

Brinsbury College

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1999-00

THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL***

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

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

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 024 7686 3000
Fax 024 7686 3100
Website www.fefc.ac.uk*

© FEFC 2000 You may photocopy this report and use extracts in promotional or other material provided quotes are accurate, and the findings are not misrepresented.

Contents

Paragraph

Summary	
---------	--

Context	
The college and its mission	1
The inspection	9

Curriculum areas	
Agriculture and conservation	12
Horticulture and floristry	19
Animal care	27
Basic skills	35

Cross-college provision	
Support for students	42
General resources	51
Quality assurance	58
Governance	66
Management	75
Conclusions	84

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 1998-99, are shown in the following table.

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

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

Student Achievements

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

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

Summary

Brinsbury College

South East Region

Inspected June 2000

Brinsbury College is a specialist college offering land-based provision in West Sussex. The college has enrolments on courses in nine of the 10 FEFC programme areas, although only small numbers of students are enrolled for subjects other than agriculture. The college had prepared its third self-assessment report for the inspection. The report provided an appropriate basis for planning and conducting the inspection. Inspectors were in broad agreement with the judgements in the self-assessment report, but they identified additional strengths and weaknesses. Insufficient attention was given in the report to student retention and achievement rates. Inspectors agreed with all the grades for curriculum areas and with three of the five grades for cross-college provision.

The inspection covered courses in agriculture and conservation, animal care, horticulture and floristry and basic skills together with aspects of cross-college provision. Much teaching is sound and vocationally relevant but, as the inspectors' and the college's own lesson gradings show, teaching in some lessons is less than satisfactory. The college's estate, farm and practical resources are used effectively to promote the development of students' practical skills. Student achievement rates have been gradually improving over the past three years, whereas student retention rates have been

declining. Information for the current year, however, indicates that retention rates on some courses are improving. The college has strong links with schools, employers and the local community. Students progress successfully to employment. The college benefits from strong leadership. Governors and managers have worked well together to address the financial challenges facing the college. Communications are good. Staff take care to ensure that students are placed on an appropriate course, and that they have access to good learning support. Students benefit from impressive residential accommodation and a recently refurbished learning centre. The college's quality assurance processes have been developed and refined, and have led to many improvements in the college's provision. The college should improve: some unsatisfactory teaching; student achievement and retention rates on some courses; curriculum planning and organisation; aspects of the tutorial system; and the quality of course reviews. It should also: ensure a more co-ordinated approach to meeting students' pastoral needs; undertake focused market research; review its strategic options for the future; update the accommodation and IT strategies; ensure that governors maintain greater oversight of the curriculum and monitor the college's academic performance.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Agriculture and conservation	2	Support for students	3
Horticulture and floristry	3	General resources	2
Animal care	2	Quality assurance	3
Basic skills	2	Governance	3
		Management	2

Context

The College and its Mission

1 Brinsbury College is situated in a 250-hectare estate in central West Sussex, equidistant from the coastal towns of Chichester and Worthing in the south and Crawley in the north. The college was formerly known as the West Sussex College of Agriculture and Horticulture, and changed its name in 1997.

2 The college was first used as a training centre for women in the Land Army. In 1952, it was acquired by West Sussex County Council and became established as a school of agriculture serving the local farming community. Since incorporation, the college's resources have been developed. New residential accommodation has been added to the campus along with a new teaching building, learning centre, and other specialist facilities.

3 The college primarily recruits students from West Sussex. Students also come from the adjoining counties of Hampshire, Surrey and East Sussex. Courses are offered in agriculture, horticulture, floristry, equine studies, animal care, countryside management, engineering and construction plant. The majority of further education courses are offered from entry level to level 3 and can be studied full time or part time. The college also offers higher level programmes in animal science and equine studies. In recent years, the college has developed work-based national vocational qualification (NVQ) programmes, education and training for adults and programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students are from a wide age range and an increasing number of mature students join full-time, part-time and short courses. The college currently has some 431 full-time and 1,386 part-time students.

4 Following the appointment of a new principal two years ago, concerns emerged about the college's financial position. The college is addressing the potential impact of its likely debts and firm action has already been taken to reduce expenditure. This included

organisational changes in 1998-99. There are now 116 full-time equivalent staff. The principal, the director of support services and the director of academic and quality development are responsible for the overall planning and business operation of the college. The college is organised into six departments.

5 Recent curricular developments include information technology (IT) based provision through the Sussex Virtual College and Skills Challenge in Horticulture projects. The college has an inclusive learning project and also a social inclusion project for students aged 16 and under. School-linked initiatives account for a large proportion of the 5,000 visitors to the college and estate annually. The college has contracts for the provision of national traineeships and modern apprenticeships with Sussex Enterprise and a New Deal contract with the employment service.

6 Rural businesses provide one of the larger sources of employment in West Sussex and include large arable and dairy farms, traditional mixed farms, riding stables, garden centres, golf courses, woodland and conservation activities. Flower and vegetable growers have merged into large-scale commercial glass operations located mainly along the Sussex coastal strip. Following the increasing use of the countryside for leisure and the changing patterns of farming, many land-based businesses have diversified and broadened their commercial bases.

7 The college maintains links with farming, horticultural and other land-based organisations. These include the West Sussex Growers Association, the British Veterinary Nursing Association and the National Farmers' Union. Employer liaison committees are linked to curriculum areas. The college hosts the administrative centre for 'A Taste of the South East', a food marketing organisation with an expanding membership of local growers and producers.

8 The college's mission is 'to provide education and training to enable people to

Context

achieve their full potential in work and society'. The strategic priorities to achieve the mission are to:

- 'ensure the college is placed on a sound financial footing (financial robustness)
- promote the continuous improvement of standards and performance (quality and excellence)
- consolidate its core business and expand its position in the land-based education and training market (recruitment and market penetration)'.

The Inspection

9 The college was inspected in June 2000. The inspection team had previously considered the college's self-assessment report and information held by other directorates of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). For 1997 and 1998, inspectors used data on students' achievements derived from the college's individualised student record (ISR) returns to the FEFC. The FEFC had requested the college to resubmit ISR data for the four years from 1995 to 1998. These data returns contained information on European Social Fund and franchised provision and were needed to evaluate fully the extent of the college's financial liability. This exercise presented the college

with some difficulties and consequently inspectors found that there were some courses where the ISR-derived data were not sufficiently robust. College staff provided additional information to assist the inspectors in making judgements. Some tables in the report, however, are incomplete. The college submitted data on students' achievements for 1999. These were checked against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by awarding bodies. These data were found to be accurate. The college was notified in March 2000 of the sample of provision to be inspected. The inspection was carried out by eight inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 39 days. It covered work in one of the FEFC's programme areas together with basic skills. Inspectors observed 50 lessons and examined students' work and college documents. Members of the inspection team met with college governors, managers, staff and students.

10 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Of the lessons observed 64% were rated good or outstanding. This is around the average for all lessons observed by inspectors during 1998-99. The percentage of less than satisfactory lessons was 12%. This is twice the national average.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
NVQ	3	9	4	1	0	17
Other vocational	2	11	8	5	0	26
Other	3	4	0	0	0	7
Total (No)	8	24	12	6	0	50
Total (%)	16	48	24	12	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99 (%)	20	45	29	6	0	100

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

Context

11 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. The highest observed attendance was in animal care at 88%, and the lowest in agriculture and conservation at 81%.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Brinsbury College	9.0	84
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99	11.2	78

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

Curriculum Areas

Agriculture and Conservation

Grade 2

12 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses in the two self-assessment reports for this area. The reports did not consider trends in students' achievements.

Key strengths

- good practical teaching
- effective use of assignments
- recent improvements in retention and achievement rates
- students' progression to further study and employment
- good use of the farm and estate as a learning resource

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates on NVQ level 2 landscapes and ecosystems course
- insufficient monitoring of off-site work experience

13 The college offers first diploma, national certificate and national diploma courses in both agriculture and countryside studies.

Recruitment to countryside courses has fallen, and is now below the college's target. NVQ courses are offered at levels 1, 2 and 3.

Recruitment to these has been low, with the exception of the NVQ level 2 landscapes and ecosystems course, which previously included franchised provision. Evening courses are offered at a variety of levels. Short professional courses are run on a commercial basis.

14 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that most teaching is good. In lessons where students from more than one course were taught together, teachers were effective in meeting the wide range of students' needs. Practical teaching is particularly good and takes

place in realistic industrial environments. Good use is made of the college farm and estate, supplemented by the use of facilities such as country parks. There are well-developed links between practical and classroom teaching. In one practical lesson on vegetation control in a newly planted hedgerow, students surveyed the hedgerow and then identified the tools required. They carried out a risk assessment covering the use of hand and machine tools. Using information on their work rates, students calculated the cost to the farmer, comparing this with alternatives, such as the use of herbicides. Students participated enthusiastically in discussion and displayed a keen interest in the topic under consideration. Classroom teaching contained some stimulating approaches to revision, including team quizzes and group work. In a minority of lessons, teachers failed to involve all students in learning activities. Some students arrived late for agricultural lessons.

15 Assignment briefs are comprehensive and include detailed assessment criteria. Most assignments require students to apply their knowledge to solve realistic practical problems. Work is marked well and students receive helpful feedback. Internal verification is carefully planned and effective. Students' portfolios are well presented. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, key skills are taught as an integral part of NVQ courses. The extent to which students receive tutorial support varies considerably from course to course. On some courses, students do not have a formal tutorial. Tutors seldom help students to plan effectively for improving their work. There are few detailed records of action plans.

16 Student retention and achievement rates on first diploma and national certificate courses have improved over the period 1997 to 1999, to just above the national average for the sector. Retention rates on national diploma courses, whilst also improving, remain just below the national average. The rates are affected,

Curriculum Areas

however, when students take up jobs at the end of their first year, having already obtained a national certificate. For the last three years, all students on the national diploma in agriculture course have obtained their qualification. As noted in the self-assessment report, retention and achievement rates are poor on the NVQ level 2 landscapes and ecosystems course. These rates were particularly poor on franchised programmes, which accounted for some 50% of enrolments, and have now been discontinued. Teachers have taken effective action to rectify weaknesses on this NVQ course. Some students who failed to achieve the NVQ in 1998-99, subsequently completed their portfolios and obtained the award. There has been a significant improvement in retention rates for full-time students. During the current year to June, they average 91%. Many students progress from the first diploma course to the national diploma course and then to employment.

17 Students have the opportunity to obtain additional qualifications in the use of equipment such as sprayers, telehandlers, and chainsaws.

Some students, however, cannot afford the examination fees. All full-time courses include work experience. The national diploma in agriculture course includes a 'sandwich year' of work experience. Students benefit from, and value, this aspect of their course. The self-assessment report recognises that teachers do not monitor the quality of the students' work experience frequently enough. All students have the opportunity to take part in overseas visits through the college's well-established links with Madeira, Spain, France and Sweden.

18 The agriculture, conservation and engineering sections have recently been combined into one department. Teachers form an effective team. They are well qualified technically and have obtained teaching qualifications. Course reviews include regular meetings between teachers and students, culminating in an end-of-year review. Changes have been made as a result of issues raised by students. However, at the review meetings teachers pay inadequate attention to the monitoring of student retention and achievement rates.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
First diploma agriculture/ first diploma countryside	2	Number of starters	17	30	23
		Retention (%)	88	83	91
		Achievement (%)	73	87	86
National certificate agriculture/national certificate countryside	2	Number of starters	32	24	25
		Retention (%)	81	75	76
		Achievement (%)	81	72	95
NVQ landscapes and ecosystems	2	Number of starters	24	34	26
		Retention (%)	67	56	62
		Achievement (%)	31	37	0
National diploma agriculture/national diploma countryside	3	Number of starters	34	25	20
		Retention (%)	*	*	75
		Achievement (%)	*	*	100

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

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Horticulture and Floristry

Grade 3

19 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report but found some strengths and weaknesses the college had omitted. The report offered no key judgements on student retention and achievement rates. Action had already been taken to rectify weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- the clear vocational relevance of teaching
- good range of courses
- effective use of specialist resources

Weaknesses

- low retention and achievement rates on many courses
- weak organisation and poor management of some lessons
- poor action-planning

20 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that the wide range of full-time courses provides good progression routes from foundation to advanced level in horticulture, landscaping, greenkeeping, garden design and floristry. Part-time programmes lead to NVQs in sports turf maintenance, greenkeeping, landscaping, decorative horticulture and floristry at levels 2 and 3, Royal Horticultural Society certificates and diplomas. The NVQ level 1 course provides for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students can gain additional vocational qualifications to improve their employability. Accreditation of students' prior achievements is underdeveloped.

21 Teachers ensure that lessons are vocationally relevant. Practical teaching is good. Teachers demonstrate techniques carefully, ensuring that students understand the theory

that underpins practice. Inspectors observed a good practical lesson where students hoed and strawed strawberries and another where they produced a wired bouquet. Most students are given clear advice on how to improve their performance.

22 Most classroom-based lessons are well planned. Teachers provide clear explanations of new concepts and make frequent references to practical and industrial applications. In the better lessons, students are encouraged to demonstrate knowledge drawn from all aspects of the course and from their own experiences. In the weaker lessons, introductions and summaries are inadequate, and students are not sufficiently involved in learning. Teachers use a narrow range of teaching methods in theory lessons. There are not enough students in some classes to allow such activities as group work, debate and discussion, to be carried out effectively. In some instances, small classes from different courses are combined, and teachers do not always take sufficient account of the range of students' abilities or differing course requirements.

23 Students' understanding of horticulture is extended through additional activities, including the planning and building of exhibition gardens. In May 2000, the college achieved both gold and bronze medals at The Chelsea Flower Show. Floristry students are invited regularly to provide arrangements for prestigious functions. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that productive links with industry extend students' opportunities for practical work. For example, landscape students work on local projects to develop their planning and construction skills. Work experience is well managed.

24 Most courses are well planned and well managed. Teachers use a wide range of assessment methods to meet course objectives. Assignment briefs and assessment criteria are usually clear but rarely include an indication of the relative weighting of the tasks. Assignments

Curriculum Areas

on many courses include assessed work in key skills. The majority of students' work is carefully researched and well presented. It is marked and verified accurately but in some cases insufficient written feedback is provided to help students improve their performance. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that records of individual students' progress are inadequate.

25 The self-assessment report did not acknowledge the poor results and the changing enrolment patterns on many courses. Retention and achievement rates on many courses fluctuate considerably and they are below college targets and the national average for the sector. Data for 1997 and 1998 from the college's student information system are unreliable. There has been a decline in enrolments on part-time floristry courses over the last three years. Retention and achievement rates have improved on NVQ level 2 floristry courses and are now above the national average. Though enrolments have increased on NVQ horticulture courses, retention and achievement rates have declined steadily over the last three years to below the national average. Currently, retention rates on these courses are improving. A high proportion of national certificate and diploma students, and those on full-time NVQ programmes progress to other further education courses or employment. Few students apply to higher education.

26 Teaching staff are appropriately qualified and have relevant commercial experience. There is no specialist technician, as technical support staff are shared between teaching sections. There is a satisfactory range of specialist tools, equipment and workshops, and a wide selection of books in the learning centre. The college estate provides a good resource for practical work. It includes landscaped grounds and gardens, a vineyard and a golf course.

Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
NVQ horticulture	1	Number of starters	11	15	14
		Retention (%)	100	*	93
		Achievement (%)	73	*	23
Foundation floristry	1	Number of starters	19	19	18
		Retention (%)	*	*	78
		Achievement (%)	*	*	46
First diploma in horticulture/ national certificate in horticulture	2	Number of starters	28	24	20
		Retention (%)	79	83	85
		Achievement (%)	77	65	82
NVQ floristry	2	Number of starters	36	33	20
		Retention (%)	72	79	80
		Achievement (%)	54	54	75
NVQ horticulture	2 and 3	Number of starters	15	25	34
		Retention (%)	*	*	59
		Achievement (%)	*	*	70
National diploma in horticulture	3	Number of starters	7	13	8
		Retention (%)	*	*	50
		Achievement (%)	*	*	75

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

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Animal Care

Grade 2

27 The self-assessment report was thorough and inspectors mainly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses it identified. They found some additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good range of teaching and learning activities
- high standard of students' practical work
- students' good achievements on NVQ caring for animals course
- good use of practical resources
- productive external links

Weaknesses

- some weak curriculum planning and organisation
- low achievement rates on veterinary nursing courses
- narrow range of additional qualifications

28 There is a wide range of animal care courses, including specialist provision in veterinary nursing and dog grooming. The college also offers higher education courses. Short course developments include reptile courses for the veterinary profession and Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals inspectorate. There are good links with industry, both informally and through the industrial liaison group. Teachers are involved in a wide range of external activities, including competitions, vocational organisations and examining body committees.

29 Most teaching is good. Theory and practical teaching are well integrated, with effective reference to commercial and practical applications. Lessons are usually well prepared, and appropriate equipment and materials are

readily available to students. In most lessons, students benefit from a variety of teaching methods. Teachers respond well to requests for additional help. In a curriculum enrichment session that was part of a 'dissection series', the teacher skilfully demonstrated the dissection of the head of a horse and a fox. The students were absorbed in the lesson, which extended their understanding of the anatomy of the two species of animals.

30 Students develop good practical skills. In a revision lesson, NVQ level 1 students took it in turns to demonstrate the handling of a range of reptiles including snakes, skinks and lizards. The teacher encouraged the students to assist each other and so increased their confidence. Full-time students benefit from well-planned and effective work experience and from performing animal care unit duties. Second-year national diploma students develop valuable skills through supervising a small group of first-year students. In one lesson, a second-year student gave good advice to an NVQ level 2 student on the preparation and feeding of bloodworms to a tank of Green Severum fish.

31 Course tutors provide a considerable amount of informal support and guidance, but tutorials are poorly recorded. Targets set for students or actions planned to improve their performance, are not written down. Good use is made of IT in teaching and learning on most courses. Students have ready access to computers. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the teaching of key skills is underdeveloped on part-time courses. Key skills are now being developed as an integral part of the content on the NVQ level 2 caring for animals course.

32 Student retention and achievement rates on diploma and certificate courses are at the national average. Achievements on NVQ courses are good. Retention and achievement rates on the NVQ level 2 caring for animals course have been consistently above the national average for the past three years.

Curriculum Areas

Retention on the veterinary nursing course was poor in 1999, but was affected by students leaving after the first year to attend new courses at colleges nearer to their homes. In its self-assessment report, the college failed to acknowledge that students' achievements on the veterinary nursing course are below the national average. Nevertheless, in the last two years three students have achieved a credit in veterinary nursing, one of whom was awarded the British Veterinary Nursing Association prize for the highest marks awarded.

33 Section and course management files are well kept. Teachers set annual targets for retention and achievement but these are not regularly reviewed. Teachers develop 'programmes of learning' to record course content and teaching, but schemes of work do not provide a clear overview of the curriculum for each course. Some aspects of the curriculum are not well planned. For example, students on the NVQ course have little opportunity to undertake assessments at their own pace. National diploma students are encouraged to take the national certificate examination at the end of their first year and to achieve NVQ units in agriculture. Veterinary nursing students study for a first-aid certificate. Opportunities for students on other courses to achieve additional relevant qualifications are few. Internal verification is thorough and is well recorded. Clear procedures are applied for the setting and marking of assignments and the conduct of practical assessments.

34 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that practical resources are used well in teaching. The animal unit contains a commercial grooming parlour, a herptile house and a wide range of small animals. Other animals include rodents, goats, poultry and birds. A classroom situated adjacent to the unit facilitates the integration of theory and practice.

Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
NVQ caring for animals	2	Number of starters	50	63	42
		Retention (%)	92	79	95
		Achievement (%)	87	76	87
First diploma animal care	2	Number of starters	13	25	24
		Retention (%)	85	88	87
		Achievement (%)	64	100	86
National certificate animal care	2	Number of starters	28	33	32
		Retention (%)	*	*	88
		Achievement (%)	*	*	86
Pre-veterinary nursing	2	Number of starters	21	26	27
		Retention (%)	100	88	96
		Achievement (%)	86	43	44
National diploma animal care	3	Number of starters	32	27	15
		Retention (%)	81	59	73
		Achievement (%)	100	100	90
Veterinary nursing	3	Number of starters	55	44	51
		Retention (%)	*	*	51
		Achievement (%)	*	*	42

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

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Basic Skills

Grade 2

35 Inspectors agreed with many of the findings in the college's self-assessment report. They found some weaknesses the college had not identified.

Key strengths

- effective teaching and learning to meet individual students' needs
- effective integration of basic and vocational skills
- good specialist resources
- strong commitment of staff team to helping students

Weaknesses

- little use of IT in teaching and learning
- lack of encouragement for students to work on their own

36 The college provides basic skills teaching through support for students on vocational courses. Almost all full-time students and part-time students with a substantial timetable take an initial test in basic skills. They also receive a confidential interview with a member of staff who assesses their learning support needs and agrees a programme to meet these. The college organises support in a range of ways, providing for individual requirements. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. The college provides one-to-one and small-group teaching, 'drop-in' support, support during lessons and key skills courses. The number of students receiving basic skills tuition has fallen since 1998-99 in line with the reduction in recruitment, and is currently 188.

37 The self-assessment report recognises the good quality of basic skills teaching. Teachers use information from initial assessments to draw up individual learning plans with students. These are used in lesson planning. Teachers

provide differentiated tasks and materials for individual students within a class. They relate basic skills teaching to students' vocational areas. For instance, students' folders included number work which required measuring a flower bed, drawing up a list of plants to go in it and estimating the cost of these plants. There was little use of IT in learning support lessons for small groups. Several students identified their lack of IT skills as a personal weakness. In lessons, teachers have good relationships with students. They do little, however, to encourage students to develop the skills of working on their own. For example, students make little use of the learning centre to carry out basic skills work on their own. In some one-to-one support sessions, the teacher gave students too much assistance and did not allow them scope to identify and correct their own mistakes.

38 Students are highly motivated and work well in lessons. They are punctual for lessons and attend regularly. Students' work in class and in their course files is of an appropriate standard and portfolios are carefully organised and well presented. The ISR only records data on students' achievements on their main course and it does not maintain separate data on students' achievements in basic skills. Therefore, there is no curriculum table to show students' achievements in basic skills. However, college data show that students' achievements are good in literacy. In 1998-99, between 83% and 96% of students who began courses, and all who completed them achieved a qualification in literacy. In the same year, between 50% and 75% of students who began courses, and all who completed them achieved numeracy qualifications.

39 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that curriculum organisation and management are particularly good. The wide range of provision and accreditation gives all students the opportunity to learn what they need in their chosen way. Basic skills and vocational staff work well together. Basic skills

Curriculum Areas

teachers carry out an analysis of the literacy and numeracy demands specific vocational courses will make upon students and they use this when planning the curriculum. Basic skills and vocational staff team-teach and plan work jointly to ensure it is relevant to students' needs. On the NVQ level 1 animal care course, the basic skills teacher identified that students were having difficulty with assignments and in organising their portfolios. She devised simple guidelines to help students deal with paperwork and manage the process of carrying out an assignment. In a lesson on the rural skills course, the basic skills teacher worked effectively with the subject teacher. They had agreed lesson objectives that had clear relevance to basic skills and worked well together in the classroom. Students were engaged in demanding activities throughout the lesson and worked at a level that stretched them.

40 The department has set itself challenging performance targets for assessing and teaching basic skills. Although these have not been entirely met, all performance indicators show an improvement. The department provides a staff induction programme and an extremely clear handbook that is welcomed by part-time staff. The teaching of all teachers has been formally observed. The grades that the college gave to lessons were broadly similar to those awarded by inspectors.

41 Students have access to good specialist resources; some have been devised by teachers and others are commercially produced. Many learning resources have a relevance to students' vocational areas. For example, learning materials included pictures of plants with matching labels. Teachers used a range of different types of learning resources in numeracy lessons but those available for literacy were less varied. Some of the rooms used for basic skills teaching either do not have computers, or contain computers that do not always work. The college has acknowledged

this weakness in its self-assessment report and plans to supply the rooms with computers by next September.

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 3

42 Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, but judged that some important strengths and weaknesses had been overlooked.

Key strengths

- many opportunities for the public to learn about the college
- helpful information and useful handbooks for new students
- thorough initial assessment procedures
- well-managed, effective learning support
- much informal personal support and guidance for students
- dynamic students' union

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped tutorial system
- unstructured and inconsistent approach to careers education and guidance
- students' pastoral and recreational needs not fully met

43 The college has developed an extensive range of imaginative initiatives to enable people to learn about its activities. It has developed strong relationships with local schools and youth groups. Pupils from approximately 80 schools visit the college annually. Provision is also publicised at agricultural shows and country fairs. All of these activities are supported by well-presented promotional materials, including a website. The significance of these initiatives was not fully acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

44 The admissions process is thorough and efficient. New students are issued with comprehensive financial information and the

college charter. There are helpful handbooks for residential and non-residential students. All full-time and some part-time students have the opportunity to undertake an access programme before starting their main course. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that this programme enables students to gain insights into a subject unfamiliar to them, and provides staff with a valuable opportunity to assess students' aptitude and skills. Students are interviewed after the programme to make sure that they have chosen the right course. They are offered alternative courses, where appropriate. Few students change course later on.

45 Additional learning support is well managed and effective. All full-time and many part-time students undertake a basic skills assessment. Specialised assessments, including dyslexia assessment, are available where appropriate. Of those identified as requiring help in 1999-2000, 92% took up the offer of assistance. Most tuition is carried out on a one-to-one basis. Students are appreciative of the help they receive. Although some students use the learning centre with their teacher, there are no resources to encourage independent study. Support is not available beyond 17.00 hours. Students receive regular reviews of their progress and are set new learning goals. Record-keeping is good. The college identifies learning support as a significant factor in improving retention and achievement rates. Figures for 1998-99 show that 71% of students who attended support sessions were successful in their main course, compared with 37% of those who did not attend. Student support staff notify course tutors of their students' progress, and advise teachers on ways of working with students with special needs. The college is developing the use of teaching methods to promote inclusive learning on NVQ level 1 courses, with some evidence of success. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that learning support is a strength.

Cross-college Provision

46 Students receive much informal personal support and guidance from staff. However, the college recognises that there are shortcomings in its tutorial system. Practice varies considerably. Action-planning with students is generally weak; where targets are agreed, they are often short term and are not always recorded, nor systematically pursued. On some courses, tutorials are not timetabled, and staff provide them during the lunch break. The college is currently revising the tutorial programme with the aim of standardising and improving tutorial practice. The weaknesses in the tutorial system were underestimated in the self-assessment report.

47 The college has identified the need to review its arrangements for careers education and guidance. The partnership agreement with West Sussex Careers is currently under-exploited. Few students consult the professional careers adviser; they rely heavily on course tutors as their main source of careers information. Some employers provide useful assistance to students by visiting the college to carry out mock interviews with them. Tutors help students to draw up curricula vitae. In general, however, students are not encouraged to explore long-term career options.

48 Students' pastoral and recreational needs are not fully met. The present tutorial system provides little scope for personal, social and health education. Students do not have access to an adequate range of welfare information and advice. A professionally trained counsellor comes to the college one day each week and a chaplain visits regularly. The knowledge of students' difficulties that these staff have, does not inform the development of other aspects of the college's provision. The arrangements for booking appointments to see the counsellor are cumbersome.

49 Some students in residential accommodation feel isolated, despite the college's efforts to develop leisure activities and facilities and to provide transport where

possible. Supervised recreational activities are offered to all students on one afternoon each week. The college has not addressed the problem of those students who do not participate, yet who disrupt activities for others. The college has reviewed security arrangements at its residential accommodation over the last 18 months and has taken steps to strengthen them. Disciplinary incidents are dealt with firmly and they are recorded.

50 The students' union has a lively committee. It holds regular meetings with class representatives, and relays students' concerns to college managers. The committee has organised a range of successful activities including a rag week, and the union supports a number of charities.

General Resources

Grade 2

51 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report. They considered that one weakness and one strength had been understated. The college has made improvements to its resources since the last inspection.

Key strengths

- improvements to accommodation since the last inspection
- good provision of modern and accessible computers
- good learning centre
- students' impressive residential accommodation
- good restaurant and conference facilities
- extensive outdoor leisure and recreational facilities

Weaknesses

- inadequate accommodation strategy

Cross-college Provision

- inefficient use of teaching accommodation
- some substandard temporary accommodation

52 The college campus lies within 250 hectares of land, used for farming and demonstration. The commercial farm includes sheep, pig and arable areas. The estate, which straddles a major road, also has woodland, a nature trail, conservation areas, a fishing lake, a nine-hole golf course, a vineyard, and small animal and equestrian units. The grounds are attractive and mostly well maintained, with large areas of grass, flower beds and mature trees. Students' work enhances the college estate. Signposting is mainly clear.

53 The buildings vary considerably in age and style. Over the years, the college's need for additional accommodation has been largely met through temporary buildings. Some new premises have been built since the last inspection. A two-storey teaching block, completed in 1997, provides good-quality classrooms and staff facilities, and the much improved learning centre is an imaginative adaptation of a grain barn. There has also been considerable refurbishment of older buildings. General teaching rooms are at least adequate or good. A few older temporary classrooms remain. These have high maintenance costs and are rarely used. Temporary buildings housing the IT and student support centres provide good accommodation.

54 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the college's self-assessment report that there is poor classroom utilisation. In late 1997, the college calculated this as 20%. In 1998, a sample survey identified utilisation of between 4% and 15%. The accommodation strategy is out of date and does not provide a sound basis for planning. The college intends to revise it and conduct an appraisal of the options for estate development. The property maintenance programme is well managed and well

resourced. Health and safety requirements are met. Most ground floor teaching areas are accessible to students with restricted mobility. Ramps have been installed. A few temporary classrooms and the upper floors of both the Limes teaching block and the learning centre are inaccessible. At the time of the inspection, the college had prepared a detailed case for FEFC funding for lifts. In general, there is good access to toilets for students with disabilities.

55 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that since the last inspection, the college has more, and better, computers. There are 118 modern computers for students' use, providing a good ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students of 1:4.7. All computers are networked and housed in a well-organised suite of rooms. Students and staff have open access to 19 computers in the learning centre and good access to those in classrooms. A small IT room has been set up in Brinsbury Hall to meet the needs of residential students. A range of up-to-date general and subject-specific software is available for use on the curriculum computer network. There is good provision of IT for teachers.

56 Students comment favourably on the learning centre, which is identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. On two floors, it provides a modern and bright space, including a library, quiet area, individual and group study rooms. There are 96 study spaces, and a good range of texts and videos. The periodical stock, of 120 titles, is especially valuable. The bookstock of 12,600 is largely modern. The library catalogue is computerised and a range of statistical indicators is used for library management. The annual budget for books and periodicals is only £25,000, but represents expenditure of approximately £30 per full-time equivalent student. The college has responded to criticisms in the last inspection report and has extended centre opening times.

57 Students' residential accommodation is particularly good but the self-assessment does

Cross-college Provision

not give sufficient recognition to this strength. Brinsbury Hall, opened in 1995, provides en suite accommodation for 124 students, including four rooms for students with disabilities. Residents enjoy good communal facilities, including television lounges, games room, bar and conservatory; these are also open to other students and staff. A small fitness room is in the early stages of development. A former workshop is in the advanced stages of conversion to a small sports hall. Outdoor leisure and recreational facilities are extensive. The Hall restaurant is large and well equipped, offering a good range of food at reasonable prices. It also supports the well-established conference and wedding business, which makes a good contribution to college finances. The restaurant is supplemented by vending machines and the college shop.

Quality Assurance

Grade 3

58 Inspectors agreed in broad terms with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but considered that some strengths had been overstated. They found some additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- well-established quality assurance system
- rigorous monitoring of progress in meeting targets
- use of an external group to monitor the college's performance objectively
- college's success in external awards for quality

Weaknesses

- absence of service standards for most support areas
- lack of measurable outcomes in the college charter

- disruption to the staff appraisal process
- poor quality of some course reviews

59 The college has an established quality assurance process. It has produced a self-assessment report for the last three years. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that staff are highly aware of the importance of quality. The quality assurance process has been refined and improved over time, supported by documents that provide guidance on quality assurance. The latest addition is a planning and quality calendar, introduced in March 2000. The only document about which all staff speak with confidence is the calendar.

60 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment finding that all staff are involved in the quality assurance process. The cross-college sections of the self-assessment report take account of contributions from staff in all parts of the college. The college's self-assessment report is not, however, underpinned by comprehensive self-assessment reports for support areas specifying agreed standards against which they evaluate their performance. This weakness is not recognised in the self-assessment report.

61 The quality assurance process has demonstrated its effectiveness. It has enabled staff to detect weaknesses and determine action that has led to identifiable improvements. For example, residential students now have access in the evenings to IT facilities; shortcomings in internal verification paperwork and procedures have been rectified; a reference pack for teachers has been developed which brings together all standardised paperwork. However, the college has been slow to identify and respond to the decline in retention rates over the last three years. Data available for 1999-2000 to date indicate an upturn in this trend. Student achievement rates, on the other hand, have shown a steady improvement over the period 1994-95 to 1998-99.

Cross-college Provision

62 In December 1998, the college established a quality assurance and audit steering group. The group has external membership, and is intended to give the college a more objective view of its performance. This is a valuable development, which the self-assessment report does not recognise as a strength.

63 Course reviews, to a standard format, have been in use for some time. Their quality and usefulness vary considerably. In the best cases, reviews report on performance against targets; they clearly identify strengths and weaknesses and include explicit reference to, for example, students' views and external verifiers' reports. In the worst cases, they are too brief to be of any use; they do not compare pass rates with national averages; they are narrative rather than analytical. Since September 1999, the revised quality assurance schedule has placed emphasis on auditing progress in implementing planned actions. Whilst staff are doing this with rigour, they are not necessarily checking that the actions are proving effective in bringing about improvements in teaching and learning and other college services. Lesson observations have been conducted across the college. The profile of lesson observation grades awarded by the college closely matches grades awarded by inspectors, with 12% of unsatisfactory grades. A detailed strategy to rectify defects in teaching and learning has not yet been established.

64 The college demonstrates its commitment to quality by seeking external recognition of its achievements. It gained the Investor in People award in 1995 and was successfully re-assessed for this in 1998. It also has the Basic Skills Agency quality mark and recently won gold and bronze medals at The Chelsea Flower Show. Students regularly achieve City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) medals, and have recently gained national recognition at floristry and dressage events. The college farm has been awarded the 'farm assured' British quality marks for beef, lamb and crop production. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-

assessment report that the charter specifies few standards against which the college's performance can be monitored and measured. The charter is being revised with the aim of providing a briefer and more sharply focused document. At the time of the inspection, however, the proposed new charter did not include standards against which the college's performance can be judged.

65 There is a staff appraisal scheme for all full-time staff and it is available to part-time staff. However, as the self-assessment report acknowledges, the process was severely disrupted in 1998-99 by the college reorganisation. With the 1999-2000 academic year now well advanced, the current appraisal cycle is far from complete. The college is unable to use appraisal for identifying staff development needs. This year, staff development has concentrated on meeting priorities set out in the college's operating statement, including quality assurance. Staff speak highly of the development opportunities open to them. They are encouraged by their managers to undertake professional development and to train for specific responsibilities and duties. The budget for staff development is substantial and is approximately £30,000 in the current year. This amount does not cover the costs of in-house staff development activities.

Cross-college Provision

Governance

Grade 3

66 Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Some strengths were overstated.

Key strengths

- strong commitment to addressing immediate financial problems
- good administration of corporation business
- productive work by audit, search and special committees
- effective working relationships with senior managers

Weaknesses

- insufficient involvement of governors in establishing the college's strategic direction
- insufficient oversight of curriculum and standards by governors
- insufficiently clear specification of information required to monitor college performance

67 During the last 18 months governors have concentrated on addressing urgent financial problems. They have demonstrated significant commitment to supporting the college through a difficult period and have attended many additional meetings. The corporation has now decided that the college should concentrate on land-based activities as its core business. It has not, however, completed a formal review of the mission and character of the institution. Governors are not sufficiently involved in strategic analysis and strategic planning, neither have they undertaken a formal evaluation of the college's options for the future. The corporation received the current strategic plan after it had been studied by a subgroup of two governors and three senior managers. The principal

makes regular progress reports to the corporation on the implementation of the strategic plan and different action plans.

68 The corporation has defined performance indicators to enable it to monitor finance, quality and recruitment. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that further development of the monitoring of performance indicators is required. The board has not determined the level of detail it requires in monitoring information, and how such information should be presented, to ensure that governors form an accurate view of the college's performance. An external consultancy is refining the presentation of management information.

69 The governing body has a determined membership of 20. There is one vacancy. The membership comprises seven business, three co-opted, two staff, one student, three local authority, three local community members and the principal. The governing body carefully planned its response to the new statutory requirements and appointments in the last year. This enabled a swift transition to the new categories of membership. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that governors possess a broad range of skills and expertise that are appropriate to the needs of the college. In appointing new governors recently, the corporation took into account the findings of a comprehensive audit of the skills of its members, which the search committee carried out in 1999.

70 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is adequate. The governing body 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.

71 The administration of corporation business is good, a strength not identified in the self-assessment report. There is an independent

Cross-college Provision

clerk whose extensive experience of senior management has been well used for the benefit of the college. Agendas, supporting papers and minutes are produced on a timely basis and to a high standard. The governing body operates in accord with an appropriate code of conduct and standing orders. A comprehensive members' handbook has been compiled and provided for all governors. Governors commented on the usefulness of this handbook. There is an annual cycle of meetings for the board and its committees together with an indication of items of business to be addressed at key meetings. There is also a register of interests which encompasses all governors, although it has not yet been extended to cover members of the management team who have significant financial responsibilities.

72 The governing body undertook a full review of its committee structure in 1999 and implemented new arrangements from January 2000. The governing body now meets every two months and detailed consideration of issues is undertaken by committees. The revised committee structure of the governing body covers resources, audit, search and curriculum, quality and standards. Each committee operates within clearly defined terms of reference. Inspectors and auditors agreed with the college's self-assessment that the audit committee operates effectively and in accord with the provisions of Council Circular 98/15, *Audit Code of Practice*, submitting an annual report of its activities to the governing body. A special committee established by the board to deal with the dismissal of a senior postholder was exemplary in its operation. Attendance at board and committee meetings is good, averaging 85%.

73 Inspectors agreed that governors have established a good working relationship with senior managers. In addition to frequent informal discussions, the chair and principal meet formally on a monthly basis. Appraisal of the principal involves feedback from the chairs

of corporation committees and the governing body. Targets are set for the following year in support of the college's operational targets. Governors understand and observe the distinction between governance and management and have discontinued the practice of serving on departmental advisory committees that reported to the board.

74 The corporation is not sufficiently involved in overseeing curriculum and standards. The curriculum, quality and standards committee was only established in January 2000. The committee has met on two occasions and received details of retention and achievement targets and reports on the monitoring of the quality of provision. It has not yet been involved in the setting of academic performance targets. Training requirements of individual governors have not been identified.

Management

Grade 2

75 Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but also found additional ones. They considered some of the strengths to be overstated.

Key strengths

- strong and effective leadership
- decisive action in addressing financial difficulties
- effective communication and an open management style
- good industrial relations and effective human resource management during restructuring
- rigorous monitoring of the implementation of action plans
- productive links with external organisations

Cross-college Provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient market research to inform strategic planning
- low recruitment to some courses and some small teaching groups
- out-of-date IT strategy

76 For the last two years a new principal has provided strong leadership. During this time, the college became aware that it faced a significant financial liability resulting from ineligible claims to the European Social Fund and delivery of certain franchised courses for which FEFC funding was ineligible. Inspectors and auditors agreed with the college's self-assessment that robust action was instigated to address the implications of this liability for the size and operating costs of the college. The college's costs have been reduced by approximately one-third. The college has worked constructively with external bodies, including the FEFC, to quantify the full extent of the deficit. This is only now being clarified. As yet the last three years' financial statements cannot be signed off.

77 The college's mission was under review at the time of the inspection. The corporation, management and staff have endorsed the need to refocus the core business of the college on land-based activities. The college has collated information on developments in the land-based sector and the education and training needs of the locality. There are good links with West Sussex schools and publicity materials are well prepared. However, enrolments on some courses are low. The lack of systematic market research and analysis to inform the annual updating of the strategic plan was not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Each term, the management team rigorously monitors the appropriateness of the operating statement, the implementation of specific actions plans and progress towards reaching targets. However, individual staff objectives set through appraisal do not clearly reflect strategic

or operational objectives. The college's IT strategy has not been completed. The accommodation strategy has not been revised to reflect the changing aims of the institution.

78 The availability and reliability of management information have improved since the last inspection. Data collection is more effective. Staff recognise the importance of accurate data and compliance with procedures. Staff have on-line access to information that is updated on a daily basis and monitoring reports can be prepared from the available data. The college recognises that it is important for staff at different management levels to receive routine reports on the monitoring of expenditure and standards, and it has employed consultants to devise a format for these.

79 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. Management accounts are produced monthly, reviewed by the directorate team and forwarded to all governors. A number of recent improvements have been made to the format, content and timeliness of the management accounts. Finance staff acknowledge, however, that additional changes would make them easier to understand and more helpful in monitoring financial performance. Financial targets associated with solvency have been set and progress towards reaching these is regularly monitored.

80 The number of managers has been reduced by 14 in the last 18 months and a tier of management has been removed. This new structure has yet to prove its effectiveness. The principal and two directors with responsibility for support services and academic and quality development constitute the college directorate. They hold weekly meetings with the aim of maintaining a clear oversight of developments and a sharp focus on key issues. Senior managers have recognised the need to ensure that managers who have taken on new responsibilities receive appropriate training and

Cross-college Provision

support. The directorate together with 11 heads of academic or service departments constitute the college management team. It meets regularly and members aim to acquire a common understanding of developments.

81 Inspectors agreed that a consultative approach to management has been developed. Communication is good and information bulletins and a weekly newsletter are effective in keeping staff up to date with current developments. Staff are involved in planning. They appreciate the opportunity to contribute to decision-making and thereby play a part in determining the future of their college.

82 Personnel policies are appropriate and are kept under review. Good external professional advice was secured on restructuring. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that the restructuring process was effectively managed and good industrial relations were maintained. The efficiency of staff deployment is monitored. There are, however, some small teaching groups. The college cannot assess the financial implications of small groups until it has completed its work on course costing. Staff vacancies are carefully reviewed. Equal opportunity policies have been developed and are being reviewed to take account of the college's strategies for widening participation and inclusive learning. Health and safety requirements are met.

83 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that the college has developed extensive links within the community and external organisations. Through these, the college has been able to develop IT-based learning, work-based training at centres away from the college, and learning opportunities for disaffected young people.

Conclusions

84 The college's self-assessment report provided a useful basis for planning and carrying out the inspection. Inspectors agreed

with most of the judgements in it, but differed from the college in respect of some of the weightings given to strengths and weaknesses. They also found strengths and weaknesses the college had not identified. Inspectors considered that there was insufficient evaluation of student retention and achievement rates, particularly in relation to national averages for the sector. The grades that the college awarded for lessons were broadly similar to those the inspectors gave. The self-assessment report provided a most helpful guide to the quality of the college's provision. Inspectors agreed with all the grades for curriculum areas and with three of the grades for cross-college provision given in the self-assessment report. The grades they awarded for two of the areas of cross-college provision were lower than those the college gave.

85 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 (May 2000)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	2
16-18 years	24
19-24 years	16
25+ years	57
Not known	1
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (May 2000)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Level 1 (foundation)	10
Level 2 (intermediate)	41
Level 3 (advanced)	23
Level 4/5 (higher)	1
Non-schedule 2	25
Total	100

Source: college data

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

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	18	109	7
Agriculture	378	701	59
Construction	6	331	19
Engineering	22	24	3
Business	0	31	2
Health and community care	0	6	0
Art and design	0	26	1
Humanities	0	158	9
Basic education	7	0	0
Total	431	1,386	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 6% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (May 2000)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	28	11	0	39
Supporting direct learning contact	11	0	1	12
Other support	60	3	2	65
Total	99	14	3	116

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£5,422,000	£5,893,000	£5,404,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£16.89	£15.52	£15.61
Payroll as a proportion of income	62%	59%	59%
Achievement of funding target	77%	70%	72%
Diversity of income	59%	55%	47%
Operating surplus	-£822,000	-£709,000	-£463,000

Sources: Income – college (1997, 1998 and 1999)

ALF – college (1997, 1998 and 1999)

Payroll – college (1997, 1998 and 1999)

Achievement of funding target – college (1997, 1998 and 1999)

Diversity of income – college (1997, 1998 and 1999)

Operating surplus – college (1997, 1998 and 1999)

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
1	Number of starters	154	165	242	664	513	502
	Retention (%)	77	88	81	82	93	90
	Achievement (%)	73	87	73	33	83	73
2	Number of starters	371	305	280	421	358	274
	Retention (%)	81	85	85	82	85	78
	Achievement (%)	52	78	77	43	89	74
3	Number of starters	430	138	147	271	185	142
	Retention (%)	81	80	72	80	81	75
	Achievement (%)	81	72	67	76	88	57
4 or 5	Number of starters	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Retention (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Achievement (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Short courses	Number of starters	292	371	442	1,355	1,680	1,167
	Retention (%)	100	98	96	99	100	99
	Achievement (%)	93	86	45	88	94	86
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	288	582	152	174	237	231
	Retention (%)	80	84	65	78	82	68
	Achievement (%)	100	13	9	92	85	66

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

n/a not applicable

FEFC Inspection Report 111/00

**Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
Website www.fefc.ac.uk
© FEFC September 2000**