

Crawley College

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1999-00

THE
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EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL

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FUNDING COUNCIL*

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

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

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Contents

Paragraph

Summary

Context

The college and its mission	1
The inspection	9

Curriculum areas

Construction	13
Engineering	18
Business and administration	23
Management and professional	28
Leisure and tourism	33
Health and social care	40
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	46
Basic education/ESOL	52

Cross-college provision

Support for students	57
General resources	63
Quality assurance	70
Governance	78
Management	87
Conclusions	95

College statistics

Grade Descriptors

Inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the report. They use a five-point scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.

The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses
- grade 2 – good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses
- grade 3 – satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses
- grade 4 – less than satisfactory provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths
- grade 5 – poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses.

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1998-99, are shown in the following table.

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

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

Student Achievements

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

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

Summary

Crawley College

South East Region

Inspected November 1999

Crawley College is a medium-sized general further education college. The college's main campus is in Crawley and smaller centres are in Horsham and East Grinstead. Crawley is situated in West Sussex close to Gatwick airport in an area of low unemployment. The self-assessment report was thorough and based on an established self-assessment process. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report but identified additional strengths and weaknesses. Since the self-assessment report was written the college has addressed some of the weaknesses identified. Statistical data on students' achievements provided by the college contained some errors in the areas inspected.

The college offers courses in nine of the FEFC's 10 programme areas, and the inspection covered provision in six of these. Some teaching, especially in practical areas, is good, but too many lessons are unsatisfactory. The percentage of lessons rated good or outstanding by inspectors was well below the national average and has not improved since the last inspection. In the sample inspected the proportion of unsatisfactory lessons has increased from 5% to 10%. Retention rates are

good. Achievement rates have increased particularly in the last year. There have been improvements to the accommodation since the last inspection, although there is still some underuse. Students are well supported in their studies but the quality of some tutorial provision is poor, particularly for part-time students. The college has a clear strategic and operational commitment to improving quality. It has successfully met its targets for growth every year since incorporation. It has continued to improve its quality assurance procedures and has linked them closely to self-assessment and strategic planning. Governors are committed to the success of the college and make a significant contribution to strategic planning. They are not fully involved in the monitoring of the college's academic performance. Although there have been improvements to the management information system since the last inspection, there are still some unreliable aspects. The college should improve: the standard of teaching; achievements on some courses; the aspects of the college management information system relating to data on students' achievements; the monitoring of the college's academic performance by governors; the quality of tutorial support for all students; the remaining poor accommodation; and the promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Construction	3	Support for students	2
Engineering	3	General resources	2
Business and administration	3	Quality assurance	2
Management and professional	2	Governance	2
Leisure and tourism	3	Management	2
Health and social care	2		
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2		
Basic education/ESOL	3		

The College and its Mission

1 Crawley College is a general further education college situated in the north of West Sussex. It predominantly serves the economically vibrant Crawley and Gatwick travel-to-work area. In November 1999, unemployment was 1.1%. The area provides some 177,000 jobs, particularly in distribution and retail, advanced manufacturing, financial services and pharmaceuticals. These industries require a highly skilled workforce. Crawley has three times the national level of employment in the travel industry because of its proximity to Gatwick airport.

2 The college has a campus near the centre of Crawley which was originally built as part of the new town in the late 1950s. There are two other smaller Crawley sites at West Green, dedicated primarily to higher education courses, and Three Bridges. Arun House in Horsham mainly offers management and professional courses. In addition, the college operates from a number of rented premises in East Grinstead which mainly provide adult education.

3 The college offers courses in nine of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) 10 programme areas. Vocational courses are available from foundation to advanced level. There is a large amount of higher level work with links to three local universities. The college has been granted institutional recognition by the University of Sussex, and is able to provide programmes leading to a degree. It also has self-accredited status for the Institute of Personnel and Development graduateship qualification.

4 In June 1999, 1,887 full-time and 10,367 part-time students were enrolled on college courses. Approximately 82% were aged 19 or over. Foundation level students accounted for 14% of enrolments, intermediate 23%, advanced 19%, higher 5% and 39% of students were on non-schedule 2 courses. The largest curriculum area was humanities, followed by construction.

The college estimates that 8.6% of its full-time enrolments in 1998-99 were from people from minority ethnic populations. Information from Sussex Enterprise, the local training and enterprise council (TEC), estimates that people from minority ethnic groups make up 6.4% of the local population.

5 The college employs 365 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 167 are teachers and a further 80 directly support learning. The management board consists of the principal, the respective directors of operations and resources and the college secretary, who are senior postholders, together with three heads of faculty and seven service area heads. The college is organised into three faculties and there are seven areas of service.

6 The college's mission is 'to promote and provide high-quality education and training to meet the needs of individuals, business and the community'. In order to achieve its mission, the college has developed several collaborative partnerships. One, known as the Sussex Strategy Group comprises the 16 colleges in Sussex, the three local education authorities (LEAs), Sussex Enterprise and the careers service. This partnership has been successful in attracting funding to establish the Sussex Virtual College to provide on-line learning.

7 Crawley College was selected as the hub for the Centre of Engineering Excellence in Sussex. This has entailed a substantial investment in computer integrated manufacturing equipment. This is linked to a number of partner colleges within the Sussex Virtual College and will enable appropriate skills training to be provided for local industry, wherever it is required.

8 A significant collaborative partnership has been formed between the three major London airports and their local colleges to provide appropriate certification for construction operatives working at these airports. In addition, the college works with 22 partners in the Mid-Downs Care Partnership, providing work-based training and assessment.

Context

The Inspection

9 The inspection took place in the first week of November 1999. Inspectors had previously scrutinised the college's self-assessment report and information held by other directorates of the FEFC. Inspectors used data on students' achievements derived from the college's individualised student record (ISR) returns to the FEFC for 1997 and 1998. The college submitted its own data on students' achievements for 1999. The data were checked against primary sources of evidence, such as pass lists issued by awarding bodies. At the time of inspection, the college's achievement data for 1999 contained a large number of students with unknown outcomes, which can give the appearance of high achievement rates.

10 The inspection was carried out by 14 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 53 days. The inspection team observed 96 lessons, examined students' work and evaluated college documents. Meetings were held with governors, managers, other college staff, students and employers. In the same week as the FEFC inspection, seven inspectors from the Training Standards Council (TSC) worked with

the inspection team during the college inspection. The TSC inspectors concentrated on work-based training supported by the college in construction, engineering, business administration and information technology (IT), hospitality, and hair and beauty. TSC inspectors interviewed 104 trainees, 36 employers and visited 41 placements. They observed 29 training sessions and seven reviews. Where it was appropriate to the FEFC inspection framework, evidence gathered by TSC inspectors was taken into account when grading college provision.

11 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Of the 96 lessons observed, 52% were rated good or outstanding and 10% were less than satisfactory. This compares unfavourably with the averages of 65% and 6%, respectively, for lessons observed during 1998-99. On the sample of lessons inspected, the proportion of these considered by inspectors to be unsatisfactory rose from 5% to 10% since the last inspection.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GNVQ	1	6	4	4	0	15
NVQ	1	12	4	0	0	17
Other vocational	7	23	28	6	0	64
Total (No.)	9	41	36	10	0	96
Total (%)	9	43	38	10	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99 (%)	20	45	29	6	0	100

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

Context

12 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1998-99.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Crawley College	11.2	81
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99	11.2	78

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

Curriculum Areas

Construction

Grade 3

13 Inspectors observed 11 lessons covering construction crafts, services and technician courses. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report but considered that some of the weaknesses in achievement and retention rates had been omitted. Inspectors from the TSC observed training in electrical installation, carpentry and joinery, and plumbing for 14 work-based trainees.

Key strengths

- good teaching especially in practical lessons
- extensive links with employers
- good achievement rates on national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 2 bricklaying and painting and decorating
- the range of construction workshops

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates on NVQ level 2 plumbing and general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) advanced
- low retention rates on NVQ level 2 bricklaying and GNVQ foundation

14 The college offers a wide range of courses. These include the GNVQ in construction and the built environment, the national certificate in building studies, the direct membership examination of the Chartered Institute of Building and NVQ programmes in craft trades. A good range of short courses is offered and there are two franchised programmes in electrical services and gas safety. There are extensive links with employers and other outside agencies. The college has gained sponsorship from a number of manufacturers which have provided equipment of industrial standard. With the help of the Construction Industry

Training Board, a link has been formed with the Marina High School. A group of 10 pupils attend the college one day a week to gain the GNVQ foundation and NVQ level 1 units. The construction section is well managed. There are regular programme team meetings. Roles and responsibilities of the senior construction staff are clear to all staff. Targets are set for achievement and retention on all courses.

15 Of the 11 lessons observed, nine were considered to be good. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that lessons are well planned. Lesson plans contained clear aims and objectives and included a variety of appropriate activities. Teachers give clear explanations of the principles of construction. At the beginning of each lesson they check students' learning from the previous lesson. Theory lessons are set in an industrial context. In one lesson, electrical installation students used workbooks to sketch electrical circuits. The students' learning was extended by the teacher's use of examples from industry. Students were fully engaged in learning and were able to explain the functions of diodes and positive and negative junctions. Practical work takes into account safe working practices. Key skills are mapped against module assignments in the technician programmes. There are specific work-related assignments integrating key skills with NVQ units. The quality of some tutorials is poor. Most tutorial records seen by inspectors were incomplete. There is no evidence of sharing of good tutorial practice across the three construction areas. The self-assessment report did not identify this weakness.

16 Student achievement rates on some courses are below the national average. Those for NVQ level 2 plumbing were 30% below the national average in 1998 and 15% below in 1999. For the GNVQ advanced course, there was a decline in achievement rates from 50% to 33% to 0% in 1997, 1998 and 1999, respectively. The college reports that the national certificate in building studies has now replaced this course.

Curriculum Areas

Achievement rates for the NVQ level 2 bricklaying programme improved from 61% in 1998 to 88% in 1999, and were accompanied by a steady reduction in the retention rate from 70% in 1997 to 52% in 1999. Achievement rates have increased steadily on NVQ level 2 painting and decorating courses from 67% in 1997 to 100% in 1999. Achievement rates on short courses for the gas industry are in line with the national average. Strengths relating to retention and achievement were identified in the self-assessment report but the weaknesses were not. Retention rates for the GNVQ foundation course are poor but many students from this course were identified as having left to take up employment or to start TEC-funded programmes. Students' portfolios of work and written projects are of a good standard. Assignments contain clear assessment criteria. There is a good range of sampling of

assignments by the internal verifiers. Teachers provide detailed written feedback to students on their work. These strengths were identified in the self-assessment report.

17 The college has a good range of construction workshops. They are suitably equipped and well laid out. The extensive links with industry have enabled the area to provide industrial standard equipment for its students. In the workshops, learning support officers aid practical teaching. Classrooms are well equipped and provide a good learning environment. Teachers are well qualified and most possess assessor awards.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ foundation construction and the built environment	1	Number of starters	45	43	48
		Retention (%)	58	58	69
		Achievement (%)	68	72	73
NVQ bricklaying	2	Number of starters	33	40	21
		Retention (%)	70	63	52
		Achievement (%)	95	61	88
NVQ mechanical engineering services (plumbing)	2	Number of starters	36	45	20
		Retention (%)	69	78	70
		Achievement (%)	53	27	50
NVQ painting and decorating	2	Number of starters	31	31	6
		Retention (%)	74	52	83
		Achievement (%)	67	94	100
NVQ (all craft trades)	2	Number of starters	237	318	171
		Retention (%)	80	80	84
		Achievement (%)	56	64	72
GNVQ advanced construction and the built environment	3	Number of starters	16	16	7
		Retention (%)	88	94	100
		Achievement (%)	50	33	0

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

Curriculum Areas

Engineering

Grade 3

18 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering motor vehicle, aeronautical, mechanical and electronic engineering. They agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses in the college's self-assessment report but considered that some strengths were overstated. They also identified weaknesses not in the report. Inspectors from the TSC observed training in automotive engineering and mechanical engineering provided by the college for 25 work-based trainees.

Key strengths

- up-to-date, well-equipped machine tool workshops
- good practical teaching
- good course management on the majority of courses
- improving achievement rates over three years

Weaknesses

- some dull and uninteresting classroom teaching
- insufficient checking of students' learning
- no deadlines set in practical assignments
- lack of personal and protective equipment in workshop sessions
- inadequate electronics equipment

19 The college offers a good range of full-time and part-time courses in motor vehicle, aeronautical, mechanical and electronic engineering. Courses are available at all levels from NVQ level 1 through to higher national diploma. Enrolments are good across the majority of programmes. The courses are effectively managed. Programme teams meet regularly and minutes of meetings record action points. Programme managers report to a faculty

board on a fortnightly basis. There is also a faculty board of studies where realistic targets for achievement and retention are set by level and course. Internal verification is effectively carried out.

20 Teaching in practical lessons is good. Students develop their practical skills effectively and are able to work at their own pace. In one practical motor vehicle lesson, students worked individually testing plugs, leads and batteries, and removing and replacing the components. A tracking document was available to monitor students' progress. However, in the courses observed, there are no deadlines for the completion of practical tasks and no short-term goals are set, making it harder for students to plan their time. In practical lessons the students were not using appropriate personal and protective equipment. Schemes of work ranged from those that were comprehensive to some that were simply a list of topics. The majority of theory lessons consisted of note copying from the board. Such lessons were uninspiring and teachers failed to involve all students in learning or to check their understanding. In one lesson students worked individually from workbooks. The teacher did not provide students with aims for the session and provided no introduction to the activity to be carried out. Some students were not engaged in learning but the teacher took no action to encourage them to work. Students were not able to identify the link between practical and theory lessons. This was a weakness not identified in the self-assessment report.

21 In the majority of courses, student achievement rates for the last three years have risen from below the national average. However, at the time of inspection the college's achievement data for 1998-99 used by inspectors contained a large number of students whose results were unknown. Achievement rates on GNVQ advanced engineering courses were well below the national average in 1997 and 1998. The college is attempting to address

Curriculum Areas

the very poor achievement rate by returning to the national diploma in engineering. The full-cost national diploma in aeronautical engineering, provided jointly with Hastings College for the United Arab Emirates, is very successful with 100% retention and achievement rates. The college has plans to address the poor retention and achievement rates on lower level technician courses by offering a range of programmes to suit all levels of entry. This will allow students a choice of qualification aims to meet their needs. Students' work is well organised and shows a good understanding appropriate to the level of the course. Drawings and sketches were particularly well presented. There was little use of IT in students' assignment work. Students' individual achievements are recognised by local industry at an annual awards evening.

22 Inspectors agreed that the resources in the machine tool workshop are good. The machine shop is well equipped, several new machines having been purchased during the last year. The Centre of Engineering Excellence is an outstanding facility that brings in full-cost work. However, it is a new facility and there has been little opportunity as yet to use it on general college courses. There is a temporary deficiency in the mechanical science and materials testing facilities. The electronics laboratories facilities are inadequate, as the college recognises. Staff are well qualified. All motor vehicle teachers are using staff development time to update their industrial experience.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
C&G	1	Number of starters	108	75	93
		Retention (%)	90	79	79
		Achievement (%)	60	59	79*
NVQ engineering manufacture motor vehicle replacement	2	Number of starters	81	103	133
		Retention (%)	89	73	69
		Achievement (%)	51	54	91*
C&G	2	Number of starters	126	161	140
		Retention (%)	97	91	93
		Achievement (%)	52	59	73*
C&G	3	Number of starters	10	19	22
		Retention (%)	100	100	100
		Achievement (%)	50	64	100*
Advanced technicians	3	Number of starters	111	116	86
		Retention (%)	83	71	85
		Achievement (%)	68	49	86*

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

*based on incomplete data

Curriculum Areas

Business and Administration

Grade 3

23 Inspectors observed 16 lessons covering business studies, business administration, and accounting. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report but identified additional weaknesses in teaching and learning. Inspectors from the TSC observed training in business administration for 15 work-based trainees.

Key strengths

- broad curriculum provision
- a wide range of additional vocational qualifications
- good support for students
- clear progression routes in business and accounting programmes
- well-planned assessment opportunities for key skills

Weaknesses

- poor achievement and retention rates on the GNVQ advanced in business
- insufficient assessment in the workplace
- some ineffective teaching
- poor use of students' previously acquired skills
- lack of compatible industrial IT software in the training office

24 There is a broad range of courses in business administration leading to good progression routes. Courses include GNVQ intermediate and advanced, NVQ levels 2 and 3 administration, NVQ levels 2, 3, and 4 accounting, the higher diploma in administrative procedures and access to business, law and social sciences. This range was identified as a strength in the college's self-assessment report. There is also a wide range of additional vocational courses, such as those for

wordprocessing qualifications, available to students. The area is effectively managed. Course teams meet regularly, implement action plans and evaluate performance. Provision is generally well planned and monitored and responsibilities for managing courses are clear with good lines of communication. However, low recruitment in administration programmes has meant that students of differing abilities are grouped together for teaching purposes and, as a result, they are not always following an appropriate programme.

25 Teaching in fewer than half the lessons observed was good. In the better lessons, teaching was well planned and teachers used a variety of appropriate methods which sustained students' interest and increased their understanding of the subject matter. In one lesson, students were taken through a cash budget step by step so that they could see how the figures were obtained. They were then given a cash budget to work out for themselves. Progressively more difficult tasks were then set. In another lesson on types of ownership of business, the teacher maintained the interests of students by making use of the students' own experiences and using as examples local and national companies with which students were familiar. In some less effective lessons no account was taken of students' previous knowledge and, in one lesson, a considerable amount of time was spent on a topic with which many students were already familiar. In another lesson, a teacher displayed an overhead transparency from which students made notes only to be told at the end that there was a handout. Some transparencies were poorly presented. They contained small print that could not be read at the back of the class and were difficult to understand. In some lessons, teachers failed to provide work that was sufficiently challenging for all students. These weaknesses in teaching were not recognised in the college's self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with the judgement that key skills are

Curriculum Areas

well integrated with the learning programmes. Key skills assessment is comprehensive and students' achievements are well recorded.

26 Students' work is of an appropriate standard. Most students' portfolios are well organised. Assignments are marked fairly and teachers provide constructive written feedback. Students' progress is reviewed regularly and they are encouraged to develop individual action plans to improve their work. Tutorial support and guidance is good. There is an over-reliance on simulation in the assessment of NVQs in administration. Opportunities for work-based assessment are missed when students are on work experience. Inspectors agreed that there are good students' achievements on some courses. In 1999, these included GNVQ intermediate, NVQ level 4 accounting and many of the Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR) single subject secretarial examinations.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in business and administration, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ intermediate business	2	Number of starters	40	32	17
		Retention (%)	63	52	73
		Achievement (%)	64	50	100
NVQ administration	2	Number of starters	122	40	26
		Retention (%)	53	90	84
		Achievement (%)	66	64	68
NVQ accounting	2	Number of starters	52	36	32
		Retention (%)	84	91	90
		Achievement (%)	71	67	49
GNVQ advanced business	3	Number of starters	48	41	24
		Retention (%)	78	59	87
		Achievement (%)	84	47	50
NVQ accounting	3	Number of starters	30	49	26
		Retention (%)	80	98	100
		Achievement (%)	75	52	58
NVQ accounting	4	Number of starters	11	31	15
		Retention (%)	90	100	100
		Achievement (%)	60	59	80

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

The college's self-assessment report also recognised that retention and achievement is poor on the GNVQ advanced programme with achievement declining from 84% in 1997 to 50% in 1999. On the current cohort, retention has fallen to 59%. However, measures have been put into place to improve retention and achievement within this area.

27 Classrooms provide a pleasant working environment. Although IT equipment and commercially used software are available, students on business and administration programmes are not always able to make the best use of them. Some students spend most of their time in the training office, where the software is not compatible with the systems they are expected to use in other rooms. This causes particular problems for students who have used software commonly used in industry before they enrolled at the college. This weakness has been recognised in the self-assessment report.

Curriculum Areas

Management and Professional

Grade 2

28 Inspectors observed nine lessons across the range of courses offered in management and professional studies. They largely agreed with the judgements in the college's self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- strong team leadership and a genuine commitment to produce good-quality courses
- most teaching effectively planned
- high standard of students' written portfolio work and formal presentations
- strong links with local businesses
- good students' achievements on many courses
- consistently good retention rates
- the college's accredited status from the Institute of Personnel and Development

Weaknesses

- inadequate arrangements for the commercial updating of teachers
- poor students' achievements on one course

29 Most management and professional courses are provided by the management and personnel section at Arun House in Horsham. Others are taught in the business and marketing section. There is strong and effective leadership. High standards of professional competence are set, which are assured by an emerging, but not yet fully implemented, system of teacher appraisal and a rigorous approach to individual professional development. Student enrolments have grown steadily in recent years, particularly on management and personnel and development courses. There is a clear vision for the development of new courses and initiatives, of which an example is the level 4 environmental

management programme. Courses are offered at times which meet the needs of students and their employers. A significant volume of work is provided for local companies on their own premises. The college's self-assessment report does not do justice to this range of strengths in course management and provision.

30 Lessons in most subjects are effectively planned. They help students to cope successfully with the assessment demands of their courses. On examined professional courses, teachers place strong emphasis on students' assimilation of knowledge and understanding. Teaching is well supported by handouts and visual aids of a high professional standard. On management development programmes, students are encouraged to combine the acquisition of knowledge and understanding with the development of a range of personal competences. Teachers use an appropriate variety of teaching methods. Students develop particularly high standards of communication and presentation skills. Pairs of students organise three-hour briefing seminars for their classmates known as 'sequentials', these seminars have been developed as an alternative to a residential activity. Students gain enormous skills, knowledge and confidence as a result of completing them. The self-assessment report mentions some of these strengths in general terms, although few are made explicit. In a small minority of lessons, the teaching is inappropriate. Students copy large amounts of information from the whiteboard or from overhead projector transparencies. There are few opportunities for students to apply new concepts, and teachers fail to check whether individual students are learning. These weaknesses are not identified in the self-assessment report.

31 Students' written work is of a consistently high standard and teachers' assessment is sound. Standards of students' communication and presentation skills demonstrated through class presentations are of the highest order.

Curriculum Areas

Examination pass rates are often at, or above, the national average. Those for the Institute of Personnel and Development, professional stage, and for the National Examining Board for Supervisory Management are particularly good. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that students' achievements for the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply, graduate foundation stage are poor. Retention rates for most courses are consistently good and unusually high for part-time professional and management courses. The college has been awarded accredited status by the Institute of Personnel and Development.

32 Full-time teachers are well qualified and experienced and demonstrate confidence in, and command of, their specialist areas. However,

despite the wealth of potential opportunities within the local business community, no arrangements exist for work placements or for shadowing to enable the professional updating of teachers. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that Arun House provides a good environment for management and professional classes. Students enjoy its adult atmosphere. Classrooms are bright and spacious and classroom equipment is well maintained. However, classroom furniture sometimes falls below the standards found in management centres. IT and library facilities are adequate. The number of computers has recently been increased and the college plans to expand the resource further. Other locations in which management and professional courses are taught also provide good standards of accommodation.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in management and professional, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Institute of Personnel and Development certificate in personnel practice	3	Number of starters	23	68	50
		Retention (%)	100	100	96
		Achievement (%)	91	78	60
National Examining Board for Supervisory Management certificate	3	Number of starters	13	13	15
		Retention (%)	85	77	93
		Achievement (%)	73	90	100
Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply graduate foundation stage	4	Number of starters	26	17	23
		Retention (%)	85	94	91
		Achievement (%)	18	33	63
Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply graduate professional stage	4	Number of starters	16	18	17
		Retention (%)	100	50	76
		Achievement (%)	80	88	62
Institute of Personnel and Development professional management development programme	4	Number of starters	43	40	36
		Retention (%)	93	84	97
		Achievement (%)	85	100	100
The Institute of Management certificate in management	4	Number of starters	16	27	18
		Retention (%)	100	74	94
		Achievement (%)	88	95	76

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

Curriculum Areas

Leisure and Tourism

Grade 3

33 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering leisure, tourism and sport and recreation courses. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They identified some additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- high student retention on most courses
- wide range of additional qualifications in both leisure and tourism
- work experience arrangements on GNVQ advanced courses
- effective enrichment of teaching

Weaknesses

- poor achievement on the GNVQ intermediate course
- some ineffective teaching
- some inadequate course planning
- insufficient monitoring of performance against targets
- some poor accommodation

34 The college offers full-time GNVQ courses at intermediate and advanced level, with a choice of either a leisure or tourism route. The majority of students have chosen tourism, reflecting the close proximity to Gatwick airport. There are excellent opportunities for full-time students to study for additional qualifications, such as British Airways fares and ticketing, the Association of British Travel Agents certificate, the Galileo computerised reservation system, itinerary planning and languages. Additional sports qualifications include coaching awards and the Football Association junior manager's award. The college also offers a course for adults wishing to enter the travel business.

35 Course management is satisfactory. Attendance is rigorously monitored. This is reflected in the high attendance during inspection of 82% compared with the national average for the programme area of 79%. Students' views are collected and centrally analysed. These are discussed at weekly team meetings which, once a month, are also attended by student representatives. Minutes are not taken. Consequently, actions identified are not adequately recorded and monitored. Courses are reviewed annually. A report is produced but this lacks analysis of performance against targets. Course targets were set for the first time last year. Findings from the course review inform the self-assessment process. From this, the departmental action plan is produced. There is no evidence of monitoring of the action plan.

36 Of the 12 lessons observed, inspectors judged seven to be good; there were no outstanding lessons. This is below the national average for the programme area, a weakness not recognised in the self-assessment report. In the better lessons, teachers provided an appropriate range of activities to keep students' interest. In a coaching lesson, a qualified local coach, who is a past student from the college and an effective role model, assisted the teacher by leading the practical activities. The teacher linked the activities to relevant theory and suggested ways they could be modified for different client groups. In the weaker lessons, preparation was poor and the teaching lacked vitality. Aims and objectives were not clearly stated and there was an over-reliance on note-taking. Many students do not have copies of the unit specifications or a scheme of work and are unclear which topics are going to be studied next. There is no course assessment schedule to help students to plan their work. Most written work is of an appropriate standard. Assignment briefs are clear. Teachers' written comments on students' work help them make progress in their learning. Records of students' progress in key skills are not kept up to date.

Curriculum Areas

37 Students' retention is good. It is at or above the national average on most courses. Achievement on the GNVQ advanced course declined significantly in 1997-98. However, it improved in 1998-99 to the national average. Achievement continues to be poor on the GNVQ intermediate course. In 1997-98 and 1998-99 it was well below the national average. This is recognised by the college in its self-assessment report. Achievement on Association of British Travel Agents Certificate and Galileo is above the national average, although it is declining.

38 Although there is no longer a travel agency based at the college, GNVQ advanced students still have good opportunities to acquire practical skills. They have two weeks' work experience in each year which is effectively organised. Tutors visit each student once during the placement but a report on the student's progress is produced only by the employer. In an effort to concentrate on improving achievement, intermediate level students have no work experience though whether this will have the desired effect remains to be seen. There is an

extensive enrichment programme of student visits in the United Kingdom and an overseas visit each year. This programme is well supported by visiting guest speakers.

39 Most lessons are held in appropriate classrooms. However, 58% of the GNVQ intermediate lessons are in a hut that is inadequate as a teaching environment. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. Students' practical sports lessons take place in the nearby leisure centre, which is modern and attractive and has extensive facilities.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in leisure and tourism, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	Number of starters	22	30	35
		Retention (%)	86	73	77
		Achievement (%)	79	62	63
Association of British Travel Agents certificate	2	Number of starters	61	58	67
		Retention (%)	95	84	88
		Achievement (%)	96	87	59
Galileo	2	Number of starters	32	82	31
		Retention (%)	84	95	90
		Achievement (%)	81	72	54
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism	3	Number of starters	58	80	48
		Retention (%)	78	83	79
		Achievement (%)	82	60	77

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

Curriculum Areas

Health and Social Care

Grade 2

40 The inspection of health and care included the observations of 14 lessons. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the college's own self-assessment but identified some additional strengths and weaknesses. Action had already been taken to address some identified weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good teaching
- high retention rates on most courses
- high achievement rates in 1999
- well-managed work experience
- effective course and quality assurance management
- well-structured provision for occupational therapy support workers

Weaknesses

- some poor achievement rates in 1998
- inadequate development of key skills in some lessons

41 The college offers a wide range of courses in health and social care and occupational health, childcare and counselling. Courses offered include GNVQ advanced, the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education certificate in childcare and education, and the diploma in nursery nursing, NVQs in care, courses in counselling, dental nursing, first aid, and health and safety and occupational therapy courses to degree level. Attendance can be full time and part time and on evenings, weekends or on flexible shortened days.

42 As identified in the self-assessment report, courses are well organised and effectively managed. The teams use performance indicators and market indicators to plan provision. For example, low recruitment on the

GNVQ intermediate course in health and care led to the introduction of a first diploma/certificate in caring. Enrolments subsequently increased. A detailed internal verification system monitors quality across the care courses. Well-managed examination boards are held for the diploma in therapeutic counselling. The well-established Mid-Downs Partnership organises NVQ levels 2 and 3 in care. Plans to broaden the provision to childcare are being discussed, although the numbers on the college NVQ in childcare are currently very small. Regular meetings of assessors and supervisors in the partnership monitor the quality of NVQ care. Strong links with placement providers are supported by information packs for supervisors and termly meetings with college staff. Teachers respond well to the needs of employers, for example, by developing the certificate for occupational therapy support workers course.

43 Inspectors agreed that teaching and learning is well planned. Lessons include a range of activities appropriate to the level of course. Students are encouraged to develop investigative skills. In one lesson, occupational therapy support students were taught how to develop teaching skills as a method of intervention. Students worked in small groups teaching each other how to carry out simple tasks. Peer group assessment was used to reinforce the learning taking place. The teacher encouraged students to reflect on the relevance of teaching skills to their work role. Most teachers use a variety of methods to check students' understanding and knowledge in lessons. Work experience is used to good effect on all courses, as identified in the self-assessment report. Regular tutorials are used to monitor students' progress, and to amend individual learning plans, as required. The development of key skills is integrated with most assignments. There was no reference to key skills on schemes of work and lesson plans. Opportunities for key skills assessment were missed in the lessons observed.

Curriculum Areas

44 Students' retention rates are often good. Those for the diploma in counselling, NVQ care levels 2 and 3, and the diploma in nursery nursing courses are above national averages. Those for GNVQ advanced are less good and vary from year to year. Achievement rates on all courses have improved in the last year. There was a significant decrease in achievement rates on NVQ level 2 care (direct care), the GNVQ advanced and the certificate in childcare and education in 1998. Achievement rates for 1999 are well above the national average in NVQ care (direct care), Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education certificate in childcare and education, Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education diploma in nursery nursing, and GNVQ advanced. Assignments are set at an appropriate level and are vocationally relevant. Students' written work is of a good standard. As noted in the self-assessment report, a high proportion of students progress to the next level of study, higher education or employment. Students have the opportunity to gain additional certificates, which extend their job opportunities.

45 Accommodation is of a good standard. Courses have well-equipped base rooms. Poor accommodation for childcare courses was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report, but the recent move to the main site has addressed this. Resources available at the West Green annex to support occupational therapy courses include a resource centre. High-quality distance learning packs have been developed for the certificate for occupational therapy support workers. These materials are well designed to enable students to learn on their own. A website has been created for NVQ care candidates. Tutors are well qualified and have a wide range of vocational experience. There has been a recent high turnover of staff in childcare, which has affected the continuity of the learning of some students. There has also been an absence of a work-based assessor for NVQ childcare. This weakness was identified in the

self-assessment report and has now been addressed with the recent appointment of teaching staff and a work-based assessor.

Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
NVQ care (direct care)	2	Number of starters	64	62	29
		Retention (%)	100	89	100
		Achievement (%)	84	24	100*
Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education certificate in childcare and education	2	Number of starters	53	32	40
		Retention (%)	91	100	88
		Achievement (%)	56	37	100*
Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education diploma in nursery nursing	3	Number of starters	33	36	41
		Retention (%)	76	94	97
		Achievement (%)	60	73	95*
GNVQ advanced in health and social care	3	Number of starters	20	20	14
		Retention (%)	60	75	67
		Achievement (%)	75	60	100*
Access to health studies	3	Number of starters	62	64	20
		Retention (%)	95	80	70
		Achievement (%)	56	76	93*

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

*based on incomplete data

Curriculum Areas

Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Grade 2

46 Inspectors observed 12 lessons. They agreed with most of the key strengths identified in the self-assessment report, but identified some additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- a wide range of courses meeting individual students' needs
- good learning opportunities for students through practical activities
- appropriately varied teaching methods in most lessons
- assessment processes linked to the achievement of individual students' goals
- well-planned and effective work experience
- productive partnerships with external agencies

Weaknesses

- lack of appropriate teaching and support for some students
- some inappropriate use of accreditation

47 The college provides full-time and part-time courses for students with disabilities, moderate and severe learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. The range has increased since the last inspection and includes extended education, vocational skills, work preparation for adults, various NVQs at level 1 and a foundation training award. These courses provide appropriate progression opportunities for students. More than 85% of students from the extended education course have progressed to more advanced courses. The needs of individual students are met through the range of options and choices

available to students. The college has forged strong links with schools, careers services, employers and parents. The college contracts with the employment service to provide rehabilitation training for adults with disabilities and long-term illness. There are strong links with the careers service to provide effective careers advice and guidance to students. This includes a residential experience during which the students develop employment skills. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that this is a significant strength. Courses are well managed.

48 In most lessons, teachers provide good practical activities that enable students to learn. For example, students on an extended education course who were learning skills in numeracy, communications, and hygienic food preparation took responsibility for the organisation, planning and delivery of over 30 meals to staff and students. In another lesson, students were encouraged to participate in a variety of drama activities aimed at developing their concentration and confidence. Students were enthusiastically engaged in the tasks, and the teacher encouraged the students' development of complex skills. A few lessons were less successfully organised, for example, teachers allowed insufficient time to reviewing students' learning or spent too much time describing the tasks to be undertaken. The activities provided in a few lessons did not always take account of the needs of students. For example, students were preparing dishes that they would not be able to make in their own homes. The handouts in two lessons were at too high a comprehension level for some students. These weaknesses in teaching were not identified in the self-assessment report.

49 Support for students is good. Teachers and support workers question students about their understanding and encourage students to check their work. They provide a variety of appropriate activities in courses to help students to consolidate their learning. Inspectors

Curriculum Areas

observed a small number of lessons where the help available was not appropriate for individual students' needs. Support assistants sometimes provided too much help for students, thereby inhibiting students from doing more for themselves and developing their abilities more fully. The college has no code of practice for support workers coming from other establishments, and, as a result, practices differ and the needs of some students are not adequately met.

50 Students' attendance and retention rates are good at over 90%. Student records show that there is continuous assessment, the results of which are communicated to students in regular tutorials and students' goals reworked as part of this process. Achievements are recognised by well-attended awards events. Initial assessment takes place throughout the induction to the college and evidence is collected from a range of sources, including the student's home, where appropriate. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that work experience for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a strength. It is well co-ordinated and provides opportunities for further assessment of what a student is learning. Employers have both informal and formal opportunities to provide evidence of students' progress. There is some inappropriate use of accreditation. For example, many students have an induction to the college for which accreditation is sought. Time and resources would be better spent on further developing the existing assessment processes. The self-assessment report does not identify this weakness.

51 Accommodation has recently been upgraded with the building of a new multi-skills workshop to provide opportunities for students to develop practical vocational skills. There is also classroom accommodation in the main building. Some poor accommodation is still in use. In the new accommodation some rooms are too small to accommodate the increased

number of students who are wheelchair users. Staff development has been provided to enhance skills in meeting the changing needs of students.

Basic Education/ESOL

Grade 3

52 Inspectors observed 10 lessons in literacy, numeracy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and key skills at level 1. They agreed with some of the judgements in the self-assessment report but also identified additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- flexible curriculum for adult students in ESOL and adult basic education
- good key skills teaching on the essential skills programme
- effective ESOL teaching
- good tutorial support for part-time ESOL students

Weaknesses

- failure of some teaching to take account of individual learning needs
- inadequate monitoring and recording of the progress of adult basic education students
- unclear curriculum policy for foundation numeracy/mathematics
- infrequent opportunities for relevant staff teams to meet

53 The college offers a range of daytime and evening courses in adult basic education and ESOL. ESOL provision is available at four levels on a flexible basis, including full-time courses. The range of adult basic education and ESOL programmes enables students to fit attendance around work and other responsibilities. Students enrol throughout the year. A revised

Curriculum Areas

full-time, foundation level 'essential skills' programme has been introduced this year. This course includes basic skills and key skills at level 1, and an NVQ level 1 in using IT. ESOL or English as a foreign language (EFL) are included in individual learning plans, where necessary. Many foundation students who are asylum seekers and entered the country less than two years ago with little or no knowledge of the English language have made rapid progress. Induction programmes and tutorials emphasise expectations and requirements as well as entitlements. Curriculum management is adequate.

54 Most of the teaching is satisfactory. In adult basic education lessons students work individually with their tutor or volunteer support. Arrangements for initial and diagnostic assessment are being standardised. Students spend extended periods working on the same task. The wide range of abilities in classes mean that teachers have to provide individual work and teaching. Teachers provide a range of stimulus materials, including newspaper articles relating to students' interests, but some of the materials are inappropriate. Teaching in ESOL lessons is good. Teachers use a variety of appropriate methods to develop students' skills. Effective key skills class teaching on the essential skills programme enables students to improve their basic numeracy and communication skills. Teachers' expectations are high. Students' learning is checked and reinforced frequently through questioning, short tests, and worked examples. Students are attentive and motivated in most lessons. In some lessons, teachers take insufficient account of the outcomes of initial assessment and students' prior achievements. In some poor lessons teachers failed to differentiate the learning tasks and students often had to wait for teacher support. The self-assessment report did not identify any weaknesses in teaching and learning.

55 Adult basic education students value the increase in confidence they achieve as a result of the committed support given to them by tutors. Monitoring and recording of students' learning and achievements are inadequate. Records show a list of activities carried out rather than the learning that has taken place. Students' progress is not reviewed frequently enough. Students are encouraged to work towards accreditation but very few adult students achieve the qualifications offered. Retention rates for ESOL and adult basic skills courses are slightly below the national averages. Inspectors agreed that the use of individual learning programmes and a grading scheme identifying achievements in ESOL is a strength. Full-time and part-time ESOL programmes include tutorials. Tutorial records are comprehensive and well maintained. Students on the essential skills programme are achieving well in most lessons. Their work files record their learning and skill development. Additional support arrangements are not yet fully in place. The policy regarding progression routes and entry criteria for accredited courses in numeracy is unclear. Some students' learning programmes include inappropriate qualification goals.

56 Inspectors agreed that accommodation limits the range of teaching methods which may be used. For example, the size of some rooms is too small for some classes and there is not enough space for the teacher to organise work in groups, when it is appropriate. Appropriate learning resources are gradually being brought together and resource banks are being established. The quality of some worksheets and handouts is poor. Most staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. There is heavy reliance on fractional and part-time staff. This makes it difficult for all the staff involved to meet and inhibits curriculum development and the sharing of good practice. Volunteer tutors are used extensively and appropriate training is provided. Joint planning

Curriculum Areas

prior to lessons and sharing of information about students' learning is not always effective. The self-assessment report identifies that the college has had difficulty in recruiting experienced numeracy or mathematics teachers. Staff training recently provided by an experienced numeracy teacher has had a positive impact on teaching and learning.

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

57 Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report but not always with the weighting accorded to them. They identified additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- well-managed pre-entry guidance and admissions process
- clear guidelines and supporting materials for tutorial programmes
- good support for students with physical and sensory impairments
- effective additional support
- swift and effective response of guidance and support services
- excellent links with external specialist agencies

Weaknesses

- lack of collation and analysis of data to inform planning
- insufficiently early take-up of additional support by some students
- poor quality of tutorial provision on some full-time and part-time courses

58 The customer services unit manages the admissions process effectively and efficiently. Students who are unsure about their future are offered an independent guidance interview. Presentations to year 11 pupils, 'taster' and open days are further sources of helpful information and advice. Most students report that the nature, requirements and expectations of courses are communicated effectively.

59 All students on full-time and substantial part-time courses receive an induction to familiarise them with the college site, facilities and services, and to introduce them to the

content and assessment processes of the course. Induction for students on some part-time courses is less successful in achieving these objectives. Many students report that their apprehensions about coming to college were quickly allayed. Younger students especially value being treated as adults in comparison with previous experiences. The most effective inductions combined orientation to the college with the development of skills relevant to their vocational aspirations. In some courses this period is used to guide students to a course at an appropriate level.

60 Since the last inspection the college has improved its tutorial provision. There is a clearly stated tutorial policy in which the college commits itself to providing a tutorial programme for all full-time students and for part-time students, where appropriate. The college needs to be more precise about its definition of part-time students as this is interpreted differently in different parts of the college. It acknowledges that tutorial support for some part-time students is not adequate. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that the tutorials on some full-time programmes do not meet all aspects of the student entitlement. There are instances where the set period of one hour a week is not taking place. Records of achievement are not always kept properly. However, there were many examples of good, and sometimes excellent, tutorial practice on both full-time and part-time courses. Students uniformly valued the accessibility of their personal tutors and their willingness to listen. Regular reviews of students' progress and action-planning sessions always take place.

61 The needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified prior to entry. Assessment is thorough. Appropriate individual programmes are drawn up and support for learning provided. All full-time students and part-time students, where appropriate, are assessed for their numeracy and literacy skills using the Basic Skills Agency

Cross-college Provision

test. The core training and development programme area and the educational development programme area jointly co-ordinate the provision of additional support. Individual support for students with dyslexia is of a high standard. Small group work for numeracy and literacy is good. Support for programme areas offering additional support as an integral part of the course has produced good results. Students can also attend essential skills workshops and clinics held in the resource centre. Demand for additional support is increasing. Some students do not receive additional support early enough for it to be fully effective, and some on other college sites are not fully aware of the help available. Good support is available to students with physical and sensory impairment. In one lesson, a student with a severe hearing impairment was enabled to be actively involved in learning with the effective support of a specialist worker who worked closely with the teacher.

62 Guidance and support services comprise careers education and guidance, welfare and accommodation, student and schools liaison, and work in the community. They have produced clear guidelines for the tutorial programme and supporting packs of materials for tutorial work. Many tutors find these invaluable. Careers guidance is well managed, and productive links with VT West Sussex Careers Service ensure wide coverage. The accommodation service is well organised and administered, and effective relationships have been established with landlords. Demand has grown with the increase in numbers of overseas students and students who become homeless. Financial and general welfare problems are handled sensitively and efficiently. Many staff and students attest to the swift and effective response of these services to requests for help. Work in the community has been successful in raising awareness of the college among community groups, increasing the proportion of ethnic minorities participating. The counselling service is of good quality, but is stretched

despite the use of trainee counsellors. Each of these central services, including additional support, keeps careful records of individual contacts with students but does not collate and analyse these data to identify their contribution to retention and achievement or to inform future planning. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. All these services have excellent links with external specialist agencies and groups to support their work with students, strengths not noted in the self-assessment report.

General Resources

Grade 2

63 Inspectors agreed with most aspects of the college's self-assessment. They identified some additional strengths and weaknesses. In a number of respects the college has improved its general resources since the last inspection.

Key strengths

- clear and effectively implemented accommodation strategy
- improved quality of general and specialist teaching accommodation since the last inspection
- well-planned and executed buildings maintenance
- comprehensive and logical IT strategy
- up-to-date and accessible IT facilities
- enterprising approach to external funding for the Sussex Virtual College
- much improved access for students with physical disabilities

Weaknesses

- remnant of poor-quality huts
- low use of teaching rooms
- inadequate formal mechanisms for determining library needs and for allocating the budget

Cross-college Provision

64 The college's main site is near the centre of Crawley. There are three other sites, and rented premises in East Grinstead. An 11-storey tower block dominates the main site, linked to surrounding lower level blocks, primarily of concrete and glass construction. Much accommodation has high maintenance costs. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the room improvement programme has significantly improved the quality of classrooms since the last inspection. With the exception of the small number of remaining huts most general classrooms are of good quality.

65 The accommodation strategy is good and is regularly revised to reflect the many changes and improvements to accommodation. Over the last four years, around £2 million has been spent on improvements and new buildings, including in 1999, a new workshop for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, a computer-integrated manufacturing centre and new tower block lifts. Over 15 huts have been removed, and there are clear plans to remove the rest. There is a substantial 'in-house' caretaking and maintenance team which is led by the facilities manager who is a member of the management board. The planned maintenance programme is clear and well managed. Priorities are appropriately addressed, including health and safety.

66 The college seeks to use teaching accommodation efficiently, but overall teaching space utilisation is low. The college recognises this weakness. The practical nature of much teaching accommodation and the number of sites makes improvement difficult. Central computerised timetabling was introduced last year, helping to make more sensible use of classrooms. Monitoring of use is not complete. Access for students and staff with disabilities has significantly improved since the last inspection. Most of the main campus is accessible at ground level and toilet facilities in key areas are adequate. Recently, all tower block floors have become readily accessible with the installation of new lifts. However, the upper floors of some other blocks are not accessible.

67 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college has a sound IT strategy. It is annually updated. Computing hardware and software is centrally managed by a senior manager; a strength not identified in the self-assessment. There is healthy debate in IT steering and user groups. They receive regular progress and audit reports on the implementation of the IT plan. The quality of computers has improved since the last inspection, although overall numbers are similar. Over 400, largely networked, modern computers are available for teaching; a good ratio of computer to full-time students of 1:5. Students have good access to computers. Nearly 40 Internet stations are available. Software continues to improve as the college completes its moves to the latest commercial standard. The college works closely with its partners in the Sussex Virtual College partnership, benefiting from additional investment of around £0.5 million.

68 The main Crawley resources centre provides a full range of library services, in a light and airy environment. The other two centres at Arun House and West Green are much smaller, but serve the specialist needs of students well. There is a common computerised catalogue. All centres have open access IT and the Internet. The satellite learning resource centre serving the needs of service industries students is well regarded. There are good stocks of journals, videos, software titles and multimedia packs. The resource centres manager works closely with curriculum managers, but there are no formal mechanisms to review library and resource needs. Similarly, the allocation of the library budget is unstructured and bidding by teachers is the largest influence on expenditure. These weaknesses are not identified in the self-assessment report.

69 The food court at Crawley offers three styles of service in separate, but linked areas. At peak times there is pressure on seating. A good range of hot and cold food is available, day and evening. At West Green and Arun House

Cross-college Provision

service is much reduced, but meets the particular needs of the centres. There are no dedicated student common rooms. Food service areas are the main student social areas. There are no sports facilities on the college's sites, but arrangements with nearby leisure centres enable students to use facilities at reduced cost and to receive coaching. The college has no nursery. It carried out a very full appraisal in 1995 and 1999 and determined that demand was well met by the large number of local and nearby facilities.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

70 Inspectors agreed with college's assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the quality assurance arrangements. They considered, however, that the number of key strengths quoted was excessive.

Key strengths

- clear and comprehensive reporting structures and procedures
- strategic and operational commitment to continuous improvement
- inclusive, clear and valued staff development procedures
- measurable improvements from quality standards

Weaknesses

- no measurable commitments in the student charter
- under-exploited teaching observation scheme

71 The college has a clear commitment to improving quality in its mission statement. Monthly management reports monitor the critical success factors that support the mission. The importance of quality improvement is widely understood and reflected, for example, in staff attitudes and the improvements made to the IT support service as a result of measurable quality standards being put in place. College catering has improved in response to students' views and the work of a quality improvement group. There has been a marked improvement in students' achievements. Achievement rates for all programme levels have been improved in the last three years. For example, at level 1 achievement rates have improved from 35% to 78%. There has been an improvement in retention rates at level 1 but a decline for level 2 and level 3 courses.

72 The college has a clear and simple structure for monitoring and improving quality. The academic board has the key role for overseeing quality assurance processes. Its quality assurance subcommittee is responsible for effective implementation of quality assurance policy and procedures. The quality assurance committee has an external member with a strong background in quality assurance. The academic board is linked to the corporation through a shared representative. This representative sends regular reports to governors after meetings. The quality improvement arrangements for support services are good. These are based on quality standards and review boards. All arrangements appear in a quality assurance handbook and are understood by staff. Quality systems have been recognised by the granting and the conferment of self-accredited status for the Institute of Personnel and Development graduateship qualification. The University of Sussex has also granted the college institutional recognition for programmes leading to a degree. These awards are only open to centres with well-developed and well-implemented quality assurance systems.

Cross-college Provision

73 Inspectors agreed that staff development is effective. Training needs are identified from appraisal. Staff development records are thorough and readily accessible to staff. New staff are introduced to the quality assurance arrangements at induction. Induction was praised by staff as effective and welcoming. The appraisal scheme covers all staff who teach for more than six hours a week. The scheme is viewed positively by staff. There is also a scheme for the appraisal of managers which involves the confidential consideration of the views of employees. These are matched against those of the managers themselves. The results are used to raise awareness of employee concerns and to develop management skills. The college received the Investors in People award in January 1999.

74 Students report that they are unaware of the charter and its stated commitments to them. These are not in the form of measurable standards. They are not integrated effectively with other quality standards. There is no monitoring of compliance with the student charter. The treatment of complaints is thorough. However, very few formal complaints are recorded. Student representation on college boards and committees is low.

75 Inspectors agreed that the validation system for new courses is rigorous. It has led to a very marked improvement in submission success rates. Course review and analysis is systematic. Students' perceptions of their courses are surveyed systematically throughout the year. The results are analysed carefully and treated seriously. Results for each programme team are recorded on a numerical scale and compared with a college mean average score. This score, which is used as a benchmark, has been adjusted in the last year to challenge programme teams further. Some teams have questioned the adoption of a single college-wide approach to surveys of students' perceptions. The college acknowledges in its self-assessment that the reporting of the results of surveys of

students' perceptions to students is poor. The routine reporting of survey results to support staff is also poor.

76 The analysis of performance and perception data is carried through to programme review and self-assessment. Some programme teams analyse the data thoroughly. Others, in compliance with the letter of procedure, merely accept the data. The internal verification system provides a clear framework for action. The requirements of the procedure meet external verifier demands.

77 There is a clear set of procedures for self-assessment. Some judgements are subject to an internal inspection process. The process has been used since 1994. This inspection includes the observation of teaching and learning. The reporting format follows closely that of the FEFC. Two members of the college staff, who are part-time FEFC inspectors, are part of the inspection team. All teaching and support services are internally inspected over a four-year cycle. Programme managers observe all teaching staff in order to confirm self-assessment grades. These observations are not used to identify the development needs of teachers in order to improve their teaching. Both academic board and the corporation receive internal inspection reports.

Cross-college Provision

Governance

Grade 2

78 Inspectors and auditors agreed with most of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report but judged that some were overstated. Some of the weaknesses had been addressed in the period between the submission of the report and the inspection.

Key strengths

- effective monitoring of financial matters by governors
- efficient conduct of business and good clerking practice
- governors' determination of the college's strategic direction

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped monitoring of the college's academic performance
- few arrangements for governor training after their initial induction

79 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is good. The corporation substantially conducts its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC.

80 Over the course of the past year, the corporation has carefully considered the impact of the modified instrument and articles of government. In the revised structure the governing body comprises six business members, one co-opted, three local authority, two local community, two staff, two student governors and the principal. Under the revised structure there are currently six vacancies. Taking into account the recently updated skills audit of corporation members, the search committee has developed clear procedures for

filling the vacancies. There is a timed action plan to ensure transition to the new structure by July 2000. The committee is also in the process of compiling a register of potential governors. Governors possess a broad range of skills that are used to contribute effectively to the work of the college. Their commitment to the college is demonstrated through a high level of attendance at corporation and committee meetings. The board has well-established arrangements for the induction of new governors. Throughout their first year, new governors benefit from the support of a designated experienced governor. The clerk provides support and advice. There are few formal arrangements for further training to be undertaken by governors other than the annual away day.

81 Corporation meetings are held five times a year on a cycle designed to ensure compliance with external requirements. Committees are used effectively to formulate recommendations to the full corporation and work within clearly defined terms of reference. The audit committee substantially acts in accordance with Council Circular 98/15, *Audit Code of Practice*, including the production of an annual report of its activities to the corporation, but it has yet to develop performance indicators for monitoring the effectiveness of both internal and external auditors.

82 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that clerking is of a consistently high standard. The college secretary acts as clerk to the corporation. Agendas, supporting papers and minutes are produced on a timely basis. Reports include an executive summary, which clearly identifies whether matters are for discussion or decision. Governors value the support provided by the clerk. Corporation minutes are available in the resource centre, although committee minutes and papers are available only on request. The code of conduct has not been updated to reflect current good practice. The register of interests is updated annually.

Cross-college Provision

83 Governors have a clear understanding of their role in determining the strategic direction of the college. They are knowledgeable about the area from which the college draws its students, about the economic and demographic profile of the region and the complex pattern of post-16 provision. Through its policy and planning committee, the board is well informed of key factors that influence the future of the college. The board considers both the medium and the longer term of five to 10 years in its deliberations. Governors attend a planning day to determine the principles and objectives that will inform the drafting of the college's strategic and operational plans. The policy and planning committee receives and comments on progress reports from the principal. The finance and operations committee carefully assesses the financial implications of proposals. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that governors effectively fulfil their role in setting the strategic direction of the college.

84 The board has been slow to establish the necessary procedures to fulfil their key responsibility of ensuring the quality of provision. Governors do not yet have a full appreciation of the college's academic performance and have yet to consider the establishing of a standards committee. The board has recently lost a member with an educational expertise to provide an independent view of the college's academic performance. There is little use of targets and benchmarks. This weakness is recognised in the college's self-assessment report.

85 The board has developed rigorous procedures for the appraisal of the principal and three other senior postholders who constitute the executive board. The annual targets that are set are derived from the college's key objectives and priorities. The chair appraises the principal. The principal assists in the appraisal of other senior postholders. These assessments are formally recorded and provided to the remuneration committee which recommends an appropriate pay settlement to the board.

86 This is the second annual self-assessment undertaken by the board. At their planning day, governors reviewed their progress against the action plan arising from the first self-assessment. A final view was agreed at a subsequent meeting of the full board.

Management

Grade 2

87 Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Some of the weaknesses had been addressed at the time of the inspection.

Key strengths

- participative, open approach to management
- clear organisational structure and widely understood management roles
- effective planning
- comprehensive and timely financial reporting
- delegation to staff of responsibility for financially viable courses
- effective links and partnerships with external organisations

Weaknesses

- little use of financial targets and performance indicators
- unreliability of aspects of management information
- weak promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities

88 The college is well managed. Senior postholders meet on a weekly basis as an executive board. Roles and responsibilities are clear and meetings of the different management groups are held at regular intervals. An open door policy is encouraged and there are frequent informal meetings at all levels. The executive board has promoted an open,

Cross-college Provision

participative approach to management. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. Staff are consulted and provided with opportunities to contribute to the developments of the work of the college. Delegation of responsibility is common practice but the way policies and procedures are implemented and monitored is not fully effective across all areas of the college. Communication within the college has improved since the last inspection. Staff bulletins and briefings by the principal are used to good effect and monthly meetings of programme area managers facilitate communication between sites.

89 Strategic planning is based on a 'top down' and 'bottom up' approach. Strategic aims are established by the corporation working closely with the executive board and are informed by the outcomes of business plan reviews and labour market information. Aims are made explicit in action plans, which underpin the strategic plan, and annual growth targets have been met since incorporation. Although clear threads running from strategic aims to operational objectives are not always discernible, the strategic planning process is effective because of the commitment to continuous review and development. The management board monitors developments and quality improvement on a monthly basis using a similar approach to that used for financial monitoring.

90 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The budgeting process is comprehensive and is linked to the planning process through the development of business plans. Budget holders complete detailed budget packs, with good guidance from the finance team. These are collated and compared with an overall college budget prepared by the management board. Any significant variances between the two are moderated to ensure that the final budget accords with operational and strategic aims.

The college has a good record of achieving the budgets set. Monthly management accounts incorporate most key aspects of current good practice and present data in both graphical and numerical formats for ease of comprehension. They lack specific targets and performance indicators against which the performance of the college in achieving its strategic financial aims could be monitored. Management accounts are produced promptly after the relevant month end and are discussed in full by the management board. Separate reports appropriate to the needs of budget holders are also provided at the same time with variances being followed up by the finance team.

91 The current three-year financial forecast predicts continuing operational stability, with small operating surpluses each year, but no real strengthening of the college's reserves. Staff show initiative in developing financially viable courses, both to maintain the operational stability and to support the college's aim of reducing reliance on FEFC funding. Business plans in support of new areas of activity are provided for management and the corporation. These plans are generally based on prudent assumptions and cover strategic, tactical and operational considerations. The financial forecast also identifies a number of risk factors that could adversely affect the college's financial position. However, no formal contingency plans have been developed to counter such risks should they arise.

92 The college has shown enterprise in developing external links and partnerships, including a central role in the development of the Sussex Virtual College. Constructive working relationships between the college and other education and training providers and employers ensure that opportunities for education and training are maximised and facilitate the development of new business and income.

Cross-college Provision

93 The last inspection identified weaknesses in information on students and quality related matters. A new management information system was installed two years ago but the college has been slow in developing appropriate procedures for data capture and processing. Software updating problems have compounded difficulties. Aspects of the management information available are unreliable and do not support the college's quality improvement strategy. This includes the aspects of the management information system relating to data on students' achievements. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report. Actions have been taken to remedy the situation although the benefits are yet to be realised.

94 Personnel policies and procedures are appropriate. The college is aware of the need for some updating. Equal opportunities are poorly promoted and the requirements of the college policy are not explicitly stated in the college staff manual. As noted in the self-assessment report there is a lack of monitoring of statistical reports relating to equal opportunities. Health and safety policies and procedures are in place. The health, safety and environment committee, chaired by the principal, pays good attention to detail. There is no annual calendar of internal inspections but the principal has conducted a series of inspections to raise the profile of health and safety.

Conclusions

95 The self-assessment report provided a useful starting point for planning the inspection. Inspectors broadly agreed with the judgements in the report, although they considered that some strengths had been overstated and they identified additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with five of the eight curriculum area grades and with all of the cross-college grades in the self-assessment report.

96 Strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection are listed under each section of the report. The main strengths and weaknesses are identified in the summary.

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (June 1999)

Age	%
Under 16	1
16-18 years	15
19-24 years	15
25+ years	67
Not known	2
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (June 1999)

Level of study	%
Level 1 (foundation)	14
Level 2 (intermediate)	23
Level 3 (advanced)	19
Level 4/5 (higher)	5
Non-schedule 2	39
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (June 1999)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	189	497	6
Construction	147	1,542	14
Engineering	209	522	6
Business	146	1,038	10
Hotel and catering	363	218	5
Health and community care	297	607	7
Art and design	162	226	3
Humanities	304	5,352	46
Basic education	70	365	3
Total	1,887	10,367	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 1% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (June 1999)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	158	9	0	167
Supporting direct learning contact	76	4	0	80
Other support	110	8	0	118
Total	344	21	0	365

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£10,906,000	£11,475,000	£11,820,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£17.03	£16.64	£16.28
Payroll as a proportion of income	69%	66%	68%
Achievement of funding target	108%	105%	100%
Diversity of income	32%	34%	35%
Operating surplus	-£260,000	-£32,000	-£3,000

Sources: Income – Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

ALF – Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1997 and 1998), Funding Allocations 1998-99 (1999)

Payroll – Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1997-98 (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

Diversity of income – Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

Operating surplus – Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
1	Number of starters	741	749	609	1,313	1,476	1,702
	Retention (%)	77	83	81	90	88	91
	Achievement (%)	49	51	78	35	36	78
2	Number of starters	1,399	1,790	1,359	1,709	1,894	1,965
	Retention (%)	92	84	83	91	89	86
	Achievement (%)	60	63	86	47	55	87
3	Number of starters	618	984	635	1,191	1,309	1,121
	Retention (%)	94	87	78	92	91	86
	Achievement (%)	53	55	76	52	50	80
4 or 5	Number of starters	26	30	41	519	604	418
	Retention (%)	96	100	100	97	95	91
	Achievement (%)	73	48	82	54	53	80
Short courses	Number of starters	562	739	559	8,183	9,537	7,899
	Retention (%)	90	96	94	98	99	99
	Achievement (%)	44	69	98	51	85	95
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	178	187	319	276	194	584
	Retention (%)	91	87	79	93	84	88
	Achievement (%)	51	65	81	61	78	74

Source: ISR

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