

# City of Bath 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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## 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

## City of Bath College

### South West Region

#### Inspected February 1999

City of Bath College is a medium-sized general further education college principally serving the population of Bath and the surrounding area. The college was thorough in its approach to its first self-assessment report in preparation for the inspection. Inspectors agreed with four out of five of the college's assessments of the curriculum areas inspected, and two out of five of the assessments of cross-college aspects.

The college offers courses in all 10 FEFC programme areas, and the inspection covered provision in five of them. Programmes of work are mostly well planned. Some teaching, especially in practical areas, is good, but too many lessons are ineffective. The percentage of lessons rated good or outstanding by inspectors was well below the national average. Students' learning is disrupted by their absence and lateness. Student achievement rates vary widely. Improvements in course management are resulting in appropriate action to address some of these weaknesses. Retention rates are improving in some areas following increased scrutiny from managers and governors. The rationalisation and refurbishment of accommodation has brought about many improvements since the last inspection, although there is still some under-use. Students have good levels of tutorial support. There is a well-organised students' union which is well

supported by the college. Governors have guided the college through much recent change. Management teams are developing well and communications are effective, but the three restructuring exercises in recent years have slowed the pace of development in some areas. Changes to management and quality assurance have yet to result in significant improvements in teaching and learning, or in students' achievements in some areas. The college should: improve standards of teaching and learning; continue to address areas of low retention and achievement; reduce students' absence and lateness; improve the implementation of quality assurance procedures and the accuracy of student registration; make more use of value-added indicators; set specific planning objectives to monitor progress; improve the quality and range of external liaison; and improve aspects of governance.

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> |
|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Science and mathematics            | 3            | Support for students           | 2            |
| Business studies                   | 3            | General resources              | 2            |
| Leisure and tourism                | 3            | Quality assurance              | 3            |
| Health and social care             | 3            | Governance                     | 3            |
| Art and design and performing arts | 2            | Management                     | 3            |

# Context

## The College and its Mission

1 City of Bath College is a medium-sized general further education college. All college buildings are in the same area near the centre of the city. Bath, with a population of approximately 80,000, is designated a world heritage city by the United Nations. It is part of the recently-established local authority of Bath and North East Somerset, which has a population of approximately 170,000 of whom 5% are aged between 16 and 19 and 23% are over the age of 60. Unemployment in the local authority area was 2.4% in December 1998, compared with 3.4% in the south-west region as a whole.

2 The college offers courses in all 10 of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas. Vocational courses are available from foundation to advanced level. Higher education courses are offered through links with five universities. In Bath and the surrounding area, manufacturing, defence-related activities and engineering have declined in recent years. The local economy is dominated by the service sector, tourism and cultural activities. The college has expanded its provision in response to this. It has substantially reduced its engineering provision. The fastest growing area is currently art, design and media studies. The college has a significant number of overseas students and is seeking to extend its overseas links.

3 In November 1998, 1,739 full-time and 4,103 part-time students were enrolled on college courses. Approximately 65% were aged 19 or over, but full-time students aged 16 to 18 still made up a substantial proportion of the college's work. Foundation level students accounted for 34% of enrolments, intermediate level 29% and advanced 30%. The largest curriculum area was humanities, followed by art and design. The college estimates that 5.3% of its enrolments in 1998-99 were by people from minority ethnic groups. The local training and enterprise council (TEC) estimates that minority

ethnic groups make up 1.6% of the population of Bath and North East Somerset. The college has met or slightly exceeded its funding targets over the last three years. There are seven state secondary schools in Bath, six of which have sixth forms. There are five other further education colleges within 15 miles.

4 The college employs 262 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 135 are teachers and a further 21 directly support learning. The senior executive team comprises the principal, three assistant principals and four directors of cross-college services, one of whom is designated deputy principal. Courses are managed by nine heads of school who report directly to the principal. The cross-college directors manage seven heads of service areas.

5 The college's mission, under the general heading 'maximise your potential', is to be an international centre for learning which meets the needs of individual students. It seeks actively to promote access, progression and independence, whilst contributing to the economic and cultural life of the local community.

## The Inspection

6 The inspection took place in the first week of February 1999. Inspectors had previously scrutinised the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. Inspectors used student achievement data derived from the college's individualised student record (ISR) returns to the FEFC for 1996 and 1997. The college submitted its own data on students' achievements for 1998. These data were checked by inspectors against primary sources of evidence, such as pass lists issued by examining bodies, and were found to be generally reliable. The inspection was carried out by 12 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 50 days. The inspection team observed 88 lessons, examined students' work

# Context

and evaluated college documents. Meetings were held with governors, managers, other college staff, students and employers.

7 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. Of the 88 lessons observed, 51% were rated good or outstanding, and 10% were less than satisfactory. This profile compares unfavourably with the averages of 65% and 6%, respectively, for all lessons observed during 1997-98.

## Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

| Programme  | Grade |    |    |   |   | Totals |
|--|-------|----|----|---|---|--------|
|  | 1     | 2  | 3  | 4 | 5 |        |
| GCE A/AS level                                       | 3     | 6  | 4  | 2 | 0 | 15     |
| GCSE   | 0     | 3  | 2  | 1 | 1 | 7      |
| GNVQ and NVQ   | 1     | 5  | 10 | 0 | 0 | 16     |
| Other vocational                                     | 4     | 19 | 15 | 3 | 1 | 42     |
| Other  | 0     | 4  | 3  | 1 | 0 | 8      |
| Total (No.)  | 8     | 37 | 34 | 7 | 2 | 88     |
| Total (%)  | 9     | 42 | 39 | 8 | 2 | 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*

8 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1997-98.

## Attendance rates in lessons observed

|  | Average number of students | Average attendance (%) |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------|
| City of Bath College                             | 10.8                       | 73                     |
| 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

## Science and Mathematics

### Grade 3

**9 Inspectors agreed with most of the self-assessment report but identified a few additional weaknesses. The action plan in the report is leading to improvements.**

#### Key strengths

- significant improvements in retention
- detailed planning of teaching and learning
- appropriate action plans leading to improvements
- high-quality laboratories and specialist equipment
- good use of information technology (IT) by students in some subjects

#### Weaknesses

- some unsatisfactory teaching
- very poor attendance at many lessons
- failure of too many students to complete their homework
- students' poor achievements in biology and human physiology and health
- poor practical and note-taking skills of some students

10 The inspection focused on general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) sciences and mathematics and the national diploma in sports science. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that there is wide variation in the quality of teaching and learning. Students in the best lessons are interested and work hard. Teachers provide them with effective guidance and individual support. This is particularly evident in some GCSE mathematics lessons where teachers provide an appropriate variety of well-planned activities which help the students to learn. In a GCE A level physics lesson, students were

studying the waveforms of different musical notes from tin whistles, violins and pipes. The waveforms were displayed on a data-logging system and their characteristics were clearly explained by the teacher. However, the number of lessons graded satisfactory or less than satisfactory was higher than the national average. Some lessons are poorly managed. For example, one lesson was disrupted by students tinkering with their mobile phones. One student arrived back from break 25 minutes late, and many students were paying insufficient attention to their work. Poor teaching and learning were not identified as weaknesses in the self-assessment report. Teachers set sufficient appropriate work for students to complete in their own time. This work is fairly marked by teachers who generally offer valuable written corrections with encouraging comments.

11 Most students achieve well in mathematics and physics. Pass rates for two-year full-time GCE A level mathematics and physics are generally high, although fewer one-year or open-learning students are successful. Pass rates in GCSE mathematics examinations have exceeded the national average for some years, but they sharply dropped to around the national average in 1998. An action plan was implemented and is leading to improvements. Current students of GCSE mathematics performed well in their external module tests in November 1998. As the self-assessment report identified, pass rates in GCE A level biology and GCSE human physiology and health have been consistently poor in recent years. Retention rates in many subjects show significant improvements over the last three years. In several subjects, students complete too little of the work set for them. Those who keep up with the work generally perform well in their examinations. Attendance at lessons observed by inspectors was very low at 67%. Students in some practical lessons were not familiar with the apparatus they were using and showed poor practical skills. Many students have poor note-taking skills and fail to record the key points of



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their lessons. Students of mathematics, physics and sports science produce work which makes good use of IT.

12 Managers and team leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the programmes for which they are responsible. There are appropriate action plans for dealing with weaknesses and these are being implemented. More effective implementation of course reviews is beginning to be evident. There is little use of value-added measurements to monitor students' progress and subject performance.

13 Teachers are well qualified in their subjects. Technical support is good. The laboratories were completely refurbished in 1998. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the laboratories provide very good facilities for practical work. They are less suitable for theory lessons. Students have easy access to computers in the laboratories. There is a good range of material on CD-ROM to support science and mathematics. There are sufficient textbooks in the resources centre, but some of them are outdated.

## **A summary of achievement and retention rates in science and mathematics, 1996 to 1998**

| Type of qualification            | Level | Numbers and outcome  | Completion year |      |      |
|----------------------------------|-------|----------------------|-----------------|------|------|
|                                  |       |                      | 1996            | 1997 | 1998 |
| GCSE mathematics                 | 2     | Expected completions | 142             | 132  | 167  |
|                                  |       | Retention (%)        | 65              | 74   | 79   |
|                                  |       | Achievement (%)      | 49              | 46   | 25   |
| GCSE human physiology and health | 2     | Expected completions | 45              | 41   | 44   |
|                                  |       | Retention (%)        | 87              | 68   | 70   |
|                                  |       | Achievement (%)      | 21              | 18   | 26   |
| GCE A level biology              | 3     | Expected completions | 34              | 36   | 36   |
|                                  |       | Retention (%)        | 56              | 50   | 75   |
|                                  |       | Achievement (%)      | 42              | 44   | 37   |
| GCE A level chemistry            | 3     | Expected completions | 18              | 14   | 26   |
|                                  |       | Retention (%)        | 50              | 71   | 85   |
|                                  |       | Achievement (%)      | 33              | 70   | 68   |
| GCE A level physics              | 3     | Expected completions | 17              | 12   | 15   |
|                                  |       | Retention (%)        | 59              | 58   | 87   |
|                                  |       | Achievement (%)      | 80              | 86   | 69   |
| GCE A level mathematics          | 3     | Expected completions | 22              | 18   | 27   |
|                                  |       | Retention (%)        | 18              | 61   | 74   |
|                                  |       | Achievement (%)      | 50              | 100  | 75   |

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

# Curriculum Areas

## Business Studies

### Grade 3

**14 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Students' achievements were included but their significance was sometimes given insufficient weight. The report gave appropriate prominence to the assessment of teaching and learning.**

#### Key strengths

- well-planned lively teaching in the better lessons
- productive working in small groups
- effective tutorial support
- high pass rates on some courses
- good retention on professional, accounting and secretarial courses
- easy access to IT for students

#### Weaknesses

- some lessons lacking pace and variety
- poor classroom management of some large groups
- poor pass rates on general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) programmes
- unsatisfactory retention on GNVQ advanced programmes
- poor punctuality in some lessons
- failure to meet some enrolment targets

15 An extensive choice of business courses is offered, from entry to higher education level. A wide range of secretarial and administrative skills programmes cater for full-time and part-time students. In several subjects, such as book-keeping, students can work at their own pace using self-study materials. Some students are attracted from overseas. Closer links are

being developed with employers. An employers' advisory board was recently instituted. Efforts to develop work experience programmes have not yet been successful, as recognised in the self-assessment report. The school's restructured management team is cohesive and effective and clear targets have been set to improve students' performance. The views of students are taken into account.

16 In the livelier, challenging lessons, students were clear about their aims. They worked well individually and in small groups to achieve them. In GCE A level business studies, the certificate in personnel practice and the national diploma in public services, students were particularly effective at analysing problems in small groups and presenting their solutions to the whole class. The teaching of professional subjects is well informed and up to date. Students are effectively supported through tutorials and workshops. Their progress is reviewed at course team meetings. National vocational qualification (NVQ) students are regularly assessed in their workplace. Public services students benefit from challenging expedition activities. Course teams work well together to ensure proper standards of internal verification. In some lessons, teachers do not vary their methods appropriately or ensure that all students are working. There is an over-reliance on teacher exposition and copying notes. In some large classes, students' needs are not fully met because those who have completed an exercise have to wait while the teacher helps those who are finding the work more difficult. Poor punctuality was identified in the self-assessment report. Inspectors found that late arrivals adversely affected learning in some classes.

17 Retention rates are high on some professional courses. In some examinations, pass rates are good. However, on a number of courses results are poor. This mixed picture was recognised in the self-assessment report. Retention has often been below national

# Curriculum Areas

benchmarking data on achievement published by the FEFC. Pass rates at GNVQ intermediate and advanced are low and have declined since 1996. Students are now receiving more support and retention has improved. Foundation students in purchasing and supply almost always complete their course and achieve high pass rates. Good results are also achieved in the certificate in personnel practice. The pass rate in the national diploma in public services has been good, although retention has been poor. Full-time students in word and text processing have regularly achieved 100% retention and pass rates, with many distinctions. Pass rates are above the sector average on most part-time wordprocessing courses. Retention and achievements for GCE A level have fluctuated around or above the sector benchmarks. Retention is good on Association of Accounting Technicians courses. Pass rates for central assessments at foundation and intermediate levels have always been well above the association's national averages. However, in the past many candidates have chosen not to complete their portfolios for the full award, although more are now doing so. The self-assessment recognised that some course enrolment targets have not been met. Appropriate objectives for their improvement are in the action plan.

18 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that staff are well qualified and suitably deployed. Most lessons are taught in specialist accommodation which has been recently refurbished to a good standard. The school has separate learning centres for both business and accounting. They supplement the college's resources centre with learning materials, computers and work areas. The business technology centre is well equipped. Students have ready access to IT and make good use of the internet. A wide range of books and periodicals is available in the resources centre. Some titles are out of date.

# Curriculum Areas

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

| Type of qualification   | Level | Numbers and outcome  | Completion year |      |      |
|---|-------|----------------------|-----------------|------|------|
|   |       |                      | 1996            | 1997 | 1998 |
| Stage 2 text processing and wordprocessing (full-time courses)                    | 2     | Expected completions | 94              | 94   | 67   |
|   |       | Retention (%)        | 100             | 100  | 84   |
|   |       | Achievement (%)      | 100             | 100  | 88   |
| GNVQ intermediate business  | 2     | Expected completions | 35              | 21   | 15   |
|   |       | Retention (%)        | 57              | 62   | 93   |
|   |       | Achievement (%)      | 94              | 38   | 57   |
| Stage 3 text processing and wordprocessing (full-time courses)                    | 3     | Expected completions | 22              | 20   | 20   |
|   |       | Retention (%)        | 91              | 100  | 90   |
|   |       | Achievement (%)      | 30              | 100  | 78   |
| GNVQ advanced business  | 3     | Expected completions | 54              | 37   | 51   |
|   |       | Retention (%)        | 67              | 65   | 57   |
|   |       | Achievement (%)      | 64              | 55   | 31   |
| GCE A level business studies  | 3     | Expected completions | 63              | 51   | 21   |
|   |       | Retention (%)        | 83              | 65   | 95   |
|   |       | Achievement (%)      | 95              | 76   | 80   |
| Institute of Personnel and Development certificate in personnel practice          | 3     | Expected completions | 18              | 30   | 23   |
|   |       | Retention (%)        | 82              | 78   | 88   |
|   |       | Achievement (%)      | 83              | 97   | 100  |
| Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply foundation stage of graduate diploma | 4     | Expected completions | 133             | 150  | 185  |
|   |       | Retention (%)        | 100             | 99   | 99   |
|   |       | Achievement (%)      | 52              | 77   | 88   |

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

# Curriculum Areas

## Leisure and Tourism

### Grade 3

**19 Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report which concentrated on hospitality and catering, rather than leisure and tourism. They considered that there were weaknesses in leisure and tourism provision not identified in the report.**

#### Key strengths

- clear assignments promptly returned with helpful comments
- opportunities for practical experience
- opportunities to gain additional qualifications

#### Weaknesses

- some ineffective teaching
- unsatisfactory aspects of course management
- lack of industrial experience of full-time staff
- some inappropriate accommodation
- very low attendance at lessons

20 The inspection covered the GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism course, national diplomas in travel and tourism and leisure studies and part-time courses for the travel industry. In some lessons, teaching is well planned and effective and objectives are clear. In these lessons, teachers provide a variety of appropriate activities which maintain the students' interest. Tutors give clear explanations and ensure that students take appropriate notes. In a practical volleyball lesson, there was a good balance between the teacher's exposition, her demonstration of skills and students' practical activities. Many lessons were no better than satisfactory. In the weaker lessons, teaching lacks vitality and teachers lose

the attention of their students. Teachers fail to manage activities at a suitable pace and the handouts they give out are poor. The self-assessment report did not comment on teaching and learning. Assignments are clear and set at an appropriate level. Students' work is promptly returned to them with helpful comments, although spelling is not always corrected. Some grading of students' work at intermediate level is too generous. Students on the travel and tourism national diploma course have an appropriate range of trips to United Kingdom destinations and a three-week period of work experience. They may study Spanish or Italian.

21 Retention and achievement on the GNVQ intermediate programme were close to the national averages for all colleges in 1996 and 1997. In 1998, retention improved significantly, but this improvement has not been maintained in 1999. Retention on the national diploma in 1997 was marginally above the national average, but declined in 1998. Retention rates are identified as an issue in the self-assessment report. Achievement rates on the national diploma course were close to the national average in 1997 and 1998. Most national diploma students achieve additional travel agency and customer service qualifications. In lessons, most national diploma students are attentive and motivated. They were well prepared for an exercise involving mock job interviews. Their coursework is at an appropriate standard. Advanced level students, in the travel shop or when representing the college elsewhere, wear smart uniforms. Intermediate students are less well motivated and are sometimes slow to get started on tasks set by the teacher. Some of their coursework shows good progress but other work is poorly presented or incomplete. Attendance for all lessons observed was very low, at 69%.

22 Several aspects of course management are unsatisfactory. There is little contact between course tutors and teachers from other schools. There are no formal team meetings for teachers

# Curriculum Areas

of leisure studies. Some records of students' progress in key skills are not kept up to date. Some attendance registers for lessons in common skills have been consistently inaccurate. Other aspects of course management are more satisfactory. There are appropriate course handbooks and assessment schedules. Some disruptive student behaviour is addressed effectively. Recruitment to the national diploma in travel and tourism has been strong, but only four students currently remain on the leisure studies course, launched in September 1998. The programme for these students is unsatisfactory because often they are taught in a combined class alongside students on another course and the teaching does not take sufficient account of their needs. No course management issues are highlighted in the self-assessment report.

23 Classrooms are comfortably furnished and suitably equipped. However, one information processing class is scheduled in a room which does not have computers. Some tutorials are inappropriately scheduled in the training restaurant. There is a small travel shop staffed by second-year students which offers services to students, college staff and the public. The college has few sports facilities. Leisure studies students use good facilities at Bath leisure centre for practical work. The library has a small range of up-to-date travel books. Full-time staff have little recent industrial experience. The college is over-reliant on one part-time member of staff for up-to-date specialist knowledge.

## A summary of achievement and retention rates in 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 | 15              | 15   | 15   |
|                                       |       | Retention (%)        | 73              | 67   | 93   |
|                                       |       | Achievement (%)      | 64              | 70   | 71   |
| National diploma                      | 3     | Expected completions | 30              | 45   | 37   |
|                                       |       | Retention (%)        | 57              | 80   | 62   |
|                                       |       | Achievement (%)      | 100             | 82   | 76   |

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

# Curriculum Areas

## Health and Social Care

### Grade 3

**24 Inspectors agreed with some of the judgements in the self-assessment report but identified additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors considered that insufficient weight was given to the lack of work-related learning opportunities and specialist resources for GNVQ students.**

#### Key strengths

- clear lesson aims and objectives
- good levels of retention and achievement on part-time courses
- good links between childcare theory and practice in assignments
- well-managed collaborative provision

#### Weaknesses

- low retention and achievement on full-time courses
- underdeveloped work schemes
- insufficient development of students' key skills in lessons
- lack of work-based learning opportunities for GNVQ students
- insufficient specialist resources

25 The inspection covered child, health and social care and counselling provision, including collaborative provision. The collaborative provision is effectively managed, delivered and monitored. There is effective communication through meetings of course teams, the care section and the community studies school. Part-time staff are encouraged to attend meetings as part of preparation time for which they are paid. Action identified in meetings has resulted in improvements. For example, students' attendance at IT lessons has been improved by ensuring that they are provided with more suitable learning activities and by monitoring attendance more effectively.

26 Inspectors agreed with the college that teaching in most lessons is satisfactory or better. In most lessons, aims and objectives are clearly explained to students. Work schemes are underdeveloped and do not identify how students' key skills are to be developed. In one successful lesson, planned to develop students' understanding of how individual differences in beliefs can be developed in schools, learning was promoted through role-play. Students played the part of people with agnostic beliefs on a curriculum review committee debating religious education. Students with specific learning difficulties are well supported in lessons. For example, a student with a profound hearing impairment was effectively supported in a GNVQ foundation class by a communicator. Some weaker lessons lacked pace and effective planning.

27 Students on childcare courses have a programme of work experience to help them develop their skills in working with children of different ages and in different settings. Students on GNVQ health and social care courses do not have a planned work experience programme as part of the course and there are few other activities for them which relate to the workplace. This restricts the opportunities they have to apply theory to current work practice and to develop skills with a sufficient range of client groups in a variety of care settings. Assignments on childcare courses are appropriate and relate theory to the workplace. Assessment of students' key skills is linked to course assignments, but teachers do not make full use of the available opportunities to develop and assess these skills. As a result of lesson observation, course teams recognise the need to improve teaching and learning for GNVQ students. Staff development activities have been undertaken to improve teaching and staffing changes have been made. However, the self-assessment report did not identify these significant weaknesses in GNVQ programmes.

28 The retention and achievement rates of students on substantial part-time courses and

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short courses are well above the national average. Students' achievements and retention rates on full-time courses are below the national average. For example, in 1998 only 47% of GNVQ intermediate students and 58% of the national diploma students achieved their qualification within normal timescales. These figures are better than those for 1997. Care course teams are aware of the need for urgent action to improve student retention and achievement rates on full-time courses. They have made a number of changes to bring about improvements. For example, they have

increased tutorial support and improved the procedures for monitoring students' progress. Students' attendance and retention since September 1998 have improved.

29 Most lessons were held in suitable rooms, but some were in rooms too small for the size of the group. This restricted the ability of the tutor to circulate during group work. There are shortages of suitable specialist equipment. Course teams are aware of this and often supplement college resources from other sources.

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

| Type of qualification   | Level | Numbers and outcome  | Completion year |      |      |
|---|-------|----------------------|-----------------|------|------|
|   |       |                      | 1996            | 1997 | 1998 |
| Full-time GNVQ intermediate health and social care  | 2     | Expected completions | 44              | 58   | 35   |
|   |       | Retention (%)        | 52              | 61   | 49   |
|   |       | Achievement (%)      | 80              | 26   | 47   |
| Part-time intermediate certificate in counselling and certificate in counselling theory   | 2     | Expected completions | 61              | 56   | 54   |
|   |       | Retention (%)        | 82              | 91   | 91   |
|   |       | Achievement (%)      | 70              | 47   | 80   |
| Full-time GNVQ advanced health and social care and BTEC national diploma in nursery nursing   | 3     | Expected completions | 62              | 60   | 80   |
|   |       | Retention (%)        | 75              | 65   | 56   |
|   |       | Achievement (%)      | 51              | 54   | 49   |
| Part-time advanced health and safety, diploma in playgroup practice, BTEC national certificate in nursery nursing, diploma in counselling | 3     | Expected completions | 51              | 68   | 73   |
|   |       | Retention (%)        | 69              | 90   | 92   |
|   |       | Achievement (%)      | 48              | 97   | 60   |
| Other vocational  | 3     | Expected completions | 83              | 765  | 498  |
|   |       | Retention (%)        | 95              | 100  | 99   |
|   |       | Achievement (%)      | 90              | 98   | 96   |

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



# Curriculum Areas

## Art and Design and Performing Arts

### Grade 2

**30 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report but considered that some aspects of the provision had been omitted.**

#### Key strengths

- well-planned courses offering additional related qualifications
- good teaching in most lessons
- regular, fair assessment
- effective schemes of work and assignment briefs
- high proportion of students gaining qualifications
- good standard of practical work
- high standard of specialist equipment
- good, well-used accommodation

#### Weaknesses

- disruption of some group work by absence and unpunctuality
- poor retention on some two-year courses
- students' poor achievements on some GCE A level courses
- insufficient books and music available for loan

31 The college provides a wide range of full-time and part-time intermediate and advanced level courses in performing arts, media and art and design. Students can take qualifications in addition to their main studies in areas such as music recording and IT. An extensive range of part-time courses involving over 2,000 part-time students is accredited through the Open College Network. Students are drawn from a wide catchment area. Enrolments have increased by over 50% in the past three years.

32 Most teaching is carefully planned. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that courses are well structured with clear schemes of work. Most teaching is of a good standard and practical teaching is particularly effective. In a design crafts lesson, students worked on stained-glass panels using traditional craft methods effectively adapted to a modern context. Much effective individual and group work was seen, but absences and poor punctuality marred the effectiveness of some group work. Students can work in their own time in studios as a result of an innovative system of issuing permits to students who demonstrate that they can use equipment safely. As identified in the self-assessment report, criteria for fair assessment are clearly documented and explained. Assessment records are detailed and there are regular reviews of students' progress by course teams.

33 Most students who complete full-time vocational courses gain the qualification. Pass rates for foundation art and design are consistently high. Pass rates on GNVQ advanced art and design and national diploma visual communication courses and on the GCE A level theatre studies course are now above the national average. However, pass rates in GCE A level music and art and design are consistently below the national average. Retention is a major problem, as the self-assessment report acknowledged. Progress is being made in improving retention on GNVQ advanced art and design and GCE A level in theatre studies and dance. However, national diploma performing arts, popular music, design communication, design visual communication and GCE A level photography courses have low retention rates. Students' progression to higher education or employment is good. Most foundation students go on to degree courses.

34 Curriculum management is generally effective across a broad and developing curriculum. Students are well briefed and fully informed about their progress. The self-

# Curriculum Areas

assessment report identified the issue of retention. Course managers establish targets for improvement and regularly monitor the progress made in achieving them through a cycle of review and action-planning. This has already resulted in changed selection procedures for the national diploma in popular music and increased access to additional learning support for design communication students.

35 Facilities across the whole programme area are good. Teachers are suitably qualified for the courses taught. Resources are well organised. There is a high standard of specialist equipment and accommodation, the majority of which

meets professional standards. The Hotbath Art Gallery, which hosts exhibitions of work by students, staff, the community and international artists, has been established within the college through productive collaboration with the city council. It is a high-quality resource for students and the wider community. Performing arts students stage regular public performances at Bath Theatre Royal's Ustinov Studio. The college resources centre provides IT equipment in addition to the high standard of IT provision within the curriculum areas. However, the self-assessment report failed to mention the poor provision of book and music stock for reference or loan.

## A summary of achievement and retention rates in art and design and performing arts, 1996 to 1998

| Type of qualification                                 | Level | Numbers and outcome  | Completion year |      |      |
|---|-------|----------------------|-----------------|------|------|
|   |       |                      | 1996            | 1997 | 1998 |
| GNVQ intermediate art and design                      | 2     | Expected completions | 24              | 17   | 17   |
|   |       | Retention (%)        | 83              | 76   | 94   |
|   |       | Achievement (%)      | 55              | 92   | 81   |
| GCE A level art and design one- and two-year combined | 3     | Expected completions | 93              | 101  | 73   |
|   |       | Retention (%)        | 47              | 69   | 83   |
|   |       | Achievement (%)      | 73              | 74   | 79   |
| GCE A level photography                               | 3     | Expected completions | 25              | 44   | 24   |
|   |       | Retention (%)        | 36              | 48   | 42   |
|   |       | Achievement (%)      | 78              | 86   | 80   |
| National diploma in performing arts                   | 3     | Expected completions | 19              | 42   | 30   |
|   |       | Retention (%)        | 79              | 50   | 63   |
|   |       | Achievement (%)      | 100             | 81   | *    |
| National diploma in design (visual communication)     | 3     | Expected completions | 29              | 16   | 20   |
|   |       | Retention (%)        | 45              | 56   | 50   |
|   |       | Achievement (%)      | 100             | 56   | 90   |

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

\*data may not be reliable

# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### Grade 2

**36 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report. A few weaknesses were omitted. Since the report was written many points in the action plan have been implemented.**

#### Key strengths

- effective pre-entry guidance
- well-structured induction programme
- much good tutorial support
- well-managed careers guidance
- good range of welfare services
- well-regarded and effective students' union

#### Weaknesses

- poor attendance at GCE A level tutorials
- inadequate induction of late enrolling and some part-time students
- lack of careers guidance for part-time students

37 The college provides prospective students with effective pre-entry advice and information. Publicity materials are informative and widely distributed. There are well-publicised events such as 'taster' days for school students, general open evenings and advice days. The college has liaised with local educational welfare officers to enable disaffected school students to attend college. The reception services, located in a main city thoroughfare, are well used. The well-informed staff provide a good service. Few students use the college's procedures to accredit their prior learning. Applicants for full-time courses are interviewed by appropriate specialist staff. Recently, training has been introduced for all interviewers. Prospective full-time students receive college newsletters in the months preceding their enrolment. Students

value their pre-entry advice and the efficient applications procedures.

38 Most students receive a well-structured introduction to the college. Tutors benefit from clear induction guidance. Appropriate attention is given to matters of safety. The student handbook contains much useful information and a copy of the college charter, recently reviewed. The self-assessment noted that students enrolling late often miss induction. The college is seeking to develop an effective means to support such students. The needs of some part-time students who join classes of full-time students are sometimes overlooked. Arrangements to enable students to transfer courses are clear and effective. Surveys of students' views yield insufficient information about the quality of course induction.

39 Most students receive good tutorial support. Full-time students meet regularly with their tutor. Tutorials include group activities as well as opportunities for individual discussion between student and tutor. A few tutorial programmes give insufficient attention to careers education. Tutorial activities observed by inspectors were well planned and of satisfactory standard or better. Poor attendance was noted in GCE A level group tutorials. The college acknowledged this weakness in its self-assessment report. The monitoring and follow-up of students' absence is taken seriously, but occasionally procedures fail. Most students meet individually with their tutors several times a term. Reviews of progress and action-planning are recorded. For part-time students, course teachers act in the role of tutor and, for many of them, tutorial support is timetabled. A tutors' forum shares good practice and discusses improvements. Tutors have been instrumental in producing a revised edition of a useful tutors' handbook. Within schools, tutorial matters are discussed regularly. Good links exist between tutors and the specialist services of the college.

40 An increasing number of students receive learning support. All full-time and some

# Cross-college Provision

part-time students have literacy and numeracy assessments during induction. There is no testing of students' IT skills. About two-thirds of those identified as needing support in basic skills came forward to receive it. Some students are supported by staff who work with them in lessons. Students' attendance in the learning support section is good. They work towards learning goals agreed with a tutor. Tutors and students maintain clear records of progress. A few students with disabilities are supported by assistants in lessons.

41 Students are well provided with careers guidance opportunities from local careers staff, the college's full-time careers adviser and tutors. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that careers guidance is effectively managed. The service is well used by full-time students but less so by the large numbers of part-time students. 'Drop-in' sessions have increased significantly, as has the amount of careers work in tutor groups. Some tutors are gaining relevant qualifications in careers guidance. There is a well-used and well-stocked careers library.

42 There is a good range of appropriate welfare services. The counselling service is well publicised and available throughout the year. The college has gained funding for a project to integrate international students with the community. A new nursery provides facilities for children aged two to five. Nearly all the parents are college students. There is a multi-faith prayer room. The students' union plays an important role in the life of the college. A full-time student services manager has encouraged an effective system for students' views to be represented at various levels in the college. Student representatives have been given training to help them fulfil their role. The students' union is active in promoting sporting and community activities, clubs and a monthly newsletter, 'The Bath Plug'.

## General Resources

### Grade 2

**43 Inspectors agreed with most of the college's judgements about the strengths and weaknesses of its general resources.**

#### Key strengths

- good progress with accommodation improvements
- much high-quality accommodation
- well-maintained and clean buildings
- light, well-furnished classrooms
- some good realistic work environments
- well-used resources centre

#### Weaknesses

- underuse of some accommodation
- lack of access for students with restricted mobility to some areas
- low levels of library stock for some curriculum areas

44 After the last inspection, the college set itself the target of disposing of surplus and unsuitable buildings and improving the general state of the accommodation. It has largely succeeded. Redecorating and refurnishing has markedly improved the remaining buildings. The largest group of college buildings was purpose built between the 1960s and 1993. The Herschel and Macaulay buildings have been extensively refurbished. The Allen building, constructed in 1993, provides professional standard accommodation and high-quality realistic work environments for hairdressing, beauty therapy, floristry, hospitality and catering. An adjacent, newly-modernised building houses a large well-equipped conference and examinations centre, and a new nursery. Two other buildings, Westgate House and the Gainsborough Building, are close by. Westgate House, refurbished in 1995, is the

# Cross-college Provision

college's administration and information centre. Gainsborough Building, which is grade II listed, accommodates media, visual and performing arts, including a high-quality art gallery. The college hopes to sell Gainsborough Building to generate funds for a new building. Much of the college's accommodation plans are dependent on this building being sold. A small annexe in Corsham (eight miles from Bath) is used for masonry students. It is decorated and furnished to an adequate standard.

45 As identified in the self-assessment report, buildings are kept clean and in a good state of repair. The quality of internal decoration is good. Teaching and staff rooms for curriculum areas are grouped together. Most classrooms are carpeted, well furnished and provide a pleasant learning environment. Staff workrooms are well furnished, although some are too small. Audiovisual equipment is available on each floor. Corridors and lavatories are clean and well decorated. Internal lighting has been improved. As the self-assessment report acknowledged, the few areas yet to be tackled are in poor decorative order, notably the main entrance and the cafe in the Macaulay building. Overall, the college still underuses some of its accommodation. Room usage is being systematically measured and action taken to improve it.

46 The self-assessment report acknowledged that social facilities have not been meeting students' needs. However, most problems have been addressed. A common room has been established in the Herschel building. Breakfast and lunch is now provided in the Allen training restaurant. The Macaulay cafe is too small for the number of students using it. Because it has no sporting facilities, the college has arranged for students to use local sports and fitness centres at discounted rates. Team games and other activities are offered and supported. Childcare provision is bright, cheerful and well furnished.

47 The resources centre includes the library, learning skills support, careers guidance, distance learning support and a staff IT development centre. It is popular with staff and students and well used. Its opening hours meet students' needs. It is conveniently situated on the ground floor of the Macaulay building. Despite an increase in study spaces of 14% and the provision of more computers, there are still not enough of either at peak times. There is a booking system for the 51 computers in the centre, nine of which are connected to the internet. Staff provide an effective information service for students. Usage is carefully monitored. Over 177 specialist journals are taken regularly. These are well organised and displayed. However, as the self-assessment report acknowledged, there are insufficient books and other learning materials for some curriculum areas. Staff are liaising with teachers to increase the stock.

48 The college is systematically replacing and upgrading its computers. The ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students is 1:10. There is a college network for use by staff and students. Computers are located in IT suites, in the resources centre and in other subject areas. Staff have direct access to computers in dedicated workrooms and offices. As the college identified in its self-assessment report, some curriculum areas are better equipped than others. Business students, for example, have easy access to workstations and good-quality printers. Other curriculum areas, such as health and social care, are less well equipped. An IT working group has been established to promote the use of technology in teaching and learning.

49 All main site buildings are accessible to wheelchair users at ground level. Changes in level on the same floor hinder access in some areas. Wherever possible, ramps have been built and there are plans to improve access further. All buildings, with the exception of the Gainsborough building, are equipped with lifts.

# Cross-college Provision

Students with restricted mobility are unable to gain access to the specialist art, design and media facilities on the top floors of the Gainsborough building.

## Quality Assurance

### Grade 3

**50 Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment of its quality assurance arrangements, but concluded that some important weaknesses had been understated.**

#### Key strengths

- clear systematic policies and procedures
- thorough self-assessment process
- productive attention to retention rates
- effective internal verification
- well-managed, accessible staff development programme

#### Weaknesses

- poor implementation of procedures in some areas
- failure to improve teaching, learning and students' achievements
- value-added analysis underdeveloped
- incomplete course portfolios
- incomplete course reviews and evaluations

51 A strong commitment to quality assurance is reflected in mission statements. An assistant principal was appointed in January 1998 to develop the new quality assurance framework. It is well designed and has the potential to make an effective contribution. The new system has brought about some improvements but it has not yet led to significant improvements in teaching, learning and students' achievements. The framework, policies and procedures are

contained in two comprehensive, detailed quality assurance manuals. They cover all aspects of the college and include standards for service delivery. An academic quality working group has recently been established. Some staff do not yet fully understand the role and purpose of this group.

52 There are college-wide targets for enrolment, retention and achievement which are set and reviewed at school, course and executive levels. Targets exceed the national benchmarking data published by the FEFC in some cases. Courses use a college-wide retention target rather than course-specific ones. This limits the effectiveness of target-setting for retention, since rates vary markedly from course to course. Some staff analyse and evaluate students' performance more fully than others. The regular monitoring of retention rates is resulting in fewer student withdrawals.

53 The quality assurance system is built on course reviews, self-assessment and analysis of students' views. Course portfolios contain notes of meetings, details of syllabuses and notes of reviews. The intention is that portfolios ensure that relevant data are collected and used for monitoring quality. Inspectors found that many portfolios were incomplete, and contained irrelevant or out-of-date material. Regular school reports on students' achievements are collated for the executive and the corporation, but are not linked to course review documentation. Course reviews vary in the degree of attention given to achievement and retention rates. Over half the course review documents inspected were incomplete. Inspectors noted a lack of evaluation and action-planning. For example, course reviews in science subjects lacked analysis and action plans were not fully developed. These weaknesses were not commented on in the self-assessment report.

54 The college was thorough in its approach to its first self-assessment report in preparation for the inspection. All staff and governors were

# Cross-college Provision

involved. A task group, which included three senior managers, oversaw the process and, with the help of two consultants, also checked the validity of supporting evidence. Lesson observations are an integral element of the quality assurance system. Sixty-six lessons were observed in November 1998 as an important contribution to self-assessment. The self-assessment report contained some detailed comments, supported by evidence, and concise descriptions of strengths and weaknesses. An action plan for each section clearly addressed weaknesses. Programme area sections vary in the amount of attention given to students' achievements, and omit some key strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors.

55 The views of students and employers are collected. Students comment on their courses at fixed points in the year. They are also invited to participate in IT-based surveys of provision. Analysis of the views of students has resulted in changes. For example, induction arrangements are being reviewed for next year. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that there is a lack of rigour and reliability in the survey process. It is voluntary and not well regarded by some staff and students. Feedback from employers has also resulted in changes in provision. For example, a masonry course has been changed to a more generic building course.

56 College internal verification procedures are well established and effective. A verifier for each course, excluding GCE A levels, checks compliance with quality assurance systems. There is an effective procedure to review new course proposals. Value-added calculations are little used for quality assurance in GCE A levels. The self-assessment report noted that arrangements for monitoring the quality of collaborative provision are clear and well established, and inspectors agreed. The college charter makes commitments to students, parents and the community. It contains standards and targets for service delivery and is regularly reviewed and updated. Improvement

targets are set and monitored. Most complaints are resolved within the time limit specified in the charter.

57 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that staff development is well managed. There is a well-documented staff development policy linked to the achievement of strategic objectives. All teachers and service staff have access to a full programme of training and development. Staff have regular appraisal interviews. The college is piloting a staff performance review and development system based on an individual self-assessment report.

## Governance

### Grade 3

**58 Inspectors and auditors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They identified additional weaknesses and judged that insufficient weight had been given to some issues in the report.**

#### Key strengths

- the skills, experience and commitment of governors
- effective conduct of corporation business
- detailed, approved corporation policies and procedures
- up-to-date code of conduct, code of ethics and register of interests
- close monitoring of the college's financial performance

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient formal review of progress against the strategic plan
- underdeveloped links with curriculum areas
- operation of corporation committees beyond their terms of reference at times

# Cross-college Provision

- inadequate monitoring of equal opportunities
- underdeveloped evaluation by governors of their own performance
- late development of appraisal process for principal

59 The corporation has helped to steer the college through a period of significant change over the last three years. There is a good balance between the continuity provided by long-serving governors and the new approaches contributed by recent appointees. The college benefits from the skills and expertise of governors. Three governors are women. At the time of the inspection there were two vacancies. The board is seeking to increase the number of women members. For some time there have been issues relating to the position of the academic staff member of the corporation. These have involved correspondence with the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). At the time of the inspection, this matter was the subject of continued legal process. As a consequence the board has lacked academic staff representation since November 1996. The search committee has reviewed corporation membership to identify additional skills needed, particularly in view of the impending statutory changes in governance. The corporation has adopted detailed standing orders and codes of conduct and ethics. A handbook incorporates these documents. There is a recently updated register of interests. New governor induction is based upon an explanation of the main issues contained in the handbook. Inspectors and auditors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that there has been little further governor training after induction.

60 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is adequate. The corporation substantially conducts its business in accordance with the instrument and articles

of government. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC. While corporation committees generally operate effectively, they have occasionally moved beyond their terms of reference. Governors participate effectively in meetings, which are generally well attended. Sound administrative arrangements support the corporation's work. Every governor receives a monthly report on finances, student enrolment and retention. Agendas are supported by well-written and timely papers and minutes. The clerk to the corporation also holds a senior executive post in the college as director of corporate administration. He holds a separate job description as clerk, approved by the corporation. Inspectors and auditors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that working relationships between governors and senior managers are good. The self-assessment report noted that the annual appraisal of the principal was not fully developed. A formal appraisal procedure was first completed in December 1998.

61 Governors are involved in the development of the strategic plan and are well informed about national issues affecting the college. The corporation does not monitor the progress of the college against strategic objectives in sufficient detail. It is made harder for them to do so because objectives are expressed in general terms. The corporation monitors the college's performance against targets for financial performance and student numbers. Governors receive data on students' achievements and have requested further detailed analysis to help them judge the college's performance in individual subjects and against national benchmarking data. Inspectors agreed with the weakness in the self-assessment report that links between governors and curriculum areas are underdeveloped. Until recently there has been little governor involvement in meetings with staff. The monitoring of some aspects of the college's work has been insufficiently rigorous. For example, the implementation of



# Cross-college Provision

an equal opportunities policy, which is an important aspect of the college's strategy to widen participation, has not been formally monitored by the corporation. Although the corporation has taken an active role in the college's self-assessment process, it has been slow to establish and monitor formally measures of its own performance.

## Management

### Grade 3

**62 Inspectors and auditors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but considered that there were weaknesses not fully covered by the report.**

#### Key strengths

- effective management communications
- clarity of roles and responsibilities
- improved teamworking
- detailed course costing framework

#### Weaknesses

- lack of detailed operational objectives
- management changes have failed to improve teaching and learning
- underdeveloped management information system to support monitoring of students
- inadequate external liaison

63 Since the last inspection in 1995, the college has undergone a series of major changes. Staffing has been considerably reduced. There have been three restructuring exercises, the most recent in February 1998. These changes have enabled the college to respond to external pressures. They have also resulted in the loss of experienced staff. The college is consolidating its new structures and adapting to other significant developments such

as the changes in accommodation, the decline in engineering courses and increases in creative arts provision. Most of the current senior postholders were appointed as a result of the restructuring. They have had to adapt quickly to their new roles. Some initiatives, such as changes to the quality assurance system, were delayed by restructuring. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment judgement that management teams would benefit from further development.

64 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. Financial reporting to budget holders and senior management is clear and comprehensive. The monthly financial reporting to the senior executive and the board includes detailed income and expenditure analysis, a cashflow statement, 12-month cashflow forecast and a commentary. Management accounts are closely monitored by the executive each month. The director of finance leads an experienced finance team. The financial regulations have recently been updated. The internal auditors have identified a number of significant weaknesses in the internal control procedures. The college has a timetable to tackle these issues, many of which were being addressed at the time of the inspection. The college's financial self-assessment recognises that it is still seeking to consolidate its position after a period of financial difficulty.

65 The only objectives that are clearly defined in the strategic plan are the targets derived from the FEFC's performance indicators. There is no college-wide operating statement showing how all objectives will be achieved. Each curriculum school has a detailed spreadsheet identifying costs and targets for student enrolments and retention. This is part of the improvements in course costing and planning procedures which are addressing former inconsistencies. Other objectives are expressed in more general terms. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the monitoring of plans is patchy.

# Cross-college Provision

66 The senior executive includes the principal, three assistant principals and four directors of support functions. One of the directors is deputy principal. The college executive comprises the senior executive plus nine heads of academic schools and seven support services directors. Both groups meet weekly. The principal has line management responsibility for the nine heads of school and four directors of services, as well as the three assistant principals. He meets each director and assistant principal weekly, and heads of school regularly, but less frequently. These meetings are used to discuss operational and strategic matters, and have also been used to develop the roles of managers relatively new to their positions. They provide valuable links between the principal and college managers but take up much of the principal's time. Staff at all levels are clear about the college's mission, the management structure and their roles in it. Teamworking is developing well. Heads of school are appreciative of the assistant principals' project management work and operational advice. Management communications are effective, through media such as newsletters, the college computer network and a demanding programme of meetings. At the time of the inspection, the changes in management resulting from restructuring had still to address effectively the weaknesses in teaching and learning identified by inspectors.

67 Managers monitor student enrolments and retention rates regularly. However, the management information system cannot yet supply a full range of information about students. Inspectors found many registers from which students had not been withdrawn even after many weeks of recorded absence, and a few significant instances of inaccurate recording of attendance. Even if such items are retrospectively corrected, the information used for weekly and monthly monitoring cannot supply managers with accurate retention and attendance figures. The system does not produce comparative reports on attendance

patterns. The management information system is more successfully used for financial management. It produces course costings and weekly reports of income and expenditure. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the development of the college's information on students has been slow.

68 Although staff retain individual links with local organisations, the college's links suffered when several business advisory groups ceased to meet. Employers and other local representatives told inspectors that in their view the college did not place enough importance upon its links with external bodies and was less effective than it used to be in responding to local needs. Such concerns were not reflected in the self-assessment report. The college liaises well with other educational institutions.

## Conclusions

69 The college was thorough in its approach to its first self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report, found some additional ones and considered that some weaknesses had not been given enough significance. The emphasis given to students' achievements varied across programme areas. In all but one of the curriculum areas inspected, the inspection findings agreed with the self-assessment grades. Inspectors agreed with two cross-college grades but in three areas considered the college had been overgenerous in its self-assessment.

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    | 1   |
| 16-18 years | 34  |
| 19-24 years | 17  |
| 25+ years   | 48  |
| Not known   | 0   |
| Total       | 100 |

Source: college data

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

| Level of study                      | %   |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Foundation                          | 34  |
| Intermediate                        | 29  |
| Advanced                            | 30  |
| Higher education                    | 7   |
| Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2) | 0   |
| 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                   | 286       | 465       | 13                |
| Agriculture               | 23        | 15        | 1                 |
| Construction              | 131       | 192       | 6                 |
| Engineering               | 39        | 223       | 4                 |
| Business                  | 147       | 523       | 11                |
| Hotel and catering        | 146       | 533       | 12                |
| Health and community care | 329       | 261       | 10                |
| Art and design            | 407       | 666       | 18                |
| Humanities                | 209       | 1,050     | 22                |
| Basic education           | 22        | 175       | 3                 |
| Total                     | 1,739     | 4,103     | 100               |

Source: college data

## Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 10% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

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

|                                    | Perm-<br>anent | Fixed<br>term | Casual | Total |
|------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|--------|-------|
| Direct learning contact            | 100            | 35            | 0      | 135   |
| Supporting direct learning contact | 21             | 0             | 0      | 21    |
| Other support                      | 104            | 1             | 1      | 106   |
| Total                              | 225            | 36            | 1      | 262   |

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

# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

|                                   | 1996        | 1997        | 1998        |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Income                            | £9,998,000  | £10,099,000 | £10,143,000 |
| Average level of funding (ALF)    |             |             |             |
| Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998     | £18.44      | £17.94      | £16.99      |
| Payroll as a proportion of income | 73%         | 63%         | 58%         |
| Achievement of funding target     | 100%        | 103%        | 101%        |
| Diversity of income               | 25%         | 26%         | 27%         |
| Operating surplus                 | -£1,495,000 | -£203,000   | -£97,000    |

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

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

Payroll – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

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

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (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 | 176                    | 947   | 761   | 634                      | 942   | 1,194 |
|                      | Retention (%)        | 92                     | 58    | 87    | 91                       | 75    | 81    |
|                      | Achievement (%)      | 75                     | 34    | 31    | 69                       | 69    | 58    |
| 2                    | Expected completions | 693                    | 1,008 | 909   | 879                      | 951   | 827   |
|                      | Retention (%)        | 83                     | 80    | 81    | 88                       | 75    | 84    |
|                      | Achievement (%)      | 81                     | 74    | 64    | 75                       | 76    | 74    |
| 3                    | Expected completions | *                      | 1,206 | 1,416 | *                        | 1,286 | 1,058 |
|                      | Retention (%)        | *                      | 80    | 77    | *                        | 78    | 78    |
|                      | Achievement (%)      | *                      | 71    | 72    | *                        | 77    | 69    |
| 4 or 5               | Expected completions | *                      | 24    | 15    | *                        | 446   | 363   |
|                      | Retention (%)        | *                      | 96    | 87    | *                        | 93    | 91    |
|                      | Achievement (%)      | *                      | 80    | 89    | *                        | 76    | 64    |
| Short courses        | Expected completions | 194                    | 457   | 785   | 2,092                    | 4,172 | 6,112 |
|                      | Retention (%)        | 99                     | 93    | 98    | 97                       | 97    | 97    |
|                      | Achievement (%)      | 84                     | 62    | 78    | 69                       | 64    | 82    |
| Unknown/unclassified | Expected completions | 114                    | 420   | 420   | 1,360                    | 1,150 | 729   |
|                      | Retention (%)        | 79                     | 79    | 82    | 89                       | 81    | 81    |
|                      | Achievement (%)      | 89                     | 62    | 69    | 91                       | 90    | 71    |

Source: ISR

\*ISR data may not be reliable

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