

Working with Employers

**NATIONAL
REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE**

1998-99

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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

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

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Summary

This report reviews the diversity and growth of links which further education colleges have with employers. Its evidence is drawn from college inspections and visits to colleges by Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) inspectors. In the context of recent changes within both the further education sector and the employment market, many colleges have become more responsive to the needs of employers.

For many employers, the provision of work experience is their major involvement with colleges. Teachers, however, do not always make sufficient use of the knowledge gained by students on work experience. Some colleges find it difficult to find suitable work placements. Project work involving employers is useful when opportunities for work experience are restricted. Many students regularly visit employers as part of their study programmes, and talks by employers help students to understand the world of work. Some colleges also involve employers in devising or assessing assignments. Assessment of employees in the workplace is increasing, and is supported by the colleges.

Many colleges provide advice to employers on education and training, some through membership of local organisations. Employers are rarely involved with individual colleges in the planning and content of the curriculum. Few colleges consider advisory groups to be useful. Most colleges deliver training to meet the needs of individual employers, but many have difficulty in responding quickly to employers' demands. Employers are not always clear of their training needs, and some claim the cost of training to be prohibitive. There is little demand from employers for the accreditation of prior learning.

Employers freely give their time to talk to students about employment opportunities. College staff often visit employers to give advice on training and changes in qualifications. Many colleges hold careers fairs, supported by employers and the careers service, to raise awareness among school pupils and adults of opportunities in education and employment. Employers generously support students' awards ceremonies.

Through close contacts with industry, some colleges have developed specialist facilities which they could not otherwise afford. Most colleges receive donations of materials and equipment or receive large discounts on purchases. Through visits to employers, students are often able to see or use equipment not available in their college. Many colleges have set up training facilities for use by employers.

Only a small proportion of teachers undertake secondment to industry or commerce, or visit employers to update their industrial experiences. Part-time teachers with current industrial experience help to ensure that students' work meets current industrial practices. Few colleges have an employers' charter, and under half of the colleges in the survey regularly use questionnaires to obtain employers' views on the quality of their

provision. Few colleges involve employers in the annual review of courses or programmes, and very few directly involve employers in their quality assurance self-assessment process.

Most governing bodies include members who have a wide range of business expertise. Involvement by governors in the strategic planning process helps colleges to meet the needs of employers. There is little summary assessment of performance against commitments stated in employer charters or analysis of responses to employer surveys to help governors to judge the quality of provision for employers.

During the past three years, some colleges have substantially increased the amount of employer-specific training. The ability of some colleges to obtain funding from sources other than the FEFC has enabled them, through joint planning, to identify and better meet the training needs of small- to medium-size enterprises. Labour market information produced by training and enterprise councils (TECs) is often not sufficiently detailed for colleges to use. Many colleges have established business development units, however, there is sometimes a lack of co-ordination between these units and staff within individual curriculum areas.

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Introduction

1 Working with employers has always been a major characteristic of the further education sector. However, recent and far-reaching changes within the sector and within the employment market have set new challenges for colleges in terms of making an effective response to employers' needs. A survey carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) published in 1996 identified several key areas of change, notably:

- a decline in the traditional part-time day and block-release patterns of training for employers, together with the requirement for more 'customised' training
- the introduction of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs)
- colleges' increased planning activity, involving training and enterprise councils (TECs), employers and community groups
- the greater emphasis on regional or local planning.

Against this background, the IES survey recognised the need, in most colleges, for a more coherent approach to the management and development of the interaction between college and employer.

2 This report is concerned with the growing diversity of links between colleges in the further education sector and employers. It aims to investigate the effectiveness of these links and to report on aspects of good practice. In particular the report focuses on:

- the diverse nature of the links
- the partnerships between colleges and employers to promote education and training
- the ways in which colleges seek the views of employers
- the role of college-employer advisory and consultative groups
- the involvement of employers in the design, review and evaluation of the curriculum

- the contribution of employers to teaching and assessment.

3 The report is based on a survey, conducted in 1998-99, which included visits to a representative sample of 40 colleges across the nine Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) regions. Examples of good practice were also drawn from inspection evidence gathered between 1997 and 1999 as part of the FEFC's four-yearly college inspection cycle. The report follows the format of FEFC Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*.

Teaching and Learning

Work experience

4 For many employers, the provision of work experience for full-time students constitutes their major involvement with colleges. Most colleges have a work experience policy, with comprehensive procedures for establishing and monitoring work placements. Almost all colleges intend that full-time students on vocational courses undergo work placements. In the colleges surveyed, between 30% and 85% of full-time students spent time on work placement as part of their course. Work experience is often optional for students on general education and GNVQ intermediate courses. According to the FEFC's curriculum area survey, *Sciences*, only 30% of general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) science students had a work placement in 1996-97. Most work placements last between 10 and 30 days. GNVQ advanced students usually attend on a block-release basis; for students on NVQ courses it is often for one day a week. GCE A level and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) students usually complete a week of work placement during a holiday period. Some colleges arrange for employers to take college-based students on the days when their employees are attending college. In four of the colleges surveyed, students also have the opportunity to undertake work experience in Europe.

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A large general further education college arranges work experience with employers in both England and Europe. Its local hotels provide work experience for foreign students. In return its European partner colleges arrange for its students to take part in work experience in one of six countries. Local hoteliers are happy that prospective employees have worked in Europe, and so are willing to take students from other countries in return. Similar arrangements exist for motor vehicle students. Employers report that the initiative raises the standards of students' work and helps students to understand other cultures.

5 Work-shadowing is popular on GCE A level courses, especially for students who have a definite career intention or where it is otherwise difficult to arrange work experience. However, on some vocational courses, such as those which lead to NVQ management qualifications, part-time students may work-shadow, either within their own organisation or with another employer if that is more profitable.

In a sixth form college, work-shadowing is used mainly to improve a student's curriculum vitae and support applications to university. Likely participants include applicants for medical school working in hospitals, applicants for teaching working in schools, and those interested in law, pharmacy, accountancy and business careers working in appropriate organisations.

6 Just over half of the colleges surveyed have work placement co-ordinators; 15% regularly liaise with external organisations such as business-education partnerships. In 10% of the colleges surveyed, students arrange their own placements, though this can be difficult where the number of placements is limited. Most colleges check that placement providers comply with health and safety legislation. This is

especially important in engineering, construction and agriculture where, for example, placement providers need to be aware of the equipment students use. Course handbooks often provide clear guidance for providers, tutors and students. In one college this includes a suggested induction programme for students to be used by placement providers. Some placement providers insist that there is a police check on care students. There are generally clear procedures for monitoring the attendance and progress of students on placements. Teachers do not always make sufficient use of the knowledge gained by students during their placements, for example in class discussions or assignment work.

In one region, a GNVQ engineering manufacturing support network provides students on GNVQ engineering courses with a work placement linked to a particular assignment. The network includes five schools and three colleges, together with 27 industry members including both large and small employers. The local careers service, TEC and local education authority (LEA) also support the scheme. Each company, together with an education partner, has developed an assignment or case study to cover an element of the GNVQ. Students complete their assignment through a mix of in-company placement and college-based work.

7 Many inner-city colleges find it difficult to organise work experience. Often their full-time students are 19 years of age or over and have commitments outside college hours, while there may not be sufficient employers to provide work experience. Colleges in rural areas experience difficulty in finding placements with beauty therapy, motor vehicle and engineering employers because of their location. The cost of travel to placements can be expensive for students, and colleges may need to fund the additional costs. Colleges also face competition for placements from training providers and

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schools. Strategies to increase the number of placements available include, for example, free short training courses for employees of placement providers. Placement providers sometimes have unrealistic expectations of the abilities of information technology (IT) students. Some students have unrealistic expectations of work experience or work-shadowing, especially work-shadowing in media and medicine. Colleges rarely use data on placement providers as a source of labour market intelligence for strategic planning.

8 Students on many courses regularly visit employers as part of their studies. For example, one group of GNVQ advanced business students had visited a major food retailer and designed and filmed an advertising campaign for an imaginary product, and students studying aquatics at an agricultural college were undertaking regular visits to retail shops, wholesalers, public aquariums and trade shows. Visits to manufacturing plants are occasionally difficult to arrange because of health and safety requirements. Some full-time construction craft students do not get enough opportunity to visit building sites. Not all teachers brief their students sufficiently before they make their visits.

Each year, hospitality and catering students from a general further education college take part in a three-day trip to London to visit three or four catering establishments. The type of visit is decided by their career aims. For example, those interested in workplace catering may visit an industrial caterer, while those interested in cooking in restaurants may visit the kitchens of leading restaurants.

English students at a sixth form college visited a local nursery and tape-recorded the children's talk in order to analyse it in terms of linguistic theories of child language acquisition. Back at college they wrote short stories for children, then returned to the nursery to read them to the children. They received important feedback from both the children and the nursery nurses. The students were given clear guidelines on how to behave with children and the ethics of tape-recording children's talk. Their work contributed to their coursework.

Employer involvement in college-based learning

9 In some curriculum areas, employers are involved in devising or assessing assignments. In particular, on public service courses, employers often devise and take part in exercises and comment on students' work. Employers may also be involved in setting projects for students on management programmes and in assessing group assignments. Art and design students commonly undertake assignments as a result of approaches to the college by employers, especially those in the media and fashion industries. Colleges also regularly involve employers in devising assignments in floristry, agriculture and hairdressing. Often assignments are related to the work experience programme. For example, employers in travel and tourism may record tasks successfully undertaken by students during their work placements.

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A major employer working with a sixth form college devised an assignment for GNVQ IT students which involved them in designing an in-house newsletter. The students presented their results to the company's managers, who then assessed their work. In the same college, officers from the nearby regional park devised and assessed an assignment for GNVQ leisure and tourism students. In both these instances, the marks awarded contributed to the students' final grades.

10 In approximately one-third of the colleges surveyed, students take part in mini-enterprise or similar schemes, generally as part of a business studies programme. In an agricultural college, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on a horticultural course run a business selling potted plants. Agricultural colleges often use farmers to explain the financial aspects of running a farm, and at some colleges financial institutions provide business advisers to help students. Many employers, however, are reluctant to become involved because of the time commitment.

A large general further education college works in partnership with the LEA's education business partnership and local schools to promote enterprise training. Students take part in the annual youth enterprise project sponsored by the local TEC. The project brings together partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors. Materials have been produced which equate to NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3 in 'owner management', allowing young people to progress into self-employment or alternatively start up in business. The project includes business support, mentoring and the opportunity to use sheltered workshop space to develop a business.

11 Case studies are extensively used in business, care and agriculture. For example, in one college, GNVQ business students visited a local shop and obtained figures from the proprietor showing the different costs and sources of income. Using these data they calculated realistic profit forecasts, while gaining an insight into the running of a small business. GNVQ health and social care students at a sixth form college undertook the role of a practice nurse in assessing an individual's lifestyle and of a laboratory technician in assessing patients for diabetes. In general, however, such role-play exercises rarely involved employers.

In a large tertiary college, part-time students on a management course are linked to a different company for one day a week over an 8 to 10 week period. They undertake a problem-solving consultancy and present their final report to a panel comprising the company's managers, the external verifier, students, managers from the student's sponsoring company and the course tutor. The companies make a financial contribution for the consultancy and, this year, the proceeds were sufficient to enable the students to visit Toronto to study the management of change with Canadian companies.

12 Project work involving employers is particularly useful when work experience opportunities are restricted. In art and design, students frequently work with real clients and carry out real tasks such as producing videos and designs for posters and clothing. Students on GNVQs in business sometimes collaborate with local authorities and employers to conduct market research. This involves them in negotiation, conducting research and reporting findings through formal presentations.

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Construction students in a general further education college built five bungalows for the elderly on land provided by the local authority. The building materials were paid for by the local authority, the local TEC, the Construction Industry Training Board and the local construction training association. The project provided excellent opportunities for the training and assessment of a range of NVQ students. The college received a national training award for the project.

13 Some courses regularly include a programme of external speakers. For example, students on childhood studies courses benefit from talks by health visitors, hospital play specialists and police child protection officers. Visiting speakers broaden the experiences of art and design students, especially if they include subjects not covered by students at college, such as furniture and shoe design or the manufacture and design of jewellery. Many sixth form colleges include talks by employers as part of their programme of increasing students' understanding of the world of work.

In an agricultural college, a group of farmers address students on two separate occasions, in the autumn and the spring. Working with the course tutor, they explain dairy and sheep production, then discuss the requirements of the industry and the importance of good farm management.

14 Colleges find that it is easier to involve employers in college-based learning activities where qualifications such as GNVQs and national diplomas are well established. It is more problematic to involve smaller, craft-based businesses, as they are often already heavily involved with other training providers. There are fewer links with employers in humanities than in other areas.

15 Employees are increasingly being assessed in the workplace, particularly in programme areas such as business, care, hospitality, beauty therapy and some aspects of engineering. Just under half of the colleges surveyed offer assessor training for employers. They also support company-based NVQ centres by offering a verification service, delivering specialist underpinning knowledge, or arranging for individual candidates to attend college sessions as necessary. Ideally, college staff meet employers prior to the assessment and explain the requirements of work-based assessment. They check health and safety compliance, the resources and equipment used by trainees, and what trainees are expected to do.

16 Employers' involvement in assessment varies by curriculum area and type of organisation. Only large organisations may have the staff and systems in place to enable them to participate and many employers do not consider it cost-effective to have their own work-based assessors, even when they have a large number of trainees. Workplace assessment is not yet well established in some curriculum areas. For example, in construction, almost all assessment takes place in the college, and many colleges have invested heavily in providing appropriate assessment facilities.

An NHS Trust registered as an NVQ centre in 1994 in order to provide training in NVQ care at levels 2 and 3. In 1996, it entered into a collaborative agreement with its local general further education college and introduced NVQs in management. The college trained the trust's assessors and provided an internal verification service. It also delivered formal training to small groups of managers in aspects of finance, management theory and quality assurance, and arranged for individual hospital staff to attend other courses at the college. The hospital is extending its programme, with support from the college.

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17 Less than 50% of the colleges surveyed have formal policies for informing employers of students' progress, attendance and achievement. In a few instances, reports are only produced upon request. Where there are effective management information systems, however, it is possible for employers to receive weekly reports on students' absences. In one college, the construction section faxes to employers the names of absent day-release students on their day of absence. In half of the colleges surveyed, progress reports are issued termly to employers. The better progress reports include details of the student's performance in practical skills, underpinning knowledge and key skills, together with an indication of the course content and options for progression.

Students' Achievements

18 In some programme areas, for example agriculture and hotel and catering, there are arrangements for students to gain a secondary qualification in addition to their primary qualification. These secondary qualifications are often highly valued by employers.

19 A minority of colleges involve employers in monitoring the standards of students' work. In almost all cases, this happens through the review of students' achievements by advisory committees. One college surveyed had employer review panels in engineering to consider the progress of part-time students. Many colleges have difficulty persuading employers to participate in reviewing students' achievements. Employers are likely to be more active where the college has been involved in the development of national standards for specific NVQs. In very few colleges, employers are encouraged to attend course team meetings. Usually it is the personnel or training managers of large employers who attend, and they provide useful comments on both the syllabus and grading issues.

20 Technology teachers frequently hold events, often with training providers, to explain the content of NVQ programmes or modern apprenticeship schemes. Employers can see work produced by students and comment on the standards reached and the appropriateness of the assessment. Unusually, in one college, construction employers meet with students and teachers to undertake a formal assessment of the work, after first receiving a full briefing on how to apply the national standards. Staff and students appreciate the comments from those who participate. In most programme areas, however, few employers take up invitations to observe assessment sessions.

A general further education college involves employers in joint verification meetings and assessor training. A training provider delivering a significant volume of NVQ training in care to residential homes over a large rural area was invited, with employers, to attend the college's internal verifier committee standardisation event. The employers discussed the differences in use of assessment evidence between the training provider and the college. The joint sharing of ideas benefited both the college and the training provider.

21 Teachers of art and design frequently arrange for their students to undertake commissions for local organisations. This provides employers with the opportunity to comment on the standards students are achieving. End-of-year fashion shows similarly expose students' work to external review. Part-time teachers with current industrial experience, often help to ensure that students' work meets the requirements of the industry. Where assessment is undertaken in the workplace, employers have a good opportunity to provide feedback on whether students are meeting the appropriate standards.

22 Over 60% of the colleges surveyed have detailed procedures for the accreditation of prior

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learning. The procedures are mainly used in the service industries, such as business administration, care and food processing. Some professional institutes, for example the Association of Accounting Technicians, are encouraging the use of accreditation. It is also becoming more popular in the engineering and construction industries. However, less than 15% of colleges surveyed reported demand for the accreditation of prior learning from either employers or individuals. The majority of those who enquire are put off either by the time required to produce evidence, or the cost, or the need to contact an ex-employer. In the case of NVQ students, it is often quicker and easier for colleges to assess candidates in the workplace than to validate evidence of prior learning. Few colleges monitor the extent to which the accreditation of prior learning is used.

A sixth form college publicised opportunities for the accreditation of prior learning through its links with the local chamber of commerce. This resulted in a group of 10 candidates attending evening sessions at the college with an assessor. All 10 gained their NVQ in business administration.

23 Almost all the colleges surveyed hold student awards ceremonies at which there is often a keynote speaker from industry. Colleges often receive substantial financial support for these events from the TEC and employers. This may include sponsorship of the event, from the printing of the prizegiving brochure to hire of the venue and the provision of refreshments. Suppliers, employers, trade organisations and institutes frequently donate awards and prizes. Strong support comes from areas such as engineering, construction, hotel and catering, agriculture and business. Support from areas related to IT, humanities and care is less strong, although a few colleges' close links with local theatres have led to prizes for humanities students.

Leisure and tourism is the major employment sector for one rural-based general further education college. The college enjoys close links with many employers and receives a wide range of prizes for its annual awards ceremony from licensed victuallers, hotel groups and training groups. It also receives sponsorship from the local education-business partnership to help it to promote GNVQs.

24 In a few colleges, employers help fund competitions and events for students. For example, at one college, local companies sponsored a millennium calendar competition as part of the college's 'countdown to the millennium' initiative. In another college, employers regularly sponsor students who take part in catering competitions. Many colleges also receive sponsorship to cover the high costs of organising their annual art and design shows. In some craft areas, competitions, including the national and international craft skills competitions, are organised in conjunction with employers. There is particularly strong support from employers for construction, catering and hairdressing competitions.

In one general further education college, there are two annual exhibitions of students' work for art and design and photography. The art and design exhibition is held in a civic building, and an art equipment supplier sponsors the awards. A local company sponsors the photography show, which it hosts on its premises.

Curriculum Content, Organisation and Management

25 Colleges often lack effective mechanisms for involving employers in the planning and content of the curriculum. The majority of colleges included in the survey used employer

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advisory groups as a source of information and consultation. The advisory groups for engineering, construction and hotel and catering tend to be the better supported of these. Few colleges, however, consider advisory groups to be particularly successful; attendance is generally poor, turnover of membership is often high, and they have little impact on curriculum development. Meetings are not always structured carefully enough to ensure that there is an effective exchange of information and ideas between college staff and employers' representatives. Some colleges feel that advisory groups work best when they are brought together for a specific purpose, for example to establish a new course. Very few colleges have developed ways of measuring the effectiveness of these groups.

Advisory groups in one general further education college function reasonably well in areas such as hotel and catering and engineering, but have lapsed in most other areas. Because of the amount of work with two particular local companies, involved in 'timeshare' properties and electronic components supply, advisory groups were established within the companies instead of at the college.

26 A large number of colleges have abandoned the use of advisory groups in favour of more focused meetings; for example, employer breakfasts or special events such as open days where curriculum matters can be presented and discussed with a broad range of local employers. One college produces a regular newsletter which advertises new course developments to local employers.

A general further education college has found formal departmental advisory boards to be of little value. Instead, it prefers to collect employers' views as part of its normal business and marketing activity. The college has in place a partnership of 'Learning Organisations' and, as part of its 'Learning Town' initiative, it has established a human resources forum. Discussions at this forum led to the introduction of a course in operations management.

27 A significant number of colleges have introduced formal arrangements for providing advice to employers on training opportunities. This is often part of the work of a separate business development unit. In other cases, there are designated members of staff who make regular contacts with employers. Colleges view their representation on external committees within the local community as a particularly effective means of giving advice to, and receiving advice from, employers. For example, one principal chairs the local Enterprise Area Board and is also president of the local chamber of commerce. Some colleges use surveys as a means of determining the training needs of employers. For example, one college conducts a yearly industry survey which has enabled it to identify demand for training in areas such as first aid, personal presentations and communication skills and to add these areas to its standard NVQ programmes. Colleges frequently have useful informal links with employers, usually operating at departmental or section level.

A tertiary college has introduced an 'Open College' to deliver distance learning packages, principally to employers. Since its introduction in 1998, over 600 students have enrolled on health and safety programmes. The local authority acts as a quality assurer and verifies assignment work.

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28 Employers' influence on the content of the curriculum is mainly through national representative bodies which establish a centrally devised curriculum. The influence of employers at local level is largely limited to the choice of alternative modules or modes of delivery. However, some employers do play an active part in the development of 'tailor-made' courses. In one region, six colleges conducted a combined research project aimed at identifying employer perceptions and understanding of key skills; 120 employers were surveyed across a wide range of areas. Research findings were disseminated to employers through workshops, and guides to key skills were published.

A tertiary college has worked closely with the army and the local TEC to develop an army preparation course. The course combines vocational training with the development of personal and key skills. Vocational options include business, IT, engineering and catering. These are all subjects which can be further pursued in the army. Members of the armed forces assist with the delivery of the course.

29 Almost all the colleges surveyed have developed training specifically to meet the needs of individual employers. Examples can be found in most curriculum areas, but they predominate in business and management, engineering and IT. This type of provision makes good use of a variety of teaching and learning methods, including small group work, open and distance learning, and telematic links. There is a clear emphasis on meeting employers' requirements, which frequently include flexible delivery times, on-site training, the use of specialist lecturing expertise, and the ability to respond quickly to training needs. Despite many successful arrangements, over one-third of the colleges surveyed claim that this type of provision is often time-consuming and uneconomic to develop, particularly where there is competition from other training providers. Colleges often

find it hard to respond quickly to employers' demands. Releasing staff from regular timetabled teaching to deliver short courses and develop new products and services for employers can be difficult, particularly at short notice.

A general further education college specialises successfully in providing a substantial number of courses for the offshore and maritime industries. These industries often require training at very short notice, depending on weather conditions, or at unsociable hours. The college has used European funding to develop new methods of teaching and learning, including on-line and video-conferencing facilities.

A college of agriculture has over 40 short courses available, and it will tailor courses to individual employers' needs if the costs make them viable. For example, the college designed a course for an electricity distribution company on how to manage trees around power lines. The course covered risk analysis, use of ropes and climbing trees, use of herbicides and chain saws, environmental issues, tree physiology and identification.

30 Colleges frequently report a lack of consensus among employers about their training requirements. Many small- to medium-size enterprises also claim that the cost of training is prohibitive. Even large employers are sometimes reluctant to bear the burden of paying for training, particularly where some form of subsidised funding has previously been available.

Support for Students

31 Most colleges invite employers to speak to students about employment opportunities, working practices and the qualifications they need. Part-time teachers, some of whom are

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employers themselves, are able to provide students with up-to-date information. However, in colleges there is generally no co-ordination of these activities, and information is restricted to particular student groups. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, employers regularly give talks to students on the benefits and pitfalls of becoming self-employed.

32 In six of the colleges surveyed, employers act as mentors and are able to provide practical support for students.

One sixth form college has set up links with a local employer. Students take part in mock interviews with the company's staff. The staff gain relevant experience for their NVQ supervisory skills qualifications, and the students receive valuable interview practice and a written evaluation of the interview.

In a sixth form college which operates a successful mentoring scheme, there is a panel of approved mentors, all of whom attend an initial briefing meeting before taking up their role. Mentors include senior industry managers, who act as role models for students and help them to develop their career ambitions.

33 For employers, the local college is an important point of contact when seeking potential staff. Many colleges have a job vacancy board which employers use when recruiting. Employers also ask colleges to recommend full-time students for interviews. This is particularly true in agriculture, where colleges are a major source of recruitment. Employers often benefit from advertising the opportunities for modern apprenticeships jointly with a college. The college can interview applicants to determine their potential and advise the employers accordingly. Increasingly, employers are using college premises for selection testing.

One tertiary college has a formal link with a local transport company. The college tests all prospective employees, using commercially-produced assessment tests. It gives the employer the names of those it considers suitable for modern apprenticeships. Those recruited enter college-based apprenticeship training in their first year. The college is developing similar arrangements for other companies in the area.

34 Colleges try in various ways to raise employers' awareness of courses and qualifications; for instance, the new or revised NVQs. One college with a very wide catchment area, much of it rural, issues a termly newsletter to employers. The newsletter has a circulation of over 3,000 and features employers who have used the college. In over half of the colleges surveyed, staff regularly visit employers to provide advice on training and changes in qualifications. For example, in one college, a member of the hotel and catering section advises small businesses on how existing and prospective employees can gain qualifications. Unusually, one college has an advice unit which supports employers who wish to recruit students with particular physical or sensory disabilities.

A sixth form college had only recently introduced GNVQs. In order to encourage their acceptance by local employers it organised a GNVQ promotion event. Over 30 employers attended to witness the range of activities undertaken by students and to see the content of the various GNVQs on offer.

35 Many colleges organise careers fairs with the local careers service to raise awareness among school pupils and adults of education and employment opportunities. Such events are often well attended by employers. Without the support of the local careers service, however, some colleges find it difficult to attract

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employers. Employers look to agricultural colleges to promote careers in agriculture; open days with a countryside theme attract large numbers of prospective students as well as members of the general public who just wish to learn more about farming issues. The national construction curriculum centre initiative is supported by individual colleges, the Construction Industry Training Board, LEAs and TECs. It aims to promote the image of the industry in schools, to encourage teachers to use construction as a context for learning, and to improve the progression of school-leavers into the industry. School pupils can take part in a range of activities, including visits to building sites and colleges. Many colleges co-ordinate these activities and provide administrative support. Some colleges promote both vocational and non-vocational programmes and run advice and information sessions for employees on employers' premises. For example, one college visits its local RAF camps, and another the offices of the county council.

With its local general further education college, a local hotel invites year 10 and 11 school pupils to visit them. Staff from the college also attend. The pupils are subsequently offered work experience within the college, while college students work in the hotel. In the same college, the local hotel training group jointly undertakes presentations with the college at school careers events.

36 Some employers sponsor full-time students in further education. For example, a major cable network provider sponsors a group of students at one college so that they can progress to employment through a modern apprenticeship. Students in sixth form colleges occasionally receive financial support for overseas field trips. At another college a local furniture removal company sponsors the football team's strip. The same college also receives sponsorship for its performing arts and to help

it enter the European youth football competition. Another college has a trust fund run by the college and local industrialists, to which both full-time and part-time students can apply for funding to help them study overseas. One local authority provides scholarships for students who do particularly well in work experience. It is worth £1,000 per student, and in return, students undertake additional work experience with the authority during the summer vacation. In some agricultural colleges, scholarships are available to students who wish to study in other countries.

In one general further education college, a consortium of employers sponsors full-time students following courses leading to NVQ qualifications. The college recruits the students. Six weeks after starting the courses the students are interviewed by the employers to identify who they will sponsor. Sponsoring companies pay students £500 a year and cover their fees to attend a residential outdoor pursuits course. The companies provide work experience for their students and receive regular reports on their progress. At the end of the year, they may recruit a sponsored student. For example, one large employer sponsors 10 students every year and usually recruits six.

Working with Employers

A general further education college which specialises in catering has a partnership with a major restaurant chain. The aim is to address: the reduction in financial support for students in full-time education; the shortage of appropriately qualified and experienced staff within the hospitality and licensed retail industry; and difficulties experienced by students working towards the GNVQ in hospitality and catering in collecting evidence for their assignments. Students undergo a joint recruitment, selection and induction programme, which includes welcome briefings, visits to outlets, team-building and the compilation of a training plan. They work one day a week for the company, with the opportunity to work additional hours at weekends or during holidays. For all work, students receive payment. Some GNVQ assessments are linked directly to the company's operations.

37 Most teachers appreciate that many full-time students need part-time work to support themselves financially. However, although students have to balance the time spent in part-time employment with that spent in studying, few colleges liaise with employers to try and help students with this difficulty.

In an arrangement between a sixth form college and an employment agency, the agency provides details of suitable part-time employment and the college recommends students. This helps the college target students who would benefit from part-time work. The college has also developed a code of practice with major local retailers, which seeks to ensure that students' studies are not adversely affected by part-time employment.

Resources

38 Through their close contacts with industry, some colleges have developed specialist facilities which they could not otherwise afford. For example, manufacturers and suppliers fund the refurbishment of catering facilities and hair and beauty salons. A local radio station sponsors a college's radio station and business centre cafe. Small-scale donations by companies enabled one college to construct a new recreation centre and therapy pool for students with disabilities. In another college, a major employer sponsors a training room. However, relatively few colleges receive such support.

39 It is expensive for colleges to keep their computer hardware and software up to date. To overcome this, some colleges have successfully developed partnerships with suppliers. For example, one college is working with an international software and hardware manufacturer to develop IT-based learning materials. The company sponsors the college network and IT-based conference room. At another college a major manufacturer sponsors the college's media production unit. Occasionally, colleges receive free copies of software; one college was given textile design software suitable for use by local small businesses.

40 Almost all the colleges surveyed receive donations of materials and equipment. These range from travel agencies' brochures to glassware and laboratory coats. One college was able to develop its forensic science and law courses through substantial donations of specialist equipment from a local pharmaceutical company whose employees attend courses at the college. Often colleges have received reconditioned equipment which, though not always perfect, is useful for students to work on. Motor vehicle sections regularly receive donations of modern motor vehicles. Employers also support colleges in smaller ways, particularly in engineering and construction, through donations of offcuts, waste materials and obsolete vehicles and machinery.

Working with Employers

A general further education college has developed a centre of excellence for print media through sponsorship of printing equipment, computer hardware and software to the value of over £1 million. As part of the centre, companies have sponsored rooms which house their own equipment. In the same college, 18 new cars have been donated by manufacturers free of charge, for use by motor vehicle students. Manufacturers of electrical equipment have also sponsored rooms at the college.

A tertiary college obtained external funding for an environmental resource and information centre containing computers and specialist facilities for environmental studies students to use. The centre also runs environmental education courses for school-teachers and is the base for the local authority's environmental forum. The same college took part in a European-wide bid to become an enterprise centre for producing CD-ROMs. As one of only two UK centres it received over £200,000 worth of equipment from a major hardware manufacturer.

41 Few colleges seek advice from employers when planning new accommodation. However, most college travel shops have been set up through liaison with local travel agencies and employers often advise agricultural colleges on the development of resources such as the college farm or become members of farm management committees.

42 Teachers in construction, engineering and the sciences often discuss their equipment requirements with employers as part of course development and delivery. Manufacturers of hair and beauty products frequently demonstrate their products, helping teachers to ensure that their students are using the latest materials. Some colleges use their open days to invite employers to see and discuss their facilities.

As part of its TEC development funding, staff in one general further education college visited local engineering companies to find out what equipment the college should have for its students. The companies advised the college to keep much of its current equipment, rather than switch completely to computer-aided equipment, since much of its work still required the use of traditional techniques.

43 Through the careful planning of visits to employers, students can see equipment not available in the college. This is particularly important where such equipment is too expensive for a college to own, such as the heavy vehicle testing equipment used in Department of Transport testing stations. In one college, printing students can watch a newspaper being printed and visit a paper mill. The same college arranges for its fashion students to visit a clothing manufacturer to see the latest industrial-standard cutting equipment.

44 Over half of the colleges in the survey have arrangements for their students to use equipment and other resources on employers' premises. Beauty and sports therapy students often use local sports and fitness centres. In one college, hotel and catering students manage a local hotel for 24 hours and organise a formal reception and dinner for the hotel's own staff and local dignitaries. In another, science students use physiological measuring equipment at a nearby hospital. Agricultural colleges usually borrow rather than buy machinery which is used seasonally, such as the combine harvesters they obtain from local farmers and dealers. Students subsequently repair and service these machines as part of the winter overhaul. Music technology students use commercial recording studios and drama students their local theatre to stage productions. Such arrangements greatly enhance students' experiences.

Working with Employers

One general further education college hires a hairdresser's premises on its closing day. In this way, the college has increased its hairdressing provision without capital cost, and provided its students with more clients. The same college uses IT equipment at a nearby army camp to deliver training courses for local employers and army personnel.

45 Colleges have set up training facilities specifically for use by employers. Often purpose-built, these facilities may comprise lecture and seminar rooms, video-conferencing facilities and IT training rooms with up-to-date business software. Few colleges calculate the true cost of these facilities, however, when setting the fees for training courses.

A rural general further education college has two mobile training vehicles fully equipped to provide IT training, short courses and open learning 'drop-in' facilities. One vehicle was purchased with European funding, the other is leased. Both are used to deliver company-specific training on employers' premises. The college also has its own study centre, located at the town's enterprise centre, with facilities for IT training, short courses and internet access.

Quality Assurance

46 Colleges often identify, through staff appraisal, the need for teachers to update their industrial experience. In most cases, teachers only take part if the college is able to access special funding, for instance from the TEC. In 1996, one college used the further education development fund to place 28 teachers in industry. Although the programme has been maintained, it now runs without funding and with smaller numbers. Few colleges have strategies for secondment to industry, and relatively few are able to access teacher

placement schemes. In the colleges surveyed, less than 4% of teachers were seconded into industry or commerce in 1997-98.

As part of a TEC project, an engineering teacher spent a week working with a local agricultural engineering company. The week included site visits, an update on workshop practice and the chance to develop contacts for future secondment.

A business link co-ordinator in a general further education college undertook secondment with the local Business Link organisation. This led to other staff undertaking work-shadowing; the principal shadowed a senior manager in the health service, and teachers shadowed employees in environmental health and hairdressing.

47 Although industrial and commercial visits are often identified as a staff development priority, the take up is generally low. Increasingly, college staff deliver provision on employers' premises, act as workplace assessors or visit trainees in the workplace, but lack of time often prevents them from taking the opportunity to update their own knowledge. Although colleges' expenditure on staff development usually exceeds 1.5% of the staffing budget, few colleges are able to identify how much activity is employer-related. It is unusual for employer-related staff development to be planned in response to curriculum changes or the introduction of new courses.

As part of the introduction of courses in aquatic studies, an agricultural college supported staff research into the rearing and restocking of declining fish stocks for the Environment Agency. It also arranged visits to three aquatic centres for a member of staff who was to teach business studies on the courses.

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48 Some employers have management development programmes which involve a secondment to a voluntary organisation such as a school or college. At one college, a secondee from a bank spent eight months helping to develop employer sponsorship. Employees from a car manufacturer were seconded to a college specialising in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to raise the profile of this work amongst students generally. Few colleges use, or have the opportunity to use, such opportunities. Colleges which have franchising arrangements with employers, however, sometimes provide joint staff development sessions.

49 Colleges adopt various methods to ensure that staff who liaise with employers have the appropriate skills. These include training events for reception and business support staff and briefings prior to visits to particular clients. Some colleges have sets of materials for individuals to take with them and standard proforma for conducting meetings. A number of the colleges surveyed recognised the need for further staff training in this area.

50 Colleges consult widely when producing their charters. However, less than 30% of colleges in the survey have a separate employers' charter. Instead, most include reference to employers within their general college charter. Where employer charters exist, these often lack quantifiable standards. Few commitments are monitored. Colleges rarely involve employers in the production of the charter, although one college was planning, as part of the process of revising its charter, to send a draft to employers for comment.

In one tertiary college, the business charter is a separate self-contained booklet. Its coverage is comprehensive. It provides: an overview of the different types of employer links; the objectives of the business training group which co-ordinates employer-led training; a section on contractual entitlements; an account of the college's commitments in respect of reports on employees' attendance and progress at college; work experience arrangements; quality assurance arrangements and a complaints procedure. The booklet is the subject of continuous revision.

51 Less than half of the colleges in the survey regularly use questionnaires to obtain employers' views on the quality of their provision. Most colleges report response rates of less than 25%, although in those colleges which have close links with employers or are successful in obtaining external funding the rates are higher. The responses received indicate high levels of satisfaction on the part of employers, but many curriculum managers believe that employers prefer to make direct contact if there are issues to be raised about individual courses. There is little evidence to suggest that employers' comments influence the content of courses. The *Charter for Further Education* indicates that summaries of employers' views should be readily available. In practice, few colleges make the findings known outside the institution. One exception is a college which publishes the results in a newsletter circulated to employers throughout its region. Colleges also obtain opinions indirectly, through meetings with the business-education partnership and the chamber of commerce and through employers' forums and seminars.

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The industrial arts section of an art and design college surveyed employers for the first time in 1998. There was a 60% response rate. The college now intends to conduct a college-wide survey annually.

52 About 20% of colleges in the survey involve employers in the annual review of courses or programmes. An agriculture college changed its annual course reviews to cover all levels of courses for a particular sector in order to encourage employers' participation. Now, up to five employers attend most reviews. In another college, all courses are rigorously reviewed on a three-yearly basis by a panel including employer representatives.

53 Very few colleges directly involve employers in their self-assessment process. Instead, most rely on comments from governors who may be employers. In four of the colleges surveyed, advisory panels discussed the programme area self-assessment reports. The colleges involved considered the comments from these sources to be invaluable. Many colleges recognise the need to increase employers' involvement.

54 The quality of training specifically designed for employers is usually monitored by means of course evaluation surveys. Often the provision must meet the requirements of an externally accredited quality assurance system. At the time of the survey, some colleges were introducing lesson observation and course reviews for the training being provided to employers.

There are service-level agreements in one general further education college between the business development unit and the curriculum teams who deliver provision for individual employers. The unit has its own mission statement and service standards. To ensure quality of delivery, it issues questionnaires to participants. Teachers must supply learning materials in advance to the unit, which arranges for them to be printed to a specified standard. The unit also briefs teachers in advance about the client's specific requirements.

Governance

55 Almost all colleges claim that governors help to forge links between employers and the college. Many governors have a high industrial profile, often as managers in local private or public sector businesses. Some have close links with training groups or are committee members of the TEC or chamber of commerce. Frequently, they can network with their own local or national employer organisation. A strength noted in many inspection reports is the wide range of business expertise which governors bring to their position. Some governors are actively involved in facilitating partnerships with local industry and government. In one sixth form college, they secured commercial sponsorship for the college.

56 Governors receive the minutes of curriculum area advisory groups and, in a few cases, are members of these groups. At one college the governors have established a college council to provide a forum for invited employers to link with the college. They consider this essential to ensure sufficient employer involvement and influence at board level. Governors regularly attend presentation evenings and other important college events which provide opportunities for them to gain an understanding of the work of the college.

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57 Many colleges have arrangements for governors to link with both curriculum and cross-college areas. For example, pairing arrangements enable individual governors to visit departments and find out about their work. At one college, a governor who is a marketing director meets regularly with the college's marketing manager. Similarly, in two sixth form colleges, governors were keen to support the development of the college's training provision for small businesses, passing on employer contacts and overseeing the introduction of an operating plan for the college's business development unit. The extent to which governors become involved in the work of the college varies considerably, with the strongest links in the areas of construction, engineering and agriculture.

Following a review of the management structure of a large general further education college, the corporation established the senior management post of director of marketing to encourage the college to adopt a more focused approach to meeting the needs of employers. Employer liaison groups were also created in order to share issues which covered more than one curriculum area.

58 Not all senior managers or governors themselves consider it appropriate for governors to develop links with specific curriculum areas. Some feel that this can encourage individual governors to promote particular vocational areas and thus create tension between the functions of governance and management. In almost all colleges, governors' involvement in the strategic planning process is the main means of ensuring that the college's provision satisfies the needs of employers. However, FEFC inspection reports note that governors are not always sufficiently involved in the early stages of this process.

59 In most colleges, managers regularly report to the board on the quantity and quality of links

between college and employers. In the best practice, the use of performance indicators for full-cost provision enables governors to judge the success of such provision. Governing boards rarely receive either a summary assessment of the college's performance against the commitments given in their employer charters or an analysis of responses to employer surveys.

At one large general further education college, the governors' marketing committee meets monthly. Agendas include presentations by college managers on initiatives designed to meet the needs of employers. An important function of the committee is to receive reports during the year on progress against the business plan, and the extent of contacts with employers. Findings of employer surveys are also reported to this committee. At the same college, the strategic planning process requires governors to review each department's business plan.

Management

60 Over 40% of the colleges included in the survey have experienced an increase in the number of part-time enrolments over the past three years. A contributory factor has often been the rise in the number of short and customised courses provided for employers. In approximately 11% of the colleges surveyed, the number of full-time students has declined. For some colleges, the changing patterns of student enrolment reflect changes in the local economy as well as an increased focus on the development of provision aimed specifically at the needs of employers.

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One general further education college has included as a priority in a number of its strategic objectives the development of courses which meet the needs of industry. A number of curriculum areas, for example technology, have seen significant growth in NVQ work because of this approach. The focus of the college's work is the serving of customer needs in a flexible manner. The principal is active in developing links with the community.

61 The majority of colleges conduct training needs analysis, although there is some variation in the comprehensiveness of this activity. In some cases, research has been specifically related to a particular vocational area; in others, emphasis has been placed on the more general needs of local employers. Colleges are beginning to make increasing use of selected groups of employers, or other local organisations such as the local authority and the careers service, as a means of reviewing their curriculum offer. The availability of European funding has enabled some colleges to identify the training needs of small and medium-size enterprises. The use made of labour market information produced by TECs is variable. Half of the colleges in the survey regard this information as too general to be of any significant use in planning provision, but some colleges find it useful as a means of identifying longer term trends and seek additional, more detailed data for their curriculum planning.

In one general further education college a working group investigated the role the college played in local economic development. It concluded that the college had significantly underestimated the contribution that it made to the local economy simply through the local expenditure of its staff and students, and also that it could, and should, play a greater strategic role in local economic development. A subsequent report proposes actions necessary to raise the profile of the college's role.

62 There are examples of joint planning relationships with local employers which enable colleges to meet local needs more effectively. The nature of the relationship depends on the size of the employer and the availability of funding from outside sources such as TECs and European funding initiatives. Where colleges seek to work with a number of small and medium-size enterprises, the availability of external funding is particularly important in attracting employers' involvement. In one area, the TEC and a number of local colleges have produced brochures promoting the business support work of the colleges, and the TEC has supported a number of bids for European funding.

One general further education college undertook research into the needs of its local small textile companies. It found that many of the major retailers required clothing to be machine-produced to ensure a consistent level of quality. This required the machine-cutting of the patterns for individual garment pieces, but many smaller companies could not afford to purchase the necessary computer-controlled equipment. The college obtained European funding for equipment, and makes the equipment available to smaller companies.

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63 Just over half of the colleges surveyed have set up business development units. In most colleges, the units act as the main point of contact for all work with employers with the remit to: build and develop links between college curriculum departments and employers; market and sell courses to employers; conduct research to indicate potential employers who may need training programmes; secure greater amounts of non-FEFC income. The units are sometimes deliberately used to promote a different image of the college from that generally held within the community, one which emphasises a specialised professional service to business.

The aim of one general further education college's business development unit is to co-ordinate the college's links with employers and to provide a central point of contact. The unit has launched a training partnership which offers companies many benefits including exclusive rates on short course programmes, invitations to free breakfast seminars and help and guidance on securing additional funding.

In one large general further education college, each centre has a designated contact for business, and all enquiries are referred to the business development unit. There is also a business development strategy group and a business network group. Some divisions also have employer focus groups. In 1998, the college created a college-wide database of companies. It is intended that the business development unit will play a greater role in co-ordinating its business-related activities.

64 There is sometimes a lack of co-ordination between the staff within curriculum areas and business development units. Curriculum areas may be reluctant to work co-operatively with a central business development unit, and instead will make use of their existing contacts with

employers to offer short courses. Some business development units have established links with curriculum sections through the use of staff contacts. For example, one college uses a team of 'key contacts', members of staff who are based in each vocational department but who report directly to the 'services to business' unit. Each member of the team has built up specialist knowledge of a specific vocational area, and works as an important contact point between the 'services to business' unit, heads of college departments and employers.

A general further education college has a business liaison co-ordinator whose role it is to develop and maintain the learning organisation network and to develop and maintain an employer contact tracking database. The co-ordinator acts as the college's front line employer liaison/marketing contact, but also works closely with a team of staff from each curriculum area to develop programmes.

65 Colleges have devised several means of measuring the success of business development units. These include the use of performance indicators based on the number of short and specific training courses delivered to companies and the number of enrolments obtained. The overriding measure of success is usually a target for income generation and the ability to operate on a profitable basis.

66 There are few examples of the joint promotion of equal opportunities between employers and colleges. In practice, it is mainly the colleges who take the initiative for such activities. For example, most colleges regularly invite school pupils to visit them and take part in hands-on activities, such as 'manufacturing awareness'. Occasionally, employers supply staff to help run the sessions. In specialist areas such as printing, colleges work with employers to give careers officers a better understanding of the career opportunities for school-leavers. At one college, the engineering department holds

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an open evening aimed at attracting more female students. Another college runs a women-into-management programme and is active in the 'woman engineer of the year' competition. Its students have been successful in winning the competition on three occasions.

A general further education college with a large number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has close links with the Employers Forum on Disability. Staff from the college have visited local employers to help their staff understand issues surrounding assessment for students with disabilities.

Conclusions and Issues

67 The survey identified that further education colleges work with employers through a wide range of activities. The key strengths of such links are:

- the involvement of employers in work experience
- work experience policies with comprehensive procedures for setting up and monitoring work placements
- regular visits by students to employers as part of their studies
- part-time teachers with current industrial experience, helping to ensure that students' work reflects current industrial practices
- employers' support for students' award ceremonies
- advice to employers on education and training opportunities
- provision developed specifically to meet the needs of individual employers
- employers' donations of materials and equipment
- access to, and use of, industry-standard equipment not available in the college
- the effective use made of governors' business expertise and knowledge of the local community

- successful bids for external funding leading to increased training by small and medium-size enterprises
- business development units promoting and co-ordinating work with employers.

68 If colleges are to benefit further from their links with employers, there needs to be:

- more use by teachers of knowledge gained during work experience
- increased involvement of employers in workplace assessment
- greater encouragement for employers to become involved in the planning and content of the curriculum
- development of strategies to increase the amount of training undertaken by small and medium-size enterprises
- implementation of strategies to encourage staff secondment or visits to industry or commerce
- increased use of employers' charters
- greater involvement by employers in the annual review of courses, programmes and the self-assessment process
- increased use by governors of performance indicators and employer surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of provision for employers
- improved co-ordination between the work of curriculum areas and business development units
- joint promotion of equal opportunities by employers and colleges.

Annex A

Colleges which Assisted in the Survey

Arnold and Carlton College
Arts Institute at Bournemouth (The)*
Basildon College
Basingstoke College of Technology
Beverley College of Further Education
College of Care and Early Education
College of North East London (The)
Coventry Technical College
Gateshead College
Havering College of Further and Higher Education
Hereward College of Further Education
Hills Road Sixth Form College
Kendal College
Knowsley Community College
Leeds College of Technology
Lowestoft College
Newark and Sherwood College
Newham Sixth Form College
North Lindsey College
North Shropshire College (The)
Oldham Sixth Form College
Peterborough Regional College
Plumpton College
Plymouth College of Art and Design
Plymouth College of Further Education
Preston College
Priestley College
Salisbury College
Sixth Form College, Farnborough (The)
Skelmersdale College
Solihull Sixth Form College
Sparsholt College, Hampshire
Thomas Danby College
Thurrock College
Tresham Institute
Wakefield College
Walford College, Shropshire
Warwickshire College, Royal Leamington Spa and Moreton Morrell
West Suffolk College
Worcester College of Technology

**(formerly Bournemouth and Poole College of Art and Design)*

Annex B

Survey Questionnaire

Questions used to inform the structured interviews with colleges.

Section 1: Teaching and learning

- 1.1 What arrangements exist for students to undertake:
 - (a) work placements
 - (b) work-shadowing?
- 1.2 Please identify specific examples of good practice in relation to work placements/work-shadowing.
- 1.3 Does the college experience any difficulties in obtaining sufficient work placement/work-shadowing opportunities? What steps are being taken to overcome these difficulties?
- 1.4 Please identify the extent of employer involvement in:
 - (a) workplace visits
 - (b) devising and assessing assignments
 - (c) Young Enterprise and similar programmes
 - (d) other work-related curriculum activities, for example case studies, simulations, role-play.
- 1.5 Please identify specific examples of good practice in relation to these activities.
- 1.6 Does the college experience difficulties in obtaining sufficient participation by employers in these activities? If so, why?
- 1.7 Please identify examples of learning provided specifically to meet the needs of individual employers.
- 1.8 Please identify specific examples of good practice in relation to this type of delivery.
- 1.9 What are the difficulties experienced by colleges in providing this type of provision?
- 1.10 Does the college have any outward collaborative provision arrangements with employers? If so, please identify the range and type of provision, and the types of employer involved.
- 1.11 What involvement do employers have in the recording and assessing of achievements in the workplace?

- 1.12 How does this vary across curriculum areas?
- 1.13 Please give examples of college staff working alongside employers in assessing students in the workplace.
- 1.14 In what ways are employers kept informed of students' progress, attendance and achievement? How effective are these methods?

Section 2: Students' achievements

- 2.1 How does the college involve employers in ensuring that students' work is of an appropriate standard?
- 2.2 Please give examples of accreditation of prior learning procedures designed to meet employers' needs.
- 2.3 Please cite examples of employer recognition of students' achievements, such as employer donation/presentation of prizes, and exhibitions/competitions supported by/organised with employers.

Section 3: Curriculum content, organisation and management

- 3.1 What mechanisms exist for employers to give advice to the college in relation to curriculum planning and content?
- 3.2 What mechanisms exist for the college to provide advice to employers on education and training development?
- 3.3 Please identify examples of the involvement of employers in curriculum design.
- 3.4 Does the college have any mechanisms for co-ordinating employer-college interaction? How effective are they?
- 3.5 Does the college have a business development unit? If so, what role does it play in employer-college liaison? How does the college measure its effectiveness?

Section 4: Support for students

- 4.1 Describe any arrangements for employers to provide advice and guidance to students, for example, on employment opportunities, mentoring and personal development.

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- 4.2 Describe any arrangements used by the college to provide advice to employers in relation to qualifications, recruitment and selection.
- 4.3 What involvement do employers have with colleges in raising awareness of prospective students to career/education and training opportunities, for example through joint employer/college activities or taster sessions?
- 4.4 Please give examples of employers' sponsorship of students.

Section 5: Resources

- 5.1 Please give examples of employers' sponsorship of college resources.
- 5.2 Does the college seek advice from employers on resource provision? If so, under what circumstances?
- 5.3 Please give examples of where students are given access to specialist resources held or provided by employers?

Section 6: Quality assurance

- 6.1 Please give examples of any staff development involving employers, including teacher placement in industry or employee secondment to the college.
- 6.2 In what ways does the college ensure that staff who liaise with employers have the appropriate skills?
- 6.3 Does the college have a charter for employers? If so, describe the role played by employers in its development and monitoring.
- 6.4 What methods does the college use to obtain employers' opinions? How is this information evaluated and disseminated?
- 6.5 Please describe examples of the involvement of employers in course/school/sector annual reviews.
- 6.6 How does the college seek to involve employers in the self-assessment process?
- 6.7 How does the college monitor the quality of 'tailor-made' provision for employers, such as short, one-day courses?

Section 7: Management

- 7.1 Discuss the pattern of the college's enrolments for full-time, part-time and customer-specific provision over the last three to four years. What changes can be identified in the relative amount of provision in these three categories?
- 7.2 What does the college perceive as the reasons for these changes? What has been their impact on the college?
- 7.3 (a) Has the college carried out a training needs analysis involving targeted employer groups? If so, what form did it take?
(b) How far is TEC labour market information used to inform curriculum planning?
- 7.4 (a) Please describe examples of joint planning between the college and employers to meet local needs.
(b) Describe the college's links with the local TEC.
(c) What has been the college's income from collaborative activities with the TEC over the last three years?
- 7.5 Does the college have school/sector advisory groups? If so, how often do they meet? How does the college measure their effectiveness?
- 7.6 Is there any joint promotion of equal opportunities between the college and employers?
- 7.7 How does the college ensure that its provision meets the requirements of employers?

Section 8: Governance

- 8.1 What is the role of governors in supporting links between employers and the college?
- 8.2 How do they ensure that the college's provision meets the requirements of employers?
- 8.3 Where advisory committees exist, how is their advice used by governors in ascertaining the quality of provision?

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**Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
September 1999**