

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

---

# **The Co-operative College**

**January 1997**

---

**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

---

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL**

*The Further Education Funding Council 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 every four years. The inspectorate also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum and gives advice to the FEFC's quality assessment committee.*

*College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge and experience in the work they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member who does not work in education and a member of staff from the college being inspected.*

*Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry CV1 2WT  
Telephone 01203 863000  
Fax 01203 863100*

---

# CONTENTS

	<b>Paragraph</b>
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	2
Responsiveness and range of provision	8
Governance and management	13
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	19
Teaching and the promotion of learning	24
Students' achievements	29
Quality assurance	33
Resources	38
Conclusions and issues	41

---

---

## **GRADE DESCRIPTORS**

*The procedures for assessing quality are set out in the Council Circular 93/28. During their inspection, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also use a five-point grading scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.*

*The descriptors for the grades are:*

- grade 1 – provision which has many strengths and very few weaknesses*
- grade 2 – provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- grade 3 – provision with a balance of strengths and weaknesses*
- grade 4 – provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- grade 5 – provision which has many weaknesses and very few strengths.*

*By June 1996, some 329 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 329 colleges are shown in the following table.*

### **College grade profiles 1993-96**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Inspection grades</b>				
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Programme area	9%	59%	29%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	14%	50%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	12%	54%	30%	4%	<1%

---

---

# **FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 01/97**

**THE CO-OPERATIVE COLLEGE  
EAST MIDLANDS REGION  
Inspected July-September 1996**

## **Summary**

The Co-operative College is a residential college near Loughborough. Six per cent of its income is derived from the FEFC in respect of one course. There are productive links with employers and trainers within the co-operative sector. Members of the board of management have an impressive range of expertise and experience. They have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and provide sound direction on strategic matters. Managers have reduced the college's financial deficit and have improved the financial monitoring and reporting procedures. Teachers are well qualified. They have positive relationships with their students and encourage and help them to study on their own. Students benefit from the residential nature of their course. They are well motivated and work hard. Their retention rate is high. Students' pass rates are variable and sometimes low. The college should: ensure that it meets the needs of students with disabilities, those from ethnic minorities, and women; market the course more effectively and meet its enrolment target; establish policies for college activities; ensure that teachers meet the diverse needs of all their students and use a wider range of appropriate teaching methods; ensure that tutorial practice is consistently effective; use management information effectively for planning; and establish performance criteria for FEFC-funded provision.

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

<b>FEFC-funded provision</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>
------------------------------	----------------

---

---

## **INTRODUCTION**

1 The Co-operative College was inspected between July and September 1996. The inspection was restricted to provision which is funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Four inspectors spent a total of 16 days in the college. They visited 15 classes, observed enrolment and induction arrangements and examined students' work and relevant course documentation. They held meetings with the chair and members of the board of management, the chief executive, senior staff, full-time and part-time teachers, students and former students. In addition, inspectors met representatives of the Leicestershire Open College Network, course assessors, education and training officers from within the co-operative movement, and co-operative society members.

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

2 The Co-operative College was established in 1919 by the Co-operative Union and was first located in Manchester. Its purpose was to support and extend education and training programmes arranged by the education department of the Co-operative Union. This served the needs of more than 1,000 co-operative societies in the United Kingdom by providing distance learning and residential programmes. The college moved to its present location at Stanford Hall, near Loughborough, in 1945. It is one of the six residential colleges in England designated, under section 28 of the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992*, to receive financial support from the FEFC from April 1993. The college is an educational charity; the corporate trustee is the Co-operative Union Limited.

3 The college designs some courses for adults with few formal qualifications; one such course, the diploma in policy studies, is funded by the FEFC. The course is accredited by the Leicestershire Open College Network and aims to provide access to higher education and employment. It is of sixth months' duration with two intakes each year. There are two full-time semesters of 21 weeks starting in January and July, respectively. Some students are attracted by the unusually short and intensive nature of the course. Students work towards units gaining credit for the Open College access certificate. There are two strands within the course; students choose units comprising the ethical business option or units in social science. The former is for students who might wish to enter employment and the latter for students wishing to enter higher education. The course amounts to 5 per cent of students' full-time equivalent enrolments in the college and generates 6 per cent of the total income. At the time of the inspection, 18 students were enrolled on the diploma in policy studies course.

4 Originally, the college aimed to provide courses in vocational skills for employees in co-operative businesses, and general education programmes for co-operative society members from the whole of the United Kingdom. The college developed long-term and short residential courses, including a small international programme. Long-term residential

---

management courses have been mostly replaced by distance learning programmes and the college has devised modules which students may study at home or in the workplace. The long-term residential international programme continues but remains small. Most of the early programmes were not externally accredited, but the college's long-term international programmes have been validated through Loughborough University for over 20 years, and external validation and accreditation has been extended to other courses in recent years.

5 During the early 1990s, the college experienced significant financial difficulties. The Co-operative Union Congress commissioned an independent review committee, chaired by Lord Graham, to report on these and to recommend action to remedy them. The review committee recommended the establishment of a new board of management with responsibility for transforming the college's operations. This new board first met in January 1995 and a new chief executive was appointed in April 1995. The college's mission was reviewed and amended to re-emphasise the co-operative nature of the institution. The new mission states that 'the college will be a centre of excellence for education, training and consultancy dedicated to the promotion of co-operative values, ideals, principles and practice'.

6 In 1995-96, the college enrolled 28.5 residential full-time equivalent students funded by the FEFC and 1,523 part-time students and four full-time students who were not FEFC funded. In 1995-96, the college received a total income of £2,059,000 and reported a total expenditure of £2,055,000. In common with the other long-term residential colleges, the college is not yet subject to the FEFC funding methodology. Funding allocations since 1993 have been based on a 'roll-forward' formula, adjusted for volume, efficiency and inflation. The FEFC allocation for 1995-96 was £130,507.

7 The management of FEFC-funded provision is undertaken by a development officer who reports to the co-operative education services manager. Other development officers have responsibility for training, management development, programme development, member education and the international programme. This management structure was introduced in 1995. The college employs 50 staff of whom 38 are full time. Staffing for the FEFC-funded provision comprises two full-time equivalent teachers and one full-time equivalent support person.

#### **RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION**

8 The college provides more than 200 courses each year in business administration, management and supervision, marketing, enterprise and finance and a range of other short courses. All courses reflect the principles and values of the co-operative movement. Co-operative movement members, including those involved in retailing, banking, dairy and funeral services, use many of these programmes. Other students include those on the international programme, who are recruited from developing countries

---

and follow a course such as the masters degree course in business administration. The college offers short courses at the college and elsewhere to members of co-operatives. These provide college staff with opportunities to extend their range of skills and experience. The college is also able to recruit some students who follow short courses to its diploma course in policy studies. The college has established a national, and international, reputation for work in the field of co-operative education.

9 The college liaises with local authorities, higher education institutions and employers. For example, staff have developed a proposal for a project with Nottinghamshire Local Authority for the European Union. The college also has adult guidance workers from the Leicestershire Careers and Guidance Services Limited. Loughborough University validates the college's international diploma and degree programmes. Some students engage in the Open University certificate and diploma in management studies after studying the college's distance learning packages. Collaborative work with Henley Distance Learning has begun recently. Other developments include a programme to promote co-operative studies in the curriculum of schools; increasing work with the co-operative movement's youth organisation; and targeted courses for students from co-operatives in Central and Eastern Europe. College staff foster strong links with employers and trainers within the co-operative sector. The college co-ordinates a training network for training officers. Visits for students on the diploma course in policy studies are arranged to co-operative agencies in Leicester and Nottingham.

10 The college recruits students to the diploma on policy studies course, nationally. All students are aged 23 and over; 55 per cent are women, 10 per cent are from minority ethnic communities and 60 per cent are not in full-time employment before beginning the course. Students' achievements at entry range from grades 1 to 5 in one or two subjects in the former certificate in secondary education (CSE), to grades A to E in four or five subjects in the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE). Most students who enrol on the diploma in policy studies course have such grades in two CSE subjects, or two GCSE subjects. Most students have not added to their qualifications since leaving school. Students on the course often come with little confidence and an unsatisfactory experience of previous education. Some have experienced homelessness and mental ill health. Students say that they gain in confidence while on the course and, in some cases, that the course has changed their lives.

11 Marketing for the diploma in policy studies course is not effective. It is largely carried out through the co-operative networks and by mailing information about the course to careers services. There is little evidence of a thorough analysis of the needs of prospective students or of systematic market research. Recruitment to the diploma in policy studies course is weak and staff have not been successful in promoting the course. However, recent publicity through *The Big Issue* magazine, and through co-operative outlets such as credit unions, has drawn in several students who are unemployed.



---

12 Equality of opportunity is a central tenet of the co-operative movement and the college organises programmes on equal opportunities issues. However, the college has no written equal opportunities policy. The particular requirements of students from minority ethnic communities are not always met and few students with disabilities have been enrolled on the diploma in policy studies course over the last three years. Staff do not systematically analyse data on recruitment to measure how successful they are in promoting equality of opportunity. The absence of childcare facilities is a significant barrier to recruitment and the college is aware of this.

### **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

13 Prior to the creation of the new board of management in 1995, the college's trustees appointed an interim trust board who acted as governors and oversaw the management of the college. The college's trustees have delegated substantial authority to the new board of management but they still retain some responsibility for governance. At the time of the inspection, the memorandum and articles of association containing an instrument and articles of government of the college, were being changed. Members of the board are clear about their roles and responsibilities; they provide positive direction to the chief executive and senior managers on strategic matters. The senior management team comprises the chief executive, the co-operative education services manager and the support services manager. Managers understand their functions, and the new structure is understood by staff.

14 The board of management has 14 members, 11 of whom are men. The board has met frequently, at least bimonthly, since being formed in January 1995. Board members have an impressive range of expertise and experience at senior levels in business, finance, the co-operative movement and educational management. Board members are committed to the mission and purpose of the college and have been involved in drawing up the three-year business plan that is now in place. Progress towards the objectives stated in the plan is monitored by the board and will be reviewed during 1997. The priority for the board has been to steer the college towards financial stability. Most board members have not been significantly involved in the general work of the college.

15 The college has recorded financial deficits for the last three years. The deficit, excluding exceptional redundancy costs, was reduced to £166,000 in 1995 and a small surplus is projected for 1996. This has been achieved by cost savings including reductions in the level of staffing and through contracting out catering services, and by income growth from new courses and accommodation lettings. The college has introduced improved financial controls and has created a new post to help the management of resources. Managers are well aware of the need for greater efficiency and they calculate unit costs at course level and report them to staff. For example, staff are kept fully informed of the subsidy required for

---

the diploma in policy studies course. The board receives regular financial reports from the trustees' accountant. The college derives 60 per cent of its income from accommodation charges and 26 per cent from tuition fees. An audit committee was appointed in April 1995. It has only met once, and no internal audit of the college has been undertaken during the last three years.

16 The college does not have any policies which have been approved by the board of management. References to equality of opportunity are made in the college charter and the student handbook, but there is not a policy statement. A health and safety policy has been adopted by the senior management team but not by the board. Employment policy is determined by a national agreement made by corporate trustees and the co-operative employers' association. There are no curriculum policies. Members of the board have acknowledged the need to consider and adopt a range of policies for the college's activities and to make these policies known to staff.

17 The FEFC-funded provision is taught by a team of 12 teachers. They meet twice during each course to monitor the progress of students and to co-ordinate course activities. All members of the course team teach on other courses and some have responsibilities for the development and co-ordination of other provision. The diploma in policy studies course is effectively co-ordinated and staff are well informed about FEFC and Open College requirements. However, staff do not have a clear plan for increasing the number of FEFC-funded students.

18 Management information is not comprehensive and is not exploited by managers and teachers. Monitoring of expenditure and of the retention of students is effective, but the collection of some other information, for example about students' destinations, is incomplete. Most records, except finance, are manual. Management information is not used effectively for planning purposes and there is no integration of financial planning with marketing and programme planning. The college has not met its enrolment target for FEFC-funded provision. The college achieved 74 per cent of its target of 50 students in 1994-95 and 66 per cent of the same target in 1995-96.

#### **STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

19 The college provides prospective students with a prompt response and helpful information about the college and the diploma in policy studies course. However, prospective students do not receive sufficiently detailed information about the different units within the course. Applicants are invited to the college for an interview, to view the college and to meet students and staff. In a few instances, applicants who live far away and cannot travel to the college easily, are offered an interview in another part of the country. Generally, staff provide applicants with effective guidance and students comment positively on the interview process. Following a recent review of admissions arrangements, staff have maintained contact

---

with students before the course starts. However, over the last two years 20 per cent of applicants who accepted places on the course withdrew before enrolment.

20 The course team organises effective induction of students. The induction process gives students an introduction to the course and the college and some information about facilities in the local area. In a few induction sessions, teachers do not convey information clearly enough to students or check sufficiently that they understand it. The induction programme is carefully reviewed in order to identify ways of improving it. Teachers provide students with appropriate guidance to help them to choose a combination of modules relevant to their individual aspirations and goals. Students can transfer between units up to the third week of the programme. The college is in the early stages of developing arrangements for assessing and accrediting students' prior learning. Students do not maintain a record of their achievements. Teachers are, however, modifying a key skills profile to develop an appropriate record of students' attainments.

21 New tutorial arrangements have been introduced for diploma in policy studies students. Most students benefit from group and individual tutorial sessions, but the effectiveness of tutorial support is inconsistent. A few small group tutorials provide little support for students. There is no planned tutorial programme. Some personal tutors mainly respond to students' problems and concerns. Some focus more on practical and administrative matters whilst others give priority to students' academic development and help them with their study skills. The roles of personal tutors are not yet clearly understood by staff or students. There is some overlap between aspects of tutoring and the teaching of personal development and core skills which students find unhelpful because some activities are repeated. Staff provide useful information and advice to students on financial issues. Some teachers have undertaken training in counselling skills, but the college has no qualified counsellor. The college has made arrangements to refer students to counsellors from other agencies when necessary, but not all staff and students are aware of these.

22 All students benefit from being residential. They can focus clearly on their studies and develop a sense of purpose. They are able to increase their self-confidence and improve their performance. They receive help from one another and from their teachers. For example, many tutors work at the college during evenings and weekends and they offer assistance to students at these times. Some students said that they studied more effectively, because they had fewer domestic responsibilities than they would have had at home. Students can use the library at any time of the week for private study. Those on the diploma in policy studies courses are, however, the only long-term residential students at the college, with the exception of four students on the international programme. Some students claimed that they had a feeling of isolation.

23 The college is committed to providing an environment in which students from different backgrounds can study successfully. However, staff give insufficient attention to identifying the wide range of their students' needs. There have been a few instances when students have been treated insensitively because of their gender, disability, race or culture. The college does not have satisfactory arrangements for helping students with disabilities. Most students comment positively about the quality of meals, but in a few cases, the college has failed to meet students' special dietary needs. Some women students said they did not feel safe or secure in the residential environment. Over half the residential students on the diploma in policy studies course are women. Neither of the two resident wardens is female.

### **TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING**

24 In the classes inspected, 40 per cent had strengths that clearly outweighed the weaknesses and 60 per cent had a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Students' attendance in these classes was 82 per cent. The distribution of inspection grades is shown in the following table.

#### **Teaching sessions: inspection grades**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Total</b>
Access to higher education		3	3	9	0	0	15

25 The effectiveness of teaching varies across different subjects. Most teachers plan lessons carefully and have clear schemes of work. However, in some cases, teachers do not have lesson plans which identify learning outcomes and the key skills students should develop. Teachers have positive relationships with their students. Some teachers lack skills in teaching students with diverse learning needs. Few teachers use a wide range of appropriate teaching methods or manage whole group discussions effectively. For example, some teachers allowed a few students to dominate class discussions. Occasionally, group discussions are dominated by tutors. Some teachers have low expectations of their students and only require them to recite simple factual information in class. They fail to engage students in discussion or analysis of an issue as a means of helping them to understand it more fully.

26 In lessons where the teaching was effective, teachers took account of students' different abilities. They provided opportunities for students to work on their own and at their own pace. Some teachers encouraged students to develop skills in critical analysis and reflection. For example, in one lesson a teacher asked students to assess the accuracy of reports from different sources before using them to establish whether standards of living were improving or not. Teaching methods used in the more effective lessons enable students to develop a good understanding of the subject and to develop key skills.

---

27 In less effective lessons, teachers took insufficient account of students' different abilities. Many staff engaged all students in the same activities. They did not provide individual students with different tasks and activities which matched their respective aptitudes. For example, in several lessons, teachers gave presentations which did not sustain the interest of all students; some students became bored and a few found it hard to understand the new ideas or information being presented. In many cases, teachers did not check that the students understood the lesson. In one particular instance, the teaching was dull and slow and the tasks were insufficiently challenging for students on an access to higher education course.

28 Most teachers make effective use of whiteboards, flipcharts and overhead transparencies to enhance students' learning. Printed materials are generally relevant, of good quality and up to date. A few teachers arrange for helpful resource collections, relevant to the course, to be available in the library. They give useful advice to students to help them to study by themselves in their own time. For example, one teacher was helping a student to study Russian. Teachers set suitable assignments for students, mark them promptly and provide constructive feedback to students. They monitor students' progress and discuss this with students.

#### **STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

29 Students achieve variable success on the course. The primary learning goal for FEFC-funded students is the award of an access certificate. The diploma is an option undertaken by some students after the residential component is over; they can return to the college for up to five residential days to complete an additional assignment. In the last two years, about 20 per cent of students completing the course also complete studies for the diploma. Students choosing the recently-introduced ethical business strand of the course, study units which are accredited but not yet recognised as a full access certificate. The college has submitted these units for accreditation as a full access certificate by the Leicestershire Open College Network. For students choosing the social science units, college statistics show that only 58 per cent achieved the access certificate between July 1995 and June 1996. However, in the previous year all the students completed the social science strand of the course and 81 per cent achieved the access certificate.

30 Most of the diploma in policy studies students are well motivated, work hard and speak about their studies with enthusiasm. The retention rate of students is high. However, there has been little analysis of the value added to students' progress and achievement by their attendance at the college. The key skills which students study and develop include communication, information technology and mathematics. Teachers emphasise the importance of these skills because most students have few formal qualifications. They pay insufficient attention, however, to assessing and recording students' achievements in these skills. Students

---

can attend other courses at the college if they wish, such as residential weekend courses on co-operative learning and ecology.

31 Students produce written work of a high standard. They give well-structured responses to questions and provide clear evidence of their ability to apply their knowledge. Students' oral skills are generally well developed. In most lessons students can demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in discussion. However, in most classes, students are not encouraged to work in groups and pairs, and teachers give little emphasis to the development of team skills through group work. Students respond positively to the detailed advice which teachers give them about their work. Some staff ensure that students submit early drafts of work for comment. However, teachers pay insufficient attention to assessing and recording students' progress in skills which are not accredited. Most students are achieving new skills and are gaining confidence in their own abilities. Students are unanimous in their view that their educational experience at the college is superior to, and more encouraging to them, than any they have previously undergone.

32 Students who pass the social science units achieve progression to higher education, but the college does not have comprehensive information about the destinations of students after they leave the course. Staff do not collect information about the course's value to students after they have left. In order to obtain such information, the college has established a friends of Stanford Hall association for former students and other supporters of the college.

#### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

33 The college has developed procedures for monitoring and reviewing the diploma in policy studies course. The board of learning oversees matters relating to standards and the improvement of quality. The course committee meets regularly to monitor the quality and effectiveness of course provision. Monitoring procedures include the collection and analysis of the views of students on their course, reviews by teachers and a commentary by course assessors. Course committees consider reports and recommend appropriate action on them. Teachers value the reports by external course assessors and their recommendations are acted upon. For example, the review process influences changes to the design of the course.

34 The college does not have a policy on quality, but a statement about quality assurance is included in the business plan. A quality assurance framework document has been discussed and adopted by the board of learning and the board of management. The college introduced a charter in October 1994. This was being revised at the time of the inspection. There is a complaints procedure for students but it is not well known to them. Some diploma in policy studies students said that although their views on the quality of provision were sought, they did not receive adequate responses to them. Students are not sufficiently aware of their rights and responsibilities.

---

35 Performance indicators are underdeveloped. The course team has not agreed standards for the retention or achievement of students, nor have they defined criteria for establishing whether the course is successful or not. Regular reports are produced on students' achievements and these are published in the college's annual report. The board of learning receives, but does not pass judgement on, the retention rates and pass rates for the diploma in policy studies course.

36 The college has produced a self-assessment report for the FEFC-funded provision. It follows the headings in the inspection framework set out in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. It is a comprehensive document, in two parts, which sets out areas of good practice and identifies areas for improvement. The report proposes action to address some areas of weakness. It does not include, however, performance criteria by which to judge the extent of improvement or a timescale for the completion of the improvement. In many instances, the college's judgements accord with those of the inspectors. However, some areas of weakness found by inspectors are not mentioned in the report. In a few instances, inspectors found weaknesses which were cited as strengths by the college, for example, some aspects of support for students.

37 The college does not have a staff-development plan for teachers. Teachers have engaged in a variety of professional development and updating activities during the last year. Few staff-development activities are closely related to the course, however, or match objectives in the college's business plan. Teachers do not have sufficient opportunities for sharing good practice or learning about good practice on similar courses at other colleges. The total amount of staff development is small. Procedures for appraising staff have not yet been introduced.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Staffing**

38 Staff who teach the FEFC-funded provision are experienced and well qualified in their subjects. Most teachers have relevant specialist degrees and more than half have a teaching qualification. However, none of the teachers has a specialist qualification in teaching basic skills. Staffing levels are appropriate and teachers are effectively deployed. There is a low rate of staff turnover. The college provides an adequate level of clerical, administrative and technical support for the course. Some residential services have been recently reviewed and they have been made more cost effective.

### **Equipment/learning resources**

39 The college provides a good range of audio and visual equipment for teachers. The diploma in policy studies course is based in two main teaching rooms equipped with whiteboards, flipcharts, overhead projectors and screens. Video players, monitors and projectors are available on request. The computer suite has 12 stand alone personal

---

computers loaded with relevant software. The suite is used by students for group and individual study and is also available to them in the evenings and at weekends. There is a well-equipped language laboratory. The library has a stock of 25,000 volumes and an adjacent archive room contains primary source material relating to the co-operative movement and co-operative education. The college provides compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database software for students' use and an area for viewing relevant videos. A small area is set aside for quiet study.

### **Accommodation**

40 The college occupies a pleasant rural site. Stanford Hall is a grade II listed building, dating in part from the sixteenth century, set in over 300 acres of parkland. The college has residential buildings with 140 bedrooms; the rooms used by diploma in policy studies students are adequate for long-term residence. Students have access to gardens, an outdoor heated swimming pool, a cricket square, a mini golf course, a licensed bar, common rooms, a chapel and a kitchen area. Most of the teaching accommodation is in good condition. It is clean and comfortable. The college's accommodation strategy is linked to the three-year business plan and is under consideration by the board of management. The college has received more than £100,000 from the FEFC for minor capital works. Access to most of the buildings is difficult for students with restricted mobility.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES**

41 The strengths of the FEFC-funded provision include:

- the residential nature of the course which helps students to develop a clear sense of purpose, improve their performance and complete the course
- positive relationships between teachers and their students
- the encouragement and support which students receive to help them work on their own
- well-qualified and experienced teachers
- the board of management which provides positive direction to the college on strategic matters
- improved financial monitoring and reporting procedures
- strong and productive links with employers, trainers and members within the co-operative sector.



---

42 In order to improve its FEFC-funded provision the college should address the following:

- the insufficient attention given to the diverse learning needs of the students
- a generally narrow range of teaching styles
- the variable, and sometimes low, pass rates for the course
- the lack of opportunity for some students to achieve the full access certificate and the small numbers of students achieving the diploma
- ineffective marketing and the failure to achieve enrolment targets for FEFC-funded provision
- deficiencies in meeting the particular needs of students with disabilities, those from minority ethnic communities and women
- the absence of written, formally agreed, policies for college activities
- the inconsistent level and nature of tutorial support for students
- the lack of agreed performance criteria by which the college is able to judge the success of the FEFC-funded provision.

Published by the  
Further Education Funding Council  
January 1997