

Barnsley College

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1999-00

THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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Contents

Paragraph

Summary	
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Context	
The college and its mission	1
The inspection	5

Curriculum areas	
Science	9
Agriculture	14
Construction	19
General business	24
Office administration	30
Art, design and performing arts	35
Humanities	40
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	45

Cross-college provision	
Support for students	50
General resources	57
Quality assurance	63
Governance	71
Management	79
Conclusions	89

College statistics	
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Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1998-99, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	10	53	30	7	–
Cross-college provision	14	54	23	7	2

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*
Sample size: 104 college inspections

Student Achievements

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

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

Summary

Barnsley College

Yorkshire and Humberside Region

Inspected November 1999

Barnsley College is a large tertiary college offering a wide range of general and vocational courses. The college produced its third self-assessment report for this inspection. All governors and staff were involved in the self-assessment process. The college also sought the views of two other colleges, local employers and the TEC about the quality of its provision. The report is long but well organised. Each section includes the action required to address the weaknesses identified. The report did not provide enough analysis of students' achievements. It did not make sufficient reference to the extensive and widely dispersed open and distance learning provision. Inspectors agreed with only three curriculum grades and one cross-college grade awarded by the college. Much of the statistical data on students' achievements which the college provided before the inspection proved unreliable.

The college offers courses in all 10 of the FEFC's programme areas. Provision in seven FEFC programme areas was inspected, together with aspects of cross-college provision. The proportion of lessons judged by inspectors to be good or outstanding was below the average for

colleges inspected in 1998-99. Some retention and achievement rates are poor. Class sizes were above the average for the sector. The college has productive links with employers, schools and its community. There is substantial provision in its outreach centres. Arrangements to provide advice and guidance are effective. Students have access to a comprehensive range of services providing them with support on personal issues. General resources are excellent and the college has improved its accommodation since the last inspection. Appraisal and staff development systems are effective. The college has acquired a range of external quality awards. Governors and senior managers work closely together to determine the strategic priorities of the college. Senior managers involve all staff in the strategic planning process and are committed to upholding and promoting equal opportunities. The college should: rectify inaccuracies in management information; collect and maintain data on all students' achievements; improve the management of open and distance learning; improve aspects of tutorial and learning support; ensure its quality assurance procedures are rigorously applied across all of its provision; develop further its procedures for the analysis of data on students' achievements; and make certain that the corporation monitors the performance of all students.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Science	2	Support for students	2
Agriculture	2	General resources	1
Construction	3	Quality assurance	3
General business	3	Governance	3
Office administration	2	Management	3
Art, design and performing arts	2		
Humanities	3		
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	4		

The College and its Mission

1 Barnsley College is a large tertiary college, formed in 1990 through the amalgamation of Barnsley College of Technology, Barnsley College of Art and Barnsley Sixth Form College. It operates from 10 sites close to the town centre. The college leases a farm about 3 miles from the main college sites. It also offers education and training to local communities at 47 centres, known as general access points. The college is the major provider of further education in the borough. There are 14 secondary schools within the Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council area but only one school maintains a sixth form. There is another further education college within 7 miles, and other large general or tertiary further education colleges are within easy travelling distance at Doncaster, Sheffield and Wakefield.

2 The local area that the college serves is one of high economic deprivation. For example, South Yorkshire is designated as a European Social Fund objective 1 area. The local economy has suffered significant change over the past two decades. The unemployment rate in the area is 6.3% compared with the national rate of 4.5%. General certificate of secondary education (GCSE) results in local schools are significantly below the national average; in 1999, only 32% of school pupils gained five or more GCSEs at grade C or above compared with 46% nationally. The proportion of school-leavers who stay on in full-time education is only 51%. Training and enterprise council (TEC) funded programmes run by local training providers attract 25% of school-leavers. The college is involved in partnerships with the public, private and voluntary sectors to widen and increase participation in learning by the educationally disadvantaged and to further the social and economic regeneration of the area following the demise of the coal industry. The college enjoys good working relationships with local schools and is supporting primary and secondary schools in projects to improve family literacy.

3 The college offers courses in all 10 of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC) programme areas. Of the 60,349 students enrolled in 1998-99, 4,676 were enrolled on full-time programmes and 84% were aged 19 or over. In addition to its further education programmes the college has a large and diverse higher education provision. At the time of the inspection there were 1,121 enrolments to higher education programmes, 77% of which were for full-time courses. In 1998-99, 38% of the college's students were female and 2% had declared a learning difficulty or disability. The college is one of the largest employers in the borough. It employs 1,158 full-time equivalent staff, 542 of whom have direct teaching and learning contact with students and 249 support the learning process.

4 The mission of the college is 'to become a nationally recognised leader in the provision of high-quality education and training for the post-16 community'. Through one of its corporate aims, the college is also committed 'to contribute to the economic and social regeneration of the borough'. The college states that it offers 'opportunities for all' and that 'its provision is open and accessible to all members of the community'. In particular, the college commits itself to:

- 'student-centredness'
- excellence
- financial stability.

The Inspection

5 The college was inspected during the week beginning 1 November 1999. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and had studied information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. Inspectors used data derived from the individualised student record (ISR) returns as a basis for their judgements relating to students' achievements in 1997 and 1998. Much of these data were unreliable. The

Context

college had failed to collect most of the data relating to students' achievements for its open and distance learning provision in 1998. Data on students' achievements for 1999 were validated by inspectors against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by awarding bodies. These data were found to have a number of discrepancies. During the inspection, inspectors identified further variations.

6 The college was notified in September 1999 of the sample of its provision to be inspected. The inspection was carried out by 18 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 71 days. Inspectors observed 131 lessons and tutorials, and examined students' work and college documents. The inspection team held meetings with governors, managers, college staff and students. They also met teachers from local schools, employers, and representatives from Barnsley and Doncaster TEC, Barnsley

Metropolitan Borough Council and local partnerships. From August 1999, the college was one of three colleges involved in joint investigations with the FEFC of those colleges having similar statistical profiles to Halton College. The FEFC reported the outcome of these investigations to the Public Accounts Committee in January 2000.

7 The following table shows the grades awarded to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Of the lessons inspected, 60% were rated good or outstanding. This is lower than the average of 65% for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. The proportion of lessons judged to be less than satisfactory was 8% and this is above the average of 6%. The number of good or outstanding grades awarded by inspectors for observation of teaching and learning was lower than that for the previous inspection.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	6	18	8	2	0	34
GCSE	0	7	2	1	0	10
GNVQ	0	6	8	1	0	15
NVQ	4	4	2	2	0	12
Other vocational	4	15	14	2	0	35
Other*	3	11	8	2	1	25
Total (No.)	17	61	42	10	1	131
Total (%)	13	47	32	8	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99 (%)	20	45	29	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*

*includes eight tutorials

Context

8 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1998-99.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Barnsley College	12.1	83
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99	11.2	78

Source for national average: Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report

Curriculum Areas

Science

Grade 2

9 Inspectors observed 16 lessons covering GCSE, general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level), access to higher education and safety courses to intermediate and advanced level. Inspectors mainly agreed with the judgements made in the self-assessment reports.

Key strengths

- well-managed departments
- effective integration of part-time and full-time staff
- good academic support for GCE A level students
- high GCE A level pass rates
- excellent physical resources

Weaknesses

- low retention on some courses
- poor GCSE results

10 The science provision is divided between the department of science, mathematics, computing and media, and the department of life sciences. The departments produced separate self-assessment reports. The range of courses is limited to GCSE, GCE A level, access to higher education and safety training courses. Inspectors agreed with one department's self-assessment report that the college has not been able to continue offering vocational science courses. Departmental and course teams meet regularly. Minutes of their meetings indicate key action points and identify those responsible for their implementation. Course management files provide an effective overview of the progress of students and the quality of courses. However, there were significant differences between the data held by curriculum managers and by the college centrally.

11 Most teaching is good, although one department's self-assessment report overstated this strength. The best lessons are well planned with teachers using the extensive facilities available to them effectively. For example, in one lesson the teacher carefully explained the concept of nuclear magnetic resonance spectra. Students were then shown the production of such spectra on the college apparatus. Most handout materials are of high quality. Students' progress is monitored carefully and teachers set individual targets for students. Support arrangements are good. For example, a science learner base is staffed each day by a facilitator who helps students with their assignments, and records attendance and completion of set tasks. However, GCSE and access to higher education students do not make sufficient use of these facilities. There are additional learning support lessons for biology, chemistry and physics students who either have particular difficulties or who need further tuition if they are to achieve high grades. Practical lessons are carried out safely in a way that motivates students. In a small number of lessons, the teaching methods used are ineffective. For example, at the end of one long evening session, students resented having to undertake a task which they regarded as inappropriate and too demanding. They became disruptive and behaved in an immature fashion. Some lesson plans are superficial and contain insufficient detailed information on teaching and learning activities.

12 Students' written and practical work is of an appropriate standard. In GCSE and GCE A level lessons, students work well with their teachers, but many students on the access to higher education course lack confidence and find the work difficult. Pass rates on GCE A level courses are good, showing an improvement over the last three years and are above the national average for the sector. Students' results in GCSE single award science subjects are poor. For example, the proportion of students gaining

Curriculum Areas

grade C or above in GCSE biology has declined from 69% to 25% in the last three years. As recognised in one department's self-assessment report, retention rates on a number of GCSE courses are low. Progression from GCE A level courses to higher education is well monitored and a large number of students are successful in gaining entry to science degree courses.

13 Teachers and technicians are highly qualified. Part-time teachers are effectively integrated with course teams. Laboratories and classrooms are well decorated and properly maintained. Teachers and students take a pride in their environment. Displays of students' work and scientific materials on laboratory walls and in circulation areas are stimulating and attractive. Students have good access to information technology (IT) equipment and many laboratories have IT equipment for use in practical work. As identified in both self-assessment reports, the range of science

equipment is very good. For example, analytical equipment includes ultraviolet, infrared and nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometers. The science learner base and the learning centre have a wide selection of books, paper-based and electronically stored materials. Technicians maintain and support laboratory work well.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in science, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE astronomy, biology, chemistry, physics, science (double award), science (single award)	2	Number of starters	*	*	110
		Retention (%)	*	*	70
		Achievement (%)	*	*	39
GCE A level biology	3	Number of starters	*	*	71
		Retention (%)	*	*	69
		Achievement (%)	*	*	92
GCE A level chemistry	3	Number of starters	*	*	53
		Retention (%)	*	*	72
		Achievement (%)	*	*	95
GCE A level physics	3	Number of starters	*	*	50
		Retention (%)	*	*	88
		Achievement (%)	*	*	86

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Agriculture

Grade 2

14 Inspectors observed 13 lessons on full-time and part-time courses in animal care, agriculture and horticulture. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They judged that some strengths were overstated and they found some weaknesses the college had not identified.

Key strengths

- students' good achievement rates on some full-time courses
- well-planned and effective teaching
- successful integration of key skills with vocational content of courses
- good use of portfolios and assignments
- good resources for agriculture courses
- students' success in progressing to employment and further education

Weaknesses

- separation of theory and practical work between two sites
- lack of systematic involvement by industry in course review
- students' poor achievement rates on some part-time courses

15 The college offers a range of part-time courses in agriculture and horticulture, most of which is based at Wigfield Farm about 3 miles from the main college sites. Included among the students on the course leading to the national vocational qualification (NVQ) in agriculture are those from a farming background and New Deal and national careership students. Recruitment to horticulture courses is very low. In animal care, there are well-established full-time first and national diploma courses, and a foundation level course. As the self-assessment report

acknowledges, the good management of the curriculum and courses in this area is a strength. There is, however, insufficient involvement of employers in course reviews. An increasing amount of assessment is carried out in the workplace. Agricultural and horticultural students can take additional qualifications, such as those in pesticides application and forklift operation, to improve their chances of employment.

16 Good schemes of work identify appropriate learning methods and aim to ensure the integration of theory and practice. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that most teaching is particularly good. Teachers tell students what the objectives of the lessons are. They keep the students' attention fully engaged by asking well-prepared questions and then naming students to answer them. They sustain the students' interest by varying learning activities appropriately throughout the lesson. Teachers agree individual action plans with students. Progress in implementing them is regularly monitored and reported to employers. Teachers make good use of the resources available. For example, in a lesson on tractor safety, the students were able to examine a tractor and trailer unit. Using appropriate equipment, they diagnosed faults in the tractor and its trailer and entered these on a defect report form.

Agriculture teachers use their contacts with local farms to widen the range of practical work available to students. Assignments are widely used as a means of learning. Criteria for their assessment are clearly stated and wherever possible, they include the development of key skills. In some lessons, especially science theory lessons, the teacher's presentation is not lively or varied enough and students fail to pay attention. Some teachers require the students to spend a great deal of time merely copying information from overhead projector transparencies. They do not enlarge on the information or engage the students in discussion

Curriculum Areas

about it. The excess of detail in some learning materials produced by the teachers merely confuses the students.

17 In general, student retention and pass rates on full-time animal care courses are good. However, no student on a part-time course in dog grooming over the last three years has gained a qualification. In animal care, many students progress from foundation to national diploma level. A high proportion of students who complete the national diploma course enter full-time employment in the animal care industry. Agriculture students achieve a high standard of practical competence. Their portfolios show an appropriate balance between evidence gathered at college and in the workplace. The self-assessment report failed to identify weaknesses in students' achievements. Some retention and pass rates on part-time agriculture courses are poor. For example, the proportion of agriculture and horticulture students who completed their NVQ level 2 courses in 1998, and achieved the qualification, was only 52% and this proportion fell to 47% in 1999. However, a high proportion of those who complete their NVQ courses enter full-time employment.

18 The college has recently taken over the management of Wigfield Farm, for its land-based courses. Buildings and facilities at the 120 acre farm have been upgraded to provide good facilities for practical teaching. A wide range of livestock includes beef cattle, sheep and pigs. The range of equipment is adequate for the level of agriculture courses offered, though some items are becoming dated. The animal care unit at the farm contains small animals, exotics, and birds but no kennels or catteries. There are not enough animals, however, for the number of students. Animal care students are taught theory subjects at Huddersfield Road. The arrangement whereby theory and practice are taught, respectively, on two different sites limits the scope for teachers to relate theory to practice. Little use is made of the resources at the farm for assignment work. Students have a well-equipped computer suite on the farm, but no specialist agricultural software is provided.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in agriculture, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
C&G certificate in gardening	1	Number of starters	34	23	26
		Retention (%)	100	100	88
		Achievement (%)	24	30	9
NVQ agriculture and horticulture	2	Number of starters	22	23	15
		Retention (%)	90	74	66
		Achievement (%)	100	52	47
BTEC first diploma in animal care	2	Number of starters	18	18	22
		Retention (%)	83	83	82
		Achievement (%)	100	67	88
BTEC national diploma in animal care	3	Number of starters	17	14	26
		Retention (%)	88	93	73
		Achievement (%)	83	85	100

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

Curriculum Areas

Construction

Grade 3

19 Inspectors observed 12 lessons on NVQ courses covering a range of construction crafts, and technician courses. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report, but considered that some weaknesses had been understated.

Key strengths

- significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning
- the high standard of specialist accommodation
- well-presented students' portfolios
- some good pass rates in 1999

Weaknesses

- insufficient rigour in completion of quality records
- poor retention on many craft courses in 1999
- failure of many students to gain a qualification between 1997 and 1998
- inadequate recording and poor analysis of performance data

20 The college offers a wide range of construction courses to suit the needs of both students and employers, as noted in the self-assessment report. The recruitment of adults has increased. The painting and decorating section has been particularly successful in enrolling women. In 1998-99, the number of craft students studying at foundation and intermediate level increased significantly, though the number of technicians studying at these levels declined drastically. Good learning opportunities are provided for New Deal clients. Students from local primary and secondary schools visit the college regularly to sample

construction activities. Curriculum management has improved, but not all records on the quality of courses are reviewed rigorously or fully completed. Records of students' progress are thorough but these give insufficient information on students' destinations. Internal verification procedures operate well. Since the last inspection, links with employers have improved and more work experience is available to students.

21 The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. Inspectors graded eight of the lessons as good or outstanding. Most lessons are thoroughly planned, though the individual needs of students are not always met. Teachers often work well in teams with large groups of craft students. These students enrol at different times during the year and many progress at different rates. For example, in a large bricklaying workshop, a team of teachers supervised and helped students working on different projects. The teachers demonstrated the correct way to carry out bricklaying tasks, corrected the students' poor practice and formally assessed the students' work on demand. Inspectors agreed that this aspect of teaching and learning is a strength, as recognised in the self-assessment report. High standards of safety were observed in all practical lessons. Risk assessment is routine, well recorded and up to date. In the main, teachers mark assignments accurately and fairly. They carry out, however, little correction of grammatical and spelling errors. There is no reference to key skills in lesson plans or lesson records.

22 Most students work hard and produce work of a good standard. Many are making good use of IT to improve the presentation of their portfolios. For example, a student on the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) course in construction at advanced level, included in a project on the impact of construction on the environment, the findings of detailed research, imaginative use of IT and

Curriculum Areas

high-quality digital photographs to exemplify points in the text. The self-assessment report understated the poor retention and achievement rates of some students between 1997 and 1999. Almost all the data provided by the college were unreliable. However, inspectors found that of the 540 intermediate level craft students who commenced their studies between 1995 and 1996, only 97 gained an NVQ level 2 in 1997-98. Of the 69 advanced craft students who enrolled in 1997, only 22 gained an NVQ level 3 in 1998. Of the technician students who enrolled in 1997, 27% failed to gain a qualification in 1998. Pass rates on courses which finished in 1999 have improved but the retention rates on these are poor. Some craft students have progressed to higher level technician programmes.

23 Teachers are well qualified and many have suitable industrial experience. Technician support is good. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that accommodation is of good quality. Most classrooms are well decorated, properly maintained and they are spotlessly clean. Much of the furniture is new. Classroom and workshop walls carry excellent displays of industrial posters and students' work including photographs of their practical achievements. The success of students in national competitions and community projects is celebrated through displays in public areas. Facilitators assist students using networked computers in the subject learner base and centre. However, few construction-related learning materials are available on the college network. The construction learner base is at an early stage of development and is underused. Hand tools and specialist machines are well maintained.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in construction, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Wood occupation (crafts)	2	Number of starters	*	*	23
		Retention (%)	*	*	65
		Achievement (%)	*	*	80
Brickwork (crafts)	2	Number of starters	*	*	31
		Retention (%)	*	*	48
		Achievement (%)	*	*	73
Plastering (crafts)	2	Number of starters	*	*	18
		Retention (%)	*	*	50
		Achievement (%)	*	*	67
GNVQ advanced construction and the built environment	3	Number of starters	*	*	19
		Retention (%)	*	*	53
		Achievement (%)	*	*	20

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

General Business

Grade 3

24 Inspectors observed 15 lessons. The inspection included open and distance learning provision which falls within the business programme area. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the programme area self-assessment reports, but considered that weaknesses in open and distance learning were understated.

Key strengths

- good teaching on advanced programmes
- thorough and constructive marking of students' work on advanced programmes
- a wide range of enrichment activities
- good pass rates in accounting
- a broad range of programmes from foundation to degree level

Weaknesses

- many students' failure to gain basic skills qualifications on the security guards course
- low retention rates on full-time advanced programmes
- no systematic monitoring of guided learning hours or students' achievements on open and distance learning programmes
- poor pass rates on GNVQ intermediate courses
- unsatisfactory teaching on some lower level courses

25 The college offers a broad range of general business courses including GNVQ, GCSE and GCE A level business courses, accounting and retail programmes, NVQ accounting courses at levels 2 to 4, and intermediate, advanced and graduate courses in business and management. Courses are well managed. Course files include detailed schemes of work and student

handbooks. As the self-assessment report acknowledged, there is a wide range of enrichment activities. For example, students regularly participate in young enterprise activities and in 1999, one of the companies set up under the young enterprise scheme won a regional award for the best overall team and trade stand. In addition, there are student exchange schemes, run in conjunction with colleges in Copenhagen and Nantes.

26 A substantial number of widely dispersed external organisations are contracted to provide services for open and distance learning. Major contracts for the security industry have led to over 30,000 enrolments during the last three years. Other provision includes courses leading to NVQs in customer services, retailing and warehousing. Until September 1999, much of the administration was undertaken by an independent training company but it is now the responsibility of the college's enterprise and special projects department. Contract files are kept for each organisation involved in delivering open learning. They include the curricula vitae of trainers, a record of audit visits to the organisations concerned, and the contractual details of the programmes offered. In the files sampled, there were no records to show that the guided learning hours were used appropriately or met contractual requirements. This weakness was noted in the last inspection report but not in the self-assessment report. The college has recently produced a handbook which requires organisations to record all contact between teacher and learner.

27 Teaching on GCE A level subjects and other advanced programmes is good. Lesson preparation is thorough. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that a broad range of teaching methods is used. Learning materials are of good quality and include the extensive use of computer-generated slides and related handouts which students can annotate. In one lesson at advanced level, the teacher related the principles of corporate

Curriculum Areas

planning to the students' own organisations effectively. The students were able to share their understanding of the importance of mission statements and the setting of objectives and targets. The marking of students' work on advanced level courses is thorough and constructive. GNVQ students are provided with detailed guidance on the standards they need to attain in order to achieve higher grades. Teaching on some foundation and intermediate level courses is less satisfactory. A number of lessons were poorly planned and did not meet the needs of students with different abilities. In some instances, the teacher talked far too much, failed to ask questions and the students lost interest in the lesson.

28 Inspectors found that ISR data on achievements held centrally and records held by departments were often irreconcilable. However, inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the pass rates on NVQ accounting programmes are good and improving. GCE A level pass rates are close to the national average for the sector. Pass and retention rates are good on the GNVQ foundation course. Retention rates are poor on full-time advanced programmes. For example, of the 57 students who started the GNVQ business course in 1998, only 40 continued to the second year in 1999. Pass rates are poor on the GNVQ intermediate level course; in 1999, only five of the 16 students who started the course gained an award. In 1998, only 28% of those who started the basic skills for security guards qualification course gained the award; no data on this course were available for 1999. Students' work on advanced courses is often of a good standard and it demonstrates that students use IT effectively.

29 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that teachers are well qualified. Several are studying for higher degrees. All staff teaching on vocational programmes hold relevant assessor awards, and many have recent industrial experience.

Students have ready access to modern networked IT resources within the business departments. There are good display materials in some classrooms. Learning resources are sufficient, although some GCE A level students have to purchase their own textbooks.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of retention and achievement rates in general business, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Basic skills for security guards	1	Number of starters	11,935	17,746	+
		Retention (%)	58	*	+
		Achievement (%)	68	*	+
GNVQ intermediate business	2	Number of starters	40	13	16
		Retention (%)	70	69	81
		Achievement (%)	43	78	38
NVQ accounting	2	Number of starters	27	*	61
		Retention (%)	96	*	80
		Achievement (%)	62	*	46
GCE A level business studies and accounting	3	Number of starters	*	*	131
		Retention (%)	*	*	70
		Achievement (%)	*	*	75
National certificate in business and finance	3	Number of starters	*	*	38
		Retention (%)	*	*	89
		Achievement (%)	*	*	79
GNVQ advanced business	3	Number of starters	40	43	24
		Retention (%)	*	*	50
		Achievement (%)	*	*	92

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

**data unreliable*

+data not collected

Curriculum Areas

Office Administration

Grade 2

30 Inspectors observed 14 lessons on a range of office administration courses. They agreed with some of the judgements made in the self-assessment report, but considered that insufficient prominence had been given to the evaluation of teaching and learning and to students' achievements.

Key strengths

- some outstanding teaching
- well-equipped specialist accommodation
- effective use of information, communications and learning technology resources
- thorough feedback on students' work
- good curriculum management

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on some courses in 1999
- insufficient preparation for work placement assessment

31 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college offers a broad range of courses in administration, office technology and single-subject skills. Most courses are available on either a part-time or full-time basis and many recruit students at various times during the year. There are good opportunities for students to progress to other further education courses and into employment. The curriculum area is well managed and part-time teachers are fully integrated with course teams. Students take initial tests in basic skills in order that their learning support needs may be identified. Up-to-date records of students' progress are kept with registers and lesson plans. The progress of 16 to 19 year old students is regularly reported to parents. NVQ students benefit from work placements although some

students find that they do not provide them with sufficient opportunities to produce evidence for their portfolios.

32 Over one-third of the teaching observed was outstanding. Schemes of work are well organised and specify a variety of appropriate learning activities. In one lesson, the teacher successfully used wordprocessing materials already stored on the computer to provide the students with practice in use of the apostrophe. The students concentrated hard throughout the lesson. The teacher questioned the students regularly and went over important points again to make sure they had understood them. In the better lessons, students make good use of well-designed workbooks which the teachers have produced. These give clear instructions, for example on how to set up and use spreadsheets and desktop publishing software, and include extension tasks where students practise these operations without further guidance. In some lessons, teachers encourage students to use and develop presentational techniques. For example, the students prepare oral presentations for which they use overhead projector transparencies. Such activities motivate students and help them to develop their key skills. Teachers provide students with detailed written feedback on their work. The poorer lessons are not planned well and the teachers fail to ensure that the learning activities suit the range of abilities of students in the class. Some of the tasks they set are insufficiently demanding. Teachers did not make good use of the facilities in the office administration support room to prepare students for their NVQ assessment in the workplace. They did not provide students with a wide range of practical work but instead, they gave them small filing tasks which failed to extend their skills. Many of the learning materials the teachers produce do not develop students' understanding of business. Students are not encouraged to use reference materials in the learner base. In some cases, teachers miss

Curriculum Areas

opportunities to illustrate points by drawing on the students' own experience. The college self-assessment report did not identify these weaknesses in teaching and learning.

33 Retention rates on most courses are near or slightly above the national average for the sector. However, on a minority of courses, retention rates have declined and are below the national average. On the majority of courses, pass rates have fallen over the last three years. For example, in 1999, the proportion of students who gained grade C or above in GCSE office studies, is below the national average. The self-assessment report did not acknowledge these weaknesses in students' achievements. Students' assessed work is of an appropriate standard. Students' portfolios are well organised. Students work conscientiously on developing basic spelling, communication, numeracy, keyboarding and wordprocessing skills. They value the opportunity to take part in enrichment opportunities such as work placement abroad, for example in Finland.

34 Teachers have relevant qualifications and commercial experience. The accommodation for office administration is good. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the business IT workshops and training offices are well equipped. These have up-to-date computers and software, provide access to the Internet and they create a realistic office environment. Teaching areas and corridors are well decorated. Students and teachers regularly use IT, including desktop publishing, projected computer screen images and presentations using a software package. There are few learning materials on the college network to support office administration students.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of retention and achievement rates in office administration, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE office studies	1	Number of starters	*	54	35
		Retention (%)	*	69	76
		Achievement (%)	*	*	27
Audio transcription stage 1 part 2 (one year)	1	Number of starters	91	49	81
		Retention (%)	82	73	83
		Achievement (%)	67	93	69
Computer literacy and information technology	1	Number of starters	**	220	171
		Retention (%)	**	89	71
		Achievement (%)	**	*	46
Mailmerge stage 2 part 2 (one year)	2	Number of starters	15	23	16
		Retention (%)	100	100	94
		Achievement (%)	80	83	73
Wordprocessing stage 2 part 2 (one year)	2	Number of starters	189	16	176
		Retention (%)	91	94	90
		Achievement (%)	73	91	70
Wordprocessing stage 3 part 2 (one year)	3	Number of starters	114	100	105
		Retention (%)	91	90	95
		Achievement (%)	65	88	73

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

**data unreliable*

***data not available*

Curriculum Areas

Art, Design and Performing Arts

Grade 2

35 Inspectors observed 15 lessons in art, design and performing arts. They agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They considered that the college had overestimated the significance of some strengths, however, and found additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- detailed and well-maintained course records
- good teaching of basic principles
- a wide range of specialist resources
- students' success in progressing to higher education
- clear roles and responsibilities of core team of staff

Weaknesses

- poor pass and retention rates on performing arts courses
- failure of teaching methods to challenge students to explore ideas

36 The college provides a wide range of art, design and performing arts courses including GCSE and GCE A level courses, and those leading to GNVQ at intermediate and advanced, first and national diploma, and the diploma in foundation studies. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that there are good opportunities for progression within programmes, and to higher education in the college and elsewhere. The provision is well managed, course teams meet regularly and curriculum planning is effective. The part-time provision is a distinctive element of the department's work. Staff who teach part-time community-based provision meet and discuss

their work with the college co-ordinator. Students in community-based classes receive help and support to enable them to learn effectively. For example, students bring their children to art classes which take place in a church hall and they are properly supervised whilst their parents concentrate on their lessons. There are strong links with the local community and students worked on a summer project involving mural design and performance. Performing arts students use video-conferencing to liaise with an American college. Students enrich their studies by attending specialist workshops, visiting theatres, dance performances and exhibitions, and making visits abroad.

37 In art and design, much of the teaching of basic principles is good. Lessons are well planned and teachers follow detailed schemes of work. In the best lessons, teachers briefed students clearly and used well-planned activities to develop the students' skills and abilities. In one successful lesson, students enjoyed working in an open-ended way with colour materials. The starting point was the random throw of a dice, which determined choice of location, objects, techniques and media. In the better lessons, students experienced an appropriate combination of theory and practice. In a dance lesson, students were taught the elements of labanotation. By the end of the lesson they were confident in reading notation and performing the dance described. The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge that some teachers do not differentiate learning activities sufficiently to suit the needs of individual students and that they fail to ensure all members of the class are challenged to explore concepts and ideas. The assessment of students' work is thorough and constructive. Teachers take care to involve students in the assessment process. There is frequent and effective monitoring of students' progress.

Curriculum Areas

38 Retention rates are poor on many courses. In 1999, only 56% of students completed the GCE A level art and design course and only 63% the GCE A level theatre studies course. Over the last three years, there has been an overall decline in retention rates. According to figures provided by curriculum managers less than 55% of students who started their BTEC national diploma in performing arts courses in 1997, 1998 and 1999 completed their course and achieved the qualification. In 1998, pass and retention rates on the GNVQ advanced art and design course were good and above the national average for the sector. The self-assessment report for performing arts did not acknowledge weaknesses in students' achievements. Many students progress to higher education. For example in 1998, 75% of students who completed the GNVQ advanced art and design course progressed to higher education. Fifteen students had previously studied GNVQ intermediate art and design. Students' portfolios in art and design are of a high standard. Attendance rates are good, and students arrive punctually for their lessons.

39 Teachers are well qualified and are encouraged to update their skills through external or in-house training activities. Many have good links with industry. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that accommodation for performing arts and art and design is good. It is clean and well managed. The professionally arranged display of students' work in all areas helps to create a working environment which the students find stimulating. There is a budget for the purchasing of students' work. The college has a well-equipped theatre and a dance studio. Students in art and design have access to an excellent range of printmaking, fashion, textiles, three-dimensional, and photography facilities. An outside covered area provides good space for large-scale work. The learning resource centre is well used.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of retention and achievement rates in art, design and performing arts, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE art and design	2	Number of starters	37	24	30
		Retention (%)	78	83	56
		Achievement (%)	0	90	82
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	Number of starters	31	29	30
		Retention (%)	84	93	67
		Achievement (%)	85	67	90
BTEC first diploma in performing arts	2	Number of starters	21	17	15
		Retention (%)	67	94	73
		Achievement (%)	100	75	63
BTEC national diploma in performing arts	3	Number of starters	50	66	36
		Retention (%)	82	79	55
		Achievement (%)	*	*	75
GCE A level theatre studies	3	Number of starters	17	15	16
		Retention (%)	88	73	63
		Achievement (%)	*	*	90
GCE A level art and design	3	Number of starters	39	40	39
		Retention (%)	72	58	56
		Achievement (%)	90	*	95
Diploma in foundation studies art and design	3	Number of starters	34	21	19
		Retention (%)	91	86	79
		Achievement (%)	94	89	93
GNVQ advanced art and design	3	Number of starters	*	64	*
		Retention (%)	*	89	*
		Achievement (%)	*	96	*

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Humanities

Grade 3

40 Inspectors observed 25 lessons covering English, modern foreign languages, psychology and sociology. They agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report but considered that the college had overestimated the strengths. Inspectors also found some weaknesses not identified through self-assessment.

Key strengths

- well-planned and authoritative teaching
- extensive support for students in their learning
- students' good achievements in GCE A level English literature, psychology and sociology
- well-resourced learning environment

Weaknesses

- some instances of failure to correct students' errors in grammar and spelling
- declining retention rates
- pass rates below the national average on some courses
- insufficient use of data on students' achievements in course evaluation and target-setting

41 The provision mainly consists of courses at GCSE and GCE A level. Some courses, developed in response to local needs, are delivered in the local community and through distance learning. Many GNVQ students study a modern foreign language as part of their programme. Courses are managed efficiently, and course files are well maintained. Teachers carry out a review of students' GCE A level results in which they compare the grades students obtain with those predicted for them on the basis of their performance in the GCSE. They do not use findings from this effectively,

however, when evaluating courses or setting targets and this weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. Students can take part in enrichment opportunities including visits to theatres and conferences. The college does not, however, arrange exchange visits to other countries for students studying modern languages.

42 As the self-assessment report indicates, most teaching is well planned. Induction programmes provide students with an effective introduction to new work. For example, GCE A level English students visit the Bradford Museum of Photography before attempting their first piece of creative writing. There are informative handbooks and good-quality handouts and worksheets for all courses. Teachers review individual students' progress regularly and they offer them helpful guidance on how they may improve their work. In some cases, students receive information about lessons they have missed. In the better lessons teaching is lively and excites the students' interest. Students are given demanding tasks which challenge them to think, explore concepts and use their skills to the full. Group work in sociology and psychology is well organised and productive. In one sociology lesson, students used a case study of a family living on unemployment benefit to determine how the family would live on the income. Through this activity, the students highlighted issues of unemployment and poverty. In the poorer lessons, group work is under-prepared, and does not occupy students productively. Students in modern languages lessons are not encouraged to make spontaneous use of the language being taught, and the work is not always at an appropriate level. Staff assess students' work carefully and usually provide valuable written feedback. In sociology and psychology, errors of grammar and spelling were not always corrected. The self-assessment report overestimated the quality of teaching and learning.

Curriculum Areas

43 In 1999, pass rates were good in GCE A level English literature, psychology and sociology, and a high proportion of students gained grade C or above in GCSE English literature. In English and psychology, GCE A level students achieve results which are better than those predicted for them on the basis of their previous GCSE performance. GNVQ students taking modern language modules achieve good pass rates. However, in 1999, pass rates in GCE A level French and the proportion of students who obtained grade C or above in GCSE modern languages were significantly below the national average for the sector. Over the last three years, there has been a decline in the overall retention rate for courses in the programme area. In 1999, retention rates were particularly low on GCSE English and in GCE A level modern languages courses. Only 50% of those who were enrolled on the two-year GCE A level French course in November 1998 were still attending at the time of the inspection. The college noted the decline in retention rates in modern languages in its self-assessment report. In most lessons, students were attentive but many did not contribute to discussions. Many students express their ideas clearly in their written work and use IT effectively. However, in their assignments some students merely narrated texts and did not engage in sufficient critical analysis of them. Their work was also marred by poor spelling and incorrect grammar.

44 Many teachers are external examiners. Facilitators, technicians and foreign language assistants provide teachers and students with valuable help and support. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that there are good specialist learning resources. Each subject area has a 'learner base' providing students with good access to materials and support. The modern languages learner base contains an extensive stock of written materials, television sets with live foreign channels, and computer stations with Internet access. A technician and

foreign language assistants are based in the learner base to assist students. Language classrooms are well equipped with individual listening and audiovisual facilities. Specialist classrooms in other subjects also contain attractive displays of students' work.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of retention and achievement rates in humanities, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE English	2	Number of starters	275	238	282
		Retention (%)	87	79	59
		Achievement (%)	*	*	47
GCSE French, German, Spanish	2	Number of starters	75	59	61
		Retention (%)	80	80	72
		Achievement (%)	*	*	45
GCSE psychology, sociology	2	Number of starters	166	112	69
		Retention (%)	83	81	76
		Achievement (%)	*	*	76
GCE A level English language, English literature	3	Number of starters	196	175	162
		Retention (%)	85	83	72
		Achievement (%)	78	87	83
GCE A level English literature	3	Number of starters	64	34	65
		Retention (%)	91	79	72
		Achievement (%)	93	100	96
GCE A level French, German, Spanish	3	Number of starters	40	59	59
		Retention (%)	*	*	63
		Achievement (%)	*	*	73
GCE A level sociology	3	Number of starters	*	*	36
		Retention (%)	*	*	69
		Achievement (%)	*	*	84
GCE A level psychology	3	Number of starters	110	98	105
		Retention (%)	87	92	70
		Achievement (%)	96	100	92

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Grade 4

45 The inspection covered full-time and part-time provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Inspectors observed 13 lessons. They agreed with many judgements in the self-assessment report but considered that weaknesses relating to teaching and learning and students' achievements were not given sufficient emphasis.

Key strengths

- students' good achievements on the vocational access certificate course
- effective work-related learning and good work placements
- clearly defined progression routes within the college

Weaknesses

- ineffective initial assessments
- inadequate individual learning plans
- narrow range of teaching methods
- inappropriateness of some provision to students' needs
- ineffective recording and reporting of students' achievements
- support workers' practice of completing the students' work themselves

46 Full-time and part-time courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are based within the department of social science. As the self-assessment report identified, the college has enlarged the scope of provision and has extended the range of programmes it offers. Students can now study courses which are designed to help them

progress towards employment. Since the last inspection, the roles and responsibilities of staff have been more clearly defined and communication between course tutors and their teams has improved. Staff have developed appropriate action plans for the development of the provision. However, much of this work is at an early stage of implementation and has not yet led to significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning or students' achievements. The college employs a high number of part-time teachers on these programmes. Problems have arisen over communications with some of these teachers, and in involving them in training initiatives and curriculum development activities.

47 The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed varied considerably. The best lessons were well planned. In their planning, teachers took into account their self-assessment of their work, students' performance in assessments, and the views of the students about their lessons. Teachers on the vocational access course ensure that lessons are closely linked to the students' work experience. They monitor students' work placements closely to ensure they are appropriate and to gain a good understanding of the students' work-based tasks. Students working towards employment and further training understand the aims of their programmes. Provision for students with more severe learning difficulties is poor. It does not meet the students' needs. Students take initial tests in basic skills to identify their learning support needs. However, the tests are not appropriate for these students. Students' individual learning plans do not specify measurable outcomes. Teachers plan activities without giving sufficient thought to what they want students to learn. In most of the lessons observed, learning activities were not differentiated to suit the ability and aptitude of individual students. All the students were expected to complete the same tasks. Some completed them more quickly than others and

Curriculum Areas

were given nothing worthwhile to do whilst waiting for the rest to finish. In some instances, the support workers completed students' work for them, thereby depriving the students of the chance to learn by working problems out for themselves. Teachers rarely offered constructive criticism and did not encourage students to reflect on what they had learned. The self-assessment report did not acknowledge the significance of these weaknesses.

48 An increasing number of students are achieving success on the vocational access certificate course. For example, in 1999, 17 out of 20 students achieved the certificate, compared with eight out of 16 in the previous year. Students on this programme focus on the task given to them, make effective contributions to discussions and benefit from well-planned work experience. For example, in a retail session students listened attentively, had a good understanding of the various roles within a retail establishment, drew on their own work experience to answer questions and supported other students in the group. A minority of students also achieve NVQ level 1 units within vocational areas. Students with more severe learning difficulties do not make satisfactory progress in the development of their personal skills. Teachers do not assess their work with sufficient thoroughness. The assessments they do carry out are not clearly recorded and no summary reports are made of the students' achievements. Only 50% of younger students progress to more advanced courses within the college but a higher proportion of adults do so. The self-assessment report did not give sufficient emphasis to the weaknesses in students' achievements.

49 Few staff have specialist qualifications or experience of teaching students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A training programme has been introduced recently, however, and staff are responding positively to this. Resources and facilities are of good quality. A learner base is well equipped with a range of

specialist computer software and peripheral equipment. Two facilitators help students and staff use the equipment effectively. The action taken to refurbish a domestic kitchen within the catering area to a high standard rectifies a weakness identified in the self-assessment report.

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

50 Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report, but found a significant weakness the college had not identified.

Key strengths

- well-managed advice and guidance for students
- good publicity materials
- effective careers, welfare and counselling services
- excellent liaison with schools and the community
- purposeful induction programme

Weaknesses

- some ineffective group tutorials
- shortcomings in aspects of learning support

51 The strategic plan commits the college to providing students with appropriate support. Responsibility for support for students is shared between the departments of student services, key skills and the curriculum areas. Support services for students are well managed. The college has received a number of awards for the quality of its support provision including the careers information it provides. Information on the support available is clearly displayed throughout the college. A strength identified in the college's self-assessment report is the extensive range of attractive publicity materials. Good pre-entry guidance is provided by members of the school links team and nominated tutors. Prospective students are well informed about the college and its courses, through recruitment events such as 'taster' days, road shows and open evenings. Links with primary and secondary schools are particularly

good. In 1999, the college provided 'taster' sessions for over 2,000 pupils from 14 schools and after-school activities for 900 year 11 pupils. The college is working with the local authority and four schools on a project for disaffected pupils.

52 Most students receive a comprehensive induction to the college and its services. All students receive the student handbook which includes the charter, a diary and other useful information. Tutors have an induction handbook, guidelines and checklists. Students commented favourably on their induction programme and most felt it to be purposeful and useful. It is the college's intention that all full-time and part-time students with a substantial timetable should undergo a basic skills assessment, as part of their induction. In practice, however, many students are not tested and in 1998, only 2,106 students received an assessment of their basic skills. In 1999, the college introduced a key skills diagnostic assessment involving the use of CD-ROM. The introduction of this assessment has, however, been beset by technical difficulties and, at the time of the inspection, many students had yet to be tested by this new method. Extra help with literacy, numeracy and IT is provided either by the department, basic skills workshops or the resource centre. The service also caters for students who refer themselves. Students with dyslexia are assessed carefully. In 1998, 80 students with dyslexia received support from a trained member of the college staff. A weakness not recognised in the self-assessment report is that the college does not monitor the effectiveness of learning support.

53 Much good support is provided for students. Many students speak highly of the support they receive from college staff, and in particular, the regular sessions when their progress is reviewed. In addition, students receive effective guidance and support in the learner bases. Tutors work to clear specifications for the conduct of tutorials across

Cross-college Provision

the college. These include details of the tutorial documentation to be used and of how group tutorials are to be structured. However, inspectors observed some tutorials which were poorly planned and not carried out effectively. Some students' attendance at tutorials is poor. The college has recently begun to monitor the quality of tutorials through its lesson observation programme.

54 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that its welfare, counselling and guidance services are responsive to students' needs and are well used. They provide advice on finance and benefits, counselling, careers guidance and advice, support with accommodation, transport and childcare. The college has its own childcare facilities for 70 children and it provides students with financial support to use other childcare facilities in the local community, if necessary. In 1998-99 over 1,000 students received financial support from the college. There are good, well-documented links with external agencies. Careers guidance is effective. Links between the college and the local careers service are strong. The service provides careers guidance interviews and a freephone helpline. A careers adviser is seconded to the college to support students wishing to progress to higher education courses. The careers resources are extensive and readily available to students.

55 The college acknowledged in its self-assessment that retention on some courses is below the national average for the sector. Retention rates are poor on many two-year courses. The college has now established a working group to explore ways of improving retention rates and determine action to be taken to dissuade students from leaving their course early. Although much of the support provided for students is good, retention rates on many courses give cause for concern.

56 Students are offered a wide variety of cultural and physical enrichment activities. At the time of the inspection, 440 students were taking part in the scheduled enrichment activities, and many more were participating in these as part of their course. There is a well-organised and active students' association managed by a president who is granted a sabbatical, and a team of three student liaison officers. The association supports both further and higher education students. It promotes clubs and societies, organises social activities and elects representatives for key groups in the college.

General Resources

Grade 1

57 Inspectors agreed with the strengths the college identified in its self-assessment report. The college did not identify any weaknesses.

Key strengths

- high standard of most accommodation
- extensive and well-equipped learning areas
- well-resourced general teaching facilities
- widespread availability of up-to-date IT resources
- effective use of community-based centres

Weaknesses

- some aspects of accommodation

58 Since the last inspection, continuous improvements have been made to the accommodation and general resources. There are five major sites: Old Mill Lane, Church Street, Eastgate, Honeywell and Huddersfield Road. Five other sites are also used and these are: Churchfields, the construction and fashion centres, the Falcon examination and conference

Cross-college Provision

hall and Belle Vue, the college's administrative centre. All sites are situated within walking distance of the town. The college also leases a 120-acre farm about 3 miles away. There are 47 smaller centres, known as general access points, located in schools, church halls and community centres across the borough. The self-assessment report recognised that these centres provide good opportunities for local communities to benefit from the college's provision. These centres vary considerably in terms of the provision and facilities they offer students. Some are excellent, have good resources and are open extensively throughout the week. Others have rudimentary facilities or are only open for short periods.

59 The college's main buildings were constructed for a variety of uses and many were in a dilapidated state at the time of incorporation. The college's accommodation strategy has effectively addressed most of the inherited problem, although the Huddersfield Road premises have major structural defects. College surveys indicate that much of the accommodation is well used. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that, internally, the college environment is good. Accommodation is well furnished, clean and tidy and appropriate security measures are taken. Well-arranged displays of students' work are a feature throughout the college. The main entrance to the college, at Old Mill Lane, is welcoming and attractively furnished and provides easy access to advice and guidance services. Inflexible heating arrangements on some sites result in working areas sometimes becoming very warm. There is a crèche at Huddersfield Road. Car parking for students is available at two sites and there are cafeteria services at four of the main sites. Exemplary sign-posting guides the public to the different sites and within the buildings. There are extensive outside sporting facilities but indoor facilities are limited. However, the college makes use of the local authority's leisure centre.

60 Each main site has an attractively furnished and well-resourced learning centre with library facilities. These centres are open extensively throughout the week and at weekends. There are also 22 learner bases, each containing learning materials for individual curriculum areas. The centres and the bases provide students with readily accessible study areas, library facilities, including books and a wide range of other learning resources, staff support and IT. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the general-purpose learning areas are of good quality. Classrooms are well equipped with audiovisual equipment and window blinds and are carpeted. Twenty sets of multimedia equipment integrating computer and projection technology are available to teachers. There is easy access to photocopying facilities.

61 Since the last inspection, the college has improved the accessibility of its accommodation for students with disabilities. Automatic doors, lifts, chair-lifts, and ramps are provided where needed and nearly all the teaching accommodation is accessible. A recent audit of the provision, conducted by a student of the college who uses a wheelchair, has resulted in further improvements. In a few areas, it is not easy for students with disabilities to reach some of the facilities directly.

62 As identified in the self-assessment report, the college has an excellent information and communications technology infrastructure. It has invested heavily, £3.5 million in the last two years, in new technology. Most college sites are linked by modern network facilities. There are over 1,030 high specification computers for student use. Most are networked and linked to the Internet. A further 48 computers are available in the general access points, supplemented by 112 portable computers when needed. Most computers are built and maintained by the college. They are replaced on a three-year cycle and old machines are donated to schools and local charities. Over 300

Cross-college Provision

teachers have each been provided with a computer so that they can work from home whilst connected to the college's network. The network provides students and teachers with electronic mail and furthers the college's aim of using the Internet extensively for learning. Students may save their coursework and personal details on the network. Forty CD-ROMs and learning materials produced by course teams are accessible through the network.

Quality Assurance

Grade 3

63 Inspectors agreed with some of the judgements in the self-assessment report but found significant weaknesses the college had not identified.

Key strengths

- strong commitment of the college to the improvement of provision
- well-developed system of lesson observation
- effective staff appraisal and staff development systems
- effective use of findings from surveys of students' opinions
- successful acquisition of external quality awards

Weaknesses

- insufficient analysis of data on students' achievements
- inadequate quality assurance arrangements for open and distance learning
- failure of some staff to carry out quality assurance procedures with consistent thoroughness
- lack of rigour in some aspects of course reviews

64 The college has a strong commitment to quality improvement. It has achieved a wide range of external awards including: Investor in People for a third time; the Charter Mark; the ISO 9000 quality management standard; the Basic Skills Agency kitemark and Beacon Awards in science, engineering and community education. Procedures for the quality assurance of mainstream provision are comprehensive and well established. However, they are not always applied with consistent thoroughness. Monitoring of compliance with the quality assurance procedures is not robust. Evaluation procedures lack rigour. The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge that arrangements for assuring the quality of the open and distance learning courses are inadequate. For example, few lesson observations had been undertaken and students' achievements had not been monitored. The curriculum sections of the report did not include sufficient evidence on the quality of these courses.

65 The college has a number of committees and panels which consider aspects relating to the quality of provision. For example, the quality review committee is chaired by a governor, and is responsible for monitoring the quality and standards of provision and for advising the corporation accordingly. The academic board also receives reports on the quality of college provision and the executive considers the main outcomes of departmental reviews of provision. Panels for reviewing the standards of programmes receive oral presentations and brief written reports on selected courses. The course approvals committee considers new course proposals against a comprehensive set of rigorous criteria. If examination results are poor on a particular course, the executive requires the course team concerned to produce an action plan for improving students' performance. The director of studies monitors three times a year, progress in implementing this plan. Some of these review panels operate well. However,

Cross-college Provision

insufficient attention is given to some important aspects of quality assurance, such as the comparison of student achievement rates with national averages and the identification of trends in students' achievements.

66 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the process of course review, based on a system of course records relating to quality, is well established. The records follow a standard format for all college-based courses and include key information, such as summaries of students' perceptions and data on students' achievements. Some records are not fully completed, however, and many do not cover trends in students' achievements. It is only since September 1999 that the records have included comparisons of performance with national benchmarks. Many records failed to identify the poor achievements of some students. Procedures for identifying the value added to students' achievements by comparing their final examination results with those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE grades, have only recently been introduced. Ways of using information gained from these procedures to improve the quality of provision, are at an early stage of development. Targets for recruitment, and for student retention and achievement, are determined by performance in the previous year only rather than by trends over several years.

67 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that quantifiable standards for cross-college services are well established and progress towards reaching them is regularly monitored in most areas. Commitments are given in the college's charter to attaining some of these standards. Reports on performance against the standards are produced in most service areas and considered by a member of the executive. However, in some areas these reports are oral rather than written.

68 The college's charter is issued to all students. There is one version for college-based students and another for students on open and distance learning programmes. The extent to

which the college meets its charter commitments is monitored effectively by the charter monitoring group. The complaints procedures are comprehensive. There are effective arrangements for obtaining and evaluating the views of students and these are considered by the quality review committee. Course teams take students' views into account when evaluating courses and establishing action plans. Students are not, however, always given summaries of their views. Students speak positively of the use of student focus groups to address particular issues. Employers are asked to offer their views on the college's courses and services but not all respond to this request.

69 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that procedures for staff appraisal were effective. All staff receive an annual appraisal when their success in meeting performance targets is reviewed and they are set new ones. Staff development is well planned and effective. The staff development programme reflects the training needs of individual staff identified through the staff appraisal process, and the aims of the college's strategic and operational plans. The evaluation of training and the dissemination of outcomes from external events are effective. The budget for staff development, excluding investment in the StaffIT project, for 1999-2000 is £200,000 and this represents 1.5% of the staffing budget.

70 There is an established and well-developed system of lesson observation. Using a small team of trained 'lead teachers' to conduct observations, all teachers are observed at least annually. The findings from the observations are used in the self-assessment process and to identify the staff development needs of individual teachers. Teachers speak positively about the benefits of the scheme and claim it has extended their knowledge of the range of teaching and learning methods. In its self-assessment report, however, the proportion of lessons graded good or outstanding was higher than that found by the inspectors.

Cross-college Provision

Governance

Grade 3

71 Inspectors and auditors agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report but found weaknesses the college had not identified.

Key strengths

- effective systems for the recruitment and induction of governors
- a wide range of policies for the conduct of corporation business
- close involvement in setting the strategic direction of the college
- governors' extensive self-evaluation of the corporation's performance

Weaknesses

- governors' failure to monitor the achievements of all students
- insufficient monitoring of actions to remedy weaknesses identified in the last inspection
- failure of the audit committee to comply fully with its remit
- failure to consider value for money when awarding a significant contract

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

73 The corporation has 12 members. At the time of the inspection, there was one vacancy. The corporation has made considerable progress towards compliance with the membership requirements of the modified instrument and articles of government. Governors have an appropriate range of skills

and professional experience, which have been used, for example, to improve financial reporting processes. Attendance at corporation and committee meetings is good. Inspectors and auditors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that the search committee operates a formal, comprehensive and open appointment process. It identifies the skills it requires of new governors who are then sought through public advertisements. New governors receive effective induction. Regular training events take place before corporation meetings. Individual members' training needs, such as specialist training in health and safety, are also met. Members of the corporation set, and monitor themselves against, individual and corporation targets. Self-assessment procedures involve evaluation of the work of the corporation, each of its committees, each member, and the effectiveness of every corporation and committee meeting.

74 The clerk is also director of corporate resources and has separate job descriptions for each role. She receives effective administrative support. Agendas, and a wide range of papers for meetings of the corporation and its committees, are circulated well in advance. Generally, they provide a good basis for discussion and decision-making. Corporation and committee papers and minutes, with the exception of confidential items, are publicly available in the college library and a summary is included in the college newsletter. Governors, except those newly appointed, and staff with significant financial responsibilities have completed a declaration of interests, also available in the learning resource centre. The corporation has approved a public interest disclosure policy. The corporation has also established criteria for determining confidentiality and release dates for confidential minutes and papers. The code of conduct has not been updated to incorporate recommendations from the Nolan committee on standards of openness and accountability.

Cross-college Provision

75 The corporation's committees cover finance and policy, audit, and remuneration. The finance and policy committee usually meets once a month and closely monitors the college's financial position. Monthly financial reports are sent to all governors. However, the committee has not given adequate consideration to the value for money aspects of the contract with a related company, in accordance with its terms of reference. The chief executive failed to declare a relevant financial interest at two finance and policy committee meetings which discussed renewing the contract with a related company. The audit committee has not fully complied with its remit. For example, it did not instigate competitive tendering of the internal and external audit services after the auditors had been in office for five years, contrary to FEFC requirements. It has not established performance measures and indicators to monitor the effectiveness of the internal and external auditors. These weaknesses were not reflected in the self-assessment report.

76 Members of the corporation play an important role in reviewing the mission and vision statements of the college and in determining its strategic priorities. This strength was recognised in the self-assessment report. Progress towards the implementation of strategic priorities is reviewed at the twice-yearly appraisal of senior postholders. Some of the corporation's committees are responsible for monitoring and reporting on the effectiveness of aspects of the strategic plan. They report formally to the corporation on progress in implementing the plan.

77 The corporation is kept well informed about many non-financial aspects of the college. It receives detailed reports on health and safety, and on the upholding of equal opportunities in relation to its role as employer. Its committees consider reports on: other equal opportunities matters, quality assurance, summaries of students' responses to questionnaires, staff development, and how the college meets its

charter obligations. Governors have not, however, given sufficient priority to monitoring progress in implementing the action plan drawn up after the last inspection, in respect of rectifying key weaknesses in relation to unsatisfactory management information and poor retention rates. The corporation receives concise reports on students' achievements. None of these reports, however, highlights the large numbers of students for whom no examination results are recorded. Governors received insufficiently detailed reports on the low achievement of students on the open and distance learning programme and no specific performance targets for this area were set. These weaknesses were not mentioned in the self-assessment report.

78 Governors work with staff and students on the college council. The council has an extensive and wide-ranging membership, and meets quarterly to discuss the progress and position of the college in its community. Each governor is associated with a particular aspect of the college, for example, business links and health and safety. Many governors are members of programme standards review panels. Governors frequently attend college functions and have published an illustrated booklet giving profiles of members and listing their responsibilities. The college holds a well-attended public meeting each year to report on its operations.

Cross-college Provision

Management

Grade 3

79 Inspectors agreed with several of the strengths identified in the college's self-assessment report. They considered, however, that some strengths were overstated and they found additional and significant weaknesses.

Key strengths

- extensive range of policies
- comprehensive and consultative strategic planning processes
- rigorous monitoring of health and safety
- effective promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities

Weaknesses

- inadequate management of open and distance learning
- discrepancies in centrally maintained management information and that held by departments
- weaknesses in the management of aspects of cross-college provision

80 The chief executive provides strong leadership and drives forward many of the initiatives related to the college's strategic development. The college's mission was recently reviewed and redefined following widespread consultation with staff. Staff speak positively about their opportunities to participate in the strategic and operational planning processes.

81 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. Both the director of corporate strategy and finance, and the head of finance have professional accountancy qualifications. The finance department produces comprehensive and timely

monthly management accounts which are reviewed by the executive management team. However, the accounts do not report on progress towards the achievement of the college's strategic financial objectives. Despite its low average level of funding, the college has produced operating surpluses between 1996-97 and 1998-99, and the financial forecasts for 1999 to 2002 indicate its continuing financial strength. The college's draft 1998-99 financial statements indicate reserves of over £5 million; this being due to the surpluses it has generated since incorporation. Budgetary processes are well documented. Pay and non-pay expenditure are fully delegated to departmental heads. The college's financial regulations have recently been updated but require further revisions to reflect issues such as the frequency with which purchases are subject to written quotations or tenders. A recent report by the internal auditors highlighted weaknesses in the procedures for student enrolment, registration and recording of attendance. College returns to the FEFC have not always been made by the required deadlines. The scope of the internal audit work has not yet extended to the college's contracted-out services, a major part of the college's activities.

82 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that there is good communication between senior managers and staff. Staff are kept well informed of current developments through a weekly newsletter, termly presentations by the chief executive and informal lunchtime surgeries held by the chief executive at each of the college's sites. Staff consider their views are respected and taken seriously. However, communication across the college is less effective. For example, staff who teach the same subject in different departments do not have the opportunity to meet together. Subject teachers do not always pass information about students to personal tutors. To address these weaknesses the college has appointed staff to act as co-ordinators between departments.

Cross-college Provision

83 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that there is a clear management structure. The role of executive members in furthering the college's mission and upholding the college's values is clearly defined. A role profile has been drawn up for executive staff and this specifies the skills, competencies and experience they should have. Role profiles for other staff help them to understand their responsibilities and their position in the management structure. Departments have responsibility for the management and the teaching of all courses across the college including those provided through open and distance learning. There is, however, some confusion over the respective responsibilities of departments and the open and distance learning unit in relation to open and distance learning programmes. The management of open and distance learning is inadequate. The college has taken action to rectify this weakness by recently revising the management responsibilities of the unit. Changes to these responsibilities, however, have not been taken account of in the college's strategic or operating plans.

84 In 1997-98, the open and distance learning courses comprised approximately 40% of the college's total provision. The self-assessment report failed to identify as a weakness, the college's failure to maintain data on students' achievements on these courses. Inspectors requested these data but were informed that it would be uneconomic for the college to collect such information retrospectively. At the time of the inspection, the college was discussing with the FEFC the financial implications of withdrawing from much of its provision delivered at a distance in 2000-01.

85 The college has been slow to address many of the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. For example, the previous inspection report highlighted that data on students' achievements presented to inspectors differed from data held by course teams. Although senior managers maintain that

centrally held data relating to students' retention and achievements are now accurate, inspectors found many discrepancies between the data held centrally and that used by course teams to plan and monitor the quality of their programmes. For example, ISR data indicated that 54 students began working towards NVQ accounts at level 4 in 1997, but course team records showed that only 11 students had enrolled. In most curriculum areas, inspectors could not place reliance on much of the data on students' achievements. Action to address the weaknesses identified in the college's provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has not yet led to significant improvements in the quality of this provision.

86 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the promotion of equality of opportunity is a strength. The 'inclusive college committee', with representatives from the corporation, managers and staff, monitors the promotion of equality of opportunity effectively. It reviews recruitment trends for staff and students, the college's accessibility to persons with disabilities, and the college's disability statement. In order to raise awareness of the importance of good race relations, the college invited the father of Stephen Lawrence to talk to staff, students and members of the community. His talk provided the stimulus for a successful poetry competition in the college on the theme of racial harmony.

87 There is an effective framework of policies. The policies are regularly reviewed. Each policy sets out procedures and guidelines for its implementation. The guidelines specify where key responsibilities for carrying out the policy lie. However, some staff do not follow the procedures, such as those for the withdrawal of absent students from registers. The college has a rigorous approach to the promotion and monitoring of health and safety. Comprehensive risk assessments are carried out at regular intervals and related training is provided for staff at all levels in the college. This strength was not identified in the self-assessment report.

Cross-college Provision

88 There are productive links with a range of external partners. For example, the college works with the Barnsley Development Agency, the Barnsley Regeneration Forum and similar bodies. Inspectors agreed that these links are helping the college to raise the educational profile of the borough. For example, the college has a partnership with local comprehensive schools to improve pupils' achievements in their GCSE examinations. However, there has been little take up in the few vocational programmes at entry level.

Conclusions

89 The college's self-assessment report was detailed. It identified strengths and weaknesses in its provision in accordance with the statements on quality in Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*. The self-assessment report also identified action for the improvement of provision. The main report incorporated self-assessment reports on some subject areas. For some programme areas component self-assessment reports were also included. Inspectors found that the self-assessment report provided a useful basis for planning and carrying out the inspection. However, the open and distance learning provision was not adequately covered in the report. Some weaknesses were understated in the self-assessment report. Inspectors did not agree with some judgements that were based on incorrect data held by the college. Insufficient attention was given to weaknesses in teaching and learning and to some students' achievements. Inspectors agreed with only four grades in the self-assessment report and for six areas of provision, they awarded lower grades than those given by the college.

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

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (July 1999)

Age	%
Under 16	2
16-18 years	14
19-24 years	20
25+ years	64
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 1999)

Level of study	%
Level 1 (foundation)	36
Level 2 (intermediate)	45
Level 3 (advanced)	7
Level 4/5 (higher)	2
Non-schedule 2	10
Total	100

Source: college data

Note: all enrolments to unknown levels allocated to level 1

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (July 1999)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	537	1,455	3
Agriculture	71	233	0
Construction	280	4,941	9
Engineering	160	2,978	5
Business	467	15,341	26
Hotel and catering	247	5,565	10
Health and community care	364	1,905	4
Art and design	692	597	2
Humanities	1,437	20,176	36
Basic education	421	2,482	5
Total	4,676	55,673	100

Source: college data

Note: all enrolments to unknown programme areas allocated to humanities

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 37% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July 1999)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	268	11	263	542
Supporting direct learning contact	112	8	129	249
Other support	347	20	0	367
Total	727	39	392	1,158

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£25,687,000	£25,754,000	£30,047,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£15.68	£14.46	£16.20*
Payroll as a proportion of income	54%	55%	49%
Achievement of funding target	126%	101%	100%
Diversity of income	21%	22%	18%
Operating surplus	£1,002,000	£192,000	£608,000

Sources: Income - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

ALF - Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1997 and 1998), Funding Allocations 1998-99 (1999)

Payroll - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

Achievement of funding target - Performance Indicators 1997-98 (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

Diversity of income - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

Operating surplus - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

*provisional data

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
1	Number of starters	704	1,336	1,266	903	5,570	2,254
	Retention (%)	83	78	83	90	94	92
	Achievement (%)	61	67	*	78	90	*
2	Number of starters	1,805	2,351	2,300	2,276	5,743	4,126
	Retention (%)	85	81	82	*	84	93
	Achievement (%)	74	70	79	74	61	*
3	Number of starters	2,842	2,679	3,050	1,502	2,870	2,903
	Retention (%)	*	86	82	*	85	90
	Achievement (%)	73	71	73	53	61	*
4 or 5	Number of starters	8	19	50	119	233	360
	Retention (%)	100	*	*	*	*	*
	Achievement (%)	38	44	80	73	35	*
Short courses	Number of starters	844	1,168	3,822	4,133	8,612	1,948
	Retention (%)	*	97	97	*	97	99
	Achievement (%)	66	72	*	74	74	*
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	4,117	4,344	3,935	10,950	27,642	32,844
	Retention (%)	93	82	92	96	75	96
	Achievement (%)	88	48	*	93	67	-

Source: ISR

-ISR data not collected

*ISR data may not be reliable

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