

# **Huddersfield Technical College**

**REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE  
1998-99**

**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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# Contents

Paragraph

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## Summary

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### Context

The college and its mission	1
The inspection	7

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### Curriculum areas

Construction	12
Engineering	17
Business studies, administration and technology	22
Health, social work and childcare	27
Art, design and performing arts	32
Humanities	37
Basic skills and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	42

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### Cross-college provision

Support for students	47
General resources	54
Quality assurance	60
Governance	68
Management	75
Conclusions	81

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### College statistics

## Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1997-98, are shown in the following table.

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

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

## Student Achievements

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

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

# Summary

## Huddersfield Technical College

### *Yorkshire and Humberside Region*

#### Inspected February 1999

Huddersfield Technical College is a general further education college serving the population of Huddersfield, south Kirklees and the surrounding districts. The college operates in a highly competitive environment with four colleges and 17 schools with sixth forms within a 10 mile radius. The college produced a self-assessment report which identified many of the strengths and weaknesses of its provision. The self-assessment process was thorough but the report overestimated the quality of provision in some areas. Statistical data on students' achievements provided by the college contained some errors which were corrected before the inspection.

The college provides a wide range of courses in all 10 of the FEFC's programme areas. Programmes in seven of these areas were inspected, amounting to more than 50% of the FEFC-funded provision in the college, together with aspects of cross-college provision. The college has productive links with employers, schools and the local community. It has been effective in widening participation and has maintained substantial provision in the

community. Rates of achievement and progression are good on some courses. Students receive effective support. The college has an open style of management. Financial management is good and the college benefits from effective governance. The college should address: the quality of teaching and learning on many courses; low rates of retention; students' achievements which are below the national average in many areas; the poor standard of some teaching accommodation; inaccuracies in management information; weaknesses in curriculum management; weak links between strategic and operational planning in many schools; and the insufficient improvement in performance in recent years.

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Cross-college provision</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Construction	3	Support for students	2
Engineering	3	General resources	3
Business studies, administration and technology	3	Quality assurance	3
Health, social work and childcare	2	Governance	2
Art, design and performing arts	3	Management	3
Humanities	3		
Basic skills and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2		

## The College and its Mission

1 Huddersfield Technical College is a general further education college located in the centre of Huddersfield. The college serves the population of south Kirklees and the surrounding districts. It has a large main site and four smaller sites in, or near, Huddersfield. In addition, more than 30 other venues are used for adult and community education. Since the last inspection, the college has increased the range of community provision and has established courses on the main site at weekends. The management structure has been reorganised twice in the last three years. The executive team now comprises the principal, three assistant principals and the director of finance. The college employs 622 full-time equivalent staff of whom 279 are full-time equivalent teachers. The curriculum is provided by nine schools and supported by learner services. The heads of schools and the executive team comprise the senior management team of the college.

2 Huddersfield and its travel-to-work area has a population of more than 220,000. The central areas of the town have many features common to deprived urban areas while some outlying areas are rural and isolated. The local economy is dominated by small to medium size businesses and a particular feature is the continuing manufacturing base in engineering, chemicals and textiles. Employment has grown in the service sector, especially in the public sector. Levels of unemployment in Kirklees are relatively low at 4.8%. The rate of unemployment is higher amongst the ethnic communities. Students from minority ethnic groups, mainly of Asian origin, form 14.5% of the college population compared with 9.2% in the area served by the college.

3 The college operates within a competitive environment. There are two other general further education colleges, two sixth form colleges and 17 schools with sixth forms within a 10 mile radius of the college. The college has

recently signed a collaborative agreement with the sixth form colleges. Achievement rates in Kirklees are below national averages for 16 to 18 year olds. In 1997, the percentage of pupils in Kirklees achieving five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects at grades A to C was 40% compared with the national average of 45%. The college makes a positive response to this by recruiting students who have little previous academic achievement. The college provides a broad range of courses across all of the 10 Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas. The number of young people entering the college is increasing, although 77% of students are aged 19 or over. In 1997-98, the college had almost 11,000 FEFC-funded students. Of the college's total student enrolments, 70% are FEFC funded and 31% are full time. The area also has several private training providers. The college is one of the largest providers of programmes funded by the Calderdale and Kirklees Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) with more than 1,200 trainees. The number of students funded from sources other than the FEFC has grown during the last three years. The college has achieved its target overall for student enrolments in each of the last three years.

4 The college has well-developed and productive links with a range of local partners, including the voluntary sector. It is working with other West Yorkshire colleges on a project to provide an internet facility for small and medium sized employers in the area. The college has carried out research into non-participation by particular community groups and this has resulted in some specific pilot provision. It is a member of the Calderdale and Kirklees Welfare to Work Strategic Partnership and has established New Deal provision. In 1997-98, collaborative provision amounted to about 3% of the college's funded units of activity.

5 The college mission is to 'provide high-quality, with total flexibility, across a comprehensive choice of programmes, to as

# Context

wide a range of the local population as possible'. The college states that its strategic aims are to:

- maximise access to its programmes of study
- provide a supportive environment
- maximise student retention and achievement
- sustain and develop a wide range of markets and collaborative links
- provide direct input into the development of the local economy
- establish a sound financial base
- provide adequate and appropriate accommodation
- pursue an open and appropriate policy of human resource management
- establish a culture of quality improvement and assurance.

6 Two key themes have been recently introduced to guide college policy development. These are: improvement of participation rates amongst key cohorts of the population; and improvement of performance in students' retention and achievement.

## The Inspection

7 The college was inspected during the week beginning 1 February 1999. Inspectors had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. The inspection was carried out by 17 inspectors and one auditor working for a total of 67 days. The college was informed of the sample of its provision to be inspected about two months before the inspection. Meetings were held with governors, managers, other college staff, students, employers, and representatives from the Calderdale and Kirklees Careers Service Partnership.

8 Data about students' retention and achievements for 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97 were analysed using the FEFC's

individualised student record (ISR). Before the inspection, inspectors identified inaccuracies that resulted in the college resubmitting some data for 1995-96 and 1996-97. These were subsequently revised, revalidated and found to be on the whole reliable. The college provided data on students' achievements for 1997-98 which were checked by inspectors against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by awarding bodies. This information was found to be incomplete and partly inaccurate. Inspectors subsequently agreed that the college's data for 1997-98 had been amended and was now, for the most part, reliable.

9 This college was one of 30 in the current cycle of inspections which agreed to participate in the joint Department for Further Education and Employment (DfEE) and FEFC assessment of careers education and guidance. The joint assessment was guided by the inspection framework, with careers education assessors contributing to judgements made by inspectors. The emphasis in this report on careers education and guidance will help colleges and careers services to improve the quality of the careers education and guidance they offer and help the DfEE to disseminate good practice.

10 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. Of the 115 lessons observed, 56% were judged to be good or outstanding and 13%, less than satisfactory or poor. This is not as good as the averages of 65% and 6%, respectively, for all lessons observed during 1997-98.

# Context

## Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level and GCSE	0	5	7	2	0	14
GNVQ	1	4	5	2	0	12
NVQ	0	5	9	0	0	14
Other vocational	6	21	10	8	1	46
Other	6	17	4	2	0	29
Total (No.)	13	52	35	14	1	115
Total (%)	11	45	31	12	1	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98 (%)	19	46	29	6	0	100

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

11 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. The highest recorded attendance was 80% in business subjects and the lowest, 64%, was in humanities.

### Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Huddersfield Technical College	10.3	73
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98	10.4	77

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



# Curriculum Areas

## Construction

### Grade 3

**12 Inspectors observed 13 lessons including general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) and national vocational qualification (NVQ) courses in a range of construction crafts, and technician courses at national and higher national levels. Inspectors agreed with many of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, but concluded that the college had overstated some of its strengths.**

#### Key strengths

- good development of key skills by full-time craft students
- good pass and retention rates on foundation and advanced level craft courses
- wide range of courses with good opportunities for student progression
- establishment of a modern construction crafts centre

#### Weaknesses

- some poor schemes of work and lesson plans
- poor theory teaching
- declining pass and retention rates on many courses
- some poorly-organised and maintained workshops

13 Construction provision is based on two sites. In the year before the inspection, the college relocated most of its construction craft courses to purpose-designed accommodation at Brunel House. At the time of the inspection, some workshop facilities were not fully operational. The wide range of construction courses enables students to obtain professional, technician and craft qualifications by both full-time and part-time study. Students from local secondary schools follow NVQ level 1 craft

courses. The college also provides a successful Saturday school for other school pupils. Inspectors agreed with the strength stated in the self-assessment report that the range of provision is comprehensive. Parents and employers receive regular reports of students' performance and absence. Statistics on student retention and achievement rates are not sufficiently monitored by course teams. Few part-time teachers attend course meetings.

14 Inspectors graded six of the 13 lessons observed as good or outstanding, which is below the average for similar colleges. Teachers display good knowledge of their subjects. Some high-quality commercially-produced learning materials enable craft students to study on their own. In the best lessons, teachers question their students effectively to make sure they understand the work. Lesson plans do not identify materials or teaching methods to be used and some schemes of work are merely lists of topics. Few teachers provide adequate introductions to the topics of lessons or summarise outcomes at the end. In theory lessons, teachers fail to use an appropriate variety of teaching methods. Teachers do not use visual aids to increase students' understanding of topics. Learning materials produced by teachers are often of poor quality. Few of these weaknesses in teaching and learning were identified in the college's self-assessment. Too little action is taken to improve students' performance.

15 Most craft students produce practical work of a satisfactory standard. The school celebrates the achievements of its students at an annual awards ceremony organised with good support from the local industry. Full-time craft students receive tuition in information technology (IT) and develop their key skills effectively. Students are well motivated, particularly those on evening courses. Tutorials are provided on full-time programmes but not for other students. Many craft students progress to supervisory level courses. Pass rates on advanced level craft courses are good. For example, 90% of

# Curriculum Areas

carpentry and joinery students who completed their NVQ level 3 courses in 1998 achieved the qualification. Retention rates for foundation courses have been above the national average in two of the last three years. In 1996, the pass and retention rates of the majority of courses were above the national average. Inspectors agreed that recent pass and retention rates were poor. The self-assessment report failed to identify the overall decline in pass and retention rates in the last three years.

16 Teachers have appropriate technical qualifications, and a number have recent industrial experience. Inefficient deployment of support staff results in workshops being poorly maintained. Workshops for plumbing and electrical installation provide realistic working situations. Other workshops, including painting

and decorating, provided an inadequate learning environment. There is restricted space for brickwork, and no common project area. Poorly laid out workshops make it difficult for teachers to supervise their students. Workshops are often untidy; there are inadequate storage areas for tools, equipment and students' work. The self-assessment report did not place sufficient emphasis on weaknesses in accommodation. Inspectors observed some unsafe working practices. There are few displays of students' work or construction-related materials. The resource centre for construction students has an appropriate range of textbooks and good computing facilities, but the centre at Brunel House has restricted opening times. Technician students have good access to modern construction-related computer software and technical information.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Foundation vocational (craft)	1	Expected completions	7	26	49
		Retention (%)	29	88	92
		Achievement (%)	100	26	91
Foundation vocational (technician)	1	Expected completions	85	80	56
		Retention (%)	69	85	84
		Achievement (%)	95	84	62
Intermediate vocational (craft)	2	Expected completions	100	268	301
		Retention (%)	80	67	51
		Achievement (%)	56	27	35
Advanced vocational (craft)	3	Expected completions	44	58	39
		Retention (%)	86	86	95
		Achievement (%)	79	68	70
Advanced vocational (technician)	3	Expected completions	51	57	42
		Retention (%)	76	74	71
		Achievement (%)	56	74	33
Higher vocational	4	Expected completions	17	27	27
		Retention (%)	88	93	56
		Achievement (%)	53	64	60

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

# Curriculum Areas

## Engineering

### Grade 3

**17 Inspectors observed 22 lessons in mechanical, electrical, electronic and motor vehicle engineering. They agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report but considered that some weaknesses had not been given sufficient weighting and that some strengths were overstated.**

#### Key strengths

- well-established links with employers
- good planning and learning materials on some courses
- students' well-developed practical skills
- high retention and pass rates on craft courses at level 3
- high standards on some courses
- outstanding specialist equipment and learning materials

#### Weaknesses

- weaknesses in course and curriculum management
- some poor teaching
- poor pass rates on craft courses at levels 1 and 2
- poor pass and retention rates on advanced technician courses
- underdeveloped internal verification procedures
- poor teaching accommodation and general resources

18 The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses in engineering providing good opportunities for progression from levels 1 to 4. The courses lead to nationally-recognised qualifications. High sickness levels and the turnover of staff in some curriculum areas have adversely affected the students' experience. Some opportunities to combine

classes as student numbers fall have been missed, and the average class size is below national averages. The school maintains a number of productive links with industry. Course and programme area teams are scheduled to meet regularly. In a few instances, meetings do not take place and, in others, the attendance is poor. Inspectors agreed with the weakness recorded in the self-assessment report that the college's internal verification systems are poorly developed in engineering.

19 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that schemes of work and lesson plans are not used consistently. On some courses, notably the mechanical engineering competences and electrical installation courses, the curriculum is taught by effective teams in a flexible and responsive manner. They are supported in their teaching by well-developed learning materials which are shared by the teams. Students' progress is carefully recorded and considered at individual tutorials. On some courses, learning materials developed by individual teachers are not shared with the team. Although course hours have been reduced, some teachers have not considered how teaching methods should be changed to take this into account. On a few courses, students spend too much time copying notes from the board. The quality of teaching and learning is poor. A lower proportion of good or better lessons was seen by inspectors than is the case nationally, and a relatively higher proportion of lessons had more weaknesses than strengths. In the weaker lessons, teachers made poor use of questioning techniques and insufficient use of teaching aids; the teaching methods used were, at times, inappropriate. In some cases, poor teaching accommodation and specialist facilities adversely affected the teaching. In the most successful lessons teachers gave clear demonstrations and used a variety of appropriate teaching methods. They questioned students effectively and provided good learning materials to help students compile

# Curriculum Areas

clear notes. Students responded well to the demands of both practical and theory lessons.

20 In practical lessons, students work hard and demonstrate well-developed practical skills. Written work is of an appropriate standard. Some teachers give students detailed comments on their written work; others provide insufficient annotation. Attendance in the lessons inspected was below the national average for the sector. A number of classes were already showing substantial withdrawals of students. The self-assessment report recognised weaknesses in the retention of students and the college is attempting to address this. The majority of pass rates are comparable with averages for the sector. A minority of courses have maintained good results over a period of time, including mechanical engineering craft courses at levels 2 and 3 and the electronic servicing course level 2. However, craft courses at level 1 and 2,

particularly in motor vehicle provision, have poor pass rates. A low proportion of the students who start advanced technician courses achieve the target qualification.

21 Teachers are appropriately qualified but a low percentage hold assessor and verifier qualifications. There is a wide range of good-quality equipment to support the teaching, including the equipment to support computer-aided engineering. The space available to engineering has been reduced recently and there is a shortage of large spaces to house some of the machine tools and equipment. Some of the teaching accommodation is poor and projection facilities are not always effective. The new motor vehicle workshops lack appropriate bench facilities and much of the equipment is in temporary storage.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Craft	1	Expected completions	294	238	85
		Retention (%)	79	66	62
		Achievement (%)	71	66	49
Craft	2	Expected completions	273	268	99
		Retention (%)	82	87	81
		Achievement (%)	75	29	59
Craft	3	Expected completions	139	101	103
		Retention (%)	88	91	87
		Achievement (%)	75	66	87
GNVQ and precursors	3	Expected completions	129	162	65
		Retention (%)	83	83	52
		Achievement (%)	79	63	57
Professional and higher education	4	Expected completions	58	55	102
		Retention (%)	88	85	85
		Achievement (%)	52	76	67

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

# Curriculum Areas

## **Business Studies, Administration and Technology**

### **Grade 3**

**22 The inspection covered a wide range of courses in business studies, administration and business technology. Inspectors observed 18 lessons. They agreed with most of the judgements contained in the self-assessment report.**

#### **Key strengths**

- good retention rates on administration and business technology courses
- responsive community-based business technology courses
- good progression to related employment and higher education
- well-equipped business IT workshops

#### **Weaknesses**

- poor retention on general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) course
- poor teaching in some lessons
- poor student punctuality on full-time business courses
- lack of recent commercial experience of teachers

23 The college offers a broad range of courses in this curriculum area including NVQs in administration, GNVQs in business and retail and distribution, GCE A level, secretarial diplomas, office skills and business technology qualifications. Students can join many of the business technology courses at any time of the year and significant numbers attend these courses at community centres. Courses are well organised and are responsive to community needs. There has been a significant reduction in the number of students enrolling on the college's range of text and wordprocessing courses.

There are few enrolments on to level 3 secretarial and administration courses. The range of courses is reviewed and modified annually. Course teams meet regularly. In September 1998, the college successfully introduced the new GNVQ single award business qualification for part-time students. Students on the GNVQ advanced business and retail and distribution courses take additional qualifications, including a GCE A level subject or text processing.

24 The majority of lessons observed were satisfactory. In the best lessons, good teaching was supported by detailed lesson plans and schemes of work which specified the learning objectives, content to be covered and appropriate resources. In these lessons, students were engaged in a range of activities and their interest was stimulated through discussion and the use of relevant case studies. Many of the lessons in administration and business technology were well structured. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that in some lessons teachers failed to vary their teaching methods sufficiently. In these lessons, teachers provided few opportunities for students to contribute or ask questions and there was little checking of students' understanding of the work. Full-time students on most vocational courses undertake work experience. On part-time courses, teachers concentrate on teaching what is required to achieve the qualification but make little reference to work practices. A portfolio room has been established for students on administration courses and this is timetabled for teachers to review and support students' portfolio work.

25 Retention rates are improving on many courses and are mostly near to national averages. They are good on GNVQ intermediate in business, GCSE accounting, NVQ level 2 administration and text and wordprocessing courses. This strength was not identified in the self-assessment report. The GCE A level business studies and accounting courses have

# Curriculum Areas

had low retention rates for the past two years. The college acknowledges that there is poor punctuality and poor attendance on some courses. In several lessons, students arrived up to 20 minutes late and missed important information. Students' assessed work is of an appropriate standard and teachers provide good feedback. Pass rates are at, or near to, the national average on many courses but remain poor for GNVQ intermediate business. There has been a continuous decline in pass rates on this course over the past three years. This weakness was not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. There is good progression for full-time students into related employment or higher education.

26 Teachers have appropriate academic and vocational qualifications. The college recognises as a weakness that teachers have insufficient recent commercial experience. Students have access to up-to-date text and reference books and industrial standard software and computer equipment. On the main site, and in community centres, business IT workshops and the training office are well equipped. They have modern computers and furniture which create a realistic office environment. Commercially-produced workbooks are used to support students' learning in these areas. There are excellent displays in the business IT areas, including those in the community centres. There are some rooms which are stark and lack any business materials.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Text and wordprocessing stage I	1	Expected completions	992	785	510
		Retention (%)	72	63	82
		Achievement (%)	78	74	76
GNVQ intermediate business	2	Expected completions	37	39	48
		Retention (%)	84	77	92
		Achievement (%)	93	80	60
Text and wordprocessing and integrated business technology stage II	2	Expected completions	546	900	711
		Retention (%)	85	89	92
		Achievement (%)	59	77	80
NVQ administration	2	Expected completions	79	52	50
		Retention (%)	79	65	94
		Achievement (%)	64	76	72
GNVQ advanced business	3	Expected completions	73	93	47
		Retention (%)	79	71	77
		Achievement (%)	86	95	69
GCE A level business studies and accounting	3	Expected completions	151	75	65
		Retention (%)	79	65	66
		Achievement (%)	46	57	63

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

# Curriculum Areas

## Health, Social Work and Childcare

### Grade 2

**27 Inspectors observed 11 lessons. They agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the school's self-assessment report. Some weaknesses had begun to be addressed by the time of the inspection.**

#### Key strengths

- good teaching supported by high-quality learning materials
- effective work placements
- good retention and achievement rates on childcare courses
- a wide range of courses providing choice and progression
- extensive links with employers and external agencies

#### Weaknesses

- overlong presentations by teachers in some lessons
- poor retention and achievement rates on some courses
- failure of some students to achieve qualifications within normal timescales
- lack of continuity, due to staff changes, adversely affecting the learning of some students

28 The inspection covered the provision of full-time and part-time courses in health, social work and childcare from foundation to advanced levels. Full-time students have the opportunity to acquire additional qualifications in areas such as first aid and GCSE English language. The college offers a wide range of courses on a flexible basis, which enables students to progress to higher levels or into employment. Staff work well together to support students but

staff absences have caused a lack of continuity which has adversely affected the learning of some students. Good links are maintained with agencies such as the local hospital, Kirklees Social Services and the local consortia for childcare. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that these were strengths. Students on full-time courses have work placements which help them to understand the theoretical concepts of care and give them experience of workplace practice and the college nursery is used by students on childcare courses. Staff teams use national benchmarks to compare their pass rates but do not use them for planning purposes. Internal verification procedures are not effective in some course teams.

29 Lessons are often carefully planned and well structured. In the best lessons, teachers recapped on previous work and at the end of the lesson effectively summarised with their students what had been learned. They used well-chosen examples from their own professional experience or built on the students' own experiences to consolidate students' understanding of theory and practice. They provided demanding tasks which successfully sustained the interest of students. Handouts used were of good quality. In discussion work, whether in groups or as a whole class, teachers encouraged students to contribute what they had learned from their work experience and also introduced equal opportunities issues for discussion. Students responded well and there was often lively debate. A minority of lessons were uninspiring. Teachers tended to talk for too long and failed to check that all their students understood what they were learning. In managing question-and-answer sessions teachers often failed to include all the students in the activity.

30 The self-assessment report highlighted good pass rates on several courses. Inspectors agreed with this judgement. The diploma in nursery nursing has had a consistently high

# Curriculum Areas

pass rate, and students on the GNVQ intermediate health and social care course have achieved pass rates above the national average, over 80%, during the last two years. On other courses, such as that for dental assistants, the pass rates are below the national average. This was acknowledged in the college's self-assessment report. The pass rate on the national certificate in caring services course was below the national average in 1996 and 1997 but has recently improved. Some students, such as those on the national diploma in caring services, fail to complete their qualifications within normal timescales. Retention rates are high on the diploma in nursery nursing, the GNVQ intermediate health and social care and

counselling courses. However, they are lower than the national average on other courses. Students' work is well presented and of an appropriate standard. Some outstanding project work was observed.

31 Teachers have a wide range of professional expertise. They are well qualified and make good use of staff development to improve their skills. Equipment levels in the classrooms are adequate but some overhead projectors and white screens are of poor quality. Facilities to store equipment and students' work are inadequate. Students make effective use of the library for assignment work and can access IT when required.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Preparation for nursing; GNVQ foundation health and social care (full time)	1	Expected completions	28	25	30
		Retention (%)	89	68	77
		Achievement (%)	76	76	88
GNVQ intermediate health and social care; certificate in childcare and education (full time)	2	Expected completions	44	53	41
		Retention (%)	77	79	80
		Achievement (%)	82	90	79
Certificate in caring (part time)	2	Expected completions	*	15	14
		Retention (%)	*	53	71
		Achievement (%)	*	100	70
GNVQ advanced health and social care; national diploma health studies; national diploma caring studies; national diploma in nursery nursing (full time)	3	Expected completions	106	113	131
		Retention (%)	81	81	69
		Achievement (%)	84	85	87
National certificate in social care (part time)	3	Expected completions	31	15	21
		Retention (%)	55	80	62
		Achievement (%)	76	60	92

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

\*course not running



# Curriculum Areas

## Art, Design and Performing Arts

### Grade 3

**32 Inspectors observed 21 lessons in art, design, fashion, media, music and performing arts. They agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. The significance of some of the acknowledged weaknesses had been underestimated by the college and other weaknesses had not been identified.**

#### Key strengths

- well-structured and effectively-planned lessons
- effective individual tuition
- good progression from advanced level courses
- wide range of courses and flexible provision

#### Weaknesses

- poor teaching in some lessons
- insufficient monitoring of students' progress
- deficiencies in course management
- poor teaching accommodation

33 The college provides a wide range of art, design and performing arts courses. These include GNVQ intermediate and advanced, BTEC first and national diplomas, the diploma in foundation studies, GCSE, GCE A level, and an access to further education programme including City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) certificates in creative studies. There are good progression opportunities within the programmes and inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that this was a strength. Several part-time courses are taught at community centres and strategies to widen participation are given a high priority. Some

creative studies courses are specially designed to meet the learning needs of Muslim women. Flexible course combinations in art and design have extended students' choice of optional subjects. Teachers meet regularly but good practice is not sufficiently shared between teaching teams. The management of music and performing arts courses is not fully effective. Course leaders and specialist teachers exercise excessive autonomy leading to insufficient accountability. Across the curriculum area, procedures to monitor teaching and students' achievements are not systematic.

34 Of the lessons observed, 13 were judged to be good or outstanding. This is a lower proportion than the national average for the programme area in 1997-98. Most lessons are well structured and reflect thorough planning, and this strength was identified in the college's self-assessment report. Teachers provide effective individual tuition for students. Students work creatively on their own and in small groups within a friendly learning environment. Teachers use studio sessions effectively to develop students' key skills and use group critiques, self-evaluation and peer evaluation to promote learning. Technical skills are taught well in media, fashion, and design. In music technology and popular music, the teaching is lively and engages the attention of students; some teaching is outstanding. In the less effective lessons across the curriculum area, teachers do not vary their methods appropriately and the work set is undemanding. Teachers fail to maintain students' interest in some long practical sessions. On some courses, teachers give insufficient attention to monitoring the progress of students. On these courses, students are given little help with the organisation of their files and they do not come suitably prepared for the work. Some tasks set by teachers do not take into account the differing abilities of the students.

35 Students on some courses achieve pass rates above the national average. GNVQ

# Curriculum Areas

intermediate art and design pass and retention rates are good. In 1998, students following BTEC national diploma art and design and BTEC national diploma in performing arts courses achieved pass rates of 100% and 94%, respectively. On other courses, for example GCE A level in communications (media) and GCSE art and design, achievement rates are near or slightly below the national average. This weakness was not identified in the college's self-assessment. Pass rates on courses for graded music qualifications are poor, but many students follow these courses as additional subjects. Retention rates on some of these courses are low. The progression of full-time students from most advanced level courses to higher education or related employment is good. Inspectors observed some good practical work. The college fashion show demonstrates work of a high quality and originality. In music and performing arts, some low standards of work and poor attendance are too readily accepted by teachers. The self-assessment report identified that the standard of some students' work is poor, but the action plan does not address this weakness.

36 Teachers are well qualified and many have relevant commercial experience and are practising artists, designers and musicians. Community courses are generally located in appropriate and satisfactory accommodation. Inspectors agreed that the physical resources at two college sites, Highfields and The Manse, are poor. The significance of this weakness was underestimated in the college's self-assessment. The standard of teaching accommodation is unsatisfactory, rooms are poorly maintained and decorated, and some are too small for the number of students in the classes using them. These rooms lack visual displays and provide a bleak learning environment for students. Dampness and a lack of natural light in some areas impact adversely on the students' learning experience.

# Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE	2	Expected completions	41	89	86
		Retention (%)	66	78	87
		Achievement (%)	74	62	73
BTEC intermediate certificate	2	Expected completions	27	29	33
		Retention (%)	56	66	58
		Achievement (%)	93	100	89
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	Expected completions	22	32	26
		Retention (%)	77	78	88
		Achievement (%)	78	88	96
GCE A level	3	Expected completions	52	112	109
		Retention (%)	79	79	85
		Achievement (%)	32	72	67
BTEC national diplomas	3	Expected completions	129	148	130
		Retention (%)	47	72	69
		Achievement (%)	84	79	93
BTEC diploma in foundation studies	3	Expected completions	59	60	63
		Retention (%)	86	88	84
		Achievement (%)	94	81	85

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

# Curriculum Areas

## Humanities

### Grade 3

**37 Inspectors observed 13 lessons in a range of humanities provision, including GCE A level, GCSE, teacher education and access to higher education courses. Provision of English, modern foreign languages and English as a foreign language was not inspected. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment, but identified other weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- most lessons well planned
- good responses from students in lessons
- clear handouts and study guides
- effective responses by teachers to the needs of individual students
- high levels of achievement in teacher education
- good relevant library bookstock

#### Weaknesses

- ineffective teaching in some GCSE and GCE A level lessons
- insufficient written comments on students' marked work
- poor attendance in many lessons
- low achievement rates on GCE A level courses
- poor retention rates on many courses
- ineffective target-setting and action-planning

38 Humanities courses are organised separately in two of the college's schools. Lessons are often timetabled for sessions of two or three hours with no break-time scheduled. This creates difficulties for students who find it hard to concentrate for such long periods of

time. In several lessons, students have been disadvantaged by staff changes during the year. Course teams set targets following annual reviews, but the targets lack precision and action plans fail to identify appropriate action.

39 The college's self-assessment indicated that teaching is well planned. This was confirmed by the quality of schemes of work which contain precise schedules for courses and also often indicate methods of teaching and assessment. Most of the teaching observed was both confident and well organised. In some lessons, teachers failed to manage the work effectively; the pace and purpose were not sustained throughout, and students were given too long to complete some tasks. There were good opportunities for students to contribute in class through small group work and discussion. Teachers generally assess students' work effectively but some provide insufficient advice in written feedback. Teaching is well supported by handouts and study guides which help students to be aware of what is required in the work they are doing and give some precise guidance on specific tasks. This strength was not clearly identified in the self-assessment report. The report did identify some features of the support shown for individual students as a strength, and inspectors agreed. Staff show a good awareness of the needs of individual students and a willingness to respond with extra advice and guidance. This was a particularly strong feature of the teaching on the access to higher education course.

40 In most lessons, students' oral contributions were confident and well expressed. They worked well together in groups and clearly enjoyed working in this way. Students' written work contained many examples of thorough and well-expressed answers. Achievements on the teacher education course have been high from 1996 to 1998, and achievements on access courses have been close to the national average within that period. The self-assessment report clearly

# Curriculum Areas

identified problems of achievement and retention on some courses inspected. The pass rates of students on GCE A level courses are, in spite of some improvement over the last three years, significantly below the national average for colleges of further education. The achievements of students aged 16 to 19 are substantially lower than those of older students on GCE A level courses. Retention rates on GCSE and GCE A level courses have deteriorated significantly from 1996 to 1998, from 78% to 52% on GCSE courses and from 73% to 44% on GCE A level courses. Inspectors agreed that retention is poor on the access to

higher education programme. Students' attendance was better in the access and teacher education courses than in GCSE and GCE A level lessons, where attendance was sometimes low. Poor attendance was not identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

41 Inspectors agreed that the quality of some teaching rooms is poor. Some rooms are small and cause difficulties in adopting a range of appropriate teaching methods. Other rooms have attractive displays and are well furnished. The library bookstock is good for many of the humanities courses.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE	2	Expected completions	214	201	134
		Retention (%)	78	63	52
		Achievement (%)	48	48	56
GCE A level	3	Expected completions	432	213	213
		Retention (%)	73	63	44
		Achievement (%)	31	43	49
Access to higher education	3	Expected completions	197	158	147
		Retention (%)	72	68	78
		Achievement (%)	68	68	60
C&G teaching certificate	4	Expected completions	54	44	63
		Retention (%)	84	75	83
		Achievement (%)	98	91	81

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

# Curriculum Areas

## Basic Skills and Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

### Grade 2

**42 The inspection covered courses in literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) in addition to provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Provision was inspected on the main college site and in the community. Seventeen lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report.**

#### Key strengths

- high standards of teaching of basic skills and ESOL
- good initial assessment, student records and action plans in basic skills
- effective organisation of community-based provision
- good liaison with schools, community groups and external bodies

#### Weaknesses

- some low rates of achievement
- ineffective teaching in many lessons for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- inappropriate curriculum for some students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

43 The basic skills provision in the community is well managed. Co-ordinators train and support part-time teachers and volunteers and they observe lessons regularly. Teachers have regular meetings. Training has been provided to address the areas of weakness identified in the college self-assessment report, including language development. In the community provision, there are good links with other

organisations. For students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, there is good liaison with schools, voluntary organisations and social services. Difficulties with transport result in some students with disabilities arriving late for lessons and others leaving early. Well-planned summer programmes help school-leavers to transfer to college courses. Students attend a range of enrichment activities including options in leisure and sports. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that these were strengths.

44 In basic skills and ESOL programmes there is an effective system of initial assessment. Those students not wishing to have their achievements accredited set themselves an individual learning goal. There are high standards of teaching on basic skills and ESOL courses. Many students, however, work on their own and teachers do not always encourage them sufficiently to take part in group activities and discussion which will help them to develop their confidence. Lessons are well planned. Teachers make good use of IT to enhance learning. Twelve of the 17 lessons observed were good or outstanding. For some students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities the initial assessment is less effective. For many students with complex cognitive impairments, teachers fail to provide learning activities which take account of their needs and ensure that they make regular progress in learning. In the better lessons, students learn through practical activities such as gardening or by developing their communication skills through drama. Students enjoy the lessons and produce work that meets the learning objectives. In the weaker lessons, students were carrying out the same activities over long periods of time. Some students with learning difficulties spend time completing poorly-designed worksheets and using plastic money. The curriculum was often inappropriate for these students' needs. These weaknesses were not identified in the college's self-assessment.

# Curriculum Areas

45 In basic skills, students make good progress and gain new skills and confidence. Schemes of accreditation enable students to progress from one level to another, and to academic and vocational courses. The accreditation framework for students with learning difficulties is less appropriate, and an overemphasis on these external requirements impedes the learning of some students. However, some of these students make significant progress and are helped by well-organised work experience. Links with employers and voluntary agencies have enabled students to develop useful skills. Some students have progressed on to other college vocational programmes at GNVQ foundation level or gained employment. Retention rates are generally near the national average for the programme area, but some rates of achievement are poor. For example, in 1997 and 1998 the pass rates for the Open College of the North West Framework for the Accreditation of Mathematics and English were 18% and 26%, respectively.

Pass rates for level 1 of the C&G certificate in numeracy (numberpower) have been consistently less than 30% during the last three years. These weaknesses were not identified in the college's self-assessment report.

46 Much of the accommodation used for provision in the community is satisfactory, although certain venues have shortcomings as identified in the self-assessment report. A multi-sensory room is available for students who have a range of impairments, including visual disabilities. This strength is stated in the college's self-assessment. There is a good range of appropriate resources to support learning in basic skills, with the exception of IT. Although every group has access to computers, there was little evidence that this resource was being fully used. Basic skills teachers are well qualified for this area of work but most teachers working with students with learning difficulties do not have appropriate specialist qualifications. Support staff have received good training and work effectively with students.

## **A summary of achievement and retention rates in basic skills and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, 1996 to 1998**

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
ASDAN provision for students with learning difficulties	*	Expected completions	263	186	109
		Retention (%)	87	94	92
		Achievement (%)	11	67	11
Open College of the North West Framework for the Accreditation of Mathematics and English	*	Expected completions	+	245	214
		Retention (%)	+	80	74
		Achievement (%)	+	18	26
C&G numeracy (numberpower)	1	Expected completions	90	200	68
		Retention (%)	73	86	83
		Achievement (%)	23	23	27
C&G communication skills (wordpower)	1	Expected completions	127	251	84
		Retention (%)	19	84	85
		Achievement (%)	+	14	47

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

\*courses of mixed levels

+data not available

# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### Grade 2

#### 47 Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses of support for students identified in the college's self-assessment report.

##### Key strengths

- good co-ordination provided by the student services unit
- effective pre-course guidance
- counselling services of a high quality
- good practical support for students
- extensive careers guidance

##### Weaknesses

- inconsistent standards of tutorial support
- insufficient uptake of additional support for literacy and numeracy

48 The student services unit provides a high standard of support for students, including pre-enrolment guidance, careers guidance, counselling, and student welfare. As the self-assessment report indicated, these services are not generally available on the other sites. The college provides prospective students with an imaginative range of activities which allow them to find out about the college and its courses. Accredited link courses during year 11 provide 400 school pupils a year with opportunities to sample work in their chosen vocational area. Other opportunities include open days, summer schools and shadowing of college students. Some activities are designed specifically for adults and are held at centres in the local community. Links with schools are well established and effective. Publicity materials are attractive and informative. Central admissions staff provide valuable co-ordination and support for course tutors who conduct admissions interviews. Admissions staff scrutinise

application forms and organise preliminary interviews for some students. Students receive a well-organised induction programme. They receive a copy of the college charter which states their entitlements and responsibilities. Students who are considered to be at risk of withdrawing from their courses are given additional support.

49 The college offers extensive practical support to enable students to attend college. Childcare provision is good. As well as a nursery and crèche on the main site the college uses 25 local childcare facilities which between them provide over 200 places for the children of college students. Substantial numbers of students experiencing hardship receive subsidies towards meals, travel, childcare, materials and examination fees. The college maintains a list of local accommodation for students, and staff visit the accommodation regularly to ensure that it is suitable. The college's counselling service is of a high standard. Counsellors are well qualified, and their services are valued by staff and students. They have extensive links with external agencies.

50 The college has a policy of assessing all full-time students for their needs for additional support in literacy and numeracy. However, not all courses carry out the assessments, and the college acknowledged in its self-assessment report that the number of students who receive support is lower than the target. The support is provided in the college's key skills centre, or by vocational teachers as part of the students' programme. Increasingly, teachers are gaining specialist qualifications to assist them in this work. Staff in the key skills centre record students' progress after each session and keep course tutors well informed. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support, during their transition to college and whilst on their courses. The college has an appropriate range of specialist equipment to assist students with disabilities.



# Cross-college Provision

51 The tutorial entitlements for full-time and part-time students are clearly specified, and a helpful guide for tutors gives recommendations for their implementation. All full-time programmes include a one-hour weekly tutorial. Students appreciate the regular individual reviews with their tutors. However, many tutors fail to follow the recommendations in the tutors' guide to prepare a scheme of work for the year and to include personal and social aspects such as health awareness. The self-assessment report acknowledged that course teams do not have the same practices for following up students' absences and, on some courses, the parents of students aged under 19 are not kept regularly informed of students' progress. As the self-assessment report acknowledged, tutorial support for part-time students is less well developed than for full-time students.

52 The college encourages students to broaden their experience at college by participating in enrichment activities such as sport and music. It has recently appointed a co-ordinator to organise a programme in which approximately 400 students participate. The co-ordinator works closely with officers of the students' association in identifying suitable activities and publicising them. The students' association receives good support and encouragement from college staff. The corporation's student liaison committee, which includes representation from the students' association, enables staff and governors to keep informed of students' views.

53 Careers advisers from the Calderdale and Kirklees Careers Service Partnership play a valuable role in providing careers guidance to groups and individuals. In 1997-98, they conducted 267 group sessions and 1,742 individual interviews. The careers resources are of a high standard and are easily accessible in the student services area. Students also receive careers education in tutorials and as an integral part of many vocational courses. Students' entitlement to careers education and guidance is widely publicised. However, there is no coherent programme which specifies the

respective roles of careers advisers and course tutors. The lack of college-wide co-ordination makes it difficult for the college to monitor careers provision at course level, and to promote good practice. The college has carried out an audit of this provision and is taking action to make improvements.

## General Resources

### Grade 3

**54 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements contained in the self-assessment report, particularly with regard to accommodation, but concluded that the significance of the weaknesses had been underestimated.**

#### Key strengths

- attractive, well-equipped and spacious library and learning centre provision
- refurbished areas providing some good teaching and general accommodation
- good facilities for IT

#### Weaknesses

- some buildings in poor structural condition
- incomplete implementation of the accommodation strategy
- a significant amount of accommodation poorly suited for teaching and learning

55 Since the last inspection, and in accordance with its accommodation strategy, the college has reduced to five the number of sites on which it has substantial provision and significantly increased the number of teaching venues in the community. The main, New North Road site, which contains 70% of the provision, is close to the town centre and bus and railway stations. It is a mix of some relatively modern buildings and an older building which was previously a

# Cross-college Provision

Victorian hospital and parts of which are Grade II listed. This older building with its narrow corridors and complex arrangement of stairways is poorly suited to its present use for teaching. Room numbering and directional signs around the college have been improved recently. However, the weakness noted in the last report with regard to poor signposting of curriculum areas and college services remains.

56 The implementation of the strategy to concentrate more provision on the main site has not yet been fully achieved. In part, this has been caused by the cancellation of plans involving several partners, including the college, to create a new centre for engineering. Several curriculum areas have been adversely affected, for example by inadequate storage space and rooms which are too small for their current use. Plans to dispose of Highfields have had to be cancelled. One of the four major sites, Brunel House, which is 2 miles from the main site, is a new building which has been adapted to provide construction and motor vehicle courses. The unexpected closure of a private training provider resulted in a significant increase in motor vehicle engineering students shortly after the site was opened. This has caused problems of overcrowding. An adjacent building has been leased to alleviate the problem. Inspectors did not agree with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the Brunel site provides an appropriate and effective environment for learning. Two of the other sites, Highfields and the management centre, are older buildings which were not originally designed for their current use and are in a poor state of repair. Highfields, for example, suffers from leaking roofs and poor-quality paintwork. The fourth site, of appropriate quality, provides for animal care and horticulture provision. Weaknesses in the suitability of the accommodation for learning were underestimated in the self-assessment report.

57 The library, learning centre and key skills centre have been recently merged and provide

an excellent learning environment. They are attractive, well maintained, spacious and well equipped. The library has sufficient study spaces, a silent study area, tutorial rooms, a media resource room, and some computers. The library stock is adequate and there is a wide range of journals, CD-ROMs, and videos. The learning centre has 60 networked computers which provide good access to the internet. There are also video-conferencing rooms and bookable IT suites. The centres are well managed and provide a good service to students and staff. Inspectors agreed that these resources are a strength. The ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students is 1:7.5. Industrial standard software is available. Many of the computers are networked including some at the other sites. Staff have good access to computers. Technician support in this area is good.

58 Many rooms have been redecorated since the last inspection. Some rooms, such as those in business technology and parts of humanities provide a stimulating learning environment. Others, for example, parts of engineering and business, are drab and have little wall display, inadequate storage for equipment, and poor overhead projection facilities. Provision in the community makes use of leasing arrangements in a range of buildings owned by others. Much teaching takes place in old schools and community buildings which provide teaching close to the community in line with the strategic plan. Many of these buildings offer an appropriate learning environment.

59 Most of the main site is accessible to students with physical disability. Some staff rooms are good while others are barely satisfactory. The self-assessment report identified the lack of social areas for students. The student common room is temporarily sited in the basement area and is of poor quality. The common room is only accessible to students when supervised by a member of the students' association. Some curriculum areas provide

# Cross-college Provision

their own general areas for students' use. Some toilets are of poor quality. There are several, good-quality eating places on the main site, catering for a range of tastes. Student services accommodation is located close to the main entrance to the college and is of good quality. The self-assessment report acknowledged the lack of sports facilities on-site. However, the college makes good use of nearby provision.

## Quality Assurance

### Grade 3

**60 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. The college had made progress in overcoming some weaknesses but inspectors identified additional weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- well-established and regularly-updated quality assurance framework
- comprehensive college auditing and inspection of provision
- extensive staff involvement in the self-assessment process
- thorough analysis of students' and employers' perceptions

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient improvement in the quality of provision
- lack of rigour of some performance reviews
- no summary evaluation of performance against charter commitments
- poor analysis of performance trends in some areas

61 The college's aim to provide high-quality education and training is clearly expressed in its mission statement, charter and quality assurance policy. The quality assurance

framework is continually reviewed and developed to meet changing needs. A wide range of procedures and guidelines enable the collection and analysis of performance data in curriculum and support service areas of the college. Some elements of the framework have been introduced recently and are not yet fully effective in encouraging rigorous and consistent analysis of performance trends. College performance, when compared with a range of national benchmarks, shows that incremental improvement has not been achieved during recent years. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that there is little awareness within the corporation of the quality assurance arrangements in the college.

62 Staff in the quality and curriculum unit oversee the college's quality assurance process. They regularly update and improve procedures. Staff value the support they receive from the unit and their prompt response to suggestions. The unit undertakes a large number of audits to assess whether course teams and support service areas adhere to appropriate procedures. The unit effectively manages the college's internal inspection programme which was introduced in 1997. This programme links well with the auditing process. Internal inspection recently incorporated lesson observations and the grading of lessons in some areas.

63 Heads of schools and cross-college service areas are responsible for assuring the quality of provision in their areas. They review team performance regularly and develop action plans. Monitoring, review and evaluation records are extensively, though not rigorously, used to guide team meetings and formal reviews. However, the self-assessment report identified as weaknesses that some teams do not hold review meetings at appropriate times, that the content of meetings is not well managed and that their evaluation of provision is ineffective, and inspectors agreed with this. The rigour of the review process is undermined by complex lines

# Cross-college Provision

of communication, the involvement of too many groups in the process and administrative difficulties.

64 The opinions of students, employers and the community are sought about the quality of college provision, and this strength was identified in the self-assessment report. Students respond well in completing detailed evaluative questionnaires but responses from employers and local people are less productive. The college publishes the results and these show that students and employers are supportive of the college. Areas of concern result in action to improve provision.

65 The course approvals group, working to clear criteria, assess and validate proposals from teams to start new full-time and substantial part-time courses. Most internal and external verifier reviews of the quality of provision are well considered. However, some teams, for example, in engineering, are not undertaking effective internal verification. 'Focus' groups consider how the college might improve specific areas of performance. Their deliberations are acted upon by the quality unit, in association with relevant school and cross-college managers. Collaborative provision, which is less than 3% of college's work, is well integrated with the college's quality assurance framework.

66 The college's self-assessment report is extensive and concise. It is supported by clear evidence, although inspectors' interpretation of the evidence differed from that of the college in several instances. The report results from the wide-ranging self-assessment exercise launched in August 1997. Governors, managers and all staff participated in its development. The procedures used to produce the report are now integrated with the college's main quality assurance system. The college's process for observing lessons did not effectively inform its self-assessment. Some cross-college and programme area self-assessments over-rated the

quality of provision, whilst one programme area under-rated its provision. Some action plans did not fully consider how improvement would be ensured.

67 The college gained Investor in People status in July 1997. All staff are encouraged to develop their skills and improve personal effectiveness in line with the college's strategic priorities, their own needs and those of the teams. Staff development activities are fully evaluated and disseminated. The college rightly identified as a strength in its self-assessment report that there is a significant training programme in management and IT. The staff development budget, at 1% of the payroll, is supplemented by a substantial number of development days held in college. Two appraisal systems operate in the college, one for teachers and the other for support staff. The process for teachers does not always involve line managers and is not always effective. For example, the college's observation of lessons does not inform individual appraisals. The process for support staff is voluntary. The college intends to develop a uniform system of appraisal for all staff.

## Governance

### Grade 2

**68 Inspectors and auditors agreed with the college's own assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of governance.**

#### Key strengths

- wide range of skills and experience
- active involvement of governors in setting the mission of the college and in strategic planning
- close monitoring of the college's financial performance
- effective audit and finance committees

# Cross-college Provision

## Weaknesses

- underdeveloped arrangements for the appraisal of the principal, chair of the corporation and clerk
- slow progress in developing links with the curriculum areas
- insufficient monitoring of the college's academic performance

69 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.

70 The corporation has a determined membership of 18 and, following a resignation immediately before the inspection, it has two vacancies. One of the vacancies for a business member is long term because of the corporation's intention to reduce business membership following its consideration of the DfEE's consultation paper, *Accountability in Further Education*. The membership has a range of appropriate expertise but, as identified in the self-assessment report, it does not include a member with professional experience in finance. There are four women members and two staff members but no student member. Induction for governors includes a handbook, pairing with staff and a training course. Inspectors did not agree that the induction of new governors is a weakness. Governor training includes attendance at formal courses and regular governors' briefing sessions before corporation meetings. The corporation publicly advertises for vacancies and has a written appointments process. Governors submit an annual statement of eligibility.

71 The corporation meets six times a year; in addition, there are special meetings to review strategic planning and the self-assessment process. The corporation has undertaken a

critical review of its performance by canvassing the individual views of corporation members. Attendance is reported annually to the corporation. Targets are not set for attendance but overall the level of attendance is good. The corporation has the following committees: finance; audit; remuneration; search; employment policy; student liaison; and planning and review. The corporation has established a number of working groups including: college safety; equal opportunities; governance working party; inspection task group; and buildings working party. The finance committee meets every month and closely monitors the college management accounts. The audit committee which includes an external, co-opted member with relevant expertise, fully complies with its terms of reference, including effective monitoring of audit reports, and it has produced an appropriate annual report to the corporation. The search committee meets as required in order to fill vacancies. The corporation ensures that committee terms of reference are reviewed each year. Corporation and committee minutes and papers clearly illustrate the business undertaken and the decision-making process; action plans are prepared to monitor the implementation of decisions.

72 The corporation aims to conduct its business openly and holds an annual general meeting. It has a public interest disclosure procedure and a complaints procedure. Confidential minuting of corporation and committee business is governed by a policy which has not been reviewed recently. Much of the work of the finance committee is deemed to be confidential. Corporation and committee minutes and papers are openly advertised as available for inspection in the college's library and are printed in the college newsletter. All governors and appropriate members of the college's senior management team have completed a comprehensive and publicly available register of interests. The corporation has a code of conduct and standing orders.

# Cross-college Provision

73 Governors play an important role in shaping the future direction of the college. They regularly review its mission statement and general aims. As stated in the college's self-assessment report, much of the governors' time has been focused on securing the financial well-being of the college. Inspectors and auditors agreed that this was a strength. Governors acknowledge that they need to review the time they have allocated to consider the curriculum. Individual governors have recently been linked with specific schools but this arrangement is at an early stage of development. However, governors are frequent visitors to the college and are actively involved in committees and working groups such as the student liaison group.

74 Arrangements for the appraisal of the principal, chair of the corporation and clerk have only recently been introduced. Governors receive summary reports to help them review the performance of the college against key indicators such as recruitment and retention. The way in which this information is presented does not always facilitate the monitoring process. This weakness was acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

## Management

### Grade 3

**75 Inspectors broadly agreed with the judgements in the college's self-assessment report. However, they considered that some strengths were overstated and identified a number of additional weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- an open and collaborative style of management
- good financial management
- substantial links with the local community

#### Weaknesses

- inadequate management control of, and within, schools
- weak links between strategic and operational planning
- some inaccuracies in management information data

76 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good, although this is not specifically identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. The college is currently financially sound. It has achieved historical cost surpluses in 1996-97 and 1997-98, and is budgeting for a surplus in 1998-99. The current three-year financial forecasts which were prepared on a prudent basis, highlight a deteriorating financial position from 1999-2000. The average level of funding has been reduced from £19.13 per unit in 1995-96 to £17.54 per unit in 1997-98. The college has an appropriately-qualified and experienced finance team. The college's large cash reserves are effectively invested and have generated significant investment income. The college has clearly-defined financial objectives. The comprehensive financial regulations were recently updated. Budget holders receive timely monthly reports on actual and committed expenditure. Detailed management accounts, with appropriate commentary, are prepared monthly for review by the finance committee and the senior management team. Before the inspection, the college's ISR returns were found to have some inaccuracies which may result in funds being repaid to the FEFC. Revised data have been submitted to the FEFC and the repayment has been fully provided for in the 1997-98 financial statements. Financial returns are submitted to the FEFC in accordance with specified deadlines.

77 Major changes have been made to the management structure of the college and the

# Cross-college Provision

current structure has only been in place since September 1998. Weekly news bulletins together with opportunities to meet the principal, formally and informally, have proved to be effective means of communication and have helped to allay the concerns of staff over the restructuring. Within the current structure, the executive team has defined functional responsibilities and line management responsibilities for the support units. This team meets informally each week. The executive team, the heads of school and the head of learner services constitute the senior management team which is the major decision-making body in the college. The heads of the support units are part of the wider college management team which meets twice each term to discuss strategic and cross-college issues. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of the new management structure. Useful external training is being provided to develop the skills of the middle managers, and training has also been provided by staff within the college for members of the senior management team.

78 Arrangements for the line management of heads of schools are not fully effective. The assistant principals have specific responsibilities for curriculum, resources, business development and finance and information, and they all have line management responsibilities for all the heads of school. This arrangement has resulted in some information not always being relayed to the executive team. The outcomes of curriculum area inspections show that there are a number of weaknesses in the management of schools that have not been addressed by senior managers. These include: some health and safety issues; inappropriate rescheduling and relocation of courses; ineffective deployment of support staff; excessive teacher turnover on many courses; poor quality assurance at course level in some cases; and some gaps in accountability.

79 The college's strategic plan sets clear targets for specific objectives such as widening

participation, establishing flexible learning routes, increasing retention rates and improving students' achievements. It provides a clear framework for the future development of the college. In many of the schools, the link between operational plans and the college strategic plan is weak. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that the monitoring of operational plans has been inadequate. The link between the operational plans of the cross-college support units and the strategic plan is generally strong. The management information system provides managers with comprehensive and detailed information to support planning and monitoring. However, inaccuracies were found in the initial data presented to inspectors on retention rates and students' achievements. Some staff do not make good use of the data that are available.

80 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the college has developed productive links with local employers, community groups, schools and other external organisations. Representatives of external organisations speak positively about the willingness of staff from across the college to listen carefully to their views and to plan provision to meet their needs. These links are helping the college to achieve its mission.

## Conclusions

81 The college's self-assessment was comprehensive. It was supported by clear evidence although inspectors' interpretation of the evidence differed from that of the college in several instances. The report was self-critical and reflected a thorough process that involved managers and staff at all levels in the college. Some action plans did not fully consider how improvement would be ensured. Inspectors agreed with many of the college's judgements about its strengths and weaknesses. However, they identified some weaknesses which the college had not noted with regard to the overall

# Cross-college Provision

standards of teaching, students' achievements and the effectiveness of some procedures to ensure quality improvement. They also formed different judgements from those of the college about the quality of provision in the majority of areas inspected. Three curriculum grades awarded by inspectors were lower than those awarded by the college and one was higher; three of the grades awarded by inspectors for cross-college areas were lower than those in the college's self-assessment.

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



# College Statistics

## Student numbers by age (July 1998)

Age	%
Under 16	5
16-18 years	18
19-24 years	13
25+ years	64
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Level of study	%
Foundation	24
Intermediate	37
Advanced	15
Higher education	4
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	20
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	363	1,512	17
Agriculture	145	75	2
Construction	133	239	3
Engineering	366	613	9
Business	377	1,077	13
Hotel and catering	252	151	4
Health and community care	411	456	8
Art and design	566	351	8
Humanities	472	2,467	27
Basic education	278	689	9
Total	3,363	7,630	100

Source: college data

## Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 22% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

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

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	178	89	12	279
Supporting direct learning contact	54	10	0	64
Other support	254	23	2	279
Total	486	122	14	622

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

# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

	1996	1997	1998
Income	£19,075,000	£19,341,000	£18,917,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998	£19.13	£18.73	£17.54
Payroll as a proportion of income	75%	71%	69%
Achievement of funding target	103%	104%	100%
Diversity of income	28%	28%	29%
Operating surplus	-£987,000	£3,000	-£641,000

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1995	1996	1997	1995	1996	1997
1	Expected completions	608	1,038	970	885	1,492	2,737
	Retention (%)	76	84	77	78	75	75
	Achievement (%)	66	63	63	58	58	59
2	Expected completions	1,521	1,737	2,215	1,911	1,926	2,211
	Retention (%)	79	80	75	76	77	76
	Achievement (%)	61	54	51	63	62	64
3	Expected completions	–	1,425	1,333	–	1,862	1,451
	Retention (%)	–	82	75	–	79	72
	Achievement (%)	74	66	74	65	59	60
4 or 5	Expected completions	–	3	9	–	466	459
	Retention (%)	–	100	100	–	88	86
	Achievement (%)	33	33	56	77	75	79
Short courses	Expected completions	4,831	901	1,147	4,749	5,860	7,085
	Retention (%)	94	89	94	94	92	92
	Achievement (%)	30	82	78	59	80	75
Unknown/unclassified	Expected completions	1,603	2,689	1,875	3,188	3,961	2,120
	Retention (%)	79	87	92	81	81	78
	Achievement (%)	38	56	31	45	56	45

Source: ISR

–ISR data not collected

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