

# **Hugh Baird College**

**REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE  
1998-99**

**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

*Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry CV1 2WT  
Telephone 01203 863000  
Fax 01203 863100  
Website <http://www.fefc.ac.uk>*

*© FEFC 1999 You may photocopy this report and use extracts in promotional or other material provided quotes are accurate, and the findings are not misrepresented.*

# Contents

Paragraph

---

## Summary

---

### Context

The college and its mission	1
The inspection	6

---

### Curriculum areas

Computing, information technology and mathematics	10
Construction	15
Engineering	22
Catering	27
Hairdressing, beauty and sports therapy	36
Geography, history and politics	41

---

### Cross-college provision

Support for students	46
General resources	55
Quality assurance	61
Governance	68
Management	78
Conclusions	85

---

### 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

## Hugh Baird College

### North West Region

#### Inspected January 1999

Hugh Baird College is in Bootle, a town in the south of the metropolitan borough of Sefton, near Liverpool. The self-assessment the college produced for inspection was its second such report. The report was detailed, identifying strengths and weaknesses with associated evidence and actions to build on strengths and address weaknesses. Some of the actions had been implemented by the time of the inspection. Inspectors agreed with almost all of the findings in the report, but also identified additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with all but two of the curriculum grades awarded by the college; these were raised by inspectors who concluded that progress had been made since the writing of the self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with all the grades for cross-college provision with the exception of one aspect which they felt was too generously graded by the college.

Hugh Baird College offers provision in all 10 FEFC programme areas and provides courses for full-time students and for part-time day and evening students from entry level to level 5. The college actively seeks to widen participation and to implement the principles of inclusive learning. It uses its links with its community to encourage participation in education and training. The college has made considerable progress since

the last inspection. Retention and achievement rates have improved over the last three years. There has been substantial upgrading of accommodation, including an attractive new building. The college is well managed. The management style encourages staff participation in decision-making as well as promoting accountability and responsibility. There is much good teaching and learning; almost three-quarters of the lessons observed by inspectors were judged to be good or outstanding. A notable feature of vocational courses has been the successful development of students' key skills through their studies. Students receive good practical support and careers education and guidance. Learning support is effective and has enabled students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to participate in a wider range of courses than is often the case. Governors are strongly committed to the success of the college and carefully monitor its progress. The well-established quality assurance procedures are understood and supported by staff. In order to continue to make progress the college should: address the poor attendance, punctuality, retention and achievements of students on some courses; improve study facilities for students; require all tutors to meet its standards for tutorials; and ensure that all operational plans are linked to its strategic objectives.

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>
Computing, information technology and mathematics	3	Support for students	2
Construction	2	General resources	2
Engineering	2	Quality assurance	2
Catering	1	Governance	2
Hairdressing, beauty and sports therapy	1	Management	2
Geography, history and politics	2		

# Context

## The College and its Mission

1 Hugh Baird College is in Bootle, a town in the south of the metropolitan borough of Sefton, near Liverpool. The college has four main sites: the Balliol centre; the Pembroke centre; the Oriel centre; and the Kings centre. These centres are within easy walking distance of each other. In addition, it leases a performing arts and media centre and a business centre, and offers courses at many venues in the community, including primary schools and residential centres for adults with learning difficulties.

2 The college attracts students from Sefton, north Liverpool, and south Lancashire. Since 1993 it has increased its numbers by over 24%. More than two-thirds of the college's students live in areas of high deprivation. Within a radius of 20 miles of the college, five general further education colleges, three sixth form colleges and over 30 schools also provide post-16 education. Employment in Bootle is predominantly in the service industries and the public sector. Small private businesses, employing mainly local people, provide just over a third of all service jobs. The unemployment rate for Sefton as a whole is falling. It averaged 7.3% in February 1998, compared with a rate of 6.4% in the north west and a national rate of 5.9%. The unemployment rate for Bootle is 12.4%. The FEFC has identified the college as one of a group which typically recruits a high percentage of students from disadvantaged areas.

3 The college offers provision in all 10 Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas, and provides courses for full-time students and for part-time day and evening students from entry level to level 5. It is a centre of excellence for floristry. Courses include pre-vocational, general certificate of secondary education (GCSE), general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level), adult basic education, access to higher education courses, and a wide range of vocational provision and customised training for

businesses. The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) secondary school performance tables for 1997-98 show that the number of pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades at C or above ranged between 18% and 26% in the college's four closest schools in Bootle and Litherland compared with a figure of 44.4% for all pupils in Sefton secondary schools.

4 The college's current management structure was established in 1997 and revised in 1998. The senior management team consists of the principal, deputy principal, three faculty heads, the financial controller and the head of corporate services. The curriculum is managed through 11 heads of school.

5 The college's mission is 'to provide high-quality education, training, counselling and pastoral care in an efficient, caring environment, encouraging all students to achieve their potential and enhance their quality of life. It will both anticipate and respond to the requirements of the community, employers and other agencies and it will react swiftly to changing needs and challenges'. The college's corporate aims stress the commitment of governors and staff to widening participation and to the principles of inclusive learning.

## The Inspection

6 The college was inspected in January 1999. Inspectors had previously examined the college's self-assessment report. The college submitted data on students' achievements for 1998. These data were checked by inspectors against primary sources such as class registers and awarding body pass lists and found to be reliable. Data for 1996 and 1997 were taken from the FEFC's individualised student record (ISR). The inspection was carried out by 10 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 46 days. Inspectors observed 89 lessons and examined students' work and college documents. Meetings were held with students, governors, managers and staff.

# Context

7 The college was one of 30 in the current cycle of inspections which agreed to participate in the joint 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.

8 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. Of the lessons inspected, 72% were rated good or outstanding and 7% were less than satisfactory or poor. These figures are better than the average figures for colleges in the sector inspected during 1997-98.

## Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	3	7	2	0	0	12
GCSE	1	0	4	0	0	5
GNVQ	1	4	4	1	0	10
Higher education and access to higher education	1	3	0	0	0	4
NVQ	12	24	3	1	0	40
Other*	5	3	6	3	1	18
Total (No.)	23	41	19	5	1	89
Total (%)	26	46	21	6	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*

\*includes other vocational and nine tutorials

# Context

9 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. The college's figure for the average number of students attending lessons includes data on tutorial sessions, some of which were individual interviews.

## Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Hugh Baird College	9.9	76
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

## Computing, Information Technology and Mathematics

### Grade 3

**10 The inspection covered courses leading to vocational qualifications in computing and information technology (IT) at levels 1 to 3, GCE A level computing, IT and mathematics, intermediate level in mathematics, and aspects of the college's access to higher education provision. Nineteen lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed with most judgements included in the self-assessment report, but they identified some additional weaknesses and a few strengths which were understated.**

#### Key strengths

- a broad range of courses meeting the needs of students and employers
- good individual support for students in computing and IT lessons
- the logical development of mathematical arguments in GCE A level lessons
- above average achievement and retention rates in foundation and intermediate IT courses
- high-quality learning resources

#### Weaknesses

- some ineffective teaching
- declining retention rates in GCSE mathematics
- poor GCE A level results in mathematics
- fluctuating retention and achievement rates on some computing and IT courses

11 The careful development of the provision in computing, IT and mathematics is a strength which is included, but understated, in the self-assessment report. In all areas, the range and

levels of courses and their modular structure cater effectively for students with a wide range of learning needs. Since the last inspection, the portfolio of vocational courses has expanded considerably to take account of the needs of industry and other clients. For example, introductory courses in programming, national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in IT and a higher national certificate in computing were introduced recently. A particular strength of the provision in mathematics is the range of courses at intermediate level to cater for students for whom a GCSE course is not immediately appropriate. As indicated in the self-assessment report, there are detailed schemes of work for mathematics courses but they do not pay enough attention to the continuous development of students' mathematical and numerical skills.

12 Teachers are well prepared for lessons and are confident about the content and structure of courses. In the better lessons, teachers provide a well-judged mix of activities which sustains students' interest, allows them to practise new techniques and tests their understanding of new concepts. A particular strength of GCE A level mathematics lessons is the emphasis teachers place on developing solutions to problems step by step. They try to ensure that students fully understand each stage of the argument. In computing and IT, students often work on particular tasks by themselves during which they receive good support from teachers who monitor their progress carefully. In some less-effective lessons, teachers failed to make productive use of students' time, did not link the different activities effectively, and did not question students enough to check that they were understanding the work. In some lessons at intermediate level in mathematics, teachers did not take enough account of the differing needs of students. These specific weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report, although it did acknowledge that approaches to teaching and learning in mathematics lacked an appropriate variety.

# Curriculum Areas

13 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgements relating to students' achievement and retention rates. In computing and IT, notable strengths include: the proportions of students achieving intermediate general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) over the last three years; consistently high pass rates for students taking introductory computing and IT courses; and a pass rate in 1998 in excess of 80% for the first cohort of students aiming for a higher national certificate in computing. Pass rates for the two-year GCE A level mathematics course are poor and have not risen above 43% in the last three years. Achievement rates at grade C or above in GCSE mathematics were below 25% in two of the last three years but, in 1998, came closer to the national average for students of all ages in general further education and tertiary colleges. Retention rates for GCE

A level mathematics and some computing and IT courses fluctuate from year to year. For example, in mathematics, they fell to 39% in 1998 although previous years' figures were above 70%. Over the last three years, retention on GCSE mathematics courses has fallen by 25%. Notably high or improving retention rates occur in introductory computing and IT courses and in the GNVQ intermediate course in IT.

14 Teachers are appropriately qualified for the courses which they teach. Many working in computing and IT have recent industrial and commercial experience. There is a wide selection of paper-based materials for students taking mathematics, computing and IT courses. Specialist computing facilities are well equipped with modern workstations and up-to-date software.

## **A summary of achievement and retention rates in computing, information technology and mathematics, 1996 to 1998**

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
RSA computer literacy and information technology and C&G IT certificate	1	Expected completions	494	524	483
		Retention (%)	76	87	91
		Achievement (%)	92	84	92*
GCSE mathematics	2	Expected completions	604	677	379
		Retention (%)	81	70	56
		Achievement (%)	22	21	38
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	Expected completions	10	16	48
		Retention (%)	70	88	77
		Achievement (%)	57	73	68
GNVQ advanced IT and precursors	3	Expected completions	42	82	72
		Retention (%)	60	76	62
		Achievement (%)	72	34	55
GCE AS/A level in computer studies and IT	3	Expected completions	19	24	22
		Retention (%)	79	58	73
		Achievement (%)	71	93	75
GCE A level mathematics (two-year course)	3	Expected completions	37	47	31
		Retention (%)	70	74	39
		Achievement (%)	43	35	42

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

\*at the time of inspection, not all results had been received from the examining boards

# Curriculum Areas

## Construction

### Grade 2

**15 Fourteen practical and theory lessons were observed, covering the college's construction crafts and built environment provision. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. However, the report contained insufficient analysis of the data on students' achievements.**

#### Key strengths

- a broad range of courses with good progression opportunities
- good teaching in practical lessons
- effective support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- good pass rates on craft courses at foundation and intermediate levels
- development of students' key skills
- purpose-built workshops providing realistic working environments

#### Weaknesses

- some ineffective theory teaching
- poor retention and pass rates on advanced level technician courses
- some poor retention and pass rates on electrical installation courses
- few links with industry

16 The college offers a broad range of construction courses. There are clear progression routes. Students may enrol on craft courses at any time during the year and effective procedures ensure that they all receive a formal induction. The college provides opportunities for school pupils to undertake training for foundation level craft qualifications. There is careful monitoring of students' absence. To encourage regular attendance, certificates are issued to those students whose attendance is exemplary. The attendance rate at

observed lessons was 74%. The monitoring of enrolment, retention and achievement does not effectively analyse students' performance.

There are few links with industry, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report. The advice of employers is not regularly sought and there are few visits to construction sites and manufacturers to extend the understanding of students. Full-time craft students do not have the opportunity to undertake work experience.

17 Practical lessons are well planned. The criteria used for marking students' work are carefully explained to them by teachers. There is good monitoring and recording of students' progress. Monthly individual student action plans include targets for the completion of practical activities and the development of key skills. Progress charts are displayed in all workshops and are readily available to students. Teachers provide useful written comments to help students improve the quality of their work. In workshops, students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by both subject and specialist support teachers. These strengths in teaching practice were identified in the self-assessment report.

18 The teaching of theory is less effective than teaching in practical lessons. In carpentry and joinery students are encouraged to develop their understanding of theoretical concepts through the use of the learning centre. However, teachers do not use a sufficient variety of appropriate teaching methods in many theory lessons. Teachers do not always question students effectively to ensure that they have grasped the main points of the lesson.

19 Students' skills are carefully developed. Technician students present their assignments well and most craft students produce good practical work. Key skills are given appropriate priority. For example, all students on full-time craft courses receive tuition in IT. Students' skills in communication and the application of number are carefully monitored. Where necessary, students can readily receive additional support.

# Curriculum Areas

20 The self-assessment report identified some poor retention and pass rates, but did not sufficiently recognise improvements in students' achievements. For example, the provision's overall retention rate has improved by 10% over the last two years. The retention and pass rates for most craft courses have improved significantly over the last three years. Pass rates for craft courses at intermediate and advanced levels were 20% above the national averages in 1997. In 1998, in carpentry and joinery at intermediate level the retention rate was 91% and the pass rate 84%. Some courses did less well. The pass rate for GNVQ advanced fell from 76% in 1997 to 27% in 1998. Pass rates on advanced level electrical installation have been below the national average in two of the last three years.

21 Teachers are appropriately qualified and three teachers have had industrial experience within the last year. Most teachers have additional assessor and verifier qualifications.

Workshops are well maintained. A strong emphasis is placed on maintaining safe working environments. Classrooms are of good size, well decorated and equipped. Construction provision is located in new purpose-built accommodation. Practical training and assessment facilities are extensive and enable teachers to create realistic working situations. For example, carpentry and joinery students have constructed a large timber framed building and painting and decorating students can practise working at heights. The facilities are identified in the self-assessment report as a strength and inspectors agreed. However, those for testing building materials are underused. There are sufficient tools and specialist equipment. In teaching and circulation areas teachers make good use of wall space to display technical information and students' project work. Students have good access to modern computing facilities with up-to-date industrial standard software for computer-aided design.

## 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 construction crafts	1	Expected completions	47	84	82
		Retention (%)	53	54	74
		Achievement (%)	28	51	79
Intermediate vocational technician	2	Expected completions	20	*	*
		Retention (%)	75	*	*
		Achievement (%)	47	*	*
Intermediate vocational construction crafts	2	Expected completions	113	98	103
		Retention (%)	73	78	72
		Achievement (%)	33	70	78
Advanced vocational technician	3	Expected completions	73	48	43
		Retention (%)	75	60	63
		Achievement (%)	55	79	48
Advanced vocational construction crafts	3	Expected completions	56	59	74
		Retention (%)	52	76	93
		Achievement (%)	24	84	62

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

\*course not running

# Curriculum Areas

## Engineering

### Grade 2

**22 The inspection covered all aspects of engineering provision including mechanical, electrical and motor vehicle technology. Inspectors observed 12 lessons. They agreed with much of the self-assessment report. By the time of the inspection the college had successfully addressed some of the weaknesses it had identified.**

#### Key strengths

- much good teaching and learning
- students' achievements above the national average
- high retention rates on many courses
- well-developed vocational skills
- effective integration of key skills with general education
- useful course documentation
- good internal verification
- modern, well-resourced facilities

#### Weaknesses

- too much absence and unpunctuality
- failure of some teachers to follow college register procedures
- excessive use of note-taking in a few lessons

23 The broad range of courses meets local needs. Of particular note are the motor vehicle and motor cycle courses which the college offers. The latter are especially successful in attracting students from groups that have not usually entered further education. The self-assessment report underestimated this strength. Links with employers are growing. In some curriculum areas, staff regularly visit companies to arrange work experience placements for students and also for teachers to increase their understanding of the needs of industry.

However, GNVQ advanced level assignments are not written within an industrial context. Course documentation is of a high standard. Schemes of work and lesson plans are good and follow a standardised format. Both long-term and short-term aims and objectives are shared with students. Internal verification is well managed; there are termly development activities to support its operation by staff. Records of students' achievements are comprehensive and students can access their own records. They can also compare their performance with data for the group as a whole. The college's register procedures are not always followed by teachers. This is contrary to health and safety procedures and distorts the accuracy of college records.

24 A wide range of appropriate teaching methods and learning aids are successfully used. There is a good rapport between teachers and students. Key skills and aspects of general education are well integrated with lessons. For example, in a practical lesson in motor cycle dismantling and re-assembly, students also developed their numeracy, physical science and metrology knowledge and skills. The self-assessment report underestimated the importance and success of this approach to learning. Appropriate attention is given to health and safety in workshops. For example, before starting a practical assignment each motor vehicle student undertook a health and safety analysis. In practical sessions, there is careful recording of students' achievements of competence. Theory is attractively presented and the standards of teaching and learning are often high. In one lesson in applied mathematics, the teachers included examples from students' practical work to help them to understand the theoretical concepts involved. In a few lessons students' time was used unproductively in copying notes from the whiteboard for long periods. Students with learning difficulties are well supported by specialist staff. The successful support of these students, enabling them to participate in a range of courses, contributes to the engineering

# Curriculum Areas

section meeting the college's aim of inclusive learning.

25 Students' work is of a good standard. Their vocational skills are well developed. Portfolios are well presented. Students talk with knowledge and enthusiasm about their work. The college identified the strength of students' skills in its self-assessment report. Over the last three years achievement rates have improved to above the national average. For example, the achievement rate for NVQ qualifications has increased by 47% between 1996 and 1998. Retention rates on NVQ courses are good. Those on advanced vocational courses have shown some fluctuation, but in 1998 were 71%. As the college states in its own assessment, punctuality and attendance remain a cause for

concern. Attendance in lessons observed was 73% and registers indicate that this is the normal pattern of attendance for engineering courses.

26 Engineering is situated in a new building with modern, well-resourced facilities. The laboratories, workshops and classrooms are of a very good standard. All of the accommodation is clean and some contains attractive wall displays. Library stock includes materials which are appropriate for the needs of engineering students. Computerised learning materials enable students to study at their own pace. The car stock is appropriate to the range of motor vehicle courses. Staff are well qualified and experienced.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Intermediate vocational	1	Expected completions	11	7	*
		Retention (%)	100	100	*
		Achievement (%)	18	100	*
NVQ courses	1 to 3	Expected completions	272	265	236
		Retention (%)	81	76	79
		Achievement (%)	37	45	84
Advanced vocational	2	Expected completions	43	40	27
		Retention (%)	61	55	71
		Achievement (%)	63	70	84

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

\*course not running

# Curriculum Areas

## Catering

### Grade 1

**27 The inspection covered all catering and hospitality courses. Twelve lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed with much of the college's own assessment but judged that the strengths of teaching, learning and management had been understated and those of tutorials overestimated.**

#### Key strengths

- much good teaching and learning
- good retention and achievement rates
- effective strategies to promote inclusive learning
- integration of key skills
- careful review of students' progress
- well-managed work experience for full-time students
- good course and curriculum management
- high-quality accommodation and resources

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient briefing of NVQ level 1 students in practical lessons
- some ineffective tutorials

28 The college's self-assessment report underestimated the strength of course and curriculum management. The curriculum is effectively planned and reviewed. Documentation supporting the curriculum is excellent. There are comprehensive and useful schemes of work and lesson plans. Staff meet frequently and the outcomes and actions resulting from these meetings are carefully recorded. Students' attendance, retention and achievements are rigorously monitored. Internal verification procedures are good and include regular sampling arrangements. The

record-keeping of internal verification activities is excellent.

29 The college's self-assessment report underestimated the strengths of teaching and learning. Students experience a good variety of appropriate teaching and learning activities. Teachers regularly check on students' understanding. In one lesson about understanding body language, students examined examples of customers' complaints and how body language can be used both to analyse and defuse difficult situations. They then went on to devise a policy on handling complaints which was related to the college's restaurant. The teacher made good use of question and answer techniques to structure the learning and the concluding summary pulled together all the major points. NVQ level 1 students are not always sufficiently briefed before practical activities.

30 There are good strategies to support the implementation of inclusive learning. Students with learning difficulties receive effective vocational support in practical lessons. They are fully integrated with group activities, benefit from peer support and contribute well to team activities.

31 Key skills are well integrated with the curriculum. They are systematically assessed. The key skills performance criteria have been carefully mapped in activities and assignments. Students have the opportunity to gain additional qualifications such as the basic health and safety certificate and the intermediate hygiene certificate. All full-time students gained a hygiene certificate during their induction period this year.

32 There are effective and detailed reviews of students' progress. Students have short-term action plans which set individual targets for a five-week period. These are carefully reviewed by teachers before new targets are set. All full-time students have a period of well-planned work experience. Evidence from their

# Curriculum Areas

placement is then used in the assessment process. Feedback from employers contributes to the students' review process. The college overestimated the strength of tutorials. In those observed there was a lack of time given to pastoral activities and the continuation of course-based activities dominated.

33 Students' written work is of a good standard and often well presented. The majority of work examined by inspectors was wordprocessed. Assignment briefs are interesting and easily understood. Teachers frequently check the standard of the students' portfolios. These are extremely well organised and supported by good course documentation. Most marking is thorough and teachers give comments which help students to improve their performance. The assessment process is very thorough. NVQ assessments include observations, completed study packs and written assignments for each unit. Retention and achievement rates on all courses are good.

34 Appropriate practical skills are being developed by students. In one practical lesson, students could clearly explain the tasks required of them, the methods of preparation to be used and the end product. They received individual tuition where appropriate and achieved a good level of competence. The more advanced students worked with little guidance from the teachers. Students with learning difficulties were able to get help from support staff so that they could meet the aims of the lesson. All students worked with due consideration for hygiene, health and safety.

35 Accommodation and resources are of a very high standard and this was acknowledged in the self-assessment report. The facilities are appropriate for the range of courses and the needs of students. Access to IT resources is good. The library bookstock is adequate and there is good liaison between the curriculum manager and library staff. Teachers and support staff are well qualified and experienced. Teachers are encouraged to undertake short

periods of industrial updating and some catering teachers have recently benefited from this.



# Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
NVQ catering and hospitality (full time)	1	Expected completions	*	31	33
		Retention (%)	*	74	82
		Achievement (%)	*	100	95
NVQ catering and hospitality (part time)	1	Expected completions	*	*	31
		Retention (%)	*	*	71
		Achievement (%)	*	*	68
NVQ catering (part time)	2	Expected completions	*	*	23
		Retention (%)	*	*	100
		Achievement (%)	*	*	100
NVQ catering and hospitality (full time)	2	Expected completions	*	27	27
		Retention (%)	*	81	81
		Achievement (%)	*	77	95
GNVQ hospitality and catering (full time and part time)	3	Expected completions	*	*	10
		Retention (%)	*	*	80
		Achievement (%)	*	*	88

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

\*course not running

# Curriculum Areas

## Hairdressing, Beauty and Sports Therapy

### Grade 1

**36 The inspection covered all courses in hairdressing, beauty and sports therapy. Inspectors observed 12 lessons. They agreed with the college's assessment of the provision and identified further strengths in students' achievements.**

#### Key strengths

- high-quality teaching and learning
- good achievement and retention rates on the vast majority of courses
- the good standard of students' practical work
- good development of students' key skills
- well-managed work experience for full-time students
- strong curriculum organisation and management
- good accommodation and specialist resources

#### Weaknesses

- inaccurate recording of some of the achievements on City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) courses

37 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the organisation and management of this area of its work is strong. The curriculum offer is well structured to take account of students' needs. There are regular, productive school meetings which inform and are informed by faculty meetings.

Documentation to support the curriculum is good. The integration of key skills with course work is well planned, carefully managed and systematically mapped and monitored. Students' progress is carefully reviewed and individual action plans include appropriate

targets. Learning agreements are reviewed when necessary. This system allows students to monitor their own progress and offers them additional help when it is required. Strenuous efforts are made to enrich the experience of students by entering them for regional and national competitions, through European exchanges and vocationally relevant visits.

38 Teaching and learning are of good quality. All of the lessons observed by inspectors were judged to be good or outstanding. Lessons are well planned and effectively taught. Theory lessons are carefully structured; clear objectives are set and shared with students. Students are well supported in these lessons by college-devised study packs. Good links are made between theory and its practical application. Lessons are timed to ensure that the theoretical aspects of the work are covered before the practical lessons take place. Briefing for practical lessons includes the stating of objectives, the raising of health and safety issues and an indication of how the study packs may be used. Practical lessons reflect realistic working practices which include the selling of products. In one lesson, a well-presented demonstration of perming was preceded by a recap of basic knowledge on health and safety and perming. Good use was made of a whole-class question and answer session to confirm students' understanding before they started to practise perming techniques.

39 Students' practical work is of a good standard. It invariably conforms to commercial practices. All full-time students undertake vocationally relevant work experience in local businesses. There is an atmosphere of professionalism in the college's salons. Students exhibit good communication skills. They use IT with confidence. Their written work is of a good standard; many excellent portfolios are produced. In one assignment on wax depilation, the work produced by students was clearly presented and displayed a good understanding of the subject and task. Students speak with enthusiasm and knowledge about their courses

# Curriculum Areas

and their learning. Achievement rates have been high in at least two of the last three years with most courses exceeding the national average. Achievements have also been improving over this period; for example, in beauty therapy level 3 courses achievement rates have increased by 11% between 1996 and 1998. All the students who completed NVQ levels 1 and 2 beauty courses and hairdressing NVQ level 2 courses in 1998 gained the qualification. Retention rates are improving and on most courses they are now above the national average. College data did not include achievements by students on some C&G courses.

40 Salons and the fitness suite are spacious and well maintained and have modern,

industrial standard equipment. There are three hairdressing and four beauty salons served by a central reception area, a communal dispensary and a laundry. The fitness suite is open to the public and enables sports therapy students to gain good experience in a realistic working environment. The suite is connected to a large sports hall, changing rooms and a spa area. Students have good access to IT equipment. Staff are well qualified in their specialist areas and many have recent industrial experience. The college requires that industrial experience is updated every three years. All full-time and many part-time staff have a teaching qualification and many hold assessor, internal verifier and adviser awards.

## A summary of achievement and retention rates in hairdressing, beauty and sports therapy, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Beauty	1	Expected completions	*	48	40
		Retention (%)	*	83	90
		Achievement (%)	*	90	100
Beauty	2	Expected completions	34	53	42
		Retention (%)	79	70	86
		Achievement (%)	89	54	100
NVQ hairdressing	2	Expected completions	47	126	112
		Retention (%)	77	68	76
		Achievement (%)	67	**	99
Hairdressing	2	Expected completions	45	29	14
		Retention (%)	87	66	86
		Achievement (%)	74	63	100
Beauty	3	Expected completions	188	201	159
		Retention (%)	76	75	77
		Achievement (%)	83	87	94
Sports therapy	3	Expected completions	15	23	61
		Retention (%)	80	70	82
		Achievement (%)	92	63	85

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

\*data incomplete

\*\*data not available

# Curriculum Areas

## Geography, History and Politics

### Grade 2

**41 The inspection covered GCE A level, GCSE, access and foundation provision in geography, history and politics. Inspectors observed 11 lessons. The college self-assessment report was a composite of all humanities subjects. Inspectors agreed with many of the generalised judgements made about humanities provision, but also identified additional strengths and weaknesses within the subjects inspected.**

#### Key strengths

- much good teaching and learning
- GCE A level achievements above national average
- excellent achievement on access courses
- good retention rates on one-year GCE A level, access and adult foundation courses
- high proportion of students progressing to higher education
- well-structured modular courses and comprehensive schemes of work
- good learning environments

#### Weaknesses

- low retention rates on GCSE and two-year GCE A level courses
- poor attendance and punctuality
- inconsistencies in the use of data at curriculum level

42 There is a broad range of geography, history and politics courses offered at many venues. There has been some decline in the number of evening classes available and numbers on GCE A level and some access courses have also fallen. For example, there were 99 enrolments for history in 1997, but in 1998 only 44. This was not identified in the

college self-assessment report. Changes in the curriculum profile and the adoption of modular courses have required the development of new management procedures. Though the curriculum is, for the most part, well managed, student retention and achievement data are not always reviewed with enough rigour. Course files contain comprehensive records for history, politics and access courses. Review and target-setting are well established.

43 The strength of teaching and learning was clearly identified in the college self-assessment report. Students experience a good variety of teaching styles. For example, a well-planned history lesson used IT to research information, local history classes have extensive visits to archives and sites and all observed lessons used a range of teaching aids effectively. In some instances, question and answer techniques were ineffective and students' responses were too brief. Generally, students' oral competence is weak. The college self-assessment report identified poor attendance and punctuality, but their impact on learning is not recognised. Registers showed that four classes observed by inspectors had never had a full attendance from the start of the course. Average attendance at observed lessons was 77% with eight lessons having fewer than 10 students present. The marking of students' work in geography is not always sufficiently detailed.

44 The self-assessment report did not identify achievement subject by subject. Achievement rates on access courses in 1998 were excellent. GCE A level achievement rates are improving. In 1998 they were above the national average for both one-year and two-year courses. GCSE achievements have also improved from some poor results in 1996 and 1997 to above the national average. Retention rates for access, foundation and one-year GCE A level courses are good. Those for two-year GCE A level and GCSE courses are not. An analysis of students' results on two-year GCE A level courses indicates that their achievements in history and

# Curriculum Areas

politics in 1997 and 1998 were better than could have been predicted from their GCSE scores. Progression to higher education from advanced level courses is very good. In the past three years, no fewer than 90% of access course students have progressed to higher education.

45 Most classrooms are well equipped, with teaching aids and suitable, comfortable

furnishings. Most students have easy access to IT equipment. Adults attending classes in the Oriel building are less well served. There are good displays of stimulus material in the history and politics rooms. The textbooks provided by the college are of a good standard. Staff are well qualified and have undertaken staff development activities, including IT training.

## A summary of achievement and retention rates in geography, history and politics, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE history and geography	2	Expected completions	58	28	50
		Retention (%)	83	71	42
		Achievement (%)	20	18	52
GCE A level (one-year courses)	3	Expected completions	105	91	54
		Retention (%)	87	81	81
		Achievement (%)	36	70	81
GCE A level (two-year courses)	3	Expected completions	47	63	41
		Retention (%)	55	74	61
		Achievement (%)	53	74	80
Access to higher education	3	Expected completions	*	*	40
		Retention (%)	*	*	88
		Achievement (%)	*	*	97

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

\*data include non-humanities provision

# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### Grade 2

**46 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths identified by the college in its self-assessment report but considered that some of the strengths were understated. Inspectors also identified weaknesses which were not included in the college's own assessment. The college had addressed a few of the weaknesses it had identified by the time of the inspection.**

#### Key strengths

- good admissions procedures
- a wide range of community liaison activities
- effective practical support for students
- successful implementation of inclusive learning principles
- good careers education and guidance

#### Weaknesses

- insufficiently comprehensive information for current and prospective students
- failure of some tutors to meet college standards for tutorials

47 The college works hard to develop links with its community to encourage participation in education and training. It has built upon the good practice which was identified by inspectors during its previous inspection. The schools liaison team offers a portfolio of activities to 155 schools and other institutions. The range of activities is extensive and varied. They include talks during assemblies, careers conventions, industry days, parents' evenings, options evenings, and subject specific and general enrolment fairs. The activities provided take account of the age and needs of the pupils. For example, year 9 pupils are able to participate in an equal opportunities workshop. The schools

liaison team works closely with the curriculum tutors to enable the input of course specific activities into school events.

48 In the community, the Family And Schools Together partnership organised by the college has developed links with 14 schools to encourage parents and children to participate in learning programmes. The college has extended its community-based provision to include courses in training and assessment centres, residential homes and social service centres. The self-assessment report identified that there is no clear overarching strategy for community liaison, and inspectors agreed. Since the report was written, a co-ordinator has been appointed whose role is to contact community groups, extend links, raise the profile of the college in the community and ensure a more structured approach to the college's community activities.

49 Admissions systems are good. Performance indicators are well used and performance is regularly reviewed against targets. Procedures for interviewing students are formalised and appropriate questions are suggested as guidance for tutors. Prospective students are offered an assessment interview followed by a second interview with a subject specialist. Students find this system helpful.

50 Communication with prospective and current students is not always effective. The college's electronic prospectus, available on the internet, and supplemented by individual brochures and leaflets does not provide a sufficiently comprehensive source of information for prospective students. Induction processes are well supported with documentation and have been reviewed in the light of the outcomes of questionnaires to students. The college's self-assessment report stated that responses to the questionnaires suggest that tutors have not always ensured students' understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Inspectors found that not all students were able to relate fairly basic information about the college and their courses.

# Cross-college Provision

51 The college sets high standards for tutorial provision. These are not always met. Of the tutorials observed, a third were less than satisfactory. Some students receive good tutorial support. For example, in the best tutorials the personal tutor had planned key topics for discussion as well as reviewing individual students' progress. In some less effective tutorials there was little evidence of previous planning and often the session was an extension of classwork or extra time for students to work on assignments. One small group tutorial observed was rushed, and the tutor gave little opportunity to students to participate. Some individual interviews were unproductive and repetitive. The observation of tutorial practice has not been systematically integrated with the college lesson observation system.

52 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that there has been successful implementation of inclusive learning principles. The college is a member of an inclusive learning consortium. It has appointed an inclusive learning co-ordinator to lead the initiative. An inclusive learning committee oversees its implementation. The college has supported this development with staff training activities. There are many examples of good practice in inclusive learning throughout the college.

53 The college careers and guidance team works closely with Career Decisions, the local careers service. This has improved the service available to students. There are extensive opportunities for careers education and guidance offered to students through a calendar of careers events, including individual careers interviews, job search workshops, and help with completing applications for employment and higher education. These activities are not only available to those who study at the college's main sites, but also at its centres in the community. This support is highly valued by students. Accommodation provided for individual interviews is not always suitable.

54 As stated in the self-assessment report, there is good practical support for students. It includes the provision of both personal and financial advice. The counselling and benefits team offers a comprehensive and responsive service to students. The college has a crèche for students' children and provides assistance for placement of children in good-quality childcare outside the college through its access fund.

## General Resources

### Grade 2

**55 Inspectors broadly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the college's self-assessment report. The college has made significant improvements to its general resources and accommodation since the last inspection.**

#### Key strengths

- a well-implemented strategy for improvement to and maintenance of buildings
- an attractive new building
- good access for wheelchair users
- good-quality learning centres, IT facilities and sporting facilities
- excellent realistic working environments

#### Weaknesses

- inadequate quiet study facilities
- some noisy, untidy areas that detract from the college's ethos
- low level of library bookstock

56 The college has rationalised its buildings since the last inspection. It operates in five buildings within walking distance of one another. Two of these buildings house a relatively small amount of the college's provision. In addition, good facilities for performing arts programmes are leased in a

# Cross-college Provision

nearby youth and community centre. The college uses numerous venues in the community. These improvements to the college's building stock were clearly detailed in the self-assessment report. A planned maintenance programme supports the accommodation strategy. The premises are managed effectively.

57 A new building, the Pembroke centre, is an attractive addition to the college. It houses the sixth form centre, modern specialist workshops for construction and engineering, a refectory, a common room and offices. A feature of college accommodation is the provision of excellent realistic working environments. These include a fitness centre, hairdressing, beauty and sports therapy salons and kitchens and a restaurant for catering students. The college has a good-quality sports hall. As stated in the self-assessment report, the college has increased the ease of access for those with restricted mobility. Most teachers have appropriate work areas close to their classrooms. Refectories and student common rooms are heavily used, particularly at peak times. Corridors, common rooms and refectories rapidly accumulate litter during the day. The college identified the standard of cleanliness as a weakness in its self-assessment report and inspectors agreed. There is either excessive or inadequate heating in different parts of the Balliol centre. Some rooms lack blinds to exclude the sun from computer and overhead projector screens. Occasionally, partitions between rooms do not exclude noise from adjacent rooms.

58 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that there has been considerable investment in IT since the last inspection. There are sufficient modern computers. The ratio of workstations to full-time equivalent students is 1:7. As well as workstations in the learning centres, all buildings have computer rooms which provide open access to machines for students. Equipment is of good quality. The main college sites are connected by well-managed computer networks. Skilled technicians play a significant part in the

management and development of the systems. The development of computer systems is carefully planned and researched. Students expressed the view that the college currently has too few internet connections. Plans are in hand to redress this, but careful attention is being paid to what restrictions to open access for students are appropriate.

59 Three learning centres, which include libraries, are managed as a single learning resource service at the two main buildings. The one at the Balliol centre occupies two floors. The self-assessment report stated that these facilities have made possible a major change to the way in which the curriculum is delivered. Between them the learning centres have 429 study spaces. Some students complain that there are few quiet areas for private study.

60 There is good liaison between library and teaching staff. Library staff attend school quality review team meetings. They have removed some but not all of the redundant books in the library. Some books are not housed in the building where most students who use them study. This is a particular problem as students have to cross a busy road to reach the appropriate bookstock. Stock levels are low at 8.5 items for each full-time equivalent student. Some curriculum areas have built up specialist ranges of course texts and resources. These are sometimes housed in the learning centres to improve security. In spite of library security systems, thefts have depleted the bookstock in some specialist areas.

## Quality Assurance

### *Grade 2*

**61 Inspectors agreed with the majority of strengths and weaknesses stated in the self-assessment report for quality assurance, but identified an additional significant weakness. An update to the report showed the progress that had been made towards further improvement.**



# Cross-college Provision

## Key strengths

- a coherent and comprehensive quality assurance framework
- a commitment to continuous improvement
- well-established procedures which are understood, supported and reviewed
- staff development arrangements clearly linked to college objectives

## Weaknesses

- some course reports of poor quality
- insufficient involvement of people outside the college in evaluation of college activities

62 College staff at all levels show commitment to continuous improvement. Strong leadership is provided by the management team. It actively promotes quality assurance throughout the college and monitors the implementation of policy. Planning at all levels is informed by outcomes from quality assurance processes. As the self-assessment report asserted, there is evidence of improvement as a consequence of review and action-planning. Student achievement and retention rates have improved over the last three years.

63 The college's quality assurance framework is well organised, coherent and comprehensive. It includes a system for reporting and monitoring. Quality assurance arrangements cover all aspects of the college's work, as the self-assessment report stated. The quality assurance system itself is regularly reviewed. There is a thoughtful and detailed development plan as a result of the latest review. Each member of staff belongs to a quality review team which focuses on reviewing and evaluating their performance. Clear, systematic documentation and a logical calendar of activities guide teams through a detailed discussion and reporting process. Staff have integrated quality assurance practices with their own routines. Where there

is good practice, such as in floristry and the college's business centre, staff use quality assurance systems effectively as a management tool. In other teams, evaluations are weak; there are significant omissions, action plans are cursory and in some reports little attention is paid to teaching and learning. This weakness was not identified in the college's self-assessment report.

64 Lesson observation is well established in the college. A trained team of 26 staff observe lessons outside their own curriculum area. All teachers are observed at least three times a year. Lesson observations include samples from centres in the community as well as from the main sites of the colleges. Teachers are not notified in advance of the visit of the observer. A minority of observation reports are insufficiently critical and some do not pay enough attention to the learning experience of students. The relevant quality review team manager receives a copy of the observation report for use in self-assessment. Weaknesses identified during observations are followed up by college managers. All staff are appraised annually.

65 The college achieved the Investor in People award in 1996. College managers are committed to the professional development of staff. Arrangements for identifying and meeting both college and individual needs are effective. A range of information including strategic objectives, appraisal outcomes and team action plans is used to identify training and development priorities. Before funds are allocated, staff are required to identify the relevance of the requested training to strategic and team priorities. Evaluations of activities are taken seriously and contribute to planning. Training and development is a standing agenda item at the monthly quality review team meetings. The annual staff development week and staff development day are well planned and responsive to the needs of all staff. The induction of new staff is thorough and has been reviewed in the light of feedback.

# Cross-college Provision

66 College charters for students, parents or guardians and employers clearly set out entitlements and responsibilities and provide some service standards. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college has not been successful in obtaining the views of those outside the college on its services. Students' views are collected through surveys and student liaison committees. Students' views are considered by quality review teams, but some take them more seriously than others. Students do not receive information about the outcomes of the surveys or the actions taken by the college in response to these.

67 The college's procedures for self-assessment have evolved from its quality assurance processes. There are clear links between strategic planning and self-assessment. Quality review teams identify strengths and weakness and grade their provision. Grades are moderated by senior managers. The self-assessment report was considered by the corporation, which also conducted its own self-assessment. No advice on the rigour of the self-assessment report was sought from people outside of the college. Evidence supporting the report was clearly referenced. There were instances of incorrect analysis of student achievement data in the report. All teams produced a formal action plan, with the exception of the corporation. The college has implemented some of the actions it had identified between submitting the most recent self-assessment report to the inspectorate and the time of the inspection. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the report.

## Governance

### Grade 2

**68 The inspection team agreed with most of the strengths reported in the self-assessment report, but considered that some strengths were over-emphasised. Inspectors identified additional weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- governors strongly committed to the success of the college
- broad range of relevant skills and experience amongst governors
- corporation involvement in strategic planning and self-assessment
- effective appraisal of senior postholders by remuneration committee
- monitoring of students' attendance, retention and achievements
- active and effective statutory committees

#### Weaknesses

- potential conflict of interest in clerkship arrangements
- absence of performance indicators to measure the corporation's performance
- little formal monitoring of management accounts by the corporation

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

70 The corporation has 16 governors, comprising eight independent governors, four co-opted governors, one TEC representative, two staff governors and the principal. There are currently no vacancies. Governors have a broad range of skills and experience. A search committee advises on possible new governors. A formal skills audit of existing governors has recently been performed to assist in recruiting new governors. The corporation has not phased the terms of office of its governors. Consequently, all terms of office will come to an end on 31 August 1999. The corporation has

# Cross-college Provision

recently introduced a system of allocating governors to specific areas in the college to improve links between the governors and college staff. A detailed induction pack is given to new governors but, as noted in the self-assessment report, a formal programme of external training for governors has not yet been developed. Attendance at corporation and committee meetings, and monitoring of attendance at those meetings, has been good.

71 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report's judgement that the corporation plays an active role in the strategic planning process. Governors hold an annual planning conference in order to confirm the college's strategic direction and the strategic plan is formally approved by the corporation. Attention is paid to the financial implications of the college's proposals. Progress is monitored against the annual objectives throughout the year but not in a composite document. The corporation has effectively monitored the attendance, retention and achievement of students aggregated to school level by considering the principal's annual review report. The corporation receives information regarding students' complaints but there is no formal contact between the corporation and the student body.

72 The employment policy, finance and general purposes committee, in accordance with its terms of reference, is responsible for the detailed monitoring of the college's financial position. The corporation has a statutory responsibility which it cannot delegate to ensure the solvency of the college and to safeguard its assets. Although all governors receive copies of the college's monthly management accounts, the corporation only formally considered the college's management accounts on one occasion during 1998. It also delegated the consideration and approval of the college's 1997-98 financial statements to the employment policy, finance and general purposes committee.

73 The corporation has taken an active role in the college's self-assessment. Governors

completed an evaluation questionnaire in 1997 and prepared the governance section of the previous and current year's self-assessment report. No formal action plan was prepared in respect of the weaknesses identified in the current year's self-assessment report. The corporation has not established a series of performance indicators in respect of its own performance.

74 There is an effective appraisal arrangement for the principal by the chair of the corporation. The appraisal leads to the setting of key tasks related to the college's strategic objectives. The remuneration committee approves these targets and monitors them during the year.

75 Corporation and committee agendas and supporting papers are comprehensive and are sent out in good time, in advance of the relevant meetings. Minutes are promptly prepared. The self-assessment report states that the governors attempt to follow best practice in their roles. The inspection team did not fully agree with this judgement. Corporation minutes are publicly available in the college library and the corporation has a code of practice on 'whistleblowing' and a register of interests which is open to public scrutiny. However, the corporation's code of conduct is in need of further development to comply fully with best practice and no standing orders have been prepared which outline how corporation business is to be conducted.

76 The clerk to the corporation is appropriately trained and experienced. However, he is also the college's financial controller. He receives no administrative support in his role as clerk and takes the minutes of all corporation and committee meetings, with the exception of the audit committee. There is potential in this arrangement for a conflict of interest. For example, at meetings of the employment policy, finance and general purposes committee, he has frequently spoken in his capacity as financial controller whilst clerking the committee.

# Cross-college Provision

Although the clerk to the corporation's job description separates the two aspects of his role, it does not state that he is responsible to the corporation in respect of his clerking duties. Similarly, annual appraisal by the principal in respect of both his financial and clerking responsibilities does not recognise the separate nature of the roles.

77 There are seven committees: employment policy, finance and general purposes; audit; search; remuneration; panel for the appointment of senior postholders; special committee for the dismissal of senior postholders; and disciplinary appeals committee. Committees meet regularly and operate in accordance with their terms of reference. The audit committee operates particularly effectively.

## Management

### Grade 2

**78 Inspectors considered that the college's self-assessment of management was comprehensive and objective. They agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses but also identified others.**

#### Key strengths

- clear management structure well understood by staff
- good financial management
- good action-planning and review procedures
- good arrangements for communicating with staff
- effective promotion of cross-college initiatives

#### Weaknesses

- inadequacies in the computerised management information system
- lack of a comprehensive marketing plan
- lack of explicit links to college strategic aims in some operational plans

79 The college is well managed. Weekly meetings of the senior management team are designated as curriculum or policy and resource meetings. Some meetings are taken up with operational detail to the detriment of more strategic issues. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that planning is effective. Development plans are produced by curriculum schools and by service areas. A common framework has been established for this year's plans and there is a clear improvement in the quality of the plans compared with previous years. Several continue to lack precision in target-setting and fail to make explicit links with college aims and strategic objectives.

80 As the self-assessment report acknowledged, the management structure is well understood by staff who know to whom they are accountable and what the college expects of them. Staff are well informed of the mission of the college. Several cross-college groups provide effective forums for disseminating good practice. The GNVQ and NVQ panels have developed a cross-college approach to delivering key aspects of the curriculum. A cross-college committee has successfully raised the profile of equal opportunities in the college. The European awareness group disseminates information on the wide range of initiatives to promote visits and exchanges for students with colleges outside the United Kingdom. This group has not, however, identified how it will promote or monitor a key objective in its policy statement: 'to ensure the integration of a European dimension into all courses'.

81 The college has modularised its curriculum into trimesters. At the end of each trimester, there is a review of performance targets for individual students and for curriculum teams. The review is underpinned by data on students' attendance, retention and achievements. The information has been improved this year, but previously it has often been incomplete and has contained inaccuracies in several curriculum areas. The outcomes of reviews feed into action

# Cross-college Provision

plans and progress towards meeting them is then monitored at the subsequent review. The college considers that these arrangements for modularisation and review have contributed to the improvement in student retention and achievement rates. As the self-assessment report indicated, the targets which are set for curriculum teams are not yet benchmarked against sector norms.

82 The self-assessment report recognised that managers do not have full access to timely and accurate management information. The lack of consistency between data in the college management information system and those in the separate computerised system for monitoring students resulted in a postponement of target-setting for this year. Since the self-assessment report was written the college has restructured the management information systems section, made new staff appointments, integrated the examinations function and decided to purchase new hardware and software in the current academic year. At the time of the inspection, managers received regular reports on enrolment and retention and could request a range of reports from the management information system. However, they do not have direct access to the system.

83 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The finance team is appropriately structured, qualified and experienced. Managers have monitored the college's financial position closely and have established financial targets to assist with financial monitoring. The college is financially sound. The college had an average level of funding of £16.13 per unit in 1997-98, compared with a sector average of £16.62 per unit. The college has introduced a new accounting system, but this is not yet fully developed. The college's internal auditors performed a post-implementation review of this new system and raised a number of significant recommendations. The college is in the process

of implementing these. The college's 1997-98 statutory accounts were given an unqualified opinion by the external auditors and were submitted by the required deadline.

84 The college actively strives to widen participation. It is involved in a wide range of partnerships and links with organisations in the community. The college's business centre is a successful venture which has exceeded its financial targets and provides a good range of programmes both on college and company premises. As the self-assessment report in part recognised, several aspects of the college's marketing strategy require improvement. A marketing manager has been appointed and an action plan has been drawn up but, at the time of the inspection, there was no marketing plan linking the marketing strategy to the achievement of college aims.

## Conclusions

85 The self-assessment report and its update were very useful for planning the inspection. Inspectors agreed with almost all of the findings in the report, but also identified additional strengths and weaknesses. They agreed with all but two of the curriculum grades awarded by the college; these were raised by inspectors who concluded that progress had been made since the writing of the self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with all but one grade for cross-college provision.

86 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 (January 1999)

Age	%
Under 16	0
16-18 years	33
19-24 years	15
25+ years	49
Not known	3
Total	100

Source: college data

## Student numbers by level of study (January 1999)

Level of study	%
Foundation	28
Intermediate	35
Advanced	30
Higher education	4
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	3
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	239	838	17
Agriculture	56	74	2
Construction	193	150	5
Engineering	170	260	7
Business	297	595	14
Hotel and catering	213	125	5
Health and community care	589	833	24
Art and design	222	165	6
Humanities	237	615	14
Basic education	6	389	6
Total	2,222	4,044	100

Source: college data

## Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 71% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

## Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (January 1999)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	202	2	13	217
Supporting direct learning contact	104	0	0	104
Other support	77	2	0	79
Total	383	4	13	400

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

# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

	1996	1997	1998
Income	£9,876,000	£9,683,000	£9,856,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998	£17.03	£16.97	£16.13
Payroll as a proportion of income	72%	73%	68%
Achievement of funding target	99%	99%	100%
Diversity of income	26%	19%	23%
Operating surplus	£220,000	£5,000	£173,000

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	68	72	280	696	1,057	1,538
	Retention (%)	76	61	66	89	83	74
	Achievement (%)	13	33	55	49	18	56
2	Expected completions	1,064	976	1,317	1,683	1,983	1,735
	Retention (%)	84	79	74	83	82	71
	Achievement (%)	36	32	38	37	32	47
3	Expected completions	–	1,255	1,361	–	1,223	1,206
	Retention (%)	–	74	77	–	77	74
	Achievement (%)	55	53	62	55	51	65
4 or 5	Expected completions	0	0	0	–	94	127
	Retention (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	–	97	76
	Achievement (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	54	38	23
Short courses	Expected completions	38	23	160	529	753	2,016
	Retention (%)	50	70	96	96	97	96
	Achievement (%)	28	13	80	50	48	65
Unknown/unclassified	Expected completions	229	414	542	859	896	907
	Retention (%)	91	76	94	88	83	78
	Achievement (%)	39	15	45	56	42	59

Source: ISR

–ISR data not collected

n/a not applicable

**FEFC Inspection Report 39/99**

**Published by the  
Further Education Funding Council**

**Website <http://www.fefc.ac.uk>**

**© FEFC April 1999**