

# **Bishop Burton College**

**REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE  
1998-99**

**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL**

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*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

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## Summary

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### Context

The college and its mission	1
The inspection	7

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### Curriculum areas

Agriculture	10
Animal care	16
Horticulture	21
Business, leisure and tourism	26

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### Cross-college provision

Support for students	32
General resources	39
Quality assurance	45
Governance	54
Management	61
Conclusions	69

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### College statistics

## 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 1997-98, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	9	60	29	2	-
Cross-college provision	18	54	24	4	-

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*  
Sample size: 108 college inspections

## Student Achievements

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

- as expected completions, which is the number of initial enrolments on qualifications where the student expected to complete the qualification in a given 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 the students have completed as expected (or are continuing with the prospect of late completion). 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 shown.

# Summary

## **Bishop Burton College**

### ***Yorkshire and Humberside Region***

#### **Inspected November 1998**

Bishop Burton College is an agricultural college which has diversified its provision significantly in recent years. Its main site is located close to Beverley. It is a major provider of courses in agriculture, horticulture and equine studies in the East Riding of Yorkshire. It has three smaller centres on the outskirts of the East Riding and another in North Lincolnshire. The self-assessment process involved staff at all levels and was rigorously moderated by staff within and external to the college. The self-assessment report proved an accurate guide to the quality of the provision. Data on students' achievements provided by the college proved reliable.

The college offers courses in all of the FEFC's programme areas. The inspection covered provision in agriculture, animal care and horticulture and also provision in business, leisure and tourism. The quality of the provision in agriculture and animal care is outstanding and good in the other curriculum areas inspected. There is a wide range of courses, facilitating students' progression. Teaching is of good quality and a high proportion of the lessons inspected were judged to be outstanding. Students are exposed to a wide range of appropriate experiences. The facilities of the college's estate are used well to

relate teaching to practice and to provide realistic working environments. The college provides extensive additional qualifications for full-time students. These improve students' employment prospects. Student retention and achievement rates are generally good and, in some cases, outstanding. Students receive exceptional tutorial support. General resources are of good quality. Quality assurance arrangements have successfully maintained the high quality of the provision since the last inspection. Governors use their extensive experience well in support of the college's operations and make a significant contribution to the college's strategic direction. The college, its finances and curriculum are well managed. Staff work co-operatively in achieving the college's strategic objectives. The college should: improve retention on a few courses; address the low pass rates for some qualifications taken in addition to the students' main course; ensure that the outcomes of individual students' reviews are recorded systematically; develop the support for some part-time students; improve aspects of the accommodation and ensure systematic operational planning is applied to all areas of the college.

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Cross-college provision</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Agriculture	1	Support for students	1
Animal care	1	General resources	2
Horticulture	2	Quality assurance	1
Business, leisure and tourism	2	Governance	1
		Management	1

# Context

## The College and its Mission

1 Bishop Burton College in the East Riding of Yorkshire was established in 1954 to serve the education and training needs of the local farming industry. Its original enrolment was 40 full-time residential students. The main site, originally the estate of a historic hall, is located in a rural setting at Bishop Burton, three miles west of the market town of Beverley. Four smaller centres are located at Driffield, Bubwith, Preston and Broughton. These are attended by part-time students. Additionally, some students attend centres throughout the country to study BTEC higher national certificate courses. The 13-hectare college estate comprises campus, gardens and sports fields. The adjoining college farm, including woodlands, comprises an additional 369 hectares. The walled garden and converted coach-house of the original estate remain. The farm, which includes a large dairy and equestrian unit with stabling for 80 horses, two large indoor arenas and a cross-country course, operates as a commercial enterprise and provides opportunities for teaching and learning. The pig unit comprises 400 sows and their progeny and is the focus of the national centre for pig industry training. Teaching areas for practical skills include agricultural and horticultural engineering workshops, carpentry and farm buildings workshops, and a centre for food and creative studies. There are also kennels, a cattery and a pet shop. The Croft, a specialist rural centre, provides education and training for those with moderate to severe learning difficulties.

2 The college has residential accommodation for 328 students who are recruited regionally, nationally and internationally. This accommodation includes a student village constructed in 1993 which is also used for the holiday and conference trade during the vacations.

3 Bishop Burton College is the only college of rural economy and land-based industries in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Askham Bryan

College, the nearest agricultural college, is 25 miles away near York. The college has diversified its provision significantly in recent years and now enrolls students in all 10 of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) programme areas. There are courses in agriculture; horticulture; equine studies; environment and conservation; countryside management; floristry; animal care; interior design; sport; leisure and tourism; engineering; and business management. Higher education is delivered in partnership with the University of Lincolnshire and Humberside and includes two honours degree and five higher national diploma courses. There is also a range of higher national certificate courses. The college provides training for students funded by the Humberside, and North Yorkshire Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs). International links have been developed with nine countries. Students from some of these countries attend the college, and some staff undertake advisory work overseas. A training centre for overseas rural development was established in 1987.

4 The college's senior management team comprises the principal, two assistant principals with responsibility for academic and resource management respectively, the finance manager and the staff development manager. The curriculum is organised into seven departments.

5 In 1997-98, over 30% of the students enrolled at the college came from outside the former Humberside county. By November 1998, the college had enrolled 7,125 students of whom 1,042 were studying by full-time and 6,083 by part-time modes of attendance. Of the students enrolled, 14% were on higher education courses. The number of full-time students has increased by 37% since the last inspection in 1994. In September 1998, the college employed 227 permanent and fixed term full-time equivalent staff, and nine full-time equivalent staff on a casual basis.

6 The mission of the college, revised in 1997, is to provide a caring environment and, working

# Context

primarily in a rural context, to enable the pursuit of lifelong learning, and the achievement of personal development and preparation for success in the world of work. The main strategic aims of the college are to develop the college's portfolio of courses; develop staff as a key to success; provide and maintain a high-quality resource base; achieve financial viability and stability; and ensure that all activity is of high quality.

## The Inspection

7 The college was inspected in November 1998. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and information held by other divisions of the FEFC. For 1996 and 1997, inspectors used data on students' achievements derived from the college's individualised student record (ISR) returns to the FEFC. The college submitted data on students' achievements for 1998. These were checked by inspectors against primary

sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. These data were found to be accurate. The college was notified in September 1998 of the sample of provision to be inspected. The inspection was carried out by eight inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 37 days. It covered aspects of work in two of the FEFC's programme areas. There were meetings with college governors, managers, staff, students and external representatives of farming, a range of other businesses and the Humberside TEC.

8 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. Grades awarded to lessons were above national averages. Of the lessons inspected, 75% were rated good or outstanding. This figure is above the average of 65% for all lessons observed by inspectors during 1997-98. Only 2% of lessons were rated less than satisfactory, which is well below the national average of 6%.

### Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GNVQ	2	6	2	0	0	10
Other advanced	5	10	7	0	0	22
Other	7	8	3	1	0	19
Total (No)	14	24	12	1	0	51
Total (%)	27	47	24	2	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98 (%)	19	46	29	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*

# Context

9 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. The average level of attendance during the inspection was 90% compared with an average of 84% for specialist colleges. The average number of students in each class was 15.8 which is significantly above the national average for specialist colleges. The highest recorded average attendance was 92% in animal care and the lowest was 78% in horticulture.

## Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Bishop Burton College	15.8	90
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98	10.4	77

*Source for national average: Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*



# Curriculum Areas

## Agriculture

### Grade 1

**10 Inspectors observed 13 lessons. Courses inspected included full-time and part-time courses in agriculture and farm management at intermediate and advanced levels.**

**Inspectors agreed with almost all the strengths contained in the self-assessment report. They identified some further strengths which were not included in the report.**

#### Key strengths

- the vocational relevance of the teaching
- high standards of practical teaching
- the wide range of courses
- high levels of students' achievements
- the effective use made of the college farm

#### Weaknesses

- weaknesses in recording the outcomes of students' progress reviews

11 As the self-assessment report recognised, the provision is well matched to the needs of students and the industry. Students can progress from foundation to higher levels of provision benefiting from well-structured arrangements to move between courses. Demand is strong for the national diploma course which attracts a high proportion of students from a farming background. There are good opportunities to study specialist aspects of farming; the college is, for example, the national centre for pig industry training. An appropriate range of courses is offered to employed students. These may be studied through different modes of attendance, including distance learning. Well-managed arrangements enable full-time students to gain employment-related qualifications such as national vocational

qualifications (NVQs) and qualifications required by legislation to operate machinery, in addition to their main qualifications. There are good links with industry; students use local farms in addition to the college farm for their practical work and assignments and work experience are well managed.

12 The self-assessment report noted that students benefit from a wide range of appropriate experiences. In most lessons, teachers explain new concepts clearly and manage discussions well so that students are made to articulate their understanding. Well-chosen examples and exercises help to ensure that students are aware of the practical and financial implications of the theory being studied. Teachers use their knowledge of current industrial practice effectively and, by drawing on college farm practice, the students are able to relate the theory to familiar practical applications. In a few lessons, teachers fail to check students' understanding regularly and some teachers are not sufficiently aware of students who are having difficulties with the work.

13 In practical lessons, students observe clear demonstrations before being carefully supervised whilst they carry out the work. Teachers provide helpful guidance, identifying areas for improvement and linking the practical activity to the related theory. In a few lessons, teachers fail to ensure that all the students are involved in the work. The self-assessment report did not identify the strengths of the assignments set. Realistic exercises provide students with good opportunities to apply their knowledge and develop a range of personal skills, such as problem-solving and research. The tasks are clearly specified but the criteria for assessment are not always sufficiently detailed. Most of the teachers' written comments on marked work show the students how to improve their performance. Although the self-assessment report identified the well-structured arrangements to review the

# Curriculum Areas

progress of each student, it did not identify the weaknesses in recording the outcomes of progress reviews; the identification of areas requiring development is often not comprehensive and proposed actions are not always made clear.

14 A well-organised programme of routine duties enables students to work on the broad range of commercial enterprises in the college farm. Students gain a good appreciation of farming methods and the duties provide valuable experience of work; the livestock duties start in the early hours of the morning and are supervised effectively by farm staff. The farm is used extensively for students' practical work and assignments. The farm office and information room readily provide information on the performance of each enterprise. Students use computer programmes to monitor the enterprises and gain valuable experience of their commercial applications.

15 Retention and achievement rates on full-time courses are high. Last year, all the first diploma students who enrolled achieved the qualification and over 90% of the national diploma students who completed the course achieved the award. Only on the advanced national certificate were students' performances not up to this high standard; only five of the nine students completing the course passed. Most students leave with additional qualifications. Last year, nearly all of the national diploma students achieved NVQ level 3. Most students are highly motivated and demonstrate considerable vocational commitment, willingly participating in the mundane elements of routine practical duties. Attendance levels are high; for the lessons inspected, over 90% of students were in attendance which is similar to the level recorded in the term. At the end of their course a high proportion of students either enter related employment or go on to other educational courses, many of them at the college.

## A summary of achievement and retention rates in agriculture, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
First diploma and national certificate courses in agriculture and farm management (full time)	2	Expected completions	42	30	28
		Retention (%)	86	90	93
		Achievement (%)	94	93	89
National diploma and advanced national certificate courses in agriculture (full time)	3	Expected completions	38	38	58
		Retention (%)	75	97	88
		Achievement (%)	100	100	88
Part time	3	Expected completions	27	36	30
		Retention (%)	89	75	80
		Achievement (%)	96	70	71

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

# Curriculum Areas

## Animal Care

### Grade 1

**16 The inspection covered animal care courses from foundation to advanced level. Twelve lessons were observed. The self-assessment report was thorough. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses. Some additional strengths were identified by inspectors. The college had attached greater significance to some of the weaknesses than inspectors did.**

#### Key strengths

- the high standard of teaching
- the good quality of students' assignment work
- good retention and achievement rates
- effectively planned practical activities
- strong links with industry
- licensed kennel and associated resources used for the benefit of students

#### Weaknesses

- inadequate written comment on students' progress reviews
- lack of some types of animals

17 The college's range of full-time provision, from foundation to higher levels, provides students with good opportunities to progress both within the college and to courses offered by others such as those in veterinary nursing. Course tutors manage the programmes well. Course documentation is comprehensive, up to date and collated in the college's course file system. This strength was not identified in the self-assessment report. The college successfully develops its courses in line with the results of surveys of employers' views.

18 Teaching is well planned and, as the self-assessment report noted, a wide range of

teaching methods is used. Good links are made between theory and practical activity. Teachers take care to ensure that the practical work is well suited to each student's needs. For example, in a lesson on grooming, teachers ensured that students selected the most appropriate breed of dog with which to practise newly acquired skills. Teachers enrich their lessons through reference to their own experiences, developments in the industry and current events. For example, in a lesson on small mammals, tutors discussed survey work they had recently undertaken on hedgerow populations. Inspectors agreed with the college that students gain experience of work through blocks of well-managed work experience and regular duties in the college's animal care unit. Students are also encouraged to participate in other events such as a pet day attended by the public, local shows and trade events. Students are assessed in many ways. For example the students' performance whilst on work experience contributes to the final assessment of each student. Key skills are developed and integrated with the vocational curriculum. Although students' progress is monitored during individual tutorials, the quality of the written comments included in the reviews of progress is sometimes poor.

19 Students worked well in groups and showed a high degree of motivation and initiative in completing their tasks. Students present their written work in a well-structured format. The work is often wordprocessed, and to a high standard of presentation. Much of it is of a quality which compares well with the requirements of the course. Students' retention and achievement rates have improved over the last three years and are now outstanding. For example, in 1997-98 the first diploma and national certificate courses achieved pass and retention rates of over 90%. These strengths were identified in the self-assessment report. In addition, students achieve national awards in such areas as dog grooming and from exhibiting at small animal breed shows.

# Curriculum Areas

20 The college has a large licensed kennel that is run on a commercial basis. A dog grooming service is also offered as well as daycare facilities for dogs. These facilities provide students with a realistic work environment within which to develop their skills. There is a large cattery offering an appropriate environment for the cats and ready access to students. Other resources include accommodation for a range of small mammals, a tropical area housing reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates and a rodent breeding room. The resources are well managed, ensuring that the animals are used with proper consideration for

their welfare. The college's other resources such as the farm and horses in the equestrian department are used to broaden the range of animals with which students work. However, the college recognises that the range of animals is insufficient; this is particularly so in respect of fish and birds. The college has allocated funds to address this weakness in the present year. The level of technician staff support is good and is effectively managed on a split-shift rotation. Teachers are well qualified and experienced and good use is made of part-time staff who possess specialist expertise.

## A summary of achievement and retention rates in animal care, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
First diploma and national certificate	2	Expected completions	36	39	35
		Retention (%)	83	87	94
		Achievement (%)	67	82	94
National diploma	3	Expected completions	41	40	38
		Retention (%)	85	88	87
		Achievement (%)	89	100	100

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

# Curriculum Areas

## Horticulture

### Grade 2

**21 The inspection covered full-time technician courses at intermediate and advanced levels, part-time higher national provision and craft provision at NVQ level 2. Inspectors observed 15 lessons and agreed with the strengths and weaknesses stated in the self-assessment report. However, inspectors identified a few additional weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- high retention and pass rates on full-time courses
- the high proportion of full-time students obtaining employment
- lively and enthusiastic teaching
- effective use of the estate facilities to support learning
- well-planned assessment programmes

#### Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on higher national certificate courses
- some poor results on courses for additional qualifications

22 The horticulture department offers a range of courses from intermediate to higher levels. Courses are well managed. Student handbooks are comprehensive and most schemes of work and assessment plans are well developed. Assessment plans are supplied to students at the start of the course. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that the programmes within horticulture are innovative and of high quality. Recent innovations include the NVQ level 2 (commercial horticulture), offered in conjunction with Hull City Council, which is part of the college's strategy to widen participation. Aimed at long-term unemployed

people, the course is delivered partly at the college and partly on an allotment site in Hull. Course teams make good use of the views of the industrial advisory panel when reviewing the provision.

23 Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods. For example, in a lesson on plant identification the teacher made effective use of questioning and discussion as well as the examination of specimens. Much of the teaching observed was enthusiastic and lively. All full-time students undertake work experience. Good use is made of the college estate to provide opportunities for practical work. Teachers enrich the curriculum by drawing on their own industrial experience, and by using examples drawn from the college's nursery and garden areas. There are close links with industry. In weeks set aside for project work, national diploma students work in groups to undertake survey and design contracts provided by local companies. Students participate in realistic work projects using the grounds and nursery. These often involve planning and budgeting as well as horticultural work. Full-time students are offered valuable opportunities to undertake work leading to NVQs as additional qualifications to their main course of study. As stated in the self-assessment report, assessment briefs are detailed and provide clear guidelines on criteria for success. Students' progress is regularly reviewed and plans to address weaknesses and make further progress are established.

24 Students work diligently. Inspectors agreed with the college that pass and retention rates on most full-time courses are good, and often exceed national averages. An exception is the higher national certificate courses where retention rates have been low for the last two years. The self-assessment report did not note this weakness. In some cases, students who have lacked the skills and experience necessary to succeed have been recruited to these courses. The department has recently taken steps to

# Curriculum Areas

improve the situation, for example, by improving the information provided at recruitment and by reviewing the curriculum. The current cohorts of students are showing improved retention rates. Students on the first diploma course achieve good rates of success in NVQs taken in addition to their main course but at advanced level pass rates for these additional qualifications were poor in 1997-98. The department has changed the additional qualifications it makes available in 1998-99 and now provides qualifications which do not require assessment in the work place. A high proportion of full-time students gain related employment or progress to a higher level of further education. Students on the higher national certificate courses are less successful.

25 The department makes effective use of the excellent facilities of the estate to support learning. The plant nursery is well managed and facilities have been significantly improved through project work done by national diploma students. The gardens and glasshouses provide a good range of plant material. Work on the grounds is carefully managed both to improve the facilities and to provide opportunities for student work. Specialist equipment and facilities such as the engineering and hard-landscape workshops are of good quality.

## A summary of achievement and retention rates in horticulture, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
First diploma	2	Expected completions	10	20	*
		Retention (%)	80	80	*
		Achievement (%)	87	100	*
National diploma	3	Expected completions	16	24	24
		Retention (%)	81	71	92
		Achievement (%)	100	88	82
Higher national certificate	4	Expected completions	14	28	35
		Retention (%)	86	57	49
		Achievement (%)	100	85	95

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

\*less than 10 students

# Curriculum Areas

## Business, Leisure and Tourism

### Grade 2

**26 Inspectors observed 11 lessons covering higher level courses in business, and general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) programmes in business, leisure and tourism. The self-assessment report was succinct; inspectors agreed with many of the strengths listed. Some of the weaknesses, particularly relating to retention and achievements, were given greater significance by inspectors.**

#### Key strengths

- effective course planning and organisation
- good standards of teaching
- the provision of additional qualifications
- work experience and foreign exchange programmes
- high pass rates on many courses

#### Weaknesses

- some unsatisfactory retention rates
- some poor pass rates in recent years on advanced programmes

27 The college offers an appropriate range of courses in business and leisure. Staff also teach the business management components of other courses. The self-assessment report noted the importance placed on additional qualifications which students study in addition to their main programmes of study. These are particularly wide ranging for students on leisure and tourism courses and include coaching and sports leader awards as well as qualifications, for example, in outdoor activities and the Association of British Travel Agencies certificate. Recruitment to intermediate and advanced courses exceeded targets in 1997-98, but was below target for the higher national certificate course. This latter course failed to recruit new students in September 1998.

28 Courses are well organised.

Comprehensive files contain information about the different elements of course organisation. They include student manuals, assignment briefs, annual reviews and the minutes of regular team meetings. Inspectors agreed with the college that schemes of work are consistently monitored by curriculum managers. Work experience is an integral feature of all the courses. It often includes duties on the college farm as well as external placements.

29 Nearly three-quarters of the lessons observed were judged to be good or outstanding. No lessons were less than satisfactory. Teachers possessed sound subject knowledge and drew upon local commerce to provide current examples of business practice. In one lesson, students had visited a local retail shop and obtained figures from the proprietor about the different costs and sources of income. Using these data they calculated realistic profit forecasts and gained an insight into the mechanics of running a small business. Overall, financial management is particularly well taught; in one lesson students successfully applied a sensitivity analysis to an investment appraisal project. In leisure and tourism, different case studies allowed students to apply the principles of leisure organisation and management to local and national service providers. In a minority of lessons, teachers failed to ensure that students contributed sufficiently to the lesson and, in others, teachers failed to explain adequately the meaning of some technical terms. Judgements about teaching contained in the self-assessment report were not supported by enough evidence.

30 Students' portfolios on GNVQ programmes are well presented, of a good standard and illustrate a broad coverage of topics. In the case of advanced leisure and tourism, they include an investigative assignment on marketing, undertaken in Italy as part of a foreign exchange programme. Key skills are appropriately developed through assignments, although the evidence relating to the development of

# Curriculum Areas

information technology (IT) competences is small. Teachers' marking of work is usually thorough; they make constructive comments to help students to improve their work. There are some high standards in external students' achievements. Pass rates of 100% have been achieved on all the main courses during the last three years. In the case of the higher national certificate programmes in business and property management, they have averaged 98% over this period. The self-assessment report acknowledged that in some years retention and achievement rates have been too low. Pass rates on the GNVQ advanced programmes have fluctuated from 57% to 100% in the last two years. Retention rates were below sector averages on three of the main programmes in 1997. Additionally, they have averaged below 65% on the higher national certificate course over the last two years. The achievement rate for additional qualifications is high for advanced

and intermediate courses; college figures indicate pass rates averaging 88% in 1997-98 for a variety of awards involving over 250 students.

31 Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced. Of the full-time or fractional staff, 92% have a teaching qualification and all have a relevant degree or professional qualification; 70% possess appropriate assessor awards and just over 20% are qualified internal verifiers. A large proportion of the teachers have recent experience of commerce; 84% of full-time or fractional teachers have been employed in business within the last five years. This is used to good effect in teaching. A substantial amount of teaching is undertaken in temporary classrooms which are adequately furnished and decorated. There is little students' work on display.

## A summary of achievement and retention rates in business, leisure and tourism, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	Expected completions	11	12	19
		Retention (%)	91	67	84
		Achievement (%)	100	88	75
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism	3	Expected completions	14	20	21
		Retention (%)	79	65	90
		Achievement (%)	73	100	58
GNVQ advanced business and precursor	3	Expected completions	42*	10	11
		Retention (%)	76	70	91
		Achievement (%)	97	57	100
Higher national certificate	4	Expected completions	10	24	23
		Retention (%)	80	67	61
		Achievement (%)	100	93	100

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

\*combined course for business and equine students



# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### Grade 1

**32 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment of the quality of its support for students and considered that the college is successfully delivering its mission to provide a caring environment.**

#### Key strengths

- effective communications with prospective students
- well-managed arrangements for initial guidance, advice and enrolment
- thorough and effective induction
- comprehensive learning support for all full-time students
- good tutorial and career planning support
- the wide range of welfare, counselling and guidance services
- effective monitoring of students' progression
- the extensive range of recreational and social activities

#### Weaknesses

- less developed support arrangements for some part-time students

33 The college uses a wide range of methods to promote its provision. Events held throughout the year, such as the national equestrian events, attract many visitors to the college. Attractive course information leaflets provide useful information. The college has well-managed arrangements to provide initial advice and guidance, a strength identified in its self-assessment report. Prospective students, particularly adults and those who are undecided about their choice of course, value the opportunity to attend guidance sessions before making a formal application. Arrangements for

interviews and admission are well documented and thorough. The college has developed effective procedures for assessing and accrediting students' prior learning and experience; in 1997-98, they were used by over 50 students.

34 Inspectors agreed with the college that there is a well-organised and comprehensive induction programme. Course managers add to the core programme to meet the requirements of their specific course. Students are made aware of their rights and responsibilities and find the induction experience enjoyable. However, not all part-time students take part. A separate programme of social events helps students who are living away from home for the first time to adjust to college life. Excellent information booklets inform both full-time and part-time students of the college's facilities and support services and course handbooks provide guidance on course requirements.

35 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that there are effective procedures which identify the additional learning support needs of students on full-time and substantial part-time courses. All full-time students are screened to identify those who may have learning difficulties. Students also complete vocationally related assignments which assess whether they have the skills needed for their specific courses. However, these assessments are not always effective: some students have been recruited to higher national certificate courses, for example, in horticulture when they lacked the necessary skills. Study skills tutors work alongside teachers to help students develop basic and key skills. Students identified in need of extra support can attend additional sessions in the study skills centre. The take-up of such support is high; in 1997-98, of the 35% of all students identified as requiring learning support, 90% received it. Tutors are informed of their students' progress. Resources within the study skills centre include large screen computers and paper-based materials, but the

# Cross-college Provision

range of up-to-date materials is small. External agencies provide additional support for students, for example, those who suffer from visual or hearing impairment.

36 The tutorial system is well organised and effective. All full-time and substantial part-time courses include a regular tutorial period. In addition, students on higher national certificate courses delivered off-site can contact their tutor outside of their taught hours, by telephone or electronic mail. The college recognises the need to provide tutorial support for all part-time students. The tutorial curriculum includes equal opportunities, health education and careers guidance. Most tutorials observed were of good quality. Students' personal action plans, prepared during induction by the careers adviser and course tutor, are regularly reviewed. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that the charter commitment to record students' achievements in a national record of achievement is not always met. Contact between teachers and students is close and electronic mail provides an additional facility for this. Students' attendance is closely monitored and action promptly taken, when needed. Parents of full-time students under 18 years of age receive regular reports on their children's progress. They are invited to attend parents' evenings.

37 The college has excellent links with the local careers service. Careers advice is well co-ordinated. Careers advisers take part in group tutorials, and offer individual guidance interviews. The quality of careers education is good. Students receive detailed advice on applying to higher education. The college publicises information on job vacancies and a national recruitment agency provides specific information for equine students. The careers adviser liaises with other careers services to arrange work experience for students outside of the college's immediate area. Students make good use of the services provided. Information on students' progression is recorded and

monitored effectively. As the college states in its self-assessment, it provides an extensive range of services relating to welfare and counselling. Students are well supported by college counsellors, residential wardens, a chaplain and an information officer. However, the provision is dispersed across the campus, and this hampers students' access to specialist information.

38 The college provides residential accommodation for over 400 students, in college-maintained accommodation and in houses near the college. Students and their parents receive a high level of practical advice and support. For example, those students living in rented accommodation away from the main site are visited monthly. Student services staff work closely with the students' association to provide a wide range of recreational and sporting activities held during the week and at weekends. There is a high level of student participation. Students regularly achieve success in national sports competitions.

## General Resources

### Grade 2

**39 Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the general resources listed in the self-assessment report.**

#### Key strengths

- the good quality of the estate and buildings
- high-quality IT resources
- good library facilities
- excellent social facilities
- extensive use of the estate for income generation

#### Weaknesses

- some poor-quality building stock
- shortcomings in the general IT and library accommodation

# Cross-college Provision

40 The college's buildings are grouped together on a compact and complex site within attractive, well-maintained gardens and parkland. The site holds over 80 separate buildings, the great majority of which are in good condition and well suited to their purpose. A few of the temporary buildings are in poor condition.

41 The estate and buildings are well maintained. Progress made in the implementation of an annual maintenance plan is rigorously checked. Room usage is closely monitored. General teaching rooms are well decorated and equipped with screens, overhead projectors, blinds and boards. Additional audiovisual aids are stored close to groups of classrooms. The conference centre has outstanding presentation facilities. Most of the specialist teaching areas and general facilities are accessible to wheelchair users. Toilets suitable for people with disabilities are available at several points on the site and in all of the latest student residential accommodation. The buildings and estate are used extensively by outside organisations; this use contributes over 2% of the college's income. The strengths in the accommodation and estate were included in the self-assessment reports.

42 The college has developed an IT resource which generally serves students and staff well. The great majority of computers used by students at the main site are modern. They are on a common network which carries an appropriate range of software and internal communication facilities. Almost all computers allow access to the internet. Technical support for the system and for students is good. The number of computers available for students' use is low in comparison with many colleges. However, the main computing facility is open in the evenings and on Saturdays and Sundays, allowing convenient access for residential students. The room providing students with open access to computers is too small. Students may use the other computer rooms when these are not timetabled for classes. The principal

computing facilities are conveniently located near to the library. Rooms used for teaching IT are well decorated, and provide pleasant environments. Staff rooms contain at least one computer connected to the network and the internet. The strengths of the IT provision were included in the self-assessment report, which also recognised the increasing demands on the resource.

43 The college library contains a comprehensive, up-to-date book and journal stock and enjoys an appropriate level of investment. It has extended opening hours, including Saturdays. The computer-based library management system is used to good effect in controlling the stock and providing detailed information about its use. Library staff liaise closely with teachers and course managers; this was noted as a strength in the self-assessment report. The library has been created by linking a number of adjacent rooms. The resultant visual barriers sometimes make supervision difficult. The library is sometimes congested. A separate room contains reference texts and provides an area for quiet study but facilities for group work are restricted. Library staff are able to tell students which classrooms are free for group use. About 60 CD-ROM titles are available through six multimedia computers. The library catalogue includes college stocks held at some of the centres used outside the college. Students studying higher national certificate courses at centres away from the main college cannot borrow books without payment of extra fees and have little access to IT facilities.

44 Social facilities at the college are excellent, and are popular with students and staff. One modern building combines a refectory shop, relaxation areas and bar. A separate large restaurant is provided near the main administration and teaching block. The sports hall is large but is not designed to modern standards. It includes a squash court and a small, but well-equipped, fitness room. College grounds have good floodlit pitches for team

# Cross-college Provision

sports, though there are no all-weather facilities. The estate provides facilities for country sports such as clay-pigeon shooting and contains an equestrian cross-country course of international standard. The strengths in the college's social and recreational facilities were emphasised in the self-assessment report. The students' residential accommodation is of mixed quality. The student village provides good-quality study bedrooms about half of which have en-suite bathrooms. Some of the older hostel facilities have poorer amenities and require refurbishment.

## Quality Assurance

### Grade 1

**45 Inspectors agreed with the strengths recorded in the college's self-assessment report but considered that some of the weaknesses had been overstated.**

#### Key strengths

- effective quality assurance procedures ensuring continuing high performance
- clearly documented and comprehensive operating procedures
- an effective system for gathering and reacting to students' views
- thorough course review and evaluation
- effective arrangements for the appraisal of staff
- extensive, well-focused professional development activities

#### Weaknesses

- deficiencies in the college's charter arrangements

46 Inspectors agreed that the college's quality assurance procedures were a strength. They demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement and contribute to the college's

continuing high standards of performance. This commitment is reflected in the strategic aims of the college. A quality assurance committee brings together representatives of all departments including support areas, promotes quality assurance procedures throughout the institution and monitors the implementation of the quality assurance policy.

47 Operating procedures cover the majority of the college's work. They are available on the college's intranet, regularly evaluated and amended by users. An audit team assesses the institution's compliance with these procedures and, where appropriate, ensures that practice is improved. Summary reports on compliance are considered by the assistant principal for academic matters. The performance of the majority of the cross-college functions is compared with service standards, some of which reflect national indicators. This practice is particularly well developed and thorough in the college library. The college has identified the need to extend these standards to all areas. Procedures for the internal verification of most courses are rigorously applied. External verifier reports confirm the thoroughness of the activity.

48 The college recognised, in its self-assessment report, that the annual review of courses is a significant strength. The reviews are underpinned by clear procedures. Course teams undertake a thorough analysis of their courses against targets for enrolment, retention and achievements. Other performance indicators such as the views of students are also considered. Heads of department, and student and industrial representatives are often present at the review meetings. Issues raised in these reviews feature in action plans and these are implemented promptly. For example, the first diplomas in horticulture, rural studies and agriculture have all been amended as a result of concerns raised at course review. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that evaluation of course provision is less rigorous on a minority of courses.

# Cross-college Provision

49 The college operates two separate systems for the observation of teaching; one is conducted by an external consultant and contributes to the self-assessment, the other is undertaken by line managers and informs appraisal and staff development. The college does not take full advantage of the extensive lesson observation which is undertaken.

50 Arrangements for the production of the self-assessment report were systematic and rigorous and involved all staff. A well-managed process, built upon the college's established quality assurance systems, took self-assessments produced by staff and systematically refined and moderated them to produce the final report. Senior managers from a partner college conducted an audit of some courses to establish the validity of the judgements. The report has a useful introduction which includes developments since the last inspection. Most strengths and weaknesses are clearly identified and supported by evidence. However, teaching and learning receive too little attention and judgements about these, where made, are insufficiently supported by evidence. An action plan to address the weaknesses allocates responsibility and a timescale for implementation. Some of the actions are not precise enough. However, the college had successfully implemented some of the actions by the time of the inspection.

51 The college charter sets out the students' responsibilities and entitlements. Whilst it is acknowledged in the charter that entitlements for part-time students may differ from those for full-time students, the differences are not made explicit. The degree to which the college meets its charter commitments is monitored through the college's quality assurance arrangements. However, there is no overall report to senior managers or governors on performance against the charter.

52 Surveys of students' views are undertaken throughout the year. These provide clear

indications of students' views, including their opinions of each teacher's performance. The quality assurance committee, which includes three members of the senior management team, considers the resulting reports, which then go to the academic board. Action required to address issues is initiated and implemented. Students also contribute their views in course team meetings and student/staff liaison meetings. Reports on aspects of the college's provision are presented termly to a student meeting attended by about 65 student representatives, but students do not receive a summary of survey findings or the action taken by the college.

53 The college has a well-documented, effective and respected appraisal system. College staff receive well-structured and clearly focused appraisal by their line manager. Self-assessment and lesson observation evidence inform these appraisals which result in agreed action plans. Staff also benefit from extensive professional development opportunities provided both within the college and outside. Training needs, identified through appraisal, are met where they conform to the college's strategic objectives. Two staff development weeks annually focus on more general issues raised by analysis of this information. Weaknesses identified in the last inspection report about the planning and evaluation of professional development have been addressed. The college has achieved Investor in People status.

# Cross-college Provision

## Governance

### Grade 1

**54 Inspectors agreed with the strengths in governance included in the self-assessment report. The report overstated weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- extensive experience of governors
- effective operation of the corporation's committees
- open governance
- close monitoring of the college's financial and academic performance
- efficient clerking arrangements
- the governors' significant contribution to the strategic direction of the college

#### Weaknesses

- there are no significant weaknesses

55 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is good. 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.

56 The corporation has 19 members, four of whom are women. There is one vacancy. The corporation has decided to defer filling this vacancy until the outcome of the government's consultation on accountability is known. The self-assessment report highlighted the wide range of expertise brought to the college by governors. Members have a range of appropriate high level experience in business, estate management, finance, personnel management, law, education, food production and retailing, equine management, horticulture and floristry. A search committee operates to find new members to fill any vacancies. The

corporation's committees are considerably enhanced by the appointment of several co-opted members. For example, the search committee has two such members who help in the identification of persons who would be suitable to serve as governors. There is a formalised induction process and members receive a comprehensive handbook. This handbook includes the corporation's instrument and articles of government, standing orders, committee structure and terms of reference, and the curricula vitae of governors. Members' training needs are determined annually and addressed appropriately. Governors receive presentations by college managers, and are given the opportunity to attend external training events.

57 The corporation meets four times a year. As noted in the self-assessment report, the corporation is well supported by the clerk to the corporation, who has a detailed job description outlining her key responsibilities. Agendas and minutes are produced to a high standard and members receive a wide selection of informative papers, including regular detailed and summative reports on enrolments, retention and achievements. A new clerk has recently been appointed. She has already initiated further improvements to the governance of the college. Governors' commitment to the college is demonstrated by an average attendance of over 80% at corporation and committee meetings during 1997-98. The governors' management committee meets monthly and reviews the college management accounts in detail. These management accounts are also presented to the corporation. The audit committee operates effectively. There are also two committees with specific remits to support the college's trading activities. Committee reporting arrangements to the corporation are good, and include the presentation of written minutes and a verbal report, when appropriate.

58 The corporation has determined that its meetings, and those of its committees, are open

# Cross-college Provision

to members of the public. Corporation agendas, minutes and papers, and the register of interests are open to public scrutiny and this is publicised in the college library. The register of interests has been completed by all governors and members of the senior management team. It is updated annually. The college publishes an annual report which includes information on the college's mission and strategic objectives, key attainments, and extensive financial and statistical data. The corporation has agreed a code of conduct, although this requires updating in line with current good practice. A 'whistleblowing' policy, consistent with recognised sector practice, has recently been approved.

59 Corporation members determine the mission, vision and strategic objectives of the college in joint meetings with senior staff. They take a leading role in exploring the options for the future direction of the college. The corporation considers and agrees the college and departmental targets set in the strategic plan and monitors the college's progress in achieving the annual objectives. In their 1998 updating of the strategic plan, members agreed critical success factors for the college and, with senior managers, identified key issues the college needed to address. The self-assessment report identified the corporation's involvement in determining and monitoring the strategic direction of the college as a strength and inspectors agreed. Governors have a good understanding of educational issues and receive a range of reports on academic performance, including the minutes of the academic board. Many governors have regular contact with staff through the corporation's committees or through their meetings with staff in those curriculum areas in which they have professional interests. Each governor has recently been paired with a teaching or functional area of the college in which they do not have a personal interest; it is planned that these attachments will be changed annually. Staff and governors appreciate the added insight that this is giving them.

60 The corporation has twice assessed its own effectiveness. A detailed questionnaire asks for members' views on the operation and performance of the corporation, and their individual contribution. The corporation does not use formal performance indicators or targets in this assessment of its work.

## Management

### Grade 1

**61 The self-assessment report provided a thorough and comprehensive account of the quality of management. Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the report.**

#### Key strengths

- a shared commitment to the college's aims and vision
- effective teamwork in achieving the college's strategic objectives
- good curriculum management
- good communications between staff
- outstanding links with employers and external bodies
- strong contribution to the local community
- good financial management

#### Weaknesses

- some weaknesses in operational planning

62 Since the last inspection, the college has diversified its range of provision, significantly increased its enrolments, maintained the quality of its education and training, achieved its funding targets and increased its efficiency. It continues to enjoy a high reputation locally and nationally.

63 Staff throughout the college were involved in producing the college's strategic plan, and share the aims and vision which it embodies.

# Cross-college Provision

In the plan, the college's key objectives are clearly outlined, and include a detailed response to national initiatives such as widening participation. Cross-college aspects, such as the library and management information systems, are supported by detailed annual operational plans which allow staff to review progress over the year. In some areas of the college, operational planning is less well developed.

64 A major factor in the college's success is the effective teamwork between managers and staff. A senior manager co-ordinates the work of curriculum managers, who meet regularly to ensure that cross-college themes such as key skills, learning support and careers education are well co-ordinated. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities. These are outlined in a helpful manual which is regularly updated. Communications are good; there is a coherent committee structure, a meetings calendar and clear lines of reporting. The minutes of all meetings, including those of the senior management team, are circulated on the college's intranet. The principal holds staff meetings three times a term; a summary of these is also held on the intranet. Communications between the main campus and the four centres at a distance from the college are regular and frequent, ensuring that their work is well integrated with that of the rest of the college. Staff morale is high.

65 Links with external bodies are outstanding. Staff use their close and extensive contacts with the industry to consult on strategic issues, ensure that the curriculum develops in line with the needs of employers and students and to gain employers' views of the quality of the courses provided. There are a number of advisory committees. The college makes good use of labour market intelligence in drawing up its needs analysis. In its self-assessment report it recognised that a more detailed and direct approach to market research is required.

66 The college has productive relationships with the TECs, with higher education

institutions and with the local education authority (LEA), who all regard the college as a reliable and valuable partner. It plays a significant part in the life of the local rural community, where it enjoys a high reputation for the quality of its provision and its responsiveness. Local people take part in recreational, cultural, sporting and social activities on the college site. Links with local primary, special and secondary schools are considerable, and the local TEC has funded a schools liaison co-ordinator to further these links. In 1997-98, 8,675 school pupils visited the college to carry out assignments designed jointly by the college and the schools. In one innovative partnership, based in one of the college's centres, school staff teach IT key skills to the college's NVQ trainees in return for college staff teaching agricultural science to school pupils. The college is a partner in a number of collaborative ventures with other colleges, including a project to co-ordinate a feasibility study to review agriculture provision in north-east England.

67 The college has reduced the proportion of its income which it obtains from the FEFC to under 40%. The college's commercial activities add significantly to the educational experiences of its students. Stringent attention is given to financial efficiency. Staff utilisation is monitored using computerised management information and performance indicators against which the costs incurred by each course are measured. Management information systems are reliable, and provide helpful and accurate information to managers and teachers to enable them to monitor performance against targets. An IT users group considers which reports would be useful to staff, and keeps the content and frequency of these reports under review.

68 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The financial position is robust, despite the reduction in the college's average level of funding to its present



# Cross-college Provision

level of £16.25. The finance team includes appropriately qualified and experienced staff. Detailed management accounts with an accompanying commentary are produced monthly, in accordance with required deadlines, and monitored by the finance directorate. However, whilst the college compares its financial performance against agricultural sector averages, it has not yet determined its own financial performance indicators. Consumable and capital budgets are delegated to departmental heads and below. Monthly budget reports are provided promptly to budget holders. The finance manager has recently started to revise the college's financial regulations in order to rectify some omissions. The positive conclusion in the 1997-98 annual internal audit report confirms that the college has adequate systems of internal control. Statistical and financial returns to the FEFC are submitted on a timely basis.

## Conclusions

69 The self-assessment report was thorough and a useful basis for planning and carrying out the inspection. The inspection findings differed by no more than one grade in any aspect of provision. In the curriculum areas, inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report. A few weaknesses were given greater significance by the inspectorate. In the cross-college areas, there was close agreement on both strengths and weaknesses and inspectors agreed with all cross-college grades except one. In this latter case, inspectors awarded a higher grade.

70 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 (November 1998)

Age	%
Under 16	5
16-18 years	19
19-24 years	13
25+ years	63
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

## Student numbers by level of study (November 1998)

Level of study	%
Foundation	20
Intermediate	13
Advanced	10
Higher education	14
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	43
Total	100

Source: college data

## Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (November 1998)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	0	16	0
Agriculture	830	2,017	40
Construction	0	120	1
Engineering	38	1,021	15
Business	24	154	2
Hotel and catering	69	1,267	19
Health and community care	0	401	6
Art and design	81	195	4
Humanities	0	631	9
Basic education	0	261	4
Total	1,042	6,083	100

Source: college data

## Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 9% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

## Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (September 1998)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	80	10	2	92
Supporting direct learning contact	33	0	0	33
Other support	101	3	7	111
Total	214	13	9	236

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

# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

	1996	1997	1998
Income	£9,583,000	£9,330,000	£9,100,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998	£18.14	£17.41	£16.25
Payroll as a proportion of income	49%	50%	48%
Achievement of funding target	119%	120%	106%
Diversity of income	61%	62%	61%
Operating surplus	£53,000	-£169,000	-£162,000

Sources: Income – Council Circular 97/35 (1996), college (1997 and 1998)

ALF – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1998)

Payroll – Council Circular 97/35 (1996), college (1997 and 1998)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Diversity of income – Council Circular 97/35 (1996), college (1997 and 1998)

Operating surplus – Council Circular 97/35 (1996), college (1997 and 1998)

### Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1995	1996	1997	1995	1996	1997
1	Expected completions	24	51	49	238	177	81
	Retention (%)	96	59	98	98	72	70
	Achievement (%)	65	103	92	92	86	84
2	Expected completions	175	317	272	70	171	161
	Retention (%)	87	74	84	86	72	61
	Achievement (%)	79	85	70	70	87	82
3	Expected completions	–	198	257	–	148	137
	Retention (%)	–	80	84	–	79	69
	Achievement (%)	79	87	92	81	86	74
4 or 5	Expected completions	–	18	2	–	206	322
	Retention (%)	–	67*	100	–	66	55
	Achievement (%)	38	50	0	53	98	81
Short courses	Expected completions	128	131	159	107	161	183
	Retention (%)	100	100	100	100	99	100
	Achievement (%)	97	99	97	90	78	98
Unknown/unclassified	Expected completions	108	144	72	153	147	160
	Retention (%)	96	92	88	97	84*	86
	Achievement (%)	75	74	71	65	71	91

Source: ISR

–ISR data not collected

\*ISR data may not be reliable

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