and staff. The college's self-assessment report identified that an adjacent building, leased by the college, which is used for engineering courses is less attractive. Inspectors agreed with this judgement. There are plans to move these facilities to a new building within college boundaries. The new Riverside Centre, some six miles away from the college, is specifically designed as a centre for education and training in childcare. It is attractively designed and the college leases part of the building for childcare courses. The Peoples Theatre at Heaton is used for teaching purposes and some of the college's productions.

53 College students use two learning centres, one at the college and the other at the Riverside Centre. Students' overall use of the facilities at these sites is carefully monitored. There are 3,027 registered users at the Wallsend learning centre and 341 at the Riverside Centre. The library provision has been merged with other facilities in these learning centres. For example, the college's learning centre has resource bases for each of the six directorates, the Swotshop, a general IT and a careers area, as well as the library provision. The learning centre at the Riverside Centre is small. The book cataloguing system at the Riverside Centre is different from the college's system. Currently, there is no effective electronic link between them. Both centres are well furnished, attractive and spacious. The bookstock of approximately 20,000 is low for an institution of this size. The college spends £17.85 per full-time equivalent student on books compared with the national figure £26.00. Some directorate staff do not

have good links with learning centre staff. For example, directorates do not advise sufficiently on relevant book purchases. The college recognises that the use, relevance and quantity of the materials available for students to work on their own, at times convenient to them, is generally poor.

54 The space allocated for performing arts at the college is used by the performing art students and staff and by others, for example, for floristry displays and fashion shows. There is, in addition, a high-quality lecture theatre with excellent presentation equipment. Many specialist areas, for example, the microelectronics clean room, a travel agency, floristry, training restaurant, and hairdressing and beauty therapy salons are of high quality and have realistic working environments.

55 Computers are available in many rooms. One of them, with 64 workstations, is used by students as a 'drop-in' facility. The two learning centres also have a small number of computers for students' use. There is a ratio of students to modern computers of 10:1. However, in addition there are a number of old computers still in general use. Multimedia and internet access is good and available on a third of the computer terminals. The college has developed its own website which is used effectively on various courses, including a GNVQ group which has produced a local weather page. The installation of fibre-optic communications within the college has speeded up the use of all computer facilities.

56 The inspection team agreed with the college's claim that access for wheelchair users and others with restricted mobility is good. Toilets for disabled people are provided on most floors. There is a modest gymnasium with adjoining changing rooms and fitness centre. There are insufficient sport and recreational facilities. Full-time and part-time staff have good work areas and an excellent staff room which has been recently refurbished to high standards. Students have an inadequate

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temporary building as a common room. Its furniture and decoration are poor. Refectory facilities are clean, relaxing environments. They are popular with students and have pleasant outside areas that are used extensively in good weather.

Quality Assurance

Grade 3

57 Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report on the college's arrangements for quality assurance.

Key strengths

- a comprehensive quality assurance framework
- a strong commitment to the development of quality assurance
- a valued and effective system of staff development
- an effective system of auditing aspects of quality assurance

Weaknesses

- failure to use targets in some areas
- inadequate analysis of student data
- insufficient awareness of quality standards

58 Inspectors agreed with the college's claim that governors, managers and staff have a strong commitment to the development of a coherent quality assurance system. The process of self-assessment has built on existing good practice. An established system with an extensive set of standards was the basis for quality assurance. A large number of teams contribute from across the college to provide evidence to support judgements. The college has a quality assurance committee that meets twice a term. It is chaired by a governor and has representation from staff and external

agencies. A 'quality' manager from a major local employer is a member of this committee and brings to it an independent viewpoint. A self-assessment team meets weekly and has been highly effective in bringing together elements from the established quality assurance systems. Members are enthusiastic and contribute well to the work of the quality assurance committee. Audit teams check on compliance with the quality assurance system for most of the college's operations. Standards of quality for a number of areas have been developed, for example, those for collaborative provision. However, some standards are not sufficiently well known to students and staff, and a number of college services do not have them.

59 Course teams are expected to produce plans which are based on reviews and which set targets to improve performance. However, targets are not consistently applied across different programmes of study. Performance indicators are not well developed and are not used to support many of the judgements made. Students have the opportunity to be represented at course review meetings but do not always attend. A number of course review reports from the directorates lack analysis and evaluation. They have not proved effective in improving students' achievements. Surveys are widely and regularly used to obtain students' views. The findings of these surveys are not always reported back to students. The action taken in response to comments is not always obvious.

60 The college charter is reviewed annually, and it is given to all students on induction. A synopsis of the charter is displayed around the college and students are well aware of it. Inspectors and the self-assessment report identified the need to clarify the procedure for monitoring the use of the charter by clients and to ensure that key names are included in it. A charter for employers has still to be developed. The college has recently introduced a comments, complaints and praise procedure which is not yet linked to the charter.

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61 The college has achieved the Investor in People award. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that staff development is well planned and given a high priority. In the last year, staff training has been more closely linked to the strategic and operational targets of the college. Current records on staff development are well maintained. Staff development needs are identified as part of the bi-annual, confidential appraisal process. This involves all staff. The college recognises the need for further training for appraisers and appraisees. Classroom observation is part of the appraisal system. Teaching is assessed and lessons learnt are shared between staff. This has improved classroom practice. Part-time staff are observed soon after they join the college. The profile of grades given by the college to their lesson observations was similar to those awarded by inspectors.

62 The procedures for monitoring the quality of collaborative provision is in line with the college's quality assurance framework. The director of collaborative provision is responsible for organising classroom observations, student evaluations and course reviews at sites distant from the college. In response to the report of the internal auditor, more time has been devoted to assuring the quality of this off-site work. However, not all of this provision is closely monitored.

Governance

Grade 2

63 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths of governance identified in the self-assessment report. However, inspection evidence revealed a number of additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good matching of governors' skills to the needs of the college

- significant governor involvement in strategic planning
- regular review of the college's financial position
- successful links between governors and students

Weaknesses

- inadequate reporting about collaborative provision
- lack of openness in some areas
- inadequate terms of reference for some corporation committees

64 The Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is adequate. 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.

65 Governors come from a wide range of backgrounds and their expertise is used effectively. A search committee considers proposals for new members after identifying the additional skills needed. Potential new governors are sought successfully through advertising, contacts of existing governors, and by direct approaches to local organisations. Procedures for ensuring the eligibility of existing governors are not comprehensive. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report's conclusion that training for new and serving governors is thorough. New governors are provided with an effective induction and appropriate documentation. An annual residential training event is linked to strategic planning.

66 Governors conduct their business efficiently. They distinguish clearly between governance and management. They devote a considerable amount of their time to the college

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outside of formal meetings. These strengths are included in the self-assessment report. Working relationships between governors and senior managers are good. The chairman and principal meet frequently. The average attendance at all meetings is lower than that seen in many colleges even though an attendance target of 100 per cent has been set. The corporation has recently completed an evaluation of its own effectiveness. It has established an appropriate committee structure, and formal reports of committees business are routinely received by the corporation. A student services monitoring committee has a membership of three governors, the student liaison officer and at least six students. It provides a direct link between the corporation and the student body which is valued by both. The remuneration committee's terms of reference have not been approved by the corporation. The terms of reference for the finance and personnel committee and the audit committee do not properly define their role and responsibilities.

67 Sound administrative arrangements support the corporation's work. Their meetings are well planned. The corporation meets at least termly. The clerk to the corporation is the principal's personal assistant. Meetings are supported by well-written reports and appropriately detailed minutes. With the exception of the audit committee, corporation and committee meeting minutes are not distributed to governors until they receive the agenda and papers for the next meeting.

68 The staff governor drafts a regular newsletter to inform staff of the corporation's business. He and the chair hold separate regular surgeries in the college. The corporation has recently approved a policy on openness. Agendas, papers and minutes of the corporation and its committees, except for confidential items, are made available for public inspection. However, a significant number of routine items are deemed confidential. The

register of interest and code of conduct do not reflect current best practice. The corporation has produced a number of policies concerning the conduct and management of its business, and intends to establish appropriate standing orders in the near future. Whilst the self-assessment report included the commitment to transparency as a strength, it did not recognise the current lack of openness in some of the corporation's working.

69 Governors are fully involved in reviewing the college mission statement and developing the college's strategic objectives. They review the strategic plan at several stages in its development. The corporation receives progress reports on the achievement of strategic objectives and on the annual operating statements. Governors use appropriate indicators to monitor the college's financial performance. They are currently determining which indicators should be used to cover their other responsibilities. The finance and personnel committee, and the corporation receive management accounts at termly intervals. The self-assessment report did not recognise that governors have received insufficient information about the nature, scope and financial implications of the collaborative provision. This accounts for nearly 10 per cent of the college's income.

Management

Grade 2

70 Inspectors generally agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Some weaknesses which are being addressed by the college were omitted from the report.

Key strengths

- open and participative management style
- engagement of staff in planning

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- constructive partnerships with other colleges and employers in the region
- effective management of college resources
- strong financial position

Weaknesses

- slow development and use of performance indicators
- unproven recent changes to the academic board

71 Issues identified in the previous inspection have been addressed successfully. The management style is open and participative. Lines of accountability are clear and generally understood. There is effective leadership and a demanding cycle of management meetings. Staff are kept well informed through a range of communication links which include an electronic bulletin board and a timetable of regular meetings. There are weak arrangements to link staff responsible for similar courses in different curriculum areas. This judgement is recognised in the self-assessment report and the college is addressing the weakness through an internally funded project.

72 The academic board has not advised the principal adequately on academic matters. Although this weakness is not included in the self-assessment report, it is well known and is being addressed by college managers. The membership, terms of reference, and meetings schedule of the board are being revised. The new board has met once and is reviewing the operation of its various committees. One of these, the equal opportunities committee, has already been reconstituted and revitalised. The launch of an updated equal opportunities policy has raised the profile of the committee's objectives throughout the college. The wide range of other policies has also been the subject of a recent major review. Policies are not well integrated with the planning and quality frameworks.

73 Most staff contribute to the college's planning processes. They understand the links between their contributions and the key strategic objectives. Market information from the Tyneside Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and other sources is used constructively. Progress on the operating statements in the plan is checked regularly by the board of management. The plan contains some objectives which are not clearly referred to in the key strategic objectives or in the operational statements. The college has been slow to develop a set of measurable indicators which would enable managers to assess performance at different levels of the college.

74 Inspectors agreed with college's assessment that it works well with other partners in the region. It collaborates with other Tyneside colleges on a number of projects. For example, a venture with Newcastle College called The Team Valley Business College provides training for local companies. Joint planning on a number of fronts is also undertaken with Tynemouth College. For example, the two colleges are developing centres called 'College Connections' at centres distant from either college. These offer advice and information as well as local study facilities for students. Relationships with the Tyneside TEC and with local businesses are constructive. Publicity arrangements are successful in raising the profile of the college in the region. Indirect promotional activities, such as press releases on individual students' achievements, have not been used effectively. The college has begun to remedy this.

75 Overall, resources are well managed. Rapid progress is being made in developing appropriate procedures covering personnel matters. Regular and constructive meetings occur between management and union representatives. Job descriptions, which currently vary in style and quality, are being revised. Staff salary costs are low compared with the sector norm. External funds have been used judiciously to improve the accommodation.

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The college's accommodation strategy gives clear direction for developments, in line with the strategic plan. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that effective timetabling has improved the utilisation of the college's teaching space. The distribution of budgets to purchase consumable items is agreed between the director of finance and business development and the heads of directorates. Frequent reports on these accounts are issued. Directorates receive a separate budget for book purchases for the learning resource centre. Less than half the annual budget allocated for this purpose had been spent by May in the 1997-98 academic year.

76 A range of reliable reports is produced by the college's management information system which assists the work of senior managers, support function managers, directors and their deputies. The services provided are increasingly valued by staff. Tutors do not have access to the main management information in their workrooms but have to access the system through the directorate office. They do not routinely use the reports available to them. A new computer-based register system is being tested as a means to improve the reliability of information and the speed of response to student absence.

77 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The finance team is appropriately structured and its members are suitably qualified and experienced. Detailed management accounts are produced each month and are comprehensive with the exception that the cashflow forecast is only produced graphically. The board of management review the college's management accounts at monthly meetings convened for that purpose. Budget holders receive timely reports of actual and committed expenditure against budget allocations. The financial health of the college is strong and it has a good level of reserves. The college's average level of funding

for 1997-98 was £15.85 per unit. The median for general further education colleges is £16.72 per unit.

Conclusions

78 The self-assessment report prepared for the inspection was the first of its kind to be produced by the college. The approach to its preparation was comprehensive and followed the headings in Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*. The summary was clear but sometimes insufficiently evaluative. There was considerable repetition. The evidence cited was not always relevant to the judgements made. Insufficient use was made of comparisons between students' achievements and national data. Inspectors' grades for lesson observations were in general agreement with the grades given for lesson observations carried out by the college. Inspectors considered that the college was overgenerous in its grading of three of the curriculum areas inspected and one cross-college area. An action plan to address many of the weaknesses was useful and gave inspectors an insight into how much had been achieved since the report was written.

79 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 1997)

| Age | % |
|-------------|-----|
| Under 16 | 0 |
| 16-18 years | 16 |
| 19-24 years | 18 |
| 25+ years | 66 |
| Not known | 0 |
| Total | 100 |

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (November 1997)

| Level of study | % |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Foundation | 2 |
| Intermediate | 61 |
| Advanced | 33 |
| Higher education | 4 |
| Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2) | 0 |
| Total | 100 |

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (November 1997)

| Programme area | Full time | Part time | Total provision % |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|
| Science | 189 | 982 | 12 |
| Agriculture | 5 | 53 | 1 |
| Construction | 1 | 74 | 1 |
| Engineering | 175 | 552 | 7 |
| Business | 222 | 1,991 | 23 |
| Hotel and catering | 124 | 215 | 3 |
| Health and community care | 399 | 1,740 | 22 |
| Art and design | 194 | 223 | 4 |
| Humanities | 316 | 2,158 | 25 |
| Basic education | 64 | 150 | 2 |
| Total | 1,689 | 8,138 | 100 |

Source: college data

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (March 1998)

| | Perm- anent | Fixed term | Casual | Total |
|------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|--------|-------|
| Direct learning contact | 112 | 2 | 52 | 166 |
| Supporting direct learning contact | 27 | 1 | 0 | 28 |
| Other support | 85 | 6 | 0 | 91 |
| Total | 224 | 9 | 52 | 285 |

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

| | 1994-95 | 1995-96 | 1996-97 |
|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Income | £8,959,000 | £9,559,000 | £9,840,000 |
| Average level of funding (ALF) | | | |
| Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97 | £17.33 | £19.13 | £17.17* |
| Payroll as a proportion of income | 64% | 53% | 53% |
| Achievement of funding target | 81% | 87% | 108% |
| Diversity of income | 20% | 14% | 14% |
| Operating surplus | £64,000 | £420,000 | £374,000 |

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

ALF – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), Funding Allocations 1996-97 (1996-97)

Payroll – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), college (1996-97)

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

*data not finalised

Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

| Qualifications | | 1994-95 | 1995-96 | 1996-97 |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| GCE A level | Number of candidates | 136 | 104 | 125 |
| | Average point score per entry | 3.6 | 3.4 | 3.6 |
| | Position in tables | middle third | middle third | middle third |
| Advanced vocational | Number in final year | 146 | 147 | 142 |
| | Percentage achieving qualification | 84% | 73% | 59% |
| | Position in tables | top third | bottom third | bottom third |
| Intermediate vocational | Number in final year | * | 68 | 72 |
| | Percentage achieving qualification | * | 25% | 57% |
| | Position in tables | * | bottom 10% | middle third |

Source: DfEE

Note: the majority of the college's students are 19 years of age or older

The achievements of these students are not covered in published DfEE performance tables

*1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available

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