# Basingstoke College of Technology

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE

## 2000-01

# Contents

## 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 1999-2000, are shown in the following table.*

|  | Grade | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
|  | **%** | **%** | **%** | **%** | **%** |
| *Curriculum areas* | *6* | *44* | *44* | *7* | *0* |
| *Cross-college provision* | *9* | *45* | *38* | *8* | *0* |

*Source: Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report*

*Sample size: 112 college inspections*
*Note: percentages subject to rounding*

## 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 1996, would appear in the results for 1997-98 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

## Basingstoke College of Technology

### South East Region

**Inspected October 2000**

Basingstoke College of Technology is a general further education college located in North Hampshire. Inspectors planned the inspection using the college's self-assessment report for 1998-99. The college produced an updated self-assessment for 1999-2000 in time for the inspection. The self-assessment process was thorough and involved teachers and support staff. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report, although they identified some additional strengths and weaknesses.

The college provides courses in nine of the 10 FEFC programme areas. Provision in five programme areas was inspected, together with basic skills and aspects of cross-college provision. The number of good lessons is well above the average for the sector but the proportion of outstanding lessons is slightly below. The integration of key skills with vocational courses is very good. Student achievement rates on most courses are above the national average for general further education colleges, with significant improvements at all levels in the last two years. Measures taken to improve retention are beginning to have an effect particularly among 16 to 18 year olds. The college has responded to a community demand for more courses for adults. However, it does not always fully address the specific learning needs of adult learners. The college has outstanding quality assurance mechanisms with effective procedures for identifying and improving underperforming courses. Learning support is good, and there is high-quality pastoral and welfare support. The college benefits from strong leadership and effective management, and has effectively dealt with a range of significant challenges over the last four years. Good teaching accommodation is well maintained, and computer facilities have been significantly upgraded in the last year. The governing body effectively oversees the college's finance and systems, but has made an insufficient contribution to some key strategic decisions. The college should improve: the overall retention rate and the retention of students over 19 years old; the uneven quality of management of some curriculum areas; the quality of student tutorials; the range of college-wide enrichment activities for students; and the governing body's contribution to some key strategic decisions. The college should also: address the learning needs of adult learners; improve the rigour of action-planning; and review the operation of the remuneration committee.

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

| Curriculum area | Grade |
| --- | --- |
| Computing and information technology | 3 |
| Engineering | 2 |
| Business studies | 2 |
| Business administration and professional studies | 2 |
| Hospitality and catering | 2 |
| Hairdressing and beauty therapy | 1 |
| Basic skills | 2 |

| Cross-college provision | Grade |
| --- | --- |
| Support for students | 2 |
| General resources | 2 |
| Quality assurance | 1 |
| Governance | 2 |
| Management | 1 |

# Context

## The College and its Mission

1    Basingstoke College of Technology is a general further education college in the North Hampshire borough of Basingstoke and Deane. The borough is mostly rural apart from Basingstoke itself. The college is located largely on a single campus close to the town centre and in a classroom block at a local school. There are also three strategically placed community learning centres. One centre is situated in the town centre, another in a suburb of Basingstoke. The third centre is located in a small town 16 miles from Basingstoke.

2    The local economy is prosperous. Basingstoke is a significant commercial location with over 3,000 registered companies; these are organisations needing a well-educated workforce. For the last 20 years unemployment rates have been below the national average and are currently under 1% for the Basingstoke travel-to-work area.

3    Local secondary education is organised in nine 11 to 16 schools. Of Basingstoke's school-leavers in 1999, 77% continued into full-time education after the age of 16. The size of the year 11 cohort declined by 8.5% between 1996 and 1998 but rose by 4% in 1999. There is a large sixth form college in Basingstoke which caters for the needs of students requiring full-time general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) or general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) programmes and there are also other colleges for post-16 students in the nearby towns of Alton, Farnborough, Andover and Winchester.

4    The college courses are mainly vocational although there is a large part-time general education provision. In 1999-2000, the college offered courses in all the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas except agriculture; courses are provided at all levels from foundation through to higher levels. There is specific provision for students with learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties and mental health problems. Two major curriculum initiatives have been developed over the last 18 months. These are the establishment of community learning centres in the college travel-to-work area and the development of distance learning. The vast majority of the college's programme is direct provision; franchised provision has declined over the last two years and is only expected to generate 0.2% of the college's funding units in 2000-01. Directly funded full-time higher education programmes have been established in business, travel and tourism management, public services, graphic design and computing.

5    In July 2000, the college had enrolled 1,505 full-time and 7,619 part-time FEFC-funded students; in addition there were a further 2,133 students enrolled on courses not funded by the FEFC. These figures represent a 7% decline in full-time and 14% increase in part-time FEFC students compared with 1 May 1999. Of the college's students, 56% are aged 19 or over. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is approximately 4% compared with about 2% in the local area.

6    The senior management team comprises the principal, two vice-principals, four school support managers, a staff support manager and a finance and estates services manager. The college is organised into 15 schools of study, six support departments and three community learning centres.

7    An updated version of the college mission statement, 'to provide access to excellence in education and training', was adopted on 1 August 1996. The statement reflects the college's continued emphasis on the provision and extension of learning opportunities accessible to the wider community and supported by college-wide quality assurance mechanisms and client-oriented services.

# Context

## The Inspection

8    The college was inspected during the week beginning 16 October 2000.  Before the inspection, inspectors considered the self-assessment report and information from other directorates of the FEFC.  The college provided data on students' achievements for 2000.  Inspectors checked these data against primary sources of evidence such as registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies and found the data accurate.  The college's data for 2000 and the individualised student record (ISR) data for 1998 and 1999, were used to compile the tables in the curriculum area reports.  The inspection was carried out by 12 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 51 days.  They observed 93 lessons, examined students' work and scrutinised college documents.  Meetings were held with governors, managers, staff and students.

9    The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000.  Of the 93 lessons inspected, 69% were judged to be good or outstanding and 3% were judged to be less than satisfactory.  The proportion of outstanding lessons was lower than the average for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000.  The proportion of unsatisfactory lessons was better than the national average.

**Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study**

| Programme | Grade | | | | | Totals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| GNVQ | 1 | 7 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 15 |
| NVQ | 4 | 17 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 26 |
| Other vocational | 2 | 17 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 28 |
| Other* | 6 | 10 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 24 |
| Total (No.) | 13 | 51 | 26 | 3 | 0 | 93 |
| Total (%) | 14 | 55 | 28 | 3 | 0 | 100 |
| National average, all inspected colleges 1999-2000 (%) | 17 | 45 | 31 | 6 | 0 | 100 |

*Source for national average: Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report*

*Note: percentages subject to rounding*

*\*includes basic skills, IT workshops and chefs' club*

# Context

10    The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000.

**Attendance rates in lessons observed**

|  | Average number of students | Average attendance (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Basingstoke College of Technology | 12.8 | 84 |
| National average, all inspected colleges 1999-2000 | 10.3 | 76 |

*Source for national average: Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report*

## Computing and Information Technology

### Grade 3

**11    Inspectors observed 14 lessons in computing and information technology (IT). They agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses recorded in the college's self-assessment report but identified additional strengths and weaknesses.**

**Key strengths**

- good achievements rates on most courses

- effective key skills support for students on full-time programmes

- good organisation of IT courses

- involvement of all staff in course review and target-setting

**Weaknesses**

- poor student retention rates for most courses

- less than satisfactory standards of instruction at some community centres

- lack of a co-ordinated approach to IT developments

- no convenient access to specialist software outside lessons

12    The college offers a wide range of computing and IT courses from foundation level to higher national diploma.  Courses include national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 2, the advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) in IT, the national certificate in computer studies, and courses in computer applications and programming.  Recently, the college has opened three IT learning centres.  These are strategically located in local communities surrounding the college.  Each community centre offers flexible arrangements for study on foundation and intermediate level IT courses.  The school of information and communications technology is responsible for teaching most of the computing and IT courses offered by the college.  Courses at the community centres are managed separately.  The college's current portfolio of IT and computing courses is fragmented.  Progression routes for students are not always clear.  Some courses are taught at the main site and at the community centres but have been developed in isolation.  There are no short courses for professionals in the IT industry.  The management of courses at the main site is good.  Plans are in place to address acknowledged problems.  Course teams meet regularly and agreed actions are monitored.  Courses are well planned and the schemes of work are appropriately detailed.  Computing staff are fully involved in course reviews and the self-assessment process.  All teachers contribute to the setting of targets for retention and achievement.

13    Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that the number of good or outstanding lessons meets the national average.  The quality of teaching varies considerably.  Practical lessons are good.  Teachers make clear the objectives of the tasks students are to undertake.  Good-quality handouts or workbooks are provided to help students learn.  In one practical lesson students developed skills in using computers to enhance the presentation of their work.  All students were fully absorbed in their work.  Excellent workbooks written by college staff enable students on some courses to work at their own pace.  In a few theory lessons, teachers used methods which were inappropriate, leaving students confused and bored.  Student attendance is good.  Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that the punctuality of some 16 to 18 year old students is unsatisfactory.  All full-time students receive excellent key skills support and students are routinely tested for their learning support needs.  Learning support teachers assist key

skill teachers.  This team teaching approach provides effective support for students.  At the community centres the amount and quality of the guidance instructors give to students differs from centre to centre and some is inadequate.  This weakness was not identified in the college's self-assessment report.  Instructors have a wide range of skills and experience but some instructors have only just achieved the IT qualification they are now teaching.  At busy times students can wait a long time to receive help.  Additional support has recently been made available to students at the community centres.

14    Most courses have student retention rates below the national average for further education colleges.  This was recognised in the college's self-assessment report.  Most IT foundation and intermediate level short courses have retention rates that are 20% below national averages.  Strategies are in place to improve retention, but it is too early to judge their effectiveness.

Student achievement rates are good.  Most courses have achievement rates at 20% above the national average.  Achievement of the NVQ level 2 in using IT has risen dramatically over the last three years from 49% to 92%.  Students' work is of a satisfactory standard and teachers provide detailed written feedback.

15    Teachers on courses at the main centre are well qualified, although there are few opportunities for teachers to update their skills.  Teaching resources for computing and IT courses are good.  At the main college sites, some courses are taught in an excellent open-plan IT workshop.  There are two specialist rooms dedicated to computing.  Specialist software required for programming courses is only available in dedicated computing rooms.  Students working in the learning resource centre do not have convenient access to work stored on the computer network.  In the community learning centres computers are not networked and software needs updating.

**A summary of retention and achievement rates in computing and information technology, 1998 to 2000**

| Type of qualification | Level | Numbers and outcome | Completion year | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
| C&G 7261 information technology certificate | 1 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 100<br>90<br>73 | 575<br>58<br>88 | 1,043<br>53<br>97 |
| NVQ IT | 2 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 115<br>84<br>49 | 171<br>79<br>83 | 99<br>64<br>92 |
| GNVQ intermediate IT | 2 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 40<br>70<br>54 | 19<br>74<br>92 | 34<br>79<br>76 |
| GNVQ advanced IT | 3 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 37<br>68<br>76 | 39<br>72<br>92 | 39<br>51<br>82 |
| BTEC national certificate in computer studies | 3 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 46<br>46<br>78 | 16<br>94<br>94 | 28<br>39<br>82 |

*Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)*

# Engineering

## *Grade 2*

**16    Inspectors observed 12 lessons in engineering and automotive engineering. They generally agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report, but considered that some weaknesses were not sufficiently emphasised.**

**Key strengths**

- high achievement rates

- good retention rates on automotive courses

- the good emphasis on hands-on activities in theory lessons

- innovative incentives to encourage improved students' performance

**Weaknesses**

- low retention rates on engineering courses

- some poor aspects of course management

17    The college offers courses from level 1 to level 5 in electrical, electronic, mechanical, manufacturing and automotive engineering. There are good progression routes in most areas of the curriculum.  The range of provision is regularly reviewed and this has resulted in the recent introduction of courses in sound engineering and computer maintenance.  Some innovative strategies are used to motivate students.  For example, a scheme sponsored by a local company awards certificates for good attendance.  A record of students' submitted work is publicly displayed on progress charts. Reports on progress are made three times a year to parents or employers.  Parents evenings are organised twice each year.  However, some aspects of management are less satisfactory. Course meetings are sometimes held irregularly and are poorly minuted.  Records relating to the

quality assurance system are not fully completed.  Students on the second year of the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) advanced course have yet to receive some assignment briefs relating to their first-year studies.  They are also awaiting the return of work submitted in that year.  These weaknesses are not fully recognised in the self-assessment report.

18    Teaching is good.  Most lessons, including theory lessons, involved some practical activity. This maintained students' interest and offered them alternative ways of learning.  One teacher used a video camera and large-screen display to show a simple electrical demonstration in close-up to a large class.  Individual students rewired the circuit, observed on-screen by others in the group.  Most lessons are well organised but formal lesson plans lack detail. Teachers miss opportunities to check all students' learning because they direct questions to the class as a whole rather than to individual students.  Some classes have large numbers of students and most teachers manage their sometimes boisterous behaviour well.  Lateness is effectively questioned.  Most students, except those studying GNVQ advanced, are positive about their studies.  Attendance in the classes observed was good.

19    Pass rates are well above the national average on the majority of courses, a strength recorded in the self-assessment report. In 1999-2000, the NVQ level 1 in vehicle maintenance, NVQ level 2 in engineering manufacture, and a range of City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) craft qualifications, all achieved 100% pass rates.  Automotive courses have good retention rates; for example, 90% in the NVQ level 1 against 73% nationally. Retention rates are low on the GNVQ advanced course, but the proportion of enrolled students who complete the course achieve pass rates which equal the national average.  On C&G courses, the proportion of enrolled students who achieve is well above the national average

despite low retention rates. The small GNVQ intermediate course has good retention and pass rates. The standard of practical and written work is often high. National certificate students produce some exemplary formal reports. On most courses, students' work is returned with helpful comments explaining the grade awarded and how improvements could be made. In a few instances, the written feedback is inadequate. Students on C&G courses are set mock examinations in each of their units and this has improved students' achievements. A high proportion of students on full-time courses progress to employment. The proportion of students who progress from the GNVQ advanced course to higher education is low.

20    Teachers and technicians are appropriately qualified. All have considerable industrial experience and, for some, this is recent. Most teachers maintain regular contact with industry but none have updated their industrial experience through formal staff development. Temporary staff shortages at the time of the inspection caused some timetable difficulties and inadequate support for some of the teaching. Engineering teaching takes place in a separate purpose-built block. The main corridor has attractive displays including students' work and photographs relating to course visits. The specialist equipment is generally fit for the purpose. Computer-aided engineering is particularly well supported. Investment is needed in some areas, for example, the mechanical engineering workshop, and this is recognised in the self-assessment report.

**A summary of retention and achievement rates in engineering, 1998 to 2000**

| Type of qualification | Level | Numbers and outcome | Completion year | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
| NVQ vehicle maintenance | 1 | Number of starters | 51 | 37 | 31 |
| | | Retention (%) | 84 | 68 | 90 |
| | | Achievement (%) | 100 | 88 | 100 |
| NVQ engineering manufacture (foundation) | 2 | Number of starters | 31 | 18 | 28 |
| | | Retention (%) | 48 | 89 | 82 |
| | | Achievement (%) | 54 | 87 | 100 |
| C&G craft qualifications | 2 | Number of starters | 96 | 77 | 70 |
| | | Retention (%) | 86 | 87 | 74 |
| | | Achievement (%) | 56 | 87 | 100 |
| NVQ vehicle mechanical and electronic systems | 3 | Number of starters | 79 | 53 | 29 |
| | | Retention (%) | 59 | * | 83 |
| | | Achievement (%) | 71 | * | 100 |
| GNVQ advanced engineering | 3 | Number of starters | 27 | 26 | 20 |
| | | Retention (%) | 59 | * | 65 |
| | | Achievement (%) | 65 | * | 77 |

*Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)*

*\*data may not be reliable*

# Curriculum Areas

## Business Studies

### *Grade 2*

**21    Inspectors observed 12 lessons in business and public services courses.  They mainly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, but considered some strengths were overstated and identified one additional weakness.**

**Key strengths**

- good teaching in many lessons

- consistently good pass rates over the last three years

- good IT facilities

**Weaknesses**

- poor student retention rates in some years

- lack of differentiated materials to help students with varied abilities

22    A range of business and public services courses are offered.  These include: GNVQ intermediate, AVCE and national certificate in business courses, BTEC national diploma in public services courses and GCE advanced subsidiary (AS) in business.  Business courses are managed in the school of business and leisure.  The programme area offers courses mainly for full-time students.  There is no longer provision at foundation level.  The area is well managed.  Teachers work closely in teams. Documentation for courses is detailed.  The school acknowledged in the self-assessment report that the quality and clarity of lesson plans and schemes of work were not always good. Teachers have started to use common formats for both, although some still do not have enough detail.  The school contributes to the college's new arrangements for *Qualifying for Success* reforms by running the new single AVCE and GCE AS in business for students from across the

college on Tuesdays when no other lessons for full-time level 3 students are timetabled.  This has increased participation in these programmes.

23    Inspectors agreed that much of the teaching is good.  In a lesson on the causes of conflict, students were encouraged to contribute their views and where they had grasped only part of the concept the teacher questioned them carefully and drew on illustrative, everyday examples to help them reach a fuller understanding.  Students were guided to make additional notes as they proceeded with discussion of each point.  Some teachers check diligently and constantly whether students have understood what was intended.  In a lesson on business finance, financial and accounting principles were revised.  Students were guided well by detailed questions from the teacher who asked further questions where students failed to demonstrate appropriate understanding.  While students then worked independently on a case study involving break-even analysis, the teacher continued to check on students' understanding by looking at their work in progress and asking questions that led students to discover for themselves whether they had made appropriate calculations.  Students concentrated well on their task throughout the lesson.

24    In some less effective lessons, students were restless or bored; teachers directed questions to the whole class but drew answers from only a few students and failed to engage the interest of the rest.  In some lessons, the teacher's management was insufficiently strong and students chatted amongst themselves, disregarding what the teacher was saying.  In other lessons, students spent excessive time copying notes from an overhead transparency when handouts of the transparencies would have been more efficient and effective. Inspectors did not agree with the self-assessment report that teachers address the learning needs of students with varied abilities. Many classes contain students with a wide range

of abilities, but there are no differentiated materials to address their needs.

25    Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the high pass rates on all courses are a key strength.  Some of the pass rates are more than 15 percentage points above the national average.  Retention rates have fluctuated, sometimes significantly, over the last three years and in 2000 were below the national average for the sector on full-time GNVQ advanced and intermediate courses and on the part-time national certificate in business course.  There is a well-developed internal verification procedure for moderating students' marked work and for validating assignments before they are used, but some assessment criteria are insufficiently clear. Teachers often provide constructive feedback on

students' marked work to help them improve their performance.  However, some students' written work contains widespread errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, which are not always corrected by teachers.  As a result, these deficiencies in written language remain in students' work to the end of their course. This weakness was not included in the self-assessment report.

26    The learning environment is bright and clean.  Students have ample access to IT facilities, including use of the Internet.  The library stock is adequate though it contains a few significantly out-of-date texts.  Teachers are well qualified but few have recent business experience.  The college acknowledged this weakness in its self-assessment report.

**A summary of retention and achievement rates in business studies, 1998 to 2000**

| Type of qualification | Level | Numbers and outcome | Completion year | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
| GNVQ intermediate business studies | 2 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 16<br>69<br>100 | 12<br>92<br>100 | 18<br>72<br>100 |
| GNVQ advanced business studies | 3 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 43<br>63<br>75 | 35<br>*<br>* | 27<br>70<br>87 |
| National certificate business | 3 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 55<br>55<br>86 | 61<br>81<br>100 | 26<br>65<br>100 |
| National diploma public services | 3 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 23<br>78<br>83 | 14<br>79<br>82 | 22<br>86<br>100 |

*Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)*

*\*data may not be reliable*

## Business Administration and Professional Studies

### Grade 2

**27   Inspectors observed 13 lessons covering business administration, management, and accounting courses.  The inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.**

**Key strengths**

- good teaching

- high achievement rates on most programmes

- good progression routes to further education and employment

- current up-to-date industrial experience of most teaching staff

**Weaknesses**

- poor attendance and retention on NVQ level 2 administration

- failure of teaching on administration courses to take account of students' previous IT skills

28    There is a wide range of courses.  These include NVQ in business administration at levels 2 and 3, NVQ in accounting levels 2, 3 and 4, the certificate in supervisory management, the advanced certificate in marketing, the certificate in purchasing supply, and the diploma in management.  Many modular courses are offered allowing flexible arrangements for learning.  Classes are held at the main college site, at a centre in a local school, and on local business premises.  The college also offers a wide range of training to local businesses on their own premises.  The programme area is effectively managed.  There are clear lines of communication and clearly designated responsibilities.  Regular staff meetings are well documented.  Action plans are produced and

resultant action monitored.  The outcomes of surveys of students' views and course reviews are used to improve the students' learning.  Targets set at course level are reviewed regularly.  Strong links have been established with many local organisations that provide work experience placements for NVQ students.  Staff take particular care to find appropriate placements for students.  They provide employers with clear information on the requirements of the course.  The college maintains good links with parents and keeps them informed of students' progress.

29    Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that teaching is good.  Teachers use a variety of appropriate methods to meet students' individual learning needs.  Teachers make good use of questioning to involve all students and students contribute well to classroom discussion.  In most lessons, aims and objectives are clearly stated at the start of the lesson and regular checks are made to ensure that these objectives are met.  In some very successful lessons topics were presented with good-quality visual aids and students were encouraged to draw on their diverse experiences in their work roles.  In a lesson on scenario planning the teacher made excellent use of current commercial marketing projects in which she had been involved.  Students found this useful and were able to relate this to their own work roles.  By contrast, in some NVQ level 2 administration lessons the learning materials provided by the teacher did not take account of the mixed abilities of the students.  Previous IT skills of students were not taken into account.  This led to students becoming bored because they could not see that they were making any progress or had a clear goal set before them to achieve.  This was reflected in attendance as low as 50% in some IT classes.

30    Students' achievements are high on most courses.  On NVQ level 2 accounting and NVQ level 3 administration courses pass rates have been over 20 percentage points above the national average for the last two years.  The

pass rate on the diploma in marketing improved to 100% in 1999-2000. Retention rates are poor on the NVQ administration courses at level 1 and 2 with rates below the national average. The college identified this in its self-assessment report as a weakness. Students' assignments are of a high standard and at an appropriate level. Teachers provide constructive written feedback. Most students' portfolios are well organised and well presented. Effective internal verification procedures are in place and verifiers accompany assessors on workplace visits. There is clear cross-referencing and mapping of evidence to performance criteria. These are strengths identified by the college in its self-assessment report. There is good progression from full-time courses with almost 100% of students finding employment or continuing their studies.

31     Teachers are well qualified and many teachers in the programme area have recent industrial experience relevant to the courses on which they teach. There is a good match between staff expertise and the courses they teach. Support is given to individual teachers to help them add to their qualifications. These strengths were identified in the self-assessment report. Accommodation is comfortable and appropriate. There are well-appointed resource rooms. Students have very good access to IT, which has industrial standard software, and access to the Internet. The library is well stocked with appropriate books, journals, magazines, CD-ROMs and videos.

**A summary of retention and achievement rates in business administration and professional courses, 1998 to 2000**

| Type of qualification | Level | Numbers and outcome | Completion year | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
| NVQ administration | 2 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 105<br>72<br>76 | 69<br>81<br>100 | 108<br>56<br>98 |
| NVQ accounting | 2 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 60<br>73<br>68 | 63<br>90<br>94 | 61<br>82<br>88 |
| NVQ administration | 3 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 85<br>*<br>* | 55<br>*<br>* | 65<br>88<br>90 |
| NVQ accounting | 3 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 59<br>79<br>50 | 7<br>*<br>* | 127<br>89<>61 |
| NVQ accounting | 4 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 25<br>100<br>44 | 9<br>89<br>60 | 71<br>90<br>34 |
| NVQ management | 4 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 7<br>86<br>100 | 43<br>79<br>38 | 31<br>83<br>73 |
| Diploma in marketing | 4 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 11<br>100<br>40 | 18<br>89<br>50 | 18<br>66<br>100 |

*Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)*
*\*data may not be reliable*

# Curriculum Areas

## Hospitality and Catering

### *Grade 2*

**32    Inspectors observed 13 lessons in hospitality and catering courses, and agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report.**

**Key strengths**

- good teaching

- students' achievements above the national average

- students with high levels of professional conduct

- good specialist catering resources

- wide range of courses

**Weaknesses**

- unsatisfactory retention rates on a few courses

- little use of catering IT software

33    Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that the college offers a wide range of catering courses to full-time and part-time students.  These include the BTEC national diploma in hotel administration, NVQs in food preparation and cooking at levels 1 to 3, and NVQs in food and drink service at levels 1 and 2.  The college also offers a range of specialist short courses to support students' main learning programmes.  These include food hygiene and 'welcome host' qualifications.  The higher professional diploma in hospitality and catering was introduced recently.  The range of courses provides students with opportunities for progression to higher level courses or vocationally appropriate employment.  A successful 'chefs' club' this summer encouraged young people to consider catering as a career.  Thirty year 10 pupils from local schools attend the college after school.  The college intends to extend this to year 9 pupils next year.  There are a number of overseas exchange contacts for students.  These include the opportunities for overseas visits each year to France, Sweden and Finland.  The whole school has the opportunity to visit New York during 2001.

34    Teaching is good.  Of the lessons observed, 10 were good or outstanding which is above the national average for the programme area.  The college did not identify this as a strength in the self-assessment report.  Practical lessons were interesting and demanding.  Teaching is well managed.  Teachers are supportive and ensure that all students participate in activities. Students at different levels of ability are taught in the same group with more experienced students in a supervisory role.  Some lessons are managed by level 4 students who take full responsibility, allowing them to be assessed for higher level management skills.  Students display high levels of professional conduct in and out of lessons.  Students in practical lessons quickly settle into their roles and responsibilities.  They work attentively to produce work of a high standard.  A pastry and bakery lesson in which a wide range of items were being produced for sale and for use in the college restaurant was particularly successful. Menus included a complex and varied range of dishes that reflected a contemporary style of eating.  The quality of some lesson plans is poor. A few lessons lack clear objectives.  This was identified in the self-assessment report.

35    Students' attendance and time-keeping are good.  Students are well supported in their studies.  All students are tested at the beginning of their course to determine their learning support needs.  Appropriate support is provided for those students who need it.  Inspectors agreed that key skills are effectively integrated with main learning programmes and are taught by key skills specialists.

36    The college identified that students' achievements are consistently above the

national average, and inspectors agreed. All students on the NVQ level 1 serving food and drink and NVQ level 3 food preparation courses for the last two consecutive years have passed successfully. Achievements on most other courses are above the national average. Retention rates on NVQ level 2 food preparation have been below the national average for the last three years. The retention rate on the national diploma in hotel administration has fallen below the national average in the last year. Students' written work is of a good standard. Errors in spelling and grammar are corrected. Teachers use structured feedback to ensure that students understand the grade awarded and how they can improve their work. There is a systematic internal verification system on NVQ courses. The college introduced an improved system for the national diploma course this year.

37   Teachers are well qualified and have a wide range of industrial experience. They all hold vocational assessor qualifications. Appropriate technical staff support the practical catering operation. The specialist accommodation is of a good standard. The kitchens are clean and well equipped although one kitchen needs to be refurbished. The restaurant and bar are of a particularly high quality and provide a real experience of work for students. The library is well stocked with relevant books but has a small number of catering videos and journals. Teachers make little use of catering-specific software in their teaching.

**A summary of retention and achievement rates in hospitality and catering, 1998 to 2000**

| Type of qualification | Level | Numbers and outcome | Completion year | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
| NVQ serving food and drink (bar) | 1 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 29<br>83<br>63 | 18<br>89<br>100 | 26<br>77<br>100 |
| Basic food hygiene certificate | 2 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 212<br>97<br>96 | 267<br>99<br>98 | 202<br>98<br>98 |
| NVQ serving food and drink (table) | 2 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 48<br>83<br>60 | 29<br>62<br>89 | 25<br>76<br>100 |
| NVQ food preparation and cooking | 2 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 59<br>64<br>82 | 45<br>64<br>100 | 53<br>60<br>75 |
| NVQ food preparation and cooking (kitchen and larder) | 3 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 10<br>100<br>80 | 10<br>100<br>100 | 13<br>92<br>100 |
| National diploma in hotel administration | 3 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 23<br>83<br>84 | 26<br>80<br>89 | 14<br>57<br>75 |

*Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)*

# Curriculum Areas

## Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy

### *Grade 1*

**38    Inspectors observed 16 lessons in hairdressing and beauty therapy.  Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths in the self-assessment report but considered that some strengths in the report were overstated.  They identified one weakness that had not been identified in the report.**

**Key strengths**

- good practical teaching

- teachers' care and concern to take account of students' individual learning styles

- good integration of key skills with vocational courses

- high retention and achievement rates

- effective management of courses

- good specialist resources

- effective liaison with employers

**Weaknesses**

- some weak theory teaching

39    There is an appropriate range of full-time and part-time courses.  NVQ in hairdressing is available at levels 1 and 2 and NVQs in beauty therapy at levels 2 and 3.  An extensive range of courses in holistic therapies is provided for part-time students.  Courses are regularly reviewed and changes made reflect those in the industry as well as the views of students and employers.  Inspectors agreed that there is good liaison with employers.  All full-time students undertake appropriate work placement in local salons once they have gained sufficient practical experience.  A work placement officer visits employers.  There are regular meetings of employer advisory committees.  A cohesive and enthusiastic team of staff actively manages the courses.  Full-time students are given the opportunity to take both hairdressing and beauty therapy classes before deciding which specialism to follow at the end of their first term.

40    Practical teaching is good.  Teachers have good technical skills, and provide clear demonstrations.  Students are encouraged to work to high professional standards.  These standards are supported by rigorous and demanding practical assessment.  There is appropriate simulation of the demands of commercial salon practice.  Teachers give detailed attention to the analysis of each client's individual needs and encourage the students to provide an excellent standard of client care.  Teachers carry out detailed practical assessments and students are given feedback on the precise improvements that they need to make.  Most theory teachers use a variety of methods to take account of the different learning styles of students.  The preferred learning style of each student is identified so that teachers can use learning methods and materials appropriate to individual needs.  In a small minority of theory lessons teachers failed to link the theoretical concepts to students' previous study and encouraged rote learning rather than an understanding of the underlying principles.  In these lessons there was little application of the theory to practical hair and beauty settings.

41    Key skills are all thoroughly integrated with learning programmes.  Key skills lessons are taught with both a vocational specialist and a key skills specialist who is also a trained hairdresser.  All naturally occurring opportunities for demonstrating competence in key skills are systematically identified in assignments.  Students with any additional learning support needs are carefully identified through initial assessment and the key skills tutor provides unobtrusive extra support for these students with their written work.  This

strength was identified in the self-assessment report.

42    Students' retention and achievements are well above the national average for most qualifications.  This strength is recognised in the college's self-assessment report.  Achievement rates are particularly high on hairdressing courses, and at level 2 achievement rates have been at more than 90% for the last three years.  In beauty therapy at level 3 achievement rates have also been consistently above 90%.  Retention on level 2 hairdressing has steadily improved over the last three years.  The downward trend in retention on level 2 beauty therapy has been recognised and is being appropriately addressed.  Demanding targets for both retention and achievement are set and monitored.  In 1999-2000, these were met in 13 out of 14 courses.  Assessment standards are stringently maintained for both practical and theoretical work.  Assignments are carefully marked and students are provided with detailed written comments.  Internal verification is thorough.

43    Teachers are well qualified and most have recent vocational experience.  They update their skills through working in the salon and attending short courses provided by beauty product manufacturers.  New teachers are given additional support and are encouraged to gain a teaching qualification.  There are excellent practical facilities for hairdressing.  Salons are spacious and well equipped.  The beauty salons are of a good standard but are too small for the numbers of students in most classes.  Students make good use of the extensive range of learning resources available.  Inspectors agreed that there is good access to high standard IT equipment.

**A summary of retention and achievement rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 1998 to 2000**

| Type of qualification | Level | Numbers and outcome | Completion year | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
| NVQ hairdressing | 1 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 6<br>*<br>* | 52<br>77<br>85 | 63<br>84<br>94 |
| NVQ hairdressing | 2 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 163<br>58<br>100 | 141<br>64<br>94 | 128<br>75<br>92 |
| NVQ beauty therapy | 2 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 74<br>86<br>84 | 81<br>73<br>95 | 76<br>70<br>91 |
| NVQ beauty therapy | 3 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 6<br>83<br>100 | 45<br>91<br>93 | 28<br>89<br>96 |
| Diploma in holistic therapies | 3 | Number of starters<br>Retention (%)<br>Achievement (%) | 17<br>71<br>100 | 16<br>93<br>93 | 14<br>*<br>* |

*Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)*
*\*data may not be reliable*

## Basic Skills

### *Grade 2*

**44   Inspectors observed 13 lessons covering discrete literacy and numeracy provision, learning support for individual students, and the key skills of communication and application of number at level 1.  Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but identified some additional ones.**

**Key strengths**

- strong senior management commitment to basic skills and key skills

- excellent achievement rates at level 1 key skills

- clear strategic direction for curriculum development

- good integration of basic skills and key skills with vocational aspects of courses

- effective initial assessment firmly fixed in vocational contexts

- a strong commitment to student-centred learning

**Weaknesses**

- insufficient take-up of basic skills accreditation

- a lack of rigour in the formulation of individual learning plans for students

45   Basic skills teaching is managed by the school of learning development.  The college offers basic skills through open-access workshop sessions on its main site and also in four community-based centres.  Family literacy and numeracy schemes are being developed.  Key skills at level 1 in communication and application of number are taught jointly by learning development teachers and vocational teachers.  There is a strong senior management

commitment to basic skills and key skills.  This is reflected in comprehensive policies for learning support and for key skills.  Curriculum leadership is good.  The curriculum area has a clear strategic direction.  Course management is effective.  Documentation is thorough.  Regular team meetings ensure effective communication between staff.  These are well minuted with clear action points that contribute to quality assurance procedures.  The impact of national basic skills initiatives is assessed and the implications of implementation are carefully reviewed.  Targets are set and monitored regularly.  The college has not yet applied to the Basic Skills Agency (BSA) for the revised basic skills quality mark.

46   Most teaching is good.  Lessons are well prepared.  Teaching methods are linked to students' individual learning styles.  Lessons have a relaxed, supportive atmosphere that is conducive to learning.  In one lesson for speakers of other languages, students were able to practise their written, reading and listening skills by role-playing telephone conversations in pairs.  The tutor separated the students into two groups; one group for beginners, the other working at intermediate level.  The tutor worked with one group and a volunteer with the other.  The oral work was reinforced with reading and writing tasks.  In some of the poorer lessons, particularly in the application of number, concepts were not explained sufficiently.  The relevance of the lesson to its vocational context was not demonstrated.  There was disruptive behaviour in some lessons.  Time management was weak in a few lessons, and the schemes of work were therefore not completed.  There is a strong concern to meet the learning needs of individual students.  Adult students particularly appreciate the opportunity to attend at flexible times, and the opportunity to take advantage of individually tailored programmes of study.  Attendance is generally good.

47   Key skills at level 1 in communication and application of number have been fully mapped

# Curriculum Areas

against vocational courses and effectively integrated with them. The college was involved in the national pilot for key skills for two years from 1998 to 2000. There is effective initial assessment, applied to vocational contexts. The college identified this as a strength in the self-assessment report. Two teachers, a key skills specialist and a vocational teacher, teach key skills lessons. This team teaching enables students to see the relevance of the key skills and increases their motivation to learn. Feedback on performance is given sensitively by staff, enabling appropriate learning support to be agreed with the student. Within vocational courses, achievement at key skills level 1 for communications and application of number has been well above the national average for the last two years. Retention rates have been around the national average for the last three years.

48    A low number of adult students undertake nationally recognised qualifications. Some students do not appear to find the work sufficiently demanding, and have low expectations of themselves, which are not always called into question by staff. Students

who have attended basic skills programmes for a number of years have no measure of the progress made. There is insufficient rigour in the formulation of students' action plans; some learning goals are inadequately defined to monitor progress adequately. For example, some learning plans repeat objectives such as 'punctuation' at several consecutive reviews. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

49    The teachers are highly committed to the work, and many possess specialist basic skills teaching qualifications. Inspectors agreed that there is an emphasis on appropriate staff development that is well documented. Volunteers, who are expected to undertake the initial certificate in the teaching of basic skills, effectively support staff. Some staff act as volunteers in lessons taught by their colleagues, enabling students to receive more individual attention. Teaching accommodation is good. Classroom displays are stimulating. Learning resources are of a high quality, particularly the materials developed to support basic skills work within a work environment.

**A summary of retention and achievement rates in basic skills, 1998 to 2000**

| Type of qualification | Level | Numbers and outcome | Completion year | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
| Key skills application of number | 1 | Number of starters | 45 | 175 | 178 |
| | | Retention (%) | 91 | * | 84 |
| | | Achievement (%) | 61 | * | 98 |
| Key skills communication | 1 | Number of starters | † | 38 | 70 |
| | | Retention (%) | † | 87 | 81 |
| | | Achievement (%) | † | 97 | 100 |

*Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)*
*\*data may not be reliable*
*†course not running*

# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### *Grade 2*

**50 Inspectors agreed with the strengths identified in the self-assessment report. The uneven quality of the tutorial provision had been recognised elsewhere in the report. One weakness had not been identified.**

**Key strengths**

- extensive range of information, advice and guidance for prospective students

- good induction procedures

- vocationally relevant initial assessment of students' learning support needs

- effective provision of learning support

- high quality of pastoral and welfare support

**Weaknesses**

- uneven quality of tutorials

- underdeveloped careers advice and guidance function

- small range of college-wide enrichment activity

51    The college's support for students has remained strong since the last inspection. Some aspects of its provision, notably learning support, have developed considerably. However, measures to ensure that tutorial arrangements are fully implemented across the college have not been established and opportunities for students to engage in a range of social, cultural and sporting activities remain small.

52    The range of information and advice for prospective students is extensive. The college runs open days and information evenings for prospective students. Promotional materials are attractive and easy to understand. The careers service is kept up to date with changes to the

college's programme. Adult guidance staff visit community groups to promote the college's activities. There are supportive links with local schools and with the pupil referral unit. The college operates an educational programme for pupils for whom the national curriculum has been 'disapplied'. Many of these pupils progress to full college courses.

53    Inspectors agreed with the college's view that its induction procedures are effective. Students are informed about the services available to them through the tutorial programme. Students are soon confident that they understand what is required of them in their studies and know where to seek help if they encounter difficulties.

54    The college identifies and deals effectively with the learning support needs of students at all levels. The literacy, numeracy and IT skills of all students undertaking substantial programmes of study are assessed on their entry to the college. Each vocational school is required to make appropriate arrangements for meeting the support needs of its students, drawing upon the expertise of staff in the school of learning development. This often involves team teaching or the provision of learning support workshops which are vocationally specific. This support enables students to work towards key skills awards while improving their basic skills.

55    The colleges' policy on learning support is clear and compliance with it is monitored. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that its arrangements for identifying and meeting students' learning support needs are considerable strengths. Additional help is available in the college's open learning centre, which students can use either by appointment or on a 'drop-in' basis. Considerable effort has been made to develop initial assessment materials which have relevant vocational content. These are available commercially. The progress students make as a result of learning

support is evaluated. Initial assessment, support and referral are available for students who are dyslexic. Some specialist resources are available for students with disabilities or students who are sensorily impaired.

56    Students receive good pastoral and welfare support. Vocational schools draw from a 'menu' of workshops and presentations devised by student services staff to enhance the tutorial programme. The welfare service is in a prominent location within the college. A counselling service is also available, operated by professionally qualified college staff. The counselling room is easily accessible but private. A college nurse provides advice on health-related matters. There are good collaborative working relationships between student services staff. Student services are advertised in the college's community learning centres. Evening appointments can usually be made for students who require them. The college operates a self-financing nursery, with a small number of places for students' children. The number of students in receipt of financial support for childcare is increasing, but is not large.

57    The college acknowledges a weakness in its careers advice and guidance function. Southern Careers Ltd, which has a contract with the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) for the delivery of careers guidance, can no longer meet the college's demand for its services. The college has taken steps to address this, but its new arrangements are not yet fully operational, and it has not begun to work towards an external quality standard. Paper-based resources and careers software packages are available in the learning centre and the careers room. Students can access the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) website on all computers in the learning and open learning centres. Careers advice specifically for groups of students at risk of not completing their course has improved retention rates of 16 to 18 year old students over the last

year. However, the college has not yet arrested the rapid turnover in the number of students attending the community learning centres.

58    Some tutorials are good; others are poor. The college has a clear tutorial policy which allows for some variation in the content and delivery of tutorials between vocational schools. Some aspects of compliance have been audited, but the quality and purposefulness of the interaction between student and tutor has not been carefully evaluated. Some students are unclear about how they receive tutorial support. Students' personal tutorial files are often poorly organised, and show little purposeful action-planning.

59    The college has increased the range of social activities available to students since the last inspection. However, most of these are in team sports, likely to appeal primarily to young, able-bodied men. There is a lack of cultural and creative activities, and the students' union has not yet found its feet. The college had not recognised this weakness.

## General Resources

### *Grade 2*

**60    Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but judged one of the weaknesses to be more significant than the college had indicated.**

**Key strengths**

- good teaching and learning accommodation
- effective property maintenance and well-maintained sites
- clear and effectively implemented accommodation strategy
- good-quality learning centre
- extensive IT facilities

# Cross-college Provision

61    Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that teaching and learning accommodation is mostly good.  The main campus of the college is located on either side of a road within easy reach of the town centre.  The buildings on the south site were constructed during the 1960s and 1970s and are well maintained.  Specialist facilities for hairdressing and beauty therapy, engineering and catering are on this site.  They provide good-quality accommodation but facilities for engineering are showing signs of wear.  An attractive restaurant is open to the public.  A comprehensive accommodation strategy has been developed.  It is reviewed and updated annually as part of the strategic planning process.  A new block was constructed on the north site in 1996 and provides good and attractive accommodation.  A 36-place nursery is conveniently located close to the main entrance.  Management courses are provided at a building leased from a secondary school, located 4 miles from the main campus.  The college also has facilities in the town centre.  It has recently acquired three additional leased buildings in a suburb of Basingstoke and in two towns within 15 miles of the college to provide community-based courses in IT.

62    The maintenance and development of the estate is well managed.  Work is carried out by the college estate maintenance team and through the use of external contractors.  Turnround times are set for jobs to ensure rapid response.  All work is carefully monitored and is based on a planned maintenance scheme, which was drawn up following the completion of a detailed condition survey.  The overall maintenance costs of the estate are low.  Minor works are identified annually and are informed by college's self-assessment procedures and curriculum development requirements.  Health and safety issues are given a high priority.  An asset register has been compiled and a replacement programme established for IT equipment.  A replacement programme for other major capital items has not been prepared.

63    Classrooms are well maintained and well decorated and are appropriately equipped and furnished.  In some areas there is little display of students' work.  Staff workrooms are generally adequate although some are crowded and ease of access to computers is not always good.  Most areas of the main campus are accessible to people with restricted mobility but inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that access to the community centres is not good in some cases.

64    Student services have recently been relocated to the north site and are conveniently placed close to a coffee shop and travel agency, adjacent to a spacious central concourse.  A further room in the same area is allocated to students for use as a common room.  The concourse is used for exhibitions and events but is generally underused.  In addition to the coffee shop there is a food court on the south site over which a mezzanine area was constructed during the summer of 2000 to provide a 'cyber café'.  The facilities are of a good quality.  Catering on other sites is limited to vending machines.  At the last inspection the college had no sports or leisure facilities.  The college continues to hire external sporting facilities for teaching on leisure and tourism courses.  Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that recreational and sports facilities are inadequate.

65    Space utilisation is low.  It was 19% in 1998 and 17.5% in 1999.  Rooms are allocated to heads of schools who are responsible for managing their use.  Some rooms are timetabled centrally and there has been some redesignation of space to meet emerging curriculum needs.

66 The learning resource centre provides a pleasant place to work. Staff and students speak highly of the help and support provided. The facility is open in the evenings and on Saturday mornings. The stock of books, videos and CD-ROMs generally meets the needs of students and staff. Although the stock is reviewed annually some of the materials are dated. Schools have devolved budgets, which enables them to prioritise their requirements. Some schools have to be encouraged to spend their full allocations.

67 A clear IT strategy has been developed. Facilities have been improved significantly during the last 12 months. An initial pilot project based on 40 computers in the learning centre was expanded to 192 during the summer of 2000. The facilities are used both for group teaching and 'drop-in' use. Students and staff speak highly of the improvements. The overall ratio of full-time equivalent students to computers is around 4:1. Although this ratio appears high, not all the computers are of the latest specification. The ratio of students to computers connected to the Internet is 6:1. The use of intranet facilities is at an early stage of development. The IT strategy is to link the educational computer system to a separate system used for administrative purposes.

## Quality Assurance

### Grade 1

68 **Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.**

**Key strengths**

- well-established and comprehensive quality assurance arrangements

- effective procedures for identifying and improving underperforming courses

- comprehensive gathering and use of students' views

- thorough work by the quality assurance committees

- significant increases in achievement on full-time courses

**Weaknesses**

- some imprecise action-planning

69 Inspectors agreed that the college has a strong commitment to quality improvement. The quality assurance system is comprehensive with a detailed framework and clear guidance documents. It brings together quality assurance, self-assessment, strategic and operational planning, staff development and appraisal. A detailed calendar outlines quality related activities for each term.

70 The course review and evaluation process is thorough. Views from students, parents and employers are effectively used to evaluate performance. These are analysed at course, school and whole-college level and the results fed back to students. Action plans are formulated in response to any weaknesses identified in the questionnaires and are incorporated in the annual course review at the end of the year. The reviews also include a report on the previous year's action plan, retention and achievement data, staff development needs and a new action plan. The college's self-assessment report notes that a few reviews are insufficiently rigorous and action plans are not precise enough. Inspectors agreed. Support areas assess their performance using the relevant results from students' questionnaires and an annual staff questionnaire.

71 The work of the college's quality assurance committees, and in particular the academic board, is very thorough. The academic board is

scrupulous in its assessment of performance against targets and review of items from the subcommittees of the schools. Members have recently been added from the community learning centres and distance learning staff. The self-assessment report is considered by the subcommittees before going to the self-assessment review group, the academic board and finally the corporation for approval. It is externally validated. The self-assessment report used for inspection has not yet gone through this process due to the timing of the inspection. However, it did have the benefit of outcomes from a mock inspection in May 2000. Self-assessment action points accumulated through course reviews and surveys are incorporated into the operational objectives of each area. Inspectors judged the self-assessment process to be thorough and rigorous with clear and well-analysed evidence. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college.

72    The policy monitoring and evaluation committee works thoroughly. Its members have, for example, carried out an audit of work experience and the staff induction policy and procedures, and this has resulted in improvements. All college areas have advisory boards, although some are more active than others are. The boards include employers and a governor. They undertake thorough audits of curriculum areas on a timetabled four-year rolling programme to ensure that courses still meet the needs both of the students and the vocational area. The college is clear about its commitment to students. The charter is updated annually and thoroughly monitored. The complaints procedure works well.

73    Course teams have been setting targets for all courses since last year, using appropriate national benchmarking data from different sources. Courses causing concern have been identified for several years. Student withdrawal statistics are carefully monitored three times a year, and the academic board closely scrutinises courses with withdrawals of 15% or more. At the end of the year, courses that have not achieved their target for retention and/or achievement are highlighted and must produce a recovery plan. This action resulted in 60% of the courses identified as underperforming in 1997-98 improving in 1998-99. In 1999-2000, 80% of the courses identified as underperforming in 1998-99 had improved. As a result, there have been significant increases in achievement over the last two years, except for some part-time courses for adults. Although retention on most courses has increased in 1999-2000, it remains close to the national average. It has declined on some part-time courses, especially at levels 2 and 3 and on short courses.

74    Since the last inspection the college has introduced a programme of lesson observations, which is included in the college's self-assessment. Observations are undertaken on a sampling basis by heads of schools and other managers from outside the schools. There is little difference between the percentage of good or outstanding lessons recorded by college observers, and by inspectors in this or the previous inspection. The number of good and outstanding lessons in the sample of lessons observed by inspectors was seven percentage points above the national average. The annual appraisal of teachers does not always take into account the outcomes of lesson observations, although it allows professional development needs to be addressed and is related to strategic and operational priorities. The provision and management of staff development centrally is good. Schools have a small training budget but staff report that this is inadequate to cover specialist curriculum needs. There have been numerous training opportunities for managers. The college has recently had its Investor in People status reconfirmed.

# Cross-college Provision

## Governance

### *Grade 2*

**75    Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths recorded in the self-assessment report, although they considered that a few were overstated.  Additional weaknesses were identified.**

**Key strengths**

- good arrangements for the recruitment and induction of governors

- open approach to governance

- effective oversight of the college's finances and systems

- governors' appropriate involvement in the work of the college

**Weaknesses**

- unsatisfactory operation of the remuneration committee

- insufficient contribution to some key strategic decisions

76    Governors work actively to develop their understanding of the organisation.  Each governor is linked to a curriculum school or service department and visits regularly.  Staff value this involvement and appreciate the opportunity to communicate directly with governors.  Link governors attend advisory committees and chair a four-yearly audit of course relevance.  This ensures that the provision in any curriculum school meets the needs of students and the local community.  Governors are also involved in the adult education policy and student advisory committees.  There is a risk that governors could become too involved in management activities as a result of their active participation, but the distinction between governance and management is currently understood and observed by the corporation.

77    The corporation has agreed a membership of 17 in line with the statutory modifications to the instrument of government.  The corporation has a clear strategy and procedures for the recruitment of new governors.  The search committee operates effectively in scrutinising candidates and advising the corporation on new appointments.  The committee has also identified potential governors to aid the speedy filling of vacancies when required.  There is an effective and thorough induction process.  New governors receive a comprehensive information pack and a briefing on their role, followed by a well-managed programme of visits to curriculum schools and support departments.  Each new governor is assigned a mentor from the corporation.  This strength was recorded in the self-assessment report.

78    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.

79    Governors have been involved in the development of the strategic plan through meetings with senior managers.  College objectives which underpin the plan have been redefined for 2000-01 and approved by the corporation.  Governors have not required measurable targets to be attached to many of the strategic aims or objectives; this hampers their effective monitoring of the progress of the plan.  Governors receive commentaries on progress against objectives and, at the end of each year, receive a summary of overall achievement.

80    The budget and financial forecast are approved annually by the corporation on the advice of the finance and general purposes committee.  Governors give careful consideration to the college's financial position

at meetings of the finance monitoring committee, finance and general purposes committee and the full corporation. College managers kept governors regularly informed of action being taken to address a potential significant reduction in income in 1999-2000, due to a shortfall in student enrolments in autumn 1999. However, the corporation did not give adequate consideration to key decisions regarding the development of the new learning centres and partnership arrangements, which formed part of the management's financial recovery strategy. The self-assessment report did not record this shortcoming. The audit committee is operating effectively in monitoring audit matters and advising the corporation on the effectiveness of the college's system of internal control.

81    There are sound clerking arrangements, which are consistent with good practice. The clerk to the corporation, who is also the vice-principal (corporate services) and the deputy clerk provide effective support to the corporation and individual governors. Attendance at corporation meetings is good. The corporation has a comprehensive set of standing orders to guide the conduct of its business.

82    The committee arrangements established by the corporation are not fully effective. There is an overlap in the responsibilities of some committees. For example, both the personnel and the finance and general purposes committee have responsibility for personnel policies. Committees have, on occasion, made decisions on matters outside their remit. The corporation has not exercised effectively its responsibility for the remuneration of senior postholders. The remuneration committee has agreed broad guidelines for the remuneration of senior postholders, but the corporation has not determined clear criteria for pay and bonus awards. Since its establishment in September 1999, the quality assurance committee has met on only two occasions and is

just beginning to interrogate information presented and monitor actions to address shortcomings. These weaknesses were not included in the self-assessment report.

83    The corporation has a positive approach to openness and accountability. There is a clear policy on confidentiality and there are few confidential papers and minutes. The corporation has a well-established code of conduct that incorporates the Nolan committee's seven principles of public life. There is a comprehensive register of interests, covering both governors and senior managers, which is updated at least annually.

84    The self-assessment report was based primarily on the outcomes of a questionnaire completed by individual governors. This was supported by a questionnaire completed by college managers. The questionnaires focused on opinions rather than drawing out evidence to support judgements. It is unclear how the grades awarded in the questionnaires relate to the final self-assessment grade. Recently approved performance indicators for governance are a good initiative, which will contribute to the rigour of the self-assessment framework.

## Management

### Grade 1

**85    Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report but identified an additional weakness. The college had taken action to address weaknesses by the time of the inspection.**

**Key strengths**

- responsive and innovative senior management team
- productive range of external partnerships
- good systems for effective deployment of staff

- decisive action to maintain the college's financial health

- strong commitment to equal opportunities

**Weaknesses**

- uneven quality of the management of curriculum areas

86    Inspectors agreed that the college is well managed.  There is strong leadership from the college management committee characterised by an open and consultative management style and good communications.  These managers have dealt effectively with a number of significant challenges over the past four years, anticipating issues and reacting swiftly to rapidly changing circumstances.

87    The college structure comprises 15 curriculum schools and three community learning centres.  Much responsibility is devolved to heads of schools who manage all aspects of the operation of their curriculum area.  They are accountable for the quality of provision as well as resource management and are encouraged to be creative and enterprising in the development of the curriculum.  However, some managers lack experience and the quality of management between and across schools is not uniformly good.  The same is true of the quality of tutorial provision and the quality of operational planning.  This deficiency was not recognised in the self-assessment report.

88    The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate.  There is a scheme of budget delegation to schools and support departments.  Heads of schools manage budgets for staffing and educational materials, which are allocated on the basis of funding units and student numbers.  In the last year, a few heads of schools did not manage their budgets effectively.  Senior managers have taken positive action to address this issue but some managers are still not confident in their budget management role.  They report that financial reports are not in a form they can understand and use.

89    The finance and estates manager produces a detailed set of management accounts for governors and senior managers, which includes an overall financial summary and analysis of performance against key indicators.  The internal and external auditors have not identified any major weaknesses in the college's systems of financial control.  Inspectors and auditors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college's financial regulations are well maintained, and updated promptly in response to audit findings.

90    The college is in good financial health.  The latest three-year financial forecast indicates that general reserves will continue to grow throughout the forecast period.  In autumn 1999, managers identified a significant shortfall in student enrolments, leading to a potential reduction in the college's income of £1 million.  Managers took effective action to reduce expenditure and generate additional income through accelerating the development of distance learning partnerships and community learning centres.  Both of these initiatives are intended to widen participation and improve access to the college curriculum.  There were some difficulties with the establishment of procedures to ensure the effective operation of the learning centres, and this resulted in some poor student retention.  The college identified these weaknesses and has taken action to address them.

91    The strategic planning process is clear.  The production of a new marketing communications strategy has sharpened the focus on market research.  The strategic plan clearly defines strategic aims.  Middle managers use these to define operational objectives for each school or support department.  Progress on

# Cross-college Provision

plans at all levels is carefully monitored.  Staff understand and contribute to the planning process.  As identified in the self-assessment report, a wide range of effective partnerships support the college in achieving growth and development.  These include international partnerships supported by European funding, joint arrangements with local schools and colleges to develop community learning centres, and partnerships with commercial and public sector organisations.  The college is frequently a lead partner in such developments.

92    College policies are well structured and appropriate.  The effective policy monitoring and evaluation committee conducts regular quality audits.  These ensure that policies are correctly implemented across the college and updated in the light of findings.  There is a strong commitment to equal opportunities.  The college's policy is well developed and regularly monitored through the equal opportunities committee.  Health and safety is effectively managed.  Clear monitoring arrangements are supported by good staff development.

93    Staff are effectively deployed and managed.  The introduction of a banded lecturer scale has defined teaching responsibilities more clearly, and encouraged the introduction of different types of posts to support learners.  A job evaluation scheme was successfully implemented for support staff roles, and a clearer salary scale introduced.  All proposals for replacement or new posts are carefully scrutinised by the college management committee.

## Conclusions

94    The self-assessment report prepared by the college, especially for the inspection, is the fifth to be produced under the current inspection framework and provided a useful basis for conducting the inspection.  The document was thorough and evaluative.  There was good use of supporting evidence for each judgement including use of lesson observations, students' achievements compared with FEFC benchmarking data and surveys of students' perceptions.  Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the college's self-assessment.  However, they identified some additional strengths and weaknesses.  Inspectors agreed with the grades awarded to six of the seven curriculum areas.  They considered that the college had been overgenerous in its grading of one curriculum area.  Inspectors agreed with three of the five cross-college grades.  They considered that the college had been overgenerous in its grading of two cross-college areas.

95    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 2000)**

| Age | % |
|---|---|
| Under 16 | 1 |
| 16-18 years | 21 |
| 19-24 years | 10 |
| 25+ years | 46 |
| Not known | 22 |
| Total | 100 |

*Source: college data*
*Note: FEFC-funded students*

**Student numbers by level of study (July 2000)**

| Level of study | % |
|---|---|
| Level 1 (foundation) and entry level | 28 |
| Level 2 (intermediate) | 30 |
| Level 3 (advanced) | 25 |
| Level 4/5 (higher) | 3 |
| Level not specified | 0 |
| Non-schedule 2 | 14 |
| Total | 100 |

*Source: college data*
*Note: FEFC-funded students*

**Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (July 2000)**

| Programme area | Full time | Part time | Total provision (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Science | 218 | 2,764 | 33 |
| Construction | 98 | 123 | 2 |
| Engineering | 111 | 526 | 7 |
| Business | 157 | 1,108 | 14 |
| Hotel and catering | 217 | 338 | 6 |
| Health and community care | 321 | 792 | 12 |
| Art and design | 235 | 351 | 6 |
| Humanities | 133 | 1,297 | 16 |
| Basic education | 15 | 320 | 4 |
| Total | 1,505 | 7,619 | 100 |

*Source: college data*
*Note: FEFC-funded students*

**Widening participation**

Based on a postcode analysis of 1998-99 ISR data, the college recruited 4% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions' Index of Local Conditions.

**Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (April 2000)**

| | Perm-anent | Fixed term | Casual | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Direct learning contact | 133 | 28 | 0 | 161 |
| Supporting direct learning contact | 26 | 4 | 3 | 33 |
| Other support | 118 | 3 | 8 | 129 |
| Total | 277 | 35 | 11 | 323 |

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

# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

|  | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Income | £11,738,000 | £12,134,000 | £12,519,000 |
| Average level of funding (ALF) | £16.82 | £16.61 | £16.88 |
| Payroll as a proportion of income | 60% | 62% | 64% |
| Achievement of funding target | 103% | 96% | 96% |
| Diversity of income | 26% | 29% | 35% |
| Operating surplus | £218,000 | £3,000 | –£237,000 |

*Sources: Income – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)*

*ALF – Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1998), Funding Allocations 1998-99 (1999), college (2000)*
*Payroll – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1998, 1999 and 2000)*
*Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1997-98 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)*
*Diversity of income – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)*
*Operating surplus – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)*

### Students' achievements data

| Level | Retention and pass | Students aged 16 to 18 | | | Students aged 19 or over | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 |
| 1 | Number of starters | 893 | 1,632 | 1,354 | 1,061 | 1,446 | 930 |
| | Retention (%) | 78 | 81 | 76 | 83 | 80 | 71 |
| | Achievement (%) | 72 | 45 | 75 | 52 | 49 | 59 |
| 2 | Number of starters | 1,471 | 2,077 | 1,880 | 1,584 | 1,662 | 1,815 |
| | Retention (%) | 71 | 71 | 74 | 76 | 76 | 75 |
| | Achievement (%) | 72 | 60 | 80 | 72 | 65 | 80 |
| 3 | Number of starters | 893 | 1,030 | 1,098 | 1,696 | 1,596 | 1,722 |
| | Retention (%) | 82 | 70 | 78 | 81 | 74 | 76 |
| | Achievement (%) | 75 | 71 | 85 | 74 | 72 | 80 |
| 4 or 5 | Number of starters | 22 | 25 | 11 | 579 | 575 | 580 |
| | Retention (%) | 91 | 72 | 73 | 83 | 78 | 85 |
| | Achievement (%) | 93 | 72 | 100 | 77 | 68 | 73 |
| Short courses | Number of starters | 1,032 | 927 | 712 | 2,854 | 3,651 | 3,103 |
| | Retention (%) | 95 | 87 | 87 | 96 | 86 | 83 |
| | Achievement (%) | 82 | 72 | 71 | 72 | 55 | 72 |
| Unknown/ unclassified | Number of starters | 836 | 787 | 630 | 470 | 310 | 374 |
| | Retention (%) | 84 | 79 | 80 | 81 | 80 | 79 |
| | Achievement (%) | 74 | 39 | 83 | 90 | 55 | 86 |

*Source: ISR*

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