

Business in Further Education

**NATIONAL REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1999-2000**

Case Studies

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

Introduction

The Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC) inspectorate published the second national survey report, *Business in Further Education* in July 2000. The survey was based on visits to more than 40 colleges in addition to evidence gathered as part of the four-yearly inspection cycle.

Those visits produced many interesting examples of practical ways in which colleges have improved the quality of the education for their students.

As part of the inspectorate's commitment to raise standards and share good practice we have published a selection of case studies, showing some of the effective work that is currently taking place in colleges. Each study identifies practices that are working.

Naturally, one cannot take an idea and expect it to work in every college. The purpose of these examples is to provide course leaders and college managers with useful food for thought.

Using the case studies

The case studies have been grouped under four headings:

- [teaching and learning](#)
- [students' achievements and retention](#)
- [teachers](#)
- [responding to change](#)

Each case study has a short descriptive title. You may scroll down each section to find an appropriate example or carry out a keyword search using the Adobe Acrobat 'find' facility.

We are interested in how useful you find the case studies and how you have used them in your college. Please send your comments to les.august@fevc.ac.uk. Les will also be pleased to receive any comments about the national survey report.

Teaching and Learning

1. Well-planned and supported assignments

At a sixth form college in the Eastern Region, assignments for the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) business programmes are well designed. Meticulous attention is given to the development of students' key skills. Key skills assessment criteria have been mapped against individual assignments and students have opportunities to apply key skills to a range of contexts. Students benefit from work experience placements in local businesses, which are carefully planned and monitored. A departmental handbook lists useful websites that students can access to help them with their assignments. Students are also encouraged to make use of a wide range of primary sources such as company reports.

2. Close-knit teams

In a London sixth form college, there are close-knit course teams which work carefully to ensure effective planning, teaching and assessment of business courses. Information from college-organised lesson observations contributes to the self-assessment report and weaknesses are addressed in action plans. Surveys are used to identify students' views of the quality of lessons and the support given by teachers. There is no formal mechanism for disseminating good practice but teams discuss teaching strategies at their regular meetings. They also share college-developed resources and commercially produced general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) learning packs, containing model lesson plans, learning materials and model assignments.

3. Effective teaching and learning

Business studies provision in a general further education college in Greater London was awarded a grade 2 at inspection. Inspectors identified the following key characteristics:

- recognition of the importance of good student support services and effective support from teachers
- the centrality of key skills development on many programmes
- an emphasis on making learning realistic and interesting
- the involvement of industrial contacts in planning and teaching
- the use of students' own work experiences, gained in part-time or full-time employment
- responsiveness to student need; for example, the introduction of an open learning course in accounting, to address the needs of students unable to attend regularly
- proper attention to poor attendance and late arrival at lessons, including the introduction of tutorial staff to deal with these issues

- a distinction between pastoral and academic tutorials, with students having time allocated for each
- a strategy for addressing the slow submission of GNVQ assignment work by some students
- staff undertaking industrial placements/visits to update their skills and industrial awareness.

4. A viable portfolio of courses

In order to ensure the viability of a broad portfolio of management and other higher level programmes, a large tertiary college in the Northern Region has identified the common elements of each of its level 4 courses. The courses include the certificate in management, national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 4 in management, medical diploma/certificate in practice management, and the higher national certificate in business. Members of the business studies department met to plan lessons on such themes as marketing, finance and human resources management which would meet the needs of students on all of these courses. The efficiency gains from conducting joint classes have ensured the viability of these courses, some of which typically recruit few students each year. Time has also been created for additional tutorials for part-time students, to ensure that students meet the assessment requirements of the awarding body, which has resulted in improved retention. The college has followed the same strategy on GNVQ and GCE A level business programmes.

5. Delivering and supporting outstanding teaching and learning

Business studies provision is outstanding in a sixth form college in Surrey. The college and inspectors identified:

- the sharing, by all teachers, of expertise, ideas and learning materials. Teachers know their strengths and weaknesses and are relaxed about stating their limitations and about drawing on colleagues' expertise as appropriate
 - extensive joint planning of lessons
 - much discussion of teaching methods - what has worked and what needs to be changed. Findings from classroom observations are openly discussed and good practice is shared at the earliest opportunity
 - schemes of work for each module in which the various elements are integrated effectively
 - good use of detailed, sufficiently challenging and topical, case studies. The studies are carefully researched, discussed and devised by the whole teaching team, and used both by GCE A level and GNVQ advanced students
 - a bank of work cards, developed to help students catch up on aspects of work they have missed, to revise, or to extend their learning
 - students' excellent use of the Internet for research
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- rigorous and regular review of individual students' progress
- detailed marking criteria for assessed work, which are made available to all students
- a planning sheet for GCE A level students to help with coursework and projects, including useful prompts about things to remember when planning work
- revision skills which are built into courses. In order to capture students' interests, revision and 'extension' sessions are often based on television game shows
- the frequent use of past examination papers, supplemented by relevant case studies, to develop students' understanding of the key issues in the examination paper
- the rigorous use of student perception surveys. There is a survey of students' views in the middle of the first term and a further survey later in the course, using the same questions, to measure any improvements.

6. *Wide range of learning materials*

A city college in the South West region has developed a wide range of learning materials for use on business courses. Common learning modules have been developed for use across a range of business, professional and management courses, and resource booklets produced for each learning module. The information in the booklets is also available on the college's intranet and on computer disk and is regularly reviewed and updated. The use of the learning modules has allowed for greater flexibility in the design and delivery of the curriculum.

7. *The conference assignment*

A large general further education college in the South West region offers the higher diploma in administrative procedures as a one-year, full-time course. The course mainly attracts mature students, most of whom have GCE A levels and/or relevant secretarial experience. Good practice on the course includes a major year-long assignment, involving students in organising and operating a national education conference for administration and secretarial lecturers from further education colleges. The assignment embraces eight units of the course and has a strong practical element which gives students experience of what might be expected of them in a real work situation. Students are individually assessed on all aspects of the project. The conference assignment has been run successfully for several years. As a preparation for the assignment, the students run a charity day in December to give them experience of planning and running an event. Students start planning for the May conference in October and undertake all the research for the venue, catering arrangements, speakers, marketing and sponsorship. They hold weekly minuted meetings to monitor progress and establish targets to which they work. They manage the conference itself, deal with all enquiries and undertake a thorough evaluation. The conference attracts between 50 and 85 delegates, involves keynote speakers and hosts a series of workshops. Students are positive about the course and especially about the value of the conference project. Some students have obtained jobs related to the skills they had practised in organising the conference; for example, jobs to do with budgeting, planning, market research, marketing and, in two instances, organising conferences.

8. The importance of keyboard skills

A West Yorkshire further education college considers it important that business students develop keyboard skills. Students learn and practise keyboard skills as part of all introductory programmes. Written schemes of work have been produced for the stages and modules of the different programmes, listing the expected skills and competences to be developed on a weekly basis. Detailed records are kept of the progress students are making. Teachers mark work carefully and comments are summarised in individuals' record books. Students are encouraged to work at the maximum pace commensurate with their ability and their progress is reviewed regularly. A graduate student with no initial keyboard skills, studying for two hours a week recently achieved six qualifications, four at level 2, within the course of a year. Other students may take a year to achieve one of the qualifications for which they are aiming. Students are made aware of appropriate progression routes for qualifications, to ensure continuity of study. Most teaching materials, including exercises to support the development of keyboard skills, are produced by teachers at the college.

9. Addressing declining recruitment

In order to address the problem of falling recruitment and declining retention on its GNVQ business programmes, a large college in West Yorkshire has reviewed its approaches to teaching and learning. It has decided to promote a more active approach to learning by encouraging students to take part in activities which provide a stronger link with local businesses. For example, classrooms are now identified with particular aspects of business, such as personnel or marketing. Students engaged in personnel activities, for example, liaise with staff at a local business to identify and resolve real personnel issues linked to relevant units of their course. This practical approach is helping to motivate students and improve retention rates.

10. An agenda to improve teaching and learning

A successful department of business, in a London sixth form college, encourages all business teachers to improve teaching and learning by:

- developing and maintaining good relationships with the students
- making lessons interesting
- linking activities in lessons to other experiences in students' lives and to situations with which they are familiar
- expecting contributions from students in class and not allowing them to coast
- having high expectations of students
- involving students in lesson activities rather than expecting them simply to listen
- developing examination and assessment skills from very early in the course
- helping students to develop a critical approach
- encouraging students to learn from each other and to evaluate each others' work
- improving the layout of classrooms to ensure that all students can see the teacher and be seen
- setting up specialist support workshops
- making work realistic, accessible and achievable
- continually working to motivate students.

Some of the outcomes of this focus on improving teaching and learning are:

- a student-to-student mentoring system for GCE A level economics students. In one case, a student with good general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) grades was paired to work with a student with lower grades
- the designation of one period a week as a workshop. The workshops, for each full-time business studies group, are staffed by business teachers and provide additional support for individuals. Students may choose to attend the workshop or are encouraged to do so by their teachers
- the course booklet provided for GCE A level business studies and economics students at the start of their course. It includes all recent examination papers and the marking schemes which tutors use in assessing students' work. During their course, students work through the booklet systematically and teachers provide feedback geared to examination requirements and grades
- GCE A level students' assessment of each others' work, which is designed to encourage them to reflect on the standards required to achieve particular grades. Students provide feedback to each other in group discussions
- the timed exercises which students undertake in simulated examination conditions
- the charts on students' progress, displayed on classroom walls
- the study support materials developed for GNVQ programmes. These explain in detail the criteria for grading work and present advice on how to achieve good grades. Each theme is explained in some detail.

11. Support from professional bodies

The Chartered Institute of Marketing has expanded its range of seminars to embrace the expertise of teachers in colleges which have successfully taught and managed marketing courses. The teachers present highly effective seminars to other teachers from newly accredited colleges. The Association of Accounting Technicians has a highly effective regional network for teachers.

12. Raising expectations

A sixth form college in the Greater London region encourages all students to achieve their best. Teachers have high expectations of students of all abilities. Business teachers articulate these expectations from the earliest stages of the course. There is a strong emphasis on regular attendance and punctuality and on the businesslike approach expected of staff and students. At open days, at interview and at induction, students are made aware that the college achieves good results and that students from a range of abilities do well. Even before they enrol, GNVQ students are shown portfolios of previous work so that they can see the level required. Attendance and punctuality are closely monitored. Student telephone numbers are included on each register. After each class, teachers routinely contact students who have not attended.

13. IT and learning

At a large London college, the tutor for Chartered Institute of Marketing courses has developed a computer website for the programme, containing copies of lecture notes and schemes of work. Class notes are mailed electronically to students so that they can print them at their leisure and cover any missed lessons. Similarly, they can access the teachers' Microsoft PowerPoint presentation for each session. The tutors also use electronic mail to communicate with students on administrative matters and to provide initial feedback on the work they have produced for assessment.

14. IT and learning

Excellent use is made of the Internet and college intranet facilities in one small general further education college in a rural area of the Yorkshire and Humberside region. Full-time GCE A level and GNVQ advanced business students have assignments, case studies and course notes issued through the college intranet and are directed to a series of Internet business sites to research their assignments. These include: www.bized.ac.uk; www.beeb.com; www.businessbureau-uk.co.uk; www.studyweb.com/business; www.encarta.com; www.norcol.ac.uk and www.eubusiness.com. The college makes its intranet resources accessible to students from home via an Internet page. Students also use electronic mail to contact each other and teachers. In their lessons, teachers lead lively discussions that draw on students' Internet work.

15. IT and learning

In one sixth form college in the Greater London region, inspectors found that most students use the Internet to access the 'bized' website for research. Teachers plan assignments which require students to use the site. Accounting and information technology (IT) computer software packages are also used. NVQ level 2 administration students have electronic mail addresses, which they use to submit assignments. Legal secretarial students use Microsoft PowerPoint software to make their presentations.

16. Effective student exchange

At one college in the Greater London region, which has a high proportion of Bangladeshi students, teachers have established a student exchange link with a large fast-food company operated by Black Americans. This link provides students with good, relevant role models.

17. Motivating students

At a college in the Greater London region, teachers make good use of students' own experience and knowledge. For example, in a lesson for the National Examining Board for Supervisory Management introductory award, the teacher drew upon students' own ideas and experiences about what motivated them and their colleagues, as a way of introducing them to Herzberg's theory of motivation. The activity stimulated considerable interest and debate and was highly productive.

18. Using lesson observation

One sixth form college in the South East region undertakes lesson observations, the findings from which are linked to teachers' appraisal and the self-assessment of the business curriculum. Questionnaires are used to obtain students' views on the quality of teaching and students are encouraged, in regular meetings of teachers and students, to say openly what they consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching. Close teamwork enables teachers to be aware of each others' teaching methods and to share good practice. The resources which teachers develop are also shared with other teachers.

19. Employers and work experience

In one small sixth form college in the Greater London region, teachers have developed an imaginative approach to work experience placements for students on the foundation GNVQ course. In collaboration with local employers students attend some of their lessons on the employers' premises and some at the college. Staff at the companies also act as mentors to the students. Students value the time they spend in a realistic working environment and find the experience stimulating.

20. Using business expertise

A college in the South West region has established a thriving business advisory board, comprising representatives from local leading businesses, chaired by a business governor. Students visit employers' premises and employers come to the college to give talks to the students. Employers also help in the preparation of assignments and participate in award evenings. Teachers have worked hard to ensure that the employers who sit on the advisory board are enthusiastic and have a meaningful role to play in the business section of the college.

21. Developing key skills

In one sixth form college, full-time students on a course for legal executives develop the three key skills of communication, application of number and IT. At a small general further education college, teachers have produced detailed schemes of work for the GCE A level business studies course. Key skills are mapped against individual lessons and assignments to ensure that students cover the three major key skills during their course. At another college, GCE A level students develop their communication skills through the presentations they make to other members of the class, and their IT skills through the use of computers, particularly the use of the Internet.

22. Developing key skills

In a large seaside college in the Northern Region, the business section has experimented with different models for delivering key skills. Current arrangements have the support of managers, teachers and external verifiers, and inspectors consider them to be effective. The business section has purchased software packages which business teachers use to develop key skills. The use of IT goes hand in hand with the development of communications and numeracy. The factors contributing to the success of this approach are that:

- the provision is well planned and well managed. There is a clear framework for the development of key skills on business courses
- the college has a key skills forum, one of several it has established to discuss particular aspects of provision, for identifying and sharing good practice across the institution. Business studies staff, therefore, meet with staff from other curriculum areas to discuss key skills
- the key skills team in business are business specialists, who teach key skills in a vocational context. The team leader is also responsible for ensuring that students who need additional support receive it
- as well as having timetabled lessons on key skills, students work on their own in the multimedia resource centre. Course managers and the supervisor of the centre liaise effectively. When students attend the additional sessions in the centre, the supervisor is aware of the work they should be doing
- key skills learning materials have been looked at carefully to ensure that the language is appropriate for students and appropriate to the level at which they are studying
- under the department's internal verification procedures, each assignment is reviewed to see that there is suitable coverage of key skills before it is issued to students. This is in addition to the 10% sample of assessed work which is subject to verification. The teacher who leads the business key skills team also manages internal verification
- students attach the same status to key skills lessons as to other lessons.

23. Key skills and insurance courses

A city centre general further education college in the Yorkshire and Humberside region has developed, in conjunction with the British Insurance Brokers Association, a key skills pack, primarily for use on NVQ level 3 modern apprenticeship programmes in insurance. Key skills are placed in an insurance context. For example, one of the problem-solving activities is linked to resolving the difficulties clients might have in obtaining a mortgage following a criminal prosecution and IT skills are linked to the calculation of premiums using spreadsheet formulae. The pack is being updated in line with changing key skills specifications and NVQ standards in insurance. More generally, the college has developed a 'quick skills' programme on its Internet site which provides introductory activities in key skills for both students and non-students. The activities are being further developed to cater for the different levels of key skills, and will be updated to meet revised key skills specifications.

24. Updating teachers' IT skills

A college in the Eastern Region has introduced a college-wide scheme for the updating of teachers' IT skills. All full-time and proportional contract teachers have been issued with laptop computers and have received training using Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR) computer literacy and information technology certification. From January 2000, all internal communications have been handled through the college intranet. Many teachers who previously made little use of IT in their teaching now use Microsoft PowerPoint and other IT applications.

25. Using IT

Business studies students in a sixth form college in the South East region have their own suite of networked computers, linked to the Internet. All of them have at least one hour a week, working on the Internet as a group, and individual access at other times to conduct their own research. Students frequently use computers in lessons to download and analyse data for class exercises or for speedy retrieval of topical information to use in group discussions. The business area has a large liquid crystal display unit for demonstrations and presentations.

26. Upgrading accommodation for business course

In a general further education college in the Eastern Region, the faculty of professional and management studies is entirely based in a new building located in a major town. Finance was raised through a deal with a major supermarket which purchased college land and developed the site. The new supermarket is situated beside the centre, forming an attractive set of buildings which have the appearance of a modern business park rather than a college. Within the centre, there has been a conscious decision to create an environment which resembles modern office accommodation rather than classrooms. Several of the classrooms are equipped with ceiling-mounted projection facilities and teachers are encouraged to use Microsoft PowerPoint or similar forms of presentation. A large room is fully equipped for video-conferencing.

27. Good, well-produced learning materials

The business studies department in a large tertiary college in the Northern Region has given a high priority to producing high-quality learning materials for all its courses. It is a condition of internal course validation that learning resources are of a high standard. Business students are provided with colour-coded resources. These include: a course handbook and induction pack; learning and workbook packs, which include teachers' notes for the whole course and the planned student activities related to these; and where appropriate, a work placement pack, with tasks and activities. Learning resources co-ordinators help to design and develop resources. In business studies, all learning materials are wordprocessed. Overhead projector slides are produced using a commercial presentation package. Centralised banks of resources are held in learning centres, and students who are absent for a lesson can easily locate the relevant learning materials.

28. Training units and realistic work environments

In order to secure a realistic work environment for administration students, a college in West Yorkshire has a training unit, now well established, providing a range of services to college staff and others. An office manager is responsible for all aspects of the unit's operations. Its services are publicised widely to staff and promoted in a college video. The unit's range of operations is broad. It includes all types of reprographic work, mail shots, mail sorting, delivery and collection, wordprocessing and desktop publishing. Administration students, working in the unit, also undertake other duties such as reception work, filing, telephone and fax services, stock maintenance and the sale of teaching materials. The students support the administration of other academic schools in the college. Year 2 students are used to supervise those in their first year. In order to ensure that students' work is of the highest standard, an additional assessor, initially acting as observer, is assigned to the unit, to assess the skills developed. All students complete a training plan logbook to form a record of the skills they have developed, prior to their formal assessment.

Students' Achievements and Retention

1. *Using academic tutors to raise achievement*

To improve students' performance in examinations and assessments, the business section of a general further education college in the Greater London region has introduced 'academic tutors'. Their role is to support students in achieving good results in their studies and to complement the work of pastoral tutors. Pastoral and academic tutors meet for one hour a week with their students. Academic tutors chase up students' academic work, ensure they meet deadlines and agree a revised timescale for the completion of work when necessary. A key target is to avoid the additional pressure placed on a student by a backlog of uncompleted work. Negotiating with students, rather than adopting a disciplinary approach, tutors and students agree targets for improvement in the return of work. Emphasis is placed on students giving work in regularly so they can benefit from early comments on the work from teachers.

2. *Analysing differences in achievement between different college centres*

A sixth form college in the Northern Region was created from a merger of two separate colleges. Business studies managers identified considerable differences in the 1998 achievement rates for GCE A level business between the two centres of the new college which could not be explained by differences in students' levels of achievement at entry. Teachers were invited to analyse and explain the reasons for their students' performance. Amongst the factors identified as contributing to poor results at the one centre, were:

- a culture of teachers' autonomy. Although teachers got on well together, they did not work effectively as a team, planning work and sharing resources. Teachers did not question each other. The prevailing orthodoxy was that individual teachers determined their own approach to the curriculum and methods of teaching
- inadequate staff development prior to the adoption of a modular syllabus, particularly in respect of the management of coursework. There was too much emphasis on coursework at the expense of developing students' examination techniques and revision strategies
- the lack of time spent on developing students' awareness of external influences on business, crucial as a context for the understanding of business concepts, was a likely contributory factor in students failing to obtain higher grades. This explanation was reinforced by feedback from students, which indicated that they saw their programme as a series of distinct modules, to be achieved and forgotten about
- poor resources and ineffective management of resources. Classrooms were shared with other subjects and many were in poor decorative order. There were no base rooms to help build a subject identity. Timetabling was inflexible. Some classes were timetabled with the same teacher for up to five hours a week
- relations between teachers and students were relaxed and friendly, but this was at the expense of developing professional business practices. The perception amongst some students and teachers was that business was a minority subject, suitable only for weaker students

- poor timekeeping, and late starts and early finishes to lessons
- the pastoral system's failure to reinforce the expectations which the college had of its students. Absences, for example, were too readily excused
- the failure to address teachers' development needs, as identified at appraisal, and the inadequate dissemination of insights gained by individuals participating in staff development.

As a result of the analysis, members of the new management team for business:

- rewrote schemes of work to emphasise the integrative themes in business
- encouraged teachers to adopt a more formal approach and a more professional and businesslike approach in communicating expectations to students
- introduced internal assessments in addition to the modular assessments, insisted on some essay writing in the first year and rigorously policed deadlines for submitting work
- timetabled two teachers to each class
- themselves contributed to the teaching. The deputy head of business began to mark samples of students' work and to set all assessments for second-year classes
- re-wrote a common set of class materials. Teachers with particular expertise were then commissioned to produce teaching resources based on these
- identified staff development needs through appraisal and classroom observation
- ensured that students who were diagnosed as unlikely to succeed at GCE A level were counselled to take GCE advanced supplementary (AS), which had not previously been an option at this centre.

In 1999, the pass rate for GCE A level business at the centre in question rose to 95%; the same as at the other centre. The percentage of students achieving higher grades also rose to 60%. Based on value-added calculations, 64% of students exceeded their target grade; still some way behind the 91% at the other centre but clearly improving.

3. Achieving consistently high retention and pass rates

A medium-sized further education college in West Yorkshire has consistently achieved retention and pass rates of close to 90% for office skills subjects, with an annual enrolment of over 700 students. Typically, 100 of them are successful in level 3 examinations. A modular qualifications framework ensures that programmes are tailored to the needs and interests of individuals. Retention is maximised through the careful monitoring of absences and the close rapport between teachers and students. Examination procedures are systematic and this helps build confidence. The timing of students' entry for examinations is carefully controlled by

teachers and decided on the basis of information in students' record books, detailing the skills acquired and the past papers successfully completed. An appropriate balance is maintained between encouraging students to work quickly to the next attainable level and securing the confidence to perform competently in an examination.

4. Improving retention and achievement rates

Key factors in improving retention and achievement identified by business teachers in a London sixth form college include:

- a tutorial approach, based around the key skill of 'improving own learning and performance'
- individual target-setting and action-planning with the students
- an emphasis on setting short-term targets which enable students to see immediate results
- using 'minimum target grades' as the basis of action-planning
- encouragement to students to aim well above the minimum target grade
- the very early identification of students who are struggling or underperforming. Students in this category receive additional support and encouragement and their progress is monitored closely.

5. Using tutorials to improve students' learning and performance

Business students in a sixth form college in the Greater London region participate in the college's 'improving own learning and performance' scheme. At the beginning of the course, each student has an interview at which their previous examination performance and objectives are discussed. They agree their strengths and weaknesses with their tutor. Average GCSE grade/point scores are calculated and used to identify target grades for current students. Teachers stress that these should be minimum targets and that many students will significantly exceed these. Examples of past students who have exceeded the minimum target grade are given. Students agree with their tutors two or three goals towards which their progress can be tracked over the first term. These may be a combination of academic, personal, vocational and self-management goals. The goals are reviewed with tutors on a regular basis. A detailed tutor manual provides guidance to tutors on implementing the improving own learning and performance programme. It includes specific sections on the links between average GCSE score outcomes for students GNVQ foundation, intermediate and advanced course, and GCE A level courses. Teachers emphasise the importance of praise and encouragement, especially for students who have not achieved well in the past. Certificates are awarded for good attendance, punctuality, quality of work and progress.

6. Using students as consultants

On one National Examining Board for Supervisory Management diploma course, part-time students, who are themselves employees, act as consultants to a different company one day each week for a period of eight to 10 weeks. They address real business problems, and

present their final report to a panel comprising the company's managers, the external verifier, students, managers from their own place of employment and the course tutor. The participating companies make a financial contribution for the consultancy. Last year the proceeds were sufficient to enable the students to visit Toronto to study the management of change in Canadian companies.

7. Maintaining high retention and achievement rates

At one sixth form college, in an area with significant levels of social deprivation in Yorkshire and Humberside, business students' achievements are often outstanding. In 1998, the pass rate on the full-time GCE A level business studies course was 96% and the proportion of higher grades A to C was significantly above the national average for similar colleges. Students also gained higher grades than those predicted from their GCSE scores on entry. Students' files are checked regularly to ensure that they are well presented and appropriately indexed. Teachers have high expectations of students and always start courses with positive messages. For example, the success rates and destinations of previous business studies students are displayed in classrooms and discussed with new groups. Past students visit the college to help existing students with course activities. There is a clear homework policy, which is effectively explained and referred to throughout the course. Progress tests are set each half term. Individual review and action-planning sessions are at the centre of students' learning. A target grade is agreed with each student towards the end of the first term. Teachers work well together in giving extra support to individual students who have been identified as needing it during course reviews. Students are encouraged to access the departmental business website which has a wide range of study materials including on-line tests. Teachers use their experience as examiners and senior examiners to ensure that students develop effective approaches to examinations and projects. Teaching teams use meetings and staff development sessions to standardise their grades. Managers give new teachers extra support to enable them to develop consistent approaches to assessment. Students receive detailed oral and written feedback on their work and sample answers are used effectively to illustrate good and weak practice. Work produced by individual students is shared amongst the group. Students have copies of marking schemes and are encouraged to comment constructively on ways of improving the scripts of fellow students.

8. Improving GNVQ intermediate pass rates

At one general further education college in the Greater London region, improvement strategies were put in place to address some poor pass rates on GNVQ intermediate business. The programme of assignments was re-written to include more primary business research and is now entirely based on realistic business scenarios. The college learning centre is used for secondary research, where students work in groups using the resources housed in the centre. Unit tests and preparation for them are being given much greater emphasis in schemes of work. Detailed testing, based on past test papers, now takes place at the end of each unit, and under similar conditions to those of the external test. This has improved students' confidence and developed their familiarity with examination techniques. Pass rates rose from 53% in 1997 to 91% in 1999.

9. Tutors help to raise achievement

A college in the Yorkshire and Humberside region, based in a large city, has clear strategies which have helped to improve retention on business studies programmes. All students are allocated a personal tutor and teachers work closely with personal tutors and, where appropriate, parents to monitor students' progress. Tutors and teachers build a partnership with parents through parents' evenings and make early contact with each other by telephone when problems occur. The college system for reporting students who are a cause for concern is used widely to enable tutors to respond quickly to problems such as poor attendance. Individual students are supported outside formal class time. Teaching and learning materials are differentiated to meet the needs of a wide ability range. Students are set minimum target grades and praised when the outcome of marked work exceeds these grades. Many students have part-time jobs and teachers encourage them to bring their experiences of work to the classroom. A residential course in the autumn term helps to build a close relationship between teachers and students so that early anxieties can be resolved. Teachers emphasise the importance of praise and encouragement, especially for students who have not achieved well in the past.

10. Working with partners to raise achievement

A tertiary college has a longstanding franchising agreement with the regional chamber of commerce to deliver, mainly NVQ accounting programmes and a range of secretarial and business IT courses at centres across the north east of England. External achievements on the accounting programmes are high, significantly above national further education averages. At technician level, for example, pass rates are 20% above the sector average. At foundation level, in 1999, 77% of students achieved the full NVQ. Over 300 students were involved in Association of Accounting Technicians courses in 1999, with an average retention rate of over 90%.

Teachers

1. A planned programme to provide commercial updating

In response to an inspection report, identifying business teachers' lack of recent commercial experience, a large tertiary college in the Northern Region undertook a comprehensive audit of the skills, experience and professional interests of its teachers. The audit demonstrated a clear need for commercial updating. External verifiers' reports and the outcomes of appraisal were used to identify those teachers who would most benefit from a placement in industry. A programme of short secondments has been developed and business teachers themselves help to identify appropriate employers. The business department has a target to ensure that all business teachers have recent and relevant commercial experience within four years of the start of the scheme.

2. Using employer links to update teachers

A large general further education college in the Eastern Region has developed effective strategies for enabling teachers to update their commercial experience. Some of this updating is based on the customised training the college provides for small and medium-sized enterprises in the local area. The college's business services unit acts as the sole point of contact for this work, but each client is allocated an advisory teacher from the business faculty. Teachers therefore have the chance to update their commercial skills through focused contact with an employer. Another aspect of good practice has been the scheme for IT updating. All full-time and proportional contract teachers have been issued with laptop computers and given basic IT training.

3. Updating the experience of full-time teachers

A sixth form college in the Eastern Region has recognised the need for full-time teachers to keep in touch with current business practice. It tackles this through: visits by teachers to local employers; visits by employers to the college; operating the Young Enterprise scheme; and short industrial placements with local employers. Teachers indicate, however, that pressures on their time have recently meant fewer industrial placements, which has led the business studies team to develop additional strategies for updating. Accountancy teachers, for example, have undertaken video interviews with local accountancy managers, interviews which are also used as a teaching resource to enliven lessons. Regional networks provide a useful forum for keeping in contact with professional bodies. The college has also developed a link with a business college in Copenhagen involving reciprocal visits by teachers and students to Danish and British companies.

4. Careful recruitment of teachers and provision of staff development

In a general further education college in Lincolnshire, the faculty of business studies carefully selects the full-time and part-time teachers who carry out its commercial and outreach work. This is central to its commitment to provide a high standard of provision to local customers. Specific schemes of staff development are used to introduce teachers to the demands of these clients. The area has also extended its general staff development by introducing a pilot training day for new part-time and full-time teachers and for some existing management teachers. The day includes lesson planning and programme planning, effective methods of teaching and learning, assessment briefs and a 'micro-teach'. Sessions were conducted by

business managers and education course teachers. Participants felt the ‘micro-teach’ to be the most useful part of the day. The session on teaching and learning methods was least popular because it was dealt with in a theoretical fashion. The pilot was considered a success and the next day will be open to all new teachers in the college. The college intends to develop this training into a specific ‘licence’ for teaching management courses.

5. Teacher training for business teachers

In a large city-centre college in the West Midlands, the business faculty has responsibility for teacher training programmes. Following recent mergers, teacher training programmes for staff have been made available throughout the week, daytime and evenings. All part-time teachers are strongly encouraged to undertake at least the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) 730 part 1 qualification. Additionally, they will be involved in a formal coaching and mentoring scheme in which they work with two other teachers acting as ‘critical friends’. Part-time teachers are invited to observe full-time colleagues in the classroom, and a full-time teacher may take a lesson for the part-time teacher, who will observe and subsequently discuss the lesson with the mentor. Because many part-time teachers are unable to attend team meetings and face-to-face communications are difficult, minutes, memoranda and other key documents are routinely sent to them by electronic mail.

6. Moving from a casual workforce

At one sixth form college in the Eastern Region, the business studies team of 13 teachers, includes four who are on fractional contracts. There are no hourly paid teachers. Recruitment and selection procedures for fractional teachers are identical to those for full-time teachers. As part of the selection process candidates have to make a presentation, allowing the interview panel to gain some evidence of their teaching competence. Fractional teachers are treated the same as full-time teachers. They are subject to the same appraisal procedures; they attend team meetings and staff meetings and have their own bases in staff rooms. The employment of fractional teachers has allowed the college to draw in staff with current expertise of marketing and business law.

7. Effective training for part-time teachers

One college in the Midlands provides training in pedagogical skills for all part-time teachers of management. They attend a compulsory training session, covering the skills of lesson planning, identifying students’ preferred learning styles and conducting assessment. They are then allocated to an experienced teacher who acts as a mentor and whose teaching they observe. Subsequently, they are encouraged to undertake a basic teaching qualification. This systematic approach to training benefits students because part-time teachers learn to communicate their specialist knowledge more effectively. It also helps to create more effective teaching teams.

8. Part-time teachers and professional courses

A tertiary college in the Northern Region offers a wide range of management and professional qualifications and employs a large number of part-time staff who work in their professions during the day or are consultants in their own businesses. The college benefits, by having staff who are qualified and experienced professionally, and who are dedicated to supporting students as up-and-coming entrants to their profession. Part-time teachers receive an

induction programme and access to the college's staff development activities, including teacher training courses. They are considered an integral part of the course team to which they belong. Links are maintained with former students with a view to them returning as teachers. Part-time teachers are observed while teaching and are also given the opportunity of an annual interview with a college manager to identify their individual training needs.

9. Recruitment and support of agency teachers

The business faculty in a general further education college in the Eastern Region views the contribution of part-time teachers as vital. In areas such as law, accountancy and human resource management they keep students in touch with modern business practice. In business, about 30% of taught hours are contributed by part-time teachers. The college uses an agency to employ part-time teachers; but the business faculty usually has to find suitable candidates itself and pass details to the agency. The agreed college pay rate creates a difficulty in attracting specialists to teach law and accountancy, although the head of faculty has discretion to increase this. The business faculty has identified four categories of potential part-time business teacher; women returning to work when their children are of school age; those who have previously worked in a relevant business occupation, such as personnel management; former students of the college who have completed a business degree; employed people contracted to work in the evenings, and 'portfolio' workers, some of whom were previously full-time teachers. Those who fall into the first two categories, and commit themselves to teach up to 10 hours a week, are provided with a mentor from the faculty and offered a place on a college teacher education course. The college believes it has been able to improve the gender and ethnic composition of part-time teachers by adopting this approach.

10. Recruitment and support of agency teachers

A college in the West Midlands uses an agency to recruit part-time teachers. It finds the supply of general business teachers to be reasonable, but has to resort to its own recruitment methods to ensure an adequate stream of management and professional studies teachers. Because of the impossibility of persuading highly qualified accountancy and law professionals to work for standard payment rates, special rates of up to £28 an hour have been agreed in some cases. The induction for newly appointed part-time teachers includes an introductory pack, a tour of the college and the appointment of a mentor. Part-time teachers are required to undertake C&G 730 if not already qualified, to have lessons observed within the first six weeks of employment and to agree a development plan arising out of the observation.

11. Using part-time teachers to broaden provision

One large college in the Eastern Region has witnessed substantial changes to its staffing establishment in recent years, with a decline in the proportion of full-time teachers and an increase in hourly paid and proportional-contract teachers. Teachers on proportional contracts have significant management responsibilities, for course leadership and course development. The increase in part-time staff is viewed as advantageous by the college. It has enabled the business school, for example, to broaden its provision and to adapt to new course demands. In business administration, four proportional-contract posts were created to staff a workshop for shorthand skills and text processing.

12. Advantages provided by part-time teachers

At a general further education college in the Eastern Region there has been a rapid growth in the numbers of teachers on proportional contracts and hourly paid teachers. Advantages identified by the business studies area include drawing in staff with current business expertise or staff who combine a portfolio of teaching tasks with private business practice. The hourly paid teachers are all contracted through an outside agency. Business studies managers themselves, however, carry out most of the work to find suitable candidates. Many hourly paid teachers see their role purely as classroom teachers. They are not paid to attend team meetings and other events.

13. Using college teacher training courses to identify potential business teachers

A further education college in the Yorkshire and Humberside region which runs the OCR teachers certificate in office skills, is able to use the course to provide an opportunity to monitor and select potential additional part-time teachers. All part-time teachers will have gained the OCR certificate or other teaching qualification before starting work at the college. A handbook, updated annually, is provided for all part-time teachers. Key meetings of course teams are held three times a year and part-time teachers' record of attendance at those is good. Meetings are held at lunchtime or in the early evening, to cater for those with childcare or work commitments. Part-time teachers are a valued part of the teaching team and are included in all college events. Central to building a coherent team has been the sharing of teaching materials. Part-time teachers use the same materials as full-time colleagues. Some of them have also been instrumental in their development.

Responding to Change

Responding to employers' training needs

1. Links between business faculty and college company

In a general further education college in the East Midlands, the business studies faculty works closely with the workplace training unit responsible for business enterprise activities. Early co-operative work focused on NVQ management courses, but has subsequently embraced National Examining Board for Supervisory Management courses. The college identifies 'empathy and experience' as key factors in a successful working relationship with employers, together with the high standard of courses offered. Workplace courses are taught by experienced part-time teachers and there is specific and compulsory training for teachers wishing to be involved in this work. Management studies teachers must be qualified to NVQ level 5, to ensure their vocational competence. The faculty places considerable emphasis on teachers working with students to identify appropriate progression routes.

2. Using distance learning to preserve provision

A general further education college in the East Midlands has offered distance learning courses for the Chartered Institute of Marketing qualifications over the last three years because traditional day-release and evening courses were recruiting sufficient numbers. Employers and students have responded well to this flexible form of provision and the programme has a healthy recruitment. An essential element of the course is the weekly three-hour tutorial. Examination pass rates are 15% to 22% above national averages. The college attributes its success to getting the message across that its provision is genuinely flexible.

3. Finding new partners

A city-centre sixth form college in the East Midlands operates in a highly competitive environment for students aged 16 to 19. It aims to increase its post-19 provision. Following the lead provided by a governor, the college has successfully developed NVQs in the workplace for a major hospital in the city. NVQs in administration, levels 1 to 4, are delivered to between 60 and 80 trainees in each 12-month period. The tuition, assessment, and portfolio support takes place at the hospital. Trainees access IT facilities at the college. The hospital has now made a commitment to provide training in customer service for administrative staff who are in direct contact with the public. A business development manager has recently been appointed to expand work with employers. On learning that one of the trainees attending the NVQ administration course was employed by a private hospital the college established contact with this hospital and now runs NVQs in administration, customer care and IT for the new customer. Another development stemming from the initial contact includes a one-year evening course in medical law for adults working in the nursing and medical professions. Students who successfully complete will be awarded continuing education certificates validated by Edexcel.

4. Working with retailers

A large general further education college in Norfolk is part of a retail training consortium of colleges, training the staff of a large high street retailer. The college's strategic plan emphasises the need to make the curriculum more flexible, to make courses more accessible

and to reduce reliance on FEFC funding. The business studies area is central to this strategy. There is a marked shift from full-time student, in-college, enrolments, towards part-time, flexibly organised local provision. The high street retailer of frozen foods intends to put all its employees through a retail and customer services training programme, to help address its concerns over high staff turnover. As an incentive to complete the programme, employees will receive shares if they achieve their qualifications. The consortium of colleges draws funds from both the FEFC and training and enterprise councils (TECs). There are currently 1,400 employees enrolled on the NVQ programme through the college. To meet its commitment, the college employs five staff with appropriate retail and training experience to conduct assessment and verification tasks. They are provided with a car, a laptop computer, and a mobile phone with appropriate connections for electronic mail.

5. Generating income

In a large general further education college in the Eastern Region, the business studies faculty has an annual target to generate £150,000 in fees from company training contracts. A management studies lecturer spends 50% of his time visiting companies, conducting training needs analyses and constructing courses to suit particular needs. For example, a programme for the local health care NHS trust combined an Edexcel certificate/diploma in management with a diploma in practice management.

6. Responding to employers' needs

One large general further education college in the Eastern Region employs a business development manager, based in the faculty of management and professional studies. The role is to identify and respond to employers' needs, building on relationships established through business rather than 'cold-calling'. The faculty has an extensive client list and companies are visited in order to develop new business. The business development manager has a salary that includes an element based on new work generated. All of the full-time, and some part-time, teachers visit companies when supervising their students' work-based projects. The business development manager has developed a 'prospects' form which the visiting teacher completes, highlighting potential training opportunities. The college emphasises the importance of devolving the responsibility for generating new business to all teachers, rather than allowing teachers to view this as someone else's responsibility.

7. Call-centre provision

The business studies department of a large tertiary college in the Northern Region identified the fast-growing area of call-centre work as an opportunity to provide training programmes. Accreditation was developed through a regional awarding body and key skills required for call-centre employees were agreed with the major employers. Good keyboard skills, for example, were identified as a prerequisite for this type of work. The college applied for 'Skills Challenge' funding to set up a call-centre training unit and was successful in gaining over £400,000, part of which was matched by the college and the local TEC. The unit was established in an industrial park where a number of major call-centre employers were operating and equipment of industry standard was purchased after advice from key employers. Intensive five-week courses and longer programmes leading to NVQ accreditation are offered. Preparatory courses are run in a number of community centres and in a mobile facility. Over 500 students attended training at the unit in its first three months of operation. Progression to direct employment in call-centre work is currently running at over

70%. Through this initiative the college has responded rapidly to the reskilling of redundant employees from, for example, the textile industry.

8. Business qualifications as part of a broad accreditation framework

A large tertiary college in the Northern Region offers a very broad accreditation framework, allowing a wide range of qualifications to be offered to employers. The college's call-centre helps to establish links with employers by identifying some of their training needs. Business teachers are able to respond flexibly to employer requests, typically teaching courses on company premises at a time to suit employees. Courses are developed to meet employer needs or delivered within established structures. The college was engaged by a county council to manage a project, helping women into work, by setting up new small businesses in the areas of tourism, arts and crafts. A target of 40 clients was agreed. Each trainee receives a customised programme to suit their needs. Trainers are provided by the business section. Workshops for 10 to 12 people are held in various locations on a variety of management issues. Clients spend the majority of the time with teachers, however, on a one-to-one basis, receiving business advice. The college encourages clients to form networks and to support one another at craft fairs and other holiday/tourist events and venues. The college has also worked with a local company to develop an NVQ management development programme for a small group of middle managers. Essential components of the programme were problem-solving projects, aimed at improving the company's performance. Institute of Management programmes were developed with the company's own personnel and training staff to ensure they emphasised issues specific to the company. Senior company staff also led workshop sessions at the college on corporate development matters. Seven employees progressed to the college's bachelor of arts (BA Hons) business, management and organisation degree course. A prestigious award ceremony was jointly organised by the college and the company to recognise students' success. Fundamental to these programmes has been the college's flexibility in arranging its provision to take account of the company's peak workloads and shift system. There are student workshops both in college and on site, and a teacher on site weekly to assist with enquiries and action-planning.

9. Higher level provision

A tertiary college in the Northern Region is one of a few to have gained accreditation to offer Institute of Personnel and Development NVQ programmes at levels 3 and 4. The college draws students from a wide geographical area and typically offers a series of college workshops to teach the theory elements of NVQs. There are group planning sessions for students, followed by individual meetings which take place in or out of college depending on individuals' work demands. Students progress at their own pace and detailed records are kept of their achievements.

10. Developing income by meeting the needs of business

The business training group of a large tertiary college in the North West region plays a significant role in meeting the training needs of business. Its contribution to the college's income targets is planned to increase further from its current annual target of almost £1.5 million. Much of the income is accounted for by contracts arranged through the college company which administers TEC contracts and outward franchising. As franchising is planned to contract, the business training group is now charged with producing alternative sources of income. The commercial training work is developed largely by a team comprising

six business project development managers and three staff from college departments. Three years ago the annual income from commercial training accounted for around £220,000. In the current year, the target of £450,000 has already been exceeded.

11. Working with industry

A large tertiary college in the North West region has recently established a learning centre on the site of a major manufacturer and distributor of motor car spare parts. The firm has agreed to support the centre, which is easily accessible to their employees, and is also open to members of the local community. The local university provides diploma in management studies modules for company staff. The centre provides IT and language training. The emphasis is on flexibility of provision. Individuals take study units which meet their needs, rather than follow programmes involving regular periods of attendance throughout the year. The college works closely with company staff and is actively reviewing how the centre can be developed and marketed further.

12. Developing successful business courses

A tertiary college in the Northern Region has identified the following factors as key to its success in developing business courses:

- effective links have been established between the college training group and curriculum departments. The training group markets courses, but relies on the curriculum areas to deliver high-quality work to obtain repeat business. There are regular meetings between curriculum managers and members of the training group to identify suitable teachers who can respond to the requirements of businesses. The needs and constraints applying to each customer are understood and addressed
- the college training group has been successful in identifying niche markets
- the training group has the advantage of being able to call on a large pool of teachers across the college, whose expertise is known to them and to their managers. In some cases they have been developed through teacher training provision at the college
- the training group staff consists of those with recent knowledge of industry and its practices and those with an educational background
- effective partnerships with local universities and companies have been established
- internal arrangements for budgeting provide an incentive for departments to participate in income generation. They keep 70% of the income which is generated by their efforts and any income over target
- the strategy for marketing business training has been refined in recent years. New and commercially experienced staff have been recruited. Marketing has been improved, through seminars conducted with targeted groups and publicity which focuses on the benefits of training rather than the content of programmes

- in providing for the training needs of a business, the training group takes a holistic approach, offering the company a solution to its training needs as a whole and for all age groups
- training group staff are encouraged to be entrepreneurial. The culture of the college encourages initiative and seeks to eliminate any bureaucratic hurdles.

13. Marketing and management courses for industry

A large general further education college in Sussex has run a number of specific ‘in-company’ courses, largely for the advanced certificate of the Chartered Institute of Marketing. Most recently, a course was run for a major national retailer of body care and cosmetics products, which has its headquarters nearby. Similar programmes in supervisory management have also been run. For Institute of Personnel and Development courses, there are very close working relations with local employers. Projects are particularly focused on areas that will be of real benefit to students’ employers, thus engaging the active interest of senior managers within the companies concerned. The business area has very close links with the local branch of the Institute of Management. The course leader is on the local committee and many meetings are held at the college. This helps to break down barriers between the college and employers.

14. Developing new business courses

A further education college in the South West region places a strong focus on business development. As day-release study for apprentices declined, it found that traditional links with employers were weakening and becoming more distant. Marketing business development, therefore, became a priority of the college and all key organisations in the locality were targeted. In 1993, the college appointed a business development manager, to work within the newly formed marketing department. A team of key account managers and marketing assistants, many recruited directly from industry, built up a comprehensive picture of what local employers wanted. Details of the training requirements of local companies, based on survey results and other market intelligence are now shared across the college. The college significantly improved its working relationships with employers through full-cost training courses, franchising and expansion of core further education business. It maintains a comprehensive database of over 16,000 companies and all enquiries are logged centrally. The database facilitates market research and promotion, although word of mouth continues to be an excellent source of new business. The college responds quickly to employers’ needs. Its pool of trained staff are committed to flexible working. The college particularly seeks to meet the needs of small companies who are often reluctant to invest in training.

Quality control is given a high priority. A quarterly report on the activities mounted and the feedback from employers is presented to management. Quality benchmarks have been established to help areas of the college identify strengths and weaknesses in their employer-linked provision. Divisions of the college are given revenue targets for full-cost activity. The business development team designs training programmes and offers these in ways and at locations which suit the customer, including distance learning and the Internet. Some employers are keen to have training accredited through national vocational and professional qualifications. The achievement of students is circulated to employers twice a year. Many small companies now view the college as their first choice provider of training. Large and multi-national companies in the region for which the college has undertaken a significant

amount of training include those involved in telecommunications, retailing, the electricity supply industry, the financial services sector, and the motor industry.

15. Developing links with employers

A large general further education college in the South West region has developed a number of successful initiatives to develop its links with employers. These include:

- a regular business newsletter to employers
- working breakfasts and lunches for employers. Employers' symposia are held twice or three times a year, always hosted on employers' premises. The college arranges each event. There are visiting speakers and working groups to enable employers to exchange views, update on current training issues and give feedback to the college. A focus topic is arranged for each meeting. For example, an event with the theme of 'on-line learning' included a presentation by the college's open learning manager and a demonstration of multimedia learning resources by a local company
- detailed analysis of the client profile for business, management and professional courses. This gives the college a picture of which companies are sponsoring employees for payment of fees, which qualifications attract particular industries and which modes of study are favoured by individual employers or sectors
- an 'after-care' programme for companies which have completed a period of training
- a college-employer liaison group, to develop strategies for liaison, including the involvement of all parts of the college in business activities
- establishing a clear identity for the business school of the college, with an imaginative directory of programmes. The directory emphasises the benefits of business and management training for both companies and individuals. It is professionally produced and has details of modes of study, course content, assessment, resources and progression routes. Included in the directory is a useful programme guide which diagrammatically indicates the approximate NVQ equivalent level of each course and offers a freephone number for further information
- on-line opportunities for study through a direct Internet link that also enables employers to access the college virtual campus for open learning
- proactive membership of local chambers of commerce, education and business partnerships and other employer and training forums
- development activity with other colleges and private training providers to pool expertise and broaden the range of courses offered. For example, a consortium of colleges in the south west is bidding to provide courses for University for Industry (Ufi) and is developing on-line training with private training providers
- a strategy to base college teachers at company premises for major training initiatives

- high-street training centres which offer a 09.00 to 21.00 hours study facility. The college has included business information technology and software applications training in these centres, to meet the demands of employees and the non-waged. In 1998-99, the college had 7,000 students attending high-street centres. Over 50% of these students, when surveyed, said they had never considered attending the main college campus.

16. Working with local TECs

The economic and marketing unit of a large college in the West Midlands liaises with the local TEC and forms links with employers, to identify ways in which the college can respond to training needs. A member of staff within the economic and marketing unit has a responsibility for writing bids to attract funding. In one project, the college analyses the job roles and associated training needs related to theme/leisure parks. It is expected that this will result in a new set of qualifications which will fulfil a need in the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States of America. In the early stages of the project, the college is helping a major local leisure park work towards Investor In People status. With the assistance of the economic and marketing unit a learning centre has been established in the local premises of an international manufacturer of commercial goods vehicles, making training accessible to all shift workers. The college believes that employees who would have been unlikely to undertake college courses have gained confidence by taking IT courses within the learning centre. A number of employees have taken Institute of Management certificate and diploma courses. The company has made a commitment that all staff, for whom it is appropriate, will undertake customer service training. This includes making it a condition of dealer franchise arrangements that at least one member of their staff has completed the training. The college provides training for three dealerships and expects this work to grow as a result of the developing on-line training materials for the more distant dealerships.

Collaborative working

17. Developing rural provision

A tertiary college in the East Midlands serves a largely rural area with a low population density. Of its students, 75% are over the age of 25. Just over 50% of provision is delivered off site on employers' premises and at locations in the surrounding villages. There are collaborative partnerships with local employers, private trainers and the TEC. An innovative 'tele-working' course was developed some five years ago, enabling wordprocessing courses to be started in some villages. The college started with a few laptop computers and operated the course five days a week in different village centres. In 1995, the college had 25 students; enrolments are now around 100. The college is a member of the tele-cottaging association. The original need for training in wordprocessing was identified through community links. The college has a central information and recruitment service, and a business development manager. Courses are marketed through village correspondents in schools and pre-school play groups. The college talks to local school secretaries to identify transport routes and estimate potential demand. Courses start in January. The college finds this to be particularly popular with women who wish to return to study. The range of work has expanded from wordprocessing and now includes integrated IT courses, business administration and personal and business development. All students now come to the main college for training days; for example, for three days for Internet and practical business training. The college is seeking to extend its on-line facilities, including video-conferencing. The college uses 35 notebook

computers, largely transported by teachers. Some village or outlying centres have their own locally funded computers. One centre, a former chapel, which has been renovated by the parish council provides a pleasant and homely environment, attractive to adult students.

The college identifies the following factors as key to its success:

- the recruitment of students who really want to use IT
- an emphasis on the experience of learning rather than the possible qualification. Qualifications are useful, but some students may already have other qualifications, such as degrees, and may not want more
- the qualities of its teachers. They must be able to work with individuals, must be confident with working at a distance, be self-sufficient and reliant and be IT literate
- a thorough induction to the college
- effective management of the programme: ensuring that teachers work as a team getting out and about, holding virtual meetings to keep in touch, and having formal meetings each term
- good working relationships with the college site-team over practical matters, such as transport and furniture.

18. GNVQ and Young Enterprise

A college in the Greater London region values the involvement of its second-year GNVQ advanced students in Young Enterprise. Students take the Young Enterprise examination, in addition to running the Young Enterprise business. The college believes that this adds realism to the experience of business students and helps them link the different elements of the course. It also develops their key skills and helps them face real-life situations and time constraints. Whilst all students have work experience they rarely see the whole business experience, whereas with Young Enterprise they do. Students present the outcomes of their work at a large gathering hosted by a major international airline. Students and the college have found that universities recognise the value of the Young Enterprise scheme.

19. Mentoring for management students

A further education college in the Northern Region has a valuable industrial mentoring scheme for its certificate in personnel management and Institute of Management students. There is an increasing interest in the courses from those seeking employment or wishing to advance into management. Previously, demand for these courses came almost exclusively from those in employment, and normally from those in management or supervisory grades. In order to support students without relevant work roles and to enhance the experience of others the college operates a mentoring system to help develop their awareness and knowledge of current business practices. They meet regularly with their mentors. They keep records of the meetings and the matters discussed. Students are positive about the value of the mentorship. Students and mentors summarise the benefits of the arrangement as:

- access for students to support and guidance from the mentor, to complement the work of course tutors. Some students believe that the additional support was pivotal to their remaining on the course in the face of domestic pressures or pressures arising from work. Mentors may be a significant factor in maintaining high retention rates
- opportunities for students to relate theoretical studies to practical applications in work situations
- students who work in the same organisation as their mentors are exposed to a different perspective on their employers and the ways in which they work. They are encouraged to think about this in relation to the theoretical aspects of their course
- mentors, some of whom have completed the same or similar professional studies as the students, welcome the stimulus and challenge afforded by students' questions and the stimulus to rethink their current practices
- students not in relevant employment are provided with opportunities to explore the practical applications of theory
- some students have obtained work either through the mentor's organisation or as a result of the mentor link
- students whose mentors are in different organisations from their own take advantage of the opportunity to carry out comparative studies, for example, of personnel practices.

20. Using education and business partnerships

At a large general further education college in the South West region, membership of the local education business partnership has helped to promote an industrial mentoring scheme. Special schools and secondary schools are also involved in the partnership which is viewed as a positive means of supporting students' transition from school to further education, higher education and employment. Small companies are given free training by the college and by the larger organisations in the partnership, in return for their mentoring services. For example, the 800 members of the local chamber of commerce are offered a portfolio of training opportunities provided by national and international companies involved in the finance, energy and electronics sectors. The local TEC supports the training costs of the scheme.

21. Using business linking

The business department in a sixth form college in the South East region has very good links with local businesses. For example:

- a local banker comes to the college to advise GNVQ advanced business students on business planning
 - business managers judge presentations given by GCE A level and GNVQ students
-

- the college organises a residential visit to Swansea. Students visit declining industries, companies that have relocated from large crowded areas and new businesses, usually subsidiaries of overseas organisations
- during this visit, students visit and speak with Swansea University lecturers and students about business courses
- assignments and projects are built around the visits to companies
- many companies provide learning materials and reports which teachers have converted into useful learning resources
- the company that designs the college's marketing documents routinely uses business studies students as its focus group to see whether its designs and intentions are suitable.

22. Developing call-centre courses

A partnership between a further education college in the South West region and a private marketing and training organisation is developing a call-centre training facility. Students, including employees and the unemployed, follow an intensive training programme, usually involving four days at the training centre and one day on employers' premises. The training is often centred on real call-centre contracts, which provide realistic training for students. In addition to the income received from the training contracts, the college places trained staff in employment for an agreed fee.

23. Colleges working together

Two further education colleges with a strong commitment to business development, one in the north and one in the south, are pooling expertise to broaden their range of courses for local industries. One college is delivering a substantial amount of training for the electricity supply industry; the other for the water supply industry. The colleges have explored outreach delivery, learning methods and the development of new learning materials. They offer a joint portfolio of training to companies in South Africa and are also in the process of forming a partnership with the largest training and further education college in Australia.

24. An effective careers education partnership

All of the colleges in a major Midlands city, most of the secondary schools and the careers services, have joined together to establish a careers education business partnership. The partnership provides curriculum and staff development opportunities for business studies teachers. Meetings are held in local companies and the host provides a speaker to give a presentation on some aspect of business. The involvement of local companies also extends to the provision of one-day work-shadowing opportunities for teachers. School teachers report that they derive a great deal of benefit from the networking opportunities created by the partnership. Unlike college staff, who often work alongside several business studies colleagues, school teachers often work in isolation or in small groups.

25. School links to raise participation rates

A large Humberside further education college has a strong tradition of effective links with local schools. In this area, GCSE achievements are amongst the lowest in the country and only 50% of school pupils continue in full-time education. In the business programme area, the college works with local schools to run a GNVQ foundation course, taught at the college, and a six-week 'taster' programme in business, offered at times to suit participating schools. The GNVQ foundation programme is taught on one day a week over two years, to year 10 and 11 pupils expressing an interest in pursuing a vocational option. Teachers from participating schools occasionally engage in team teaching at the college. Some are also working towards an assessor award. Pupils welcome the more adult college environment. Withdrawals from the GNVQ course have been negligible and pass rates are high, at over 80%. Over two-thirds of the last GNVQ cohort returned to study full-time at the college. Business programmes are perceived by college teachers to provide an attractive option for school pupils. A range of practical options are offered, including business case studies and other work simulations. Pupils make good use of the extensive workshop facilities for key skills, particularly IT, at the college. They are also given opportunities to take their learning out of the classroom, using commercial institutions as a resource. The college produces a prospectus for local schools promoting a variety of possible link schemes. It is currently developing a curriculum centre for schools where most link programmes will be delivered and which will be available as a resource for school pupils outside the normal school day.

26. Improving links with employers

A relatively small sixth form college situated in North London has developed a number of opportunities for its business students to link with employers. In 1997, a mentoring scheme for GNVQ foundation students was developed in co-operation with the local council, to give students a work-related context to their studies and links with the 'real world'. The council's economic development officer matched students with small-business people willing to act as mentors. Managers from local companies, including a major insurance company, also visit the college to assist with interviews and presentations within the GNVQ programme. Students' part-time work experience enables them to gather information for assignment and coursework. For example, on the GNVQ foundation course a student working at a local retailers used the firm's staff handbook as a source of evidence for an assignment on the production of handbooks.

Flexible modes of delivery

27. Open learning and distance learning

A general further education college in Norfolk serves a large geographical area. The college's strategic plan emphasises the need to make the curriculum more flexible and more accessible to students, and to reduce reliance on FEFC funding. The business studies area is central to this strategy, which moves the college from full-time, in-college activity, towards part-time, flexibly organised provision in community centres. Shift working, seasonal employment, transport problems and the distances which some students have to travel have been critical factors contributing to the growth of open and distance learning at the college. Several business studies courses are available at learning centres in various towns or can be taken by

open learning. The Association of Accounting Technicians course has about 20 students enrolled through the open learning route. Students enrol for modules and can build these up at their own pace. Each student is allocated a tutor. Tutorial support is provided mainly by telephone, but meetings are also arranged. Course fees for open learning and conventional delivery are the same. Open learning students can start their programme at any time of the year though the timing of assessments remains fixed. The college has developed a BA degree in international business administration which has both taught and open learning routes. It has proved attractive to shift-workers and seasonally employed workers because they can move between the two modes of study as it suits them.

28. Addressing declining enrolments

The part-time higher national certificate business studies programmes at a college in the Northern Region have until recently attracted good numbers of students. In line with sector trends, however, enrolments have declined over the last five years, especially on evening courses. To make the evening programme viable, the course team has reduced the weekly teaching hours from six to three, and made use of commercially available open learning materials to supplement classroom work. Teachers used the college intranet to provide instruction for students on how to use the open learning materials, both at home and at college. For the academic year 1999-2000, the timetable was changed so that lessons now take place between 13.00 and 19.00 hours and between 15.00 and 21.00 hours. This allows day-release and evening students to attend college jointly for the majority of their time. Teachers have begun to develop learning materials on the intranet, to promote teamwork and to widen access for potential students.

29. Meeting the needs of foundation level students

At a general further education college in the Northern Region, the course team has developed a paperless portfolio for students on NVQ level 1 administration courses. The level of students' ability was such that the requirement for students to write statements, even though some were capable of doing so, was a demotivating factor. Teachers aimed to take the onus of writing statements away from students and to rely on the presentation of a portfolio and witness statements as evidence for assessment. The project centred around the preparation for, and execution of, a presentation evening for staff, and the family and friends of students. The work produced by students for this event formed the evidence for their portfolios. It was supplemented by evidence of competence at the student's work placement, observed and written up by the assessor. Interviews with students were recorded on video tape. Students could also draw on evidence arising from the additional IT, wordprocessing and text processing they undertook.

30. Moving to more flexible forms of teaching and learning

Following changes in curriculum responsibilities, the business area of a large college in West Sussex has reviewed its course structures, teaching methods and the order in which syllabuses are delivered. This has led to the development of a curriculum area information and learning technology centre, the 'business learning centre', equipped with networked PCs and Internet facilities. Staff have evaluated a range of potentially useful software for management and professional studies. They have also consulted with the Institute of Management, which has provided a series of CD-ROMs on flexible forms of delivery. The reordering of syllabuses has led the college to operate a pilot study on Association of Accounting Technicians courses,

involving the early assessment of some modules, to relieve pressures on students later in their course. The pilot has been particularly successful for the technician stage. The reaction of students, including students repeating the course who have experienced both models of assessment, has been positive. Students' achievements have improved considerably since the introduction of the greater variety of study routes, and of a 'pick and mix' formula. The setting up of tutorials has helped to improve retention rates. Foundation students are encouraged to take an introductory short bookkeeping course if they have no accounting background. For the Chartered Institute of Marketing qualifications, the college increasingly uses a combination of examined and continuously assessed modules, with some delivered by distance learning.

31. Broadening the range of learning methods

A further education college in the South West region offers a range of study methods for students on many part-time courses. These include: attending classes on college premises, working to a published timetable; studying through paper-based distance learning programmes; studying at work, assisted by visiting college teachers; and studying on-line in ones own home or places of work, through the virtual college. Increasingly, individual students combine different modes of study to meet their needs. On-line study includes access to a wide range of learning materials and gives students a direct link to the Internet. Students register on-line and are allocated a tutor who will monitor their progress. Enrolment and payment of fees can all be done through the Internet. Whilst completing a study module, students can make Internet requests for tutor support, in addition to their arranged monthly face-to-face meetings. The tutor can access the study pattern of each student and will make contact if progress is slower than planned. Most interest in on-line provision has been shown by companies who need flexible training opportunities for their staff, and individuals who wish to study from home, at times to suit them. The course catalogue includes a range of management skills, software and computer applications, accounting, computer-aided design, basic communication skills and safety practices. The college expects that some full-time students will choose to add to their primary learning goal by obtaining additional on-line qualifications, for example in key skills. Students obtain quick feedback on their progress and receive a printout of their grade profile when each course is complete. To support this open learning development, the college has produced a range of literature for companies and individuals, including a help sheet for those who are unfamiliar with the Internet. In order to encourage open learning across the college, teachers are encouraged to post their lesson notes and course materials on the college's intranet. The college has a target that 20% of all course materials used in the college should be on-line.

32. Meeting community needs

A further education college in West Yorkshire, catering for a diverse multi-ethnic community, offers a wide range of office technology and computing programmes. These extend from introductory level to level 3 and span a 12-hour day. Students may enrol at one of four enrolment dates during the year or at any other time. Programmes are organised on the basis of short modules. Students are able to 'pick and mix' from these, selecting the hours, the start date and the class times to suit their needs. They can study for as little as two hours a week or can undertake a full-time programme. Because students can customise their studies a wider range of students is encouraged to enrol. Numbers have doubled over the last four years, allowing many more options to be offered. Because the system is well established in the local area little marketing is required and there is an extensive waiting list at the start of each

session. Senior citizens are offered courses at special rates, at times of the day when workshops are free.

33. Responding to new training initiatives

The business administration team in a West Yorkshire college have developed a highly responsive approach to new training initiatives. By adopting modular approaches to study, supported by workbooks and other study guides, a wide range of programmes has been delivered to a variety of clients. Currently, the team contributes to provision in the community, New Deal, job seekers allowance and modern apprenticeship schemes as well as programmes to encourage women returners. It also has a portfolio of full-time and part-time courses. Hours and modes of study have been adapted to suit the needs of different groups, and teachers are deployed to support these initiatives.

34. Linking with local companies

A college in the South West region has introduced a range of measures to develop its links with local companies. These include:

- a regular business newsletter to employers
- working breakfasts and lunches at employers' premises
- detailed analysis of the client profile for business, management and professional courses, so that publicity can be targeted effectively
- contact with company employees who have completed a period of training
- on-line opportunities for study through a direct Internet link, enabling employers to access the college's virtual campus for open learning
- working with other colleges and private training providers to pool expertise and broaden the range of courses offered
- developing high street and in-company training centres that make use of business software.

Widening participation

35. Taking provision out of the college

Research conducted for a general further education college in Suffolk showed that in 1996-97 the level of participation in further education, within its local authority wards, varied from 2% to 12%, with an average of 4.3%. Major constraints on participation were identified including the distance to travel to the college and an underdeveloped public transport system. Since 1997, the college has developed centres in market towns, sometimes in collaboration with district councils. These centres now provide day and evening provision. IT and business studies subjects have proved popular. The head of faculty calculates that 13% of the growth in part-time enrolments is due to the development of this type of provision. The college has gained European Social Fund money to fund 'Learning by Laptop'. It now provides after-

school childcare so that parents can learn using the laptops which the tutor brings to the centre. The provision of basic IT skills has led to a demand for more advanced courses, such as OCR computer literacy and information technology.

36. A wide range of provision

A coastal college in the North West region has a history of providing a wide range of provision, from basic skills through to higher education, to meet the needs of local communities. In recent years, the college has sought to widen access to groups under-represented in further education. Two projects which the business area has contributed to are:

- the Winter Training Initiative, aimed at seasonal workers. The seaside resort has significant numbers employed in the leisure industry, from spring to late autumn. Many have few formal qualifications, low levels of skills and a history of poor experiences with formal education. The project was designed to offer specially-designed training programmes in the out-of-season months, at convenient town centres or community sites. Programmes included training in basic skills, IT training, job search and training for relevant vocational qualifications. In addition to FEFC funding, the college has obtained funding from the single regeneration budget and from the private sector. Links with employers have been used to encourage participants to obtain qualifications, as an incentive to obtaining employment at the start of the next season
- the Integra project aimed at residents of a disadvantaged area of town, characterised by high unemployment. The aim of the project was to provide key skills development and to improve job prospects. Like those targeted on the winter training initiative, the target group often had negative experiences of formal education and few qualifications. The project offered individuals training in their communities, supported by mentors from local companies and community groups. In addition to key skills and job search skills, students were offered the opportunity to study for NVQs in business administration and childcare.

Key elements of both projects included:

- links with employers. In the case of the Winter Training Initiative, these were particularly important in reinforcing the message to potential students that qualifications are important as a means of rejoining the labour market
 - the links with staff in other community agencies, who had contact with potential students, were crucial in helping to persuade them to participate
 - community locations. Students were considered to be most unlikely to attend a main college campus, with its associations with their previous lack of success
 - careful selection of appropriate teachers. Staff development was provided for teachers to help them deal with the particular challenges of these client groups
 - the heavy administrative burden of tracking students and accounting for the expenditure to the various funding agencies
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- the importance of catering for students' needs by providing 'bite-sized' qualifications, which gave students early credit for their achievement. It was recognised that most students would be more likely to commit themselves to short programmes, with follow-on opportunities for further study
- the use made of community links, both to recruit students and, through their mentors, to chase up absences and deal with student difficulties.