

Kendal College
Reinspection of Quality Assurance: October 2000
Report from the Inspectorate
The Further Education Funding Council

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

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

REINSPECTION

The FEFC has agreed that colleges with provision judged by the inspectorate to be less than satisfactory or poor (grade 4 or 5) should be reinspected. In these circumstances, a college may have its funding agreement with the FEFC qualified to prevent it increasing the number of new students in an unsatisfactory curriculum area until the FEFC is satisfied that weaknesses have been addressed.

Satisfactory provision may also be reinspected if actions have been taken to improve quality and the college's existing inspection grade is the only factor which prevents it from meeting the criteria for FEFC accreditation.

Reinspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Reinspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports and confirm that actions taken as a result of previous inspection have improved the quality of provision. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work they inspect. The opinion of the FEFC's audit service contributes to inspectorate judgements about governance and management.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

Assessments use grades on a five-point scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses. The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

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Kendal College North West Region

Reinspection of quality assurance: October 2000

Background

The college was inspected in October 1999 and the findings published in inspection report 05/00. Quality assurance was awarded a grade 4.

The key strengths were the development of a comprehensive quality assurance framework and a good range of staff development linked to strategic aims. The key weaknesses were: little progress in addressing issues from the previous inspection; tenuous links between quality assurance processes; ineffective analysis and use of data; insufficiently thorough performance review; inadequate monitoring of action plans; and insufficiently rigorous system of lesson observations.

Reinspection took place in October 2000. Inspectors examined a range of documents, scrutinised students' retention and achievement data, had meetings with staff at all levels and spoke with students from a range of courses.

Assessment

There has been slow progress in addressing issues from the last inspection. Responsibilities for leading developments in quality assurance have been allocated to the newly created post of head of personnel and quality. The college has made some progress in developing the links between quality assurance processes. A newly established quality steering group is responsible for monitoring, evaluating and driving quality improvements. It is redrafting the quality framework to identify standards and performance indicators. A schedule of management, operational and cross-college meetings has been introduced to ensure a coherent approach to quality. Monitoring of action plans has improved with active involvement of staff and senior curriculum managers. Other processes are at an early stage of development and there has been slow progress in improving their monitoring. Quality standards are underdeveloped in service areas. It is too early to assess the effectiveness or outcomes of the revised systems.

Review and evaluation at course level are poor which was a weakness at the last inspection. Notes and minutes of team and review meetings are often anecdotal and there is little systematic monitoring of action. Teams do not use evidence which informs the programme area self-assessment. Course review documentation used previously has been superseded by a one-page proforma, which analyses performance under standard headings. Course teams use the performance review effectively. Accurate data from the management information system help them to analyse trends in achievement and retention. Benchmarking data is used to compare course performance with national trends.

The updated self-assessment report identified weaknesses in the lesson observation scheme. The process is not sufficiently robust. In action plans to address weaknesses found through lesson observation, actions are not always identified or followed through. Proformas and guidelines for lesson observation have been reviewed and amended. Moderation arrangements are at an early stage of development. The proportion of lessons graded as outstanding and good by the college is high compared with national averages. A recent internal inspection was more rigorous. The college has links with a Beacon college to

develop good practice. Training for teachers has taken place. However, sharing of good practice is not fully developed in all curriculum areas. Teaching observations inform both the self-assessment process and staff appraisal. Evaluation of the effectiveness of staff development has improved. The college was recently re-accredited as an Investor in People.

Systems for assuring the quality of franchised and business development programmes are still underdeveloped. The programmes are a significant proportion of the college's activities, but they are not systematically reviewed and evaluated, a weakness identified in the inspection. A business development officer has been appointed, but had not started to co-ordinate new procedures at the time of reinspection.

Revised grade: quality assurance 4.