

Kendal College

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1999-00

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.

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Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

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

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

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

Student Achievements

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

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

Summary

Kendal College

North West Region

Inspected October 1999

Kendal College is a small general further education college which serves the communities of South Lakeland. Governors as well as staff at all levels were involved in the production of the self-assessment report which was clearly laid out and concise. It contained examples of good practice, and identified actions both to improve strengths and to tackle weaknesses. Most of the judgements in the report were supported by reference to sources of evidence rather than to the evidence from which they derived.

Examples of routine practice were frequently represented as strengths. Not enough emphasis was placed on teaching and learning and on students' achievements. Inspectors agreed with two of the curriculum grades awarded by the college. They did not agree with any of the grades awarded to cross-college provision. In two cross-college aspects inspectors awarded grades which were two below those that the college awarded itself.

The college provides courses in all of the FEFC's programme areas. Provision in four of these areas was inspected, together with aspects of cross-college provision. The governors show a strong commitment to the college and operate in an open way. They have supported managers in their successful efforts to improve the financial

position of the college. In most curriculum areas students have a wide choice of courses. Provision in art and design is good. Most full-time students receive good support. The college's buildings are well maintained and space is efficiently used. The majority of students have ready access to IT. The emphasis that governors and senior managers have placed on improving the college's finances has worked to the detriment of the curriculum. The quality of teaching and learning has declined since the college was last inspected. Only 46% of lessons observed were judged to be good or outstanding, compared with the national average of 65%. Despite improvements in 1999, retention rates remain unsatisfactory on some programmes and levels of achievement are low in many curriculum areas. Many students fail to complete their qualifications on time. Quality assurance procedures are not implemented effectively in many areas. Communications with the large numbers of part-time teachers are poor. In order to make progress the college should: improve the quality of teaching and learning; focus on raising levels of retention and achievement; strengthen the support it gives to part-time students; collect and use data more effectively in setting targets and monitoring performance; and improve arrangements for managing agency teachers.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Business	3	Support for students	3
Hospitality and catering, leisure and tourism	3	General resources	2
Art, craft and design	2	Quality assurance	4
Humanities, comprising English, modern foreign languages and teacher education	3	Governance	3
		Management	4

The College and its Mission

1 Kendal College serves a predominantly rural area in South Lakeland. Its main campus is located in the market town of Kendal, where there are also four smaller centres. In addition the college offers provision at six centres in the community and through three mobile units. South Lakeland has a population of almost 100,000 which is expected to rise by 3% by 2006. The main employment sectors are distribution and catering, which account for 27% of jobs, other service-related industries, which account for 25%, and manufacturing, which accounts for 16%. A decline in manufacturing is expected in the near future. The unemployment rate in South Lakeland is 2%, which compares favourably with the national rate of 4.4%.

2 Within the college's catchment area there are 13 schools, all but three of which have sixth forms. In and around Kendal itself there are six secondary schools, four of which have sixth forms, and three of which offer vocational programmes as well as courses at general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level). According to information provided by Cumbria Careers Service, 72% of pupils in year 11 remain in post-16 education, 25% of whom enter further education.

3 The college offers substantial provision in eight of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) 10 programme areas, and caters for a small number of students in each of the other two. Courses are also offered in a small number of subjects at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and GCE A level, some of which are available through open learning. The college offers an extensive range of qualifications accredited by the Open College of the North West at both stage A and stage B. General national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at intermediate and advanced level are offered in seven curriculum areas and at foundation level in two. National vocational

qualifications (NVQs) are offered in eight curriculum areas. The college provides modern apprenticeships, national traineeships and the full-time education and training option for New Deal students. It is an associate college of the University of Central Lancashire.

4 The senior management team comprises the principal, two vice-principals and the director of curriculum. The curriculum is managed through four units. The unit managers, together with the senior managers, form the college management team. The college employs 138 permanent members of staff on full-time or fractional contracts. It uses the services of 120 temporary part-time teachers employed by an agency.

5 The college's mission is 'to provide education for all' and to help its students to develop the skills and knowledge that will enable them to:

- be more effective and successful at work
- enjoy rich and satisfactory personal lives
- build a competitive local economy and a strong community.

6 To help students achieve this, the college seeks to:

- offer the widest possible range of programmes
- be responsive to the needs of the community including employers
- gain the respect and support of local people
- value and develop its staff and students
- maintain financial stability
- aim for excellence in all its activities.

Context

The Inspection

7 The college was inspected during the week beginning 4 October 1999. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. This included data on students' achievements for 1997 and 1998 that derived from the individualised student record (ISR). The college supplied retention and achievement data for 1999. Inspectors checked these against class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. The college was notified of the sample of its provision to be inspected about three months before the inspection. The inspection was carried out by 10 inspectors and an auditor, working for a total of 43 days. Inspectors observed 52 lessons, including tutorials, and examined students' work and documentation about the college and its courses. Inspectors observed a meeting of the governing body and held meetings with governors,

representatives of external institutions, college managers, staff and students. Inspectors also consulted the local training and enterprise council (TEC) about its relationships with the college. Three inspectors from the Training Standards Council (TSC) worked with the inspection team during the college inspection. The TSC inspectors concentrated on work-based training supported by the college in hairdressing. Where it was appropriate to the FEFC inspection framework, evidence gathered by TSC inspectors was taken into account when grading college provision.

8 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Of the 52 lessons inspected, 46% were judged to be good or outstanding and 8% were less than satisfactory. These percentages were below the averages of 65% and 6%, respectively, for all lessons observed during 1998-99.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level and GCSE	0	1	2	1	0	4
GNVQ	3	1	9	0	0	13
NVQ	2	3	3	1	0	9
Other vocational	3	8	6	1	0	18
Other*	2	1	4	1	0	8
Total (No.)	10	14	24	4	0	52
Total (%)	19	27	46	8	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99 (%)	20	45	29	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99:*

Chief inspector's annual report

*includes tutorials

Curriculum Areas

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

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Kendal College	9.8	81
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99	11.2	78

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

Curriculum Areas

Business

Grade 3

10 Inspectors observed 14 lessons, covering general business, administration and business information technology (IT) courses. They agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. They identified additional weaknesses, especially in students' achievements and teaching, and considered that some strengths were overstated.

Key strengths

- a choice of modes of study
- well-organised course documentation
- well-planned, work-related assignments
- improving retention rates on most courses
- the supply of IT and learning resources

Weaknesses

- slow progress in developing foundation and intermediate level programmes
- unsuitable teaching areas for a few lessons
- students' slow progress in achieving NVQ qualifications
- poor achievement rates on some secretarial skills and accounting programmes
- failure of teachers to check students' learning sufficiently in lessons

11 The college offers a variety of business courses for the local community. It has been slow to develop provision at levels 1 and 2, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report. There are opportunities for students who find it difficult to attend college to follow programmes of study as part of the college's open and distance learning provision, and two buses equipped with computers make it possible for students in outlying rural areas to undertake IT training. There is insufficient communication

between teachers of the college-based programmes and those who work in the IT buses or out in the community to ensure that subject expertise is effectively co-ordinated.

12 Inspectors found that the self-assessment report overstated the strength of teaching and learning and did not identify a number of weaknesses. For example, several of the lessons observed by inspectors were not planned to make the most appropriate use of time and, in others, teachers did not check students' learning. In contrast, in a particularly effective lesson for a group of adults, the teacher interspersed explanations to the whole class with opportunities for individuals to test their understanding by completing brief exercises printed on handouts. Course documentation is well organised. The learning materials that teachers use are in the main carefully designed. Packs of materials help students of administration and office skills to work at a pace of their own choosing. Assignments are well planned and are related to current working practices. Students' files show that some need further guidance on ways of organising the numerous handouts they receive. A few lessons take place in the learning resource centre in areas separated by low movable partitions and the noise from adjacent groups interferes with students' concentration.

13 In its self-assessment report, the college made few references to strengths or weaknesses in students' achievements. Action has been taken to address the poor retention rates in 1997 and 1998. Retention rates on most courses improved in 1999. Pass rates for advanced level GNVQ business courses are good, with all students who completed the course gaining the qualification in 1998 and 1999. Achievement rates on the integrated business technology programme exceeded national averages in all three years and were 100% last year. There have been marked improvements in achievements in the computer literacy and information technology programme.

Curriculum Areas

Achievements on NVQ courses are poorer. Some students take much longer than anticipated to achieve the qualifications. Actions taken to address this led to improvements in NVQ business administration and accountancy courses in 1999. Achievements on several of the individual secretarial skills awards remain poor. Teachers are generally appropriately qualified. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that arrangements for supporting and communicating with the many part-time staff who teach business subjects are inadequate; the college has recently begun to address the problem. The duties of course co-ordinators are not clearly defined; this causes particular problems for those part-time teachers who undertake such duties. The learning resource centre is well equipped. Students have ready access to computers and to up-to-date

software, and technician support is on hand. A business studies specialist in the centre provides advice for students on the resources they may need in order to complete assignments and on study skills.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Vocational awards (over 24 weeks)	1	Number of starters	215	109	288
		Retention (%)	71	91	87
		Achievement (%)	54	51	56
Computer literacy and information technology	1	Number of starters	737	743	383
		Retention (%)	87	87	94
		Achievement (%)	30	40	86
Integrated business technology	2	Number of starters	44	9	46
		Retention (%)	77	67	93
		Achievement (%)	65	67	100
Typewriting and wordprocessing awards	2	Number of starters	76	73	66
		Retention (%)	89	89	95
		Achievement (%)	35	52	62
NVQ awards	3	Number of starters	181	57	148
		Retention (%)	90	95	86
		Achievement (%)	40	29	65
GNVQ advanced business	3	Number of starters	21	21	8
		Retention (%)	57	57	88
		Achievement (%)	73	100	100

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

Curriculum Areas

Hospitality and Catering, Leisure and Tourism

Grade 3

14 Inspectors observed 11 lessons, covering the range of courses in the programme area. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report but considered that some of the aspects identified as strengths were no more than examples of routine practice. The quality of teaching and learning was overstated and some weaknesses, particularly those related to students' achievements, were given insufficient weight or were omitted.

Key strengths

- a broad range of courses for hospitality and catering students
- well-planned skills development and tutorial programmes for craft students
- well-constructed portfolios of catering students
- a pleasant training restaurant and well-equipped kitchens

Weaknesses

- declining enrolments
- dull teaching in many lessons
- poor retention on some courses
- many students not achieving qualifications within the agreed time

15 The college offers a broad range of courses in hospitality and catering, and GNVQ intermediate and advanced levels in leisure and tourism. A small amount of training and assessment is carried out on employers' premises. Enrolments in the programme area are currently in decline. Course teams meet regularly, but do so in isolation. There are no arrangements for sharing good practice across programmes. Course reviews take place annually, but vary in their degree of rigour.

16 Inspectors could not agree that the quality of teaching and learning was a strength. Teachers do not always make the objectives of lessons clear to students. This creates confusion when a new topic is introduced in the course of a lesson. A majority of lessons are dull. In some, teachers make too few attempts to involve students in discussions and other activities. Some handouts and visual aids are of poor quality. Little use is made of resource-based learning materials other than those developed for basic and intermediate level hygiene courses. There is some good practice. For example, in a particularly imaginative GNVQ advanced level lesson, students carried out a number of tasks to determine the external factors affecting the financial performance of a business. The teacher had designed a series of visual prompts to encourage discussion. Students were encouraged to take notes. Each then produced a list of relevant factors. Later, working in small groups, they compared and discussed their lists. Finally, they completed an exercise to test their recall of what the teacher had told them at the start of the lesson. Practical skills are more successfully taught than theory. All craft students follow a thorough 10-week skills development programme during each year of their course, which is supplemented by a programme of effective tutorials. The development and assessment of key skills are particularly well co-ordinated on hospitality and catering GNVQ programmes. Students of leisure and tourism have the opportunity to apply theory to practice, during a short period of work experience in year one of the advanced programme.

17 Catering students work safely and competently in the kitchens and restaurant. Their portfolios are well organised, and demonstrate good use of photographic evidence and IT skills. Teachers do not provide sufficient comments on marked work to guide students towards improvement in their performance. Assessment targets are insufficiently precise.

Curriculum Areas

18 Retention is poor on the majority of courses. For example, in 1998, retention on the GNVQ advanced level hospitality and catering course was 20% below the average for the sector. On the advanced level leisure and tourism course retention rates in 1999 fell by 23% in comparison with the previous year. In 1997, retention rates on NVQ level 2 courses were 14% below the average for the sector and dipped again in 1999. Many students do not complete their programmes within the agreed time, and students' achievements on many courses are below the average for the sector. Achievements were particularly poor on the GNVQ advanced level hospitality and catering programme and on NVQ level 2 and level 3 programmes in 1997 and 1998. The improvements in 1999 need to be set against a fall in the number of students and low rates of retention on level 2 courses.

19 There are good specialist resources for hospitality and catering courses, a strength which is noted in the self-assessment report. The kitchens are well equipped and there is a pleasant training restaurant. There is no realistic work environment for students of leisure and tourism, and the view-data facility is not available for much of the time. Two general classrooms are of a very poor standard and do not represent an appropriate learning environment. Teachers have relevant vocational qualifications and most have assessor and teaching qualifications. Some have recently undertaken short periods of industrial updating.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
NVQ	2	Number of starters	125	73	40
		Retention (%)	61	70	63
		Achievement (%)	53	39	100
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	Number of starters	+	+	10
		Retention (%)	+	+	90
		Achievement (%)	+	+	57
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism	3	Number of starters	16	20	15
		Retention (%)	75	90	67
		Achievement (%)	64	60	100
GNVQ advanced hospitality and catering	3	Number of starters	7	13	*
		Retention (%)	71	54	*
		Achievement (%)	60	43	*
NVQ	3	Number of starters	51	36	8
		Retention (%)	80	80	100
		Achievement (%)	70	63	100

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

*course did not recruit

+course introduced in 1998-99

Curriculum Areas

Art, Craft and Design

Grade 2

20 Inspectors observed 11 lessons in art, design, performing arts, creative crafts and craft skills. They agreed with many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report but considered that some were overstated. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment of weaknesses in the provision.

Key strengths

- good progression to relevant employment and higher education
- good retention and achievement on part-time courses
- well-developed key skills development and assessment in GNVQ programmes
- well-planned, creative and challenging assignments and projects
- good levels of guidance and support for students

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on some full-time courses
- poor teaching and learning and low retention rates in popular music
- lack of appropriate planning in some lessons
- insufficient curriculum planning development

21 The college offers full-time provision at levels 2 and 3 in art, music and performing arts and at level 3 in popular music. There is a successful pre-degree foundation course in art and design and full-time and part-time provision in furniture making and restoration. The college recently started to provide courses in popular music, and at first allowed many students to enrol who had little experience of playing an instrument. The self-assessment report recognised this as a significant weakness.

22 Inspectors agreed that standards of teaching and learning are generally good. They are at their weakest in music and on full-time courses where students studying at different levels are combined in one group. Students speak highly of their courses, and are enthusiastic about their work and the support they receive from their tutors. Most lessons are well planned, with clearly defined aims and objectives that are shared with students. Key skills lessons for GNVQ students are a particular strength, and are developed by a tutor who works closely with course teams. In the best lessons, teachers took care to ensure that all students were able to understand difficult concepts. For example, in a lesson on the Greek theatre, the teacher translated the story of Medea into contemporary terms to help students grasp the definition of tragedy. In the poorer lessons, there was a lack of structure and too little attention was paid to checking and consolidating students' learning. Teachers work hard to provide relevant work experience for full-time students. They maintain strong links with local businesses which they use to good effect. For example, drama students are teamed up with a professional storyteller. Students of dance work with a professional company for a week and have the opportunity to take part in a professional performance. This imaginative approach is also apparent in the planning of assignments and projects. Most are well designed and elicit creative, individual responses which lead to good-quality work. Cross-fertilisation between specialist areas, shared projects and many community-based ventures make important contributions to both the personal and artistic development of students.

23 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that the quality of students' work and their progression to jobs and further study were significant strengths. A significant number of students on part-time courses progress to full-time courses in further or higher education or to employment related to the arts. A successful student from the creative

Curriculum Areas

studies embroidery course was runner-up for the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) gold medal award and has set up a professional studio. Students of furniture craft attract private commissions even before qualifying. The self-assessment report recognises that courses in popular music and some in the performing arts have retention rates that are below the average for the sector. In other areas, retention and achievement are satisfactory or better. The pre-degree foundation course and the furniture craft course both have retention and achievement rates which are consistently above the average for the sector. Retention and achievement rates on part-time courses are also good.

24 Courses in the programme area are housed in a building dating from 1912. Physical resources are adequate. They have recently been improved by the purchase of three-dimensional equipment and by the setting up of a performing arts workshop. There are well-organised and striking displays of students'

work. With a few exceptions, courses are well staffed. Many teachers work part time. Their professional expertise is of great value, but in some areas they have neither the time nor the experience to support, manage and develop the curriculum.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in art, craft and design, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
C&G furniture craft studies	3	Number of starters	+	12	11
		Retention (%)	+	100	82
		Achievement (%)	+	75	78
BTEC national foundation and GNVQ advanced	3	Number of starters	11	22	32
		Retention (%)	85	82	70
		Achievement (%)	100	86	81
Open College B units	3	Number of starters	46	51	75
		Retention (%)	46	85	84
		Achievement (%)	43	78	87
Open College A units	3	Number of starters	184	329	246
		Retention (%)	70	94	86
		Achievement (%)	75	45	87

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)
+course introduced in 1997-98

Curriculum Areas

Humanities, comprising English, Modern Foreign Languages and Teacher Education

Grade 3

25 Inspectors observed 11 lessons in modern foreign languages, English and the C&G course for teachers in further education. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report but considered that some were overstated. Weaknesses, particularly in teaching and learning, were given too little weight or were not recognised.

Key strengths

- a broad range of modern language courses offering opportunities for progression
- good teaching in English and teacher education courses
- well-managed and successful teacher education

Weaknesses

- ineffective management of modern language courses
- poor achievements on modern language courses
- low levels of retention on the majority of courses

26 Provision in modern languages is extensive. The college offers courses accredited by the Open College Network at three levels in French, German, and Spanish. There are also courses at GCE A level in English language and in GCSE English, French and German. Though there are effective schemes of work for all courses, however, courses in foreign languages are otherwise not well managed. The teachers, who are all on part-time contracts, have little

opportunity to meet, and to develop and share good practice. The absence of a marking policy in modern languages means that work is not graded and corrected in a consistent way. The self-assessment report notes the weakness. The C&G course for teachers in further education and courses in English are better managed, with good communication between teachers.

27 Most teaching is satisfactory or better. Lessons are well structured, and handouts and other teaching materials are of good quality. Teachers use a number of different methods to promote learning, including work in pairs and groups, simulations and role-playing, presentations by students and effective directed questioning of students. For example, in a particularly interesting GCE A level English language lesson, the teacher succeeded in introducing students to the activity of recasting a written text into another genre by using carefully chosen examples and well-constructed exercises. In another good lesson, students of teacher education engaged in an enthusiastic and successful group discussion on the best ways of making presentations. The teacher's careful preparation was evident. In a French class for beginners, at a very early stage of the course, the teacher skilfully used questions to spur students into speaking the foreign language. Inspectors identified a number of weaknesses that were not identified in the self-assessment report. In the majority of language lessons, teachers lapsed too readily into English and did not make sufficient use of the language being learned for students to see it as a normal means of communication. In a minority of lessons, teachers failed to involve the less willing students in the work. One particularly unsuccessful lesson was knowingly planned to build on work that very few students had completed and proved a waste of time for most of the class.

Curriculum Areas

28 Students' oral work both on teacher education courses and on modern language courses for adults is characterised by enthusiasm and enjoyment. Most of their written work is well organised and of an appropriate standard. A few pieces are of a particularly good standard. For example, students of GCE A level English presented the story of two World War II lovers through a series of letters. They successfully blurred the boundaries between history and literature and effectively demonstrated their understanding of language theory and of textual analysis. GCSE pass rates in modern languages and English were well above the average for the sector, with 86% and 67%, respectively, of students achieving grades C or above in 1999. Pass rates on the C&G course for teachers in further education have been above the average for the sector throughout the three years from 1997 to 1999. Retention improved from 78% in 1997 to 94% in 1999. Many students who start to learn a modern language in the college progress to higher levels. However, pass rates on Open College Network modern language courses are poor. For example, in 1999 level 1 courses had a 49% pass rate. In 1997 and 1998, the pass rates for level 2 courses were 64% and 60%, respectively. This weakness is not identified in the self-assessment report. While GCE A level English results in 1997 and 1998 were good, the pass rate in 1999 dropped to 54%. Retention rates on Open College Network courses and the GCE A level English course are poor. The self-assessment report did not comment in sufficient detail on students' performance.

29 With two exceptions, all teachers in the programme area have a teaching qualification. Three of the teachers of modern languages are native speakers. English and teacher education courses have well-resourced base rooms. Modern language classes take place in general classrooms, which, though spacious and well furnished, lack any form of visual display to help students learn. The library's stock of books in English and modern foreign languages is inadequate.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of achievement and retention rates in humanities, comprising English, modern foreign languages and teacher education, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Open College Network language proficiency	1	Number of starters	66	82	88
		Retention (%)	68	57	44
		Achievement (%)	62	70	49
Open College Network language proficiency	2	Number of starters	64	66	94
		Retention (%)	69	80	59
		Achievement (%)	64	60	69
GCSE English	2	Number of starters	32	35	29
		Retention (%)	59	38	72
		Achievement (%)	42	38	67
GCSE modern languages	2	Number of starters	20	18	17
		Retention (%)	80	100	88
		Achievement (%)	44	78	86
Open College Network language proficiency	3	Number of starters	+	26	52
		Retention (%)	+	73	54
		Achievement (%)	+	74	75
GCE A level English	3	Number of starters	16	26	20
		Retention (%)	44	50	65
		Achievement (%)	86	77	54
C&G teacher education	3	Number of starters	40	37	33
		Retention (%)	78	78	94
		Achievement (%)	80	93	87

*Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)
+course introduced in 1997-98*

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 3

30 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. At the time of the inspection the college had taken effective action to remedy some weaknesses. However, inspectors judged that some strengths were overstated and they identified further weaknesses.

Key strengths

- well-managed admissions procedures
- imaginative guidance practices to encourage wider participation
- well-planned and thoroughly monitored induction activities
- systematic progress reviews for full-time students
- good opportunities for work experience

Weaknesses

- inadequate co-ordination of the different aspects of student support
- some poor tutorial work
- poorly promoted support for part-time students
- little reporting to parents of younger students

31 Since the last inspection, the college has improved the support it gives to students and is taking action to remedy weaknesses identified through self-assessment. Inspectors agreed that some elements of support, such as admissions, initial guidance and induction are well managed, though it is too early to assess whether they are having an impact on improving retention and achievement. A weakness not identified in the self-assessment report is the absence of co-ordination of all of the activities that contribute to support for students.

32 Links with partner schools and the local careers company ensure that pupils in year 11 have access to appropriate information and advice. School liaison activities include talks by current and recent students of the college. Admissions procedures are clear and include guidelines for interviewers. A centralised admissions service arranges guidance interviews with subject tutors for prospective full-time students. Adults receive guidance mainly through visiting the college's advice and guidance centre. Initial enquiries are dealt with promptly and efficiently. The self-assessment report identifies the lack of record-keeping relating to the number of enquiries converted into enrolments as a weakness. This is now being addressed. Creative guidance activities aimed at encouraging wider participation include the use of a 'studybus', which takes information and advice to prospective students in rural areas. In partnership with a health trust, the college has developed effective guidance, support and bridging provision in the community for students with mental health difficulties.

33 There is a comprehensive induction programme. It is rigorously monitored and is reviewed annually in the light of students' evaluations. All students receive an informative student handbook and charter. There is a well-designed induction pack which is issued to all students who enrol late.

34 Inspectors identified weaknesses in tutorial provision. Tutorial work is not always well planned and well managed. Some full-time students have individual tutorials twice a term and a programme of group tutorials. Others do not. The tutorial programme is not rigorously evaluated. The progress of full-time students, including their attendance, is systematically reviewed. The progress of part-time students, particularly those with multiple learning goals, is not monitored, and their entitlement to tutorial support is neither clearly stated nor vigorously promoted. Teachers have little

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contact with the parents of younger students. Feedback from parents identifies that they would welcome progress reports. This weakness was not recognised in the college self-assessment report.

35 A cross-college screening programme identifies the additional learning support needs of full-time students. Its co-ordinator is also alerted to their support needs through application forms, self-referrals and tutor referrals, and through information received from staff who teach key skills. The proportion of students taking up the offer of additional support is low, at around 50%, and its impact on helping them to achieve their learning goals is not assessed. Very few part-time students seek or receive additional learning support. The support given to students with disabilities is effective.

36 All students receive the offer of an individual careers interview. They are given insufficient encouragement to attend and take-up is poor, at around only 100 students a year. An adviser from the local careers company also offers support to personal tutors for careers education, and contributes to induction and tutorial programmes. The careers library in the main library has up-to-date resources. Work experience is well co-ordinated, and is offered to all full-time students. Destination data are collected efficiently, but are not analysed in sufficient detail to be useful.

37 Students have access to ample advice on personal and welfare matters. Counselling is provided by qualified counsellors contracted by the college from a health trust. There is specialist support for students with mental health difficulties. The staff-student liaison officer and personal tutors provide informal welfare advice. The students' union is one of a number of sources of financial advice. The college's nursery is open throughout the year. It is open to the public, but nearly all the parents who use it are students of the college. They speak highly of the service it provides in making

it possible for them to attend college. The staff-student liaison officer organises and actively promotes a programme of additional curricular activities, including sports, social events, theatre trips, visiting performers, health promotion and charity events. Students' views are sought to develop the programme.

General Resources

Grade 2

38 The college's accommodation and learning resources have improved since the last inspection. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths in the self-assessment report, but considered that insufficient attention had been given to some weaknesses.

Key strengths

- clean and well-maintained buildings
- efficient use of space
- modern realistic working environments
- up-to-date computing facilities on the two main campuses
- a well-equipped resource centre

Weaknesses

- restrictions on access for people with mobility difficulties
- poor library facilities on some sites

39 The college operates from five campuses in Kendal. The bulk of the students are based at the purpose-built Milnthorpe Road campus, which dates from 1971. Most of the remaining students work in the 80-year-old Allen building. Wood occupations are based in another older building at Union Street. The enterprise centre is in a former school and recently the college has set up a performing arts and popular music practice studio in a redundant commercial building. The college has made imaginative use of limited resources to improve its accommodation, and, as the self-assessment report notes, there is efficient use of space.

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40 The Milnthorpe Road and Allen campuses provide pleasant learning environments. The buildings are kept very clean and are well maintained. Most classrooms are carpeted and have modern furniture and appropriate teaching aids. They provide functional but uninspiring teaching accommodation and lack visual displays. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the workshops and other realistic working environments are equipped to reflect current industrial practice. Employers have sponsored some of the improvements that have taken place. For example, manufacturers of hair products have partially funded the refurbishment of the hairdressing and beauty therapy salons, and insurance companies have donated some almost new cars for motor vehicle studies. The enterprise centre provides an excellent environment for courses for external clients. Most staff workrooms are of a good standard and are well equipped, but a few are overcrowded.

41 Since the last inspection the college has considerably improved its computing facilities. For example, in the last three years it has spent over £325,000 on new computer hardware and software. College systems are networked and most staff can access the network in their staff rooms. The ratio of full-time equivalent students to computers is similar to the average ratio for the sector according to *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*. There is a good level of technical support. All full-time students may use electronic mail and the Internet free of charge. Open access IT facilities in the resource centre at the main site are available for long hours during the week and on Saturday mornings. However, students at the Union Street campus are without access to computers on site. The college has three mobile training vehicles, two of which are equipped to provide IT training, short courses and open learning 'drop-in' facilities. The self-assessment report identifies these strengths in the college's IT provision.

42 The resource centre on the main campus provides a well-used and pleasant working environment. It has ample study spaces, but students complain that at times it is noisy. Since the last inspection the college has spent large sums on increasing the stocks of books and periodicals. There is a wide range of journals, CD-ROMs and videos. The centre's staff have produced subject-specific learning materials, and work with individual students. Library and learning resource provision on the remaining campuses is poorer. The resource centre in the Allen building has short opening hours and insufficient study spaces. Students at Union Street have no access to the technical information they need to draw on for their studies. The self-assessment report does not acknowledge these weaknesses. All staff have ready access to central reprographic and audiovisual facilities, with technician support.

43 The college's self-assessment recognises as a significant weakness the impossibility of access to parts of the college for people with mobility difficulties. They can reach most parts of the Milnthorpe campus, although some corridors are too narrow to admit wheelchairs. There is no access to the reception area and teaching rooms on the first floor of the Allen building. The Milnthorpe campus provides well for the social and recreational needs of students. The refectory provides good-quality food at reasonable prices and its opening hours are long. The fitness centre is well equipped and the college has arranged for students to have free entry to the swimming pool at the local leisure centre. There are no outdoor sports facilities. On the Allen campus there are no areas where students can meet socially other than in a small canteen which is closed for much of the day.

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Quality Assurance

Grade 4

44 Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. They identified additional weaknesses and considered that several strengths were overstated.

Key strengths

- a comprehensive quality assurance framework
- a good range of staff development linked to strategic objectives

Weaknesses

- little progress in addressing issues from the previous inspection
- tenuous links between quality assurance processes
- ineffective analysis and use of data
- insufficiently thorough performance review
- inadequate monitoring of action plans
- an insufficiently rigorous system of lesson observations

45 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college has developed a comprehensive quality framework which identifies standards of performance across all areas. Some elements of the framework are at an early stage of development, and they are insufficiently linked. Reports on matters affecting quality assurance go to the college's management team, the academic board, and to the personnel and quality subcommittee, but no single body has responsibility for driving improvements and for monitoring and evaluating the progress made towards completing the many actions that are identified. Performance indicators have recently been identified for the college but in many areas the targets are not challenging enough.

46 The quality assurance procedures cover all aspects of the college's work, although the systems for assuring the quality of franchised provision are not comparable with those for the rest of the college. The evaluation of the effectiveness of such courses is insufficiently rigorous. The college recently completed an internal audit of compliance against the quality standards and identified where further action is needed. The audit process is underdeveloped. For example, it does not assess compliance of working practices with the college's quality policies and thus does not enable an effective review process to take place. The record-keeping associated with quality assurance is not always implemented and in many areas records are incomplete.

47 The last inspection report identified weaknesses in the quality of course review and evaluation. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that course teams do not use a standardised approach and do not all draw on the same information. Some make use of feedback from students, obtained from questionnaires. The college has recognised the need to improve the quality of the questionnaires and has recently introduced student focus groups to supplement the feedback obtained. Achievement data are used, but are not fully analysed to establish trends. There are few comparisons with national benchmarks. The college's self-assessment report recognises this as a weakness. Reviews do not take sufficient account of information from lesson observations, customer complaints and student questionnaires. Action plans arising from reviews are not systematically followed through and monitored. Reviews of development plans for the curriculum units into which courses are grouped contain actions linked to the college's strategic objectives. The actions arising out of the reviews are not sufficiently focused on teaching and learning and the continuous improvement of students' achievements.

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48 The college's self-assessment report was the second that it had produced. For the first time in 1999 course teams assessed their performance in terms of strengths and weaknesses. Staff received training to help them carry out self-assessment and all teams produced reports which fed into the self-assessment report used for the inspection. Many of the strengths and weaknesses in both the team reports and the composite report are in the form of statements rather than judgements, and the great majority of provision is too generously graded. The action plans, which form a part of both the team reports and the composite report, do not address all of the weaknesses that were identified. This makes it difficult for the self-assessment process to inform strategic planning. There is no common system for following up self-assessment and for monitoring action plans.

49 In 1998-99, the college strengthened its programme of lesson observations, and the majority of teachers were observed at least once. The standards set are insufficiently rigorous. The college judged 72% of lessons to be good or outstanding; in contrast, inspectors awarded grades 1 and 2 to only 46% of lessons. The college draws up development plans to help to improve performance only for full-time teachers whose teaching is judged to be weak. The college's policy is for teachers whose lessons are judged to be good or satisfactory also to have action plans to help them improve their performance, but this does not happen. There is no sharing of examples of good practice within or across curriculum areas, and the findings from lesson observations do not adequately inform self-assessment. Information from lesson observations does not inform appraisals.

50 All members of the college's staff have the opportunity to take part in training and development activities, many of which are related to curriculum development. The profile of staff development activities is reviewed

against the college's strategic aims and objectives. There is little evaluation of the effectiveness of staff development except during appraisal. The college achieved the Investors in People standard in 1997.

Governance

Grade 3

51 The inspection team agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They identified a number of additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- strong commitment to the college and an open style of governance
- effective input to strategic planning
- close monitoring of the college's financial performance

Weaknesses

- slowness in reacting to the need to drive up student achievement rates
- failure of some practice to accord with standing orders
- lack of use of performance indicators for internal and external audit

52 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. The corporation has 16 members, including a member of staff and a student. It is moving quickly to revise its membership in line with the newly determined categories, and it has adopted the modified instrument and articles of government. The current governors have appropriate expertise. Between them they have experience of

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personnel management, the leisure and tourism industry, education, and community work, and possess legal, financial, property management and general business skills. The corporation does not at present have a formal and publicly available procedure for filling vacancies. New governors are prepared for their role with the help of an induction pack, a tour of the college and meetings with senior staff. Other training is mainly provided through briefings from unit managers prior to corporation meetings and through governors attending external courses. Governors' training needs are assessed through an annual questionnaire. They also use the questionnaire as a means of evaluating their performance.

53 Governors are committed to the college and take an active interest in the issues currently facing further education. Corporation business is conducted in an open fashion. Staff are invited to attend corporation meetings as observers. The chair writes a commentary for the college newsletter following each corporation meeting on the issues he considers to be of interest. Corporation and committee minutes and papers are available for inspection in the college's library and on the college intranet. Confidential minuting of corporation and committee business is kept to a minimum. The college holds an annual public meeting.

54 The corporation met seven times in 1998-99. There is a high level of attendance at full meetings, and the clerk to the corporation ensures that individual attendance is monitored. Governors who miss three meetings in succession are replaced. The governors play a full role in strategic planning and devote one of their meetings to considering the college's strategic objectives. The principal provides regular reports on the progress made against the college's operating statements. The chair carries out an annual appraisal of the principal and the clerk. Until recently, there has been too strong a focus in corporation meetings on monitoring funding performance at the expense

of consideration of the curriculum and of discussions on students' achievements. The corporation has promoted the college as a community resource and has been slow to grasp the necessity of taking vigorous action to ensure that students complete their courses and gain the qualifications for which they have enrolled.

55 The corporation is supported by five committees: finance and property; personnel and quality; audit; remuneration; and search. There is also a governor on the academic board. Standing orders are not always complied with and are in need of some revision. The finance and property committee met on five occasions in 1998-99; six meetings are scheduled in the standing orders. Nevertheless, the committee closely monitored the college's management accounts. The audit committee met on only two occasions in 1998-99 and its members did not consider the setting of performance indicators for the internal and external auditors and did not give sufficiently detailed consideration to the *Audit Code of Practice*. The chair of the corporation attends meetings of the audit committee, which compromises its independence. The clerk to the corporation, who is also the director of resources, presents his own reports to both the corporation and the finance and property committee. This is not in line with best practice. The corporation has a code of conduct, which is in need of revision, and a 'whistleblowing' procedure. All governors and appropriate members of the college's senior management team have completed a register of interests.

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Management

Grade 4

56 Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. However, they considered that the report overstated a number of strengths, and they identified further weaknesses.

Key strengths

- the involvement of staff at all levels in strategic planning
- significant improvements in financial performance since the last inspection

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped links between strategic and operational planning
- poor levels of achievement on many programmes
- inadequacies in management information
- ineffective management in a number of curriculum areas
- unclear roles and targets for course managers

57 Inspectors agreed with the college's claim that strategic planning takes place within a clearly defined cycle and involves consultation with all staff. Planning is informed by market information from a number of sources, some specifically commissioned. There has been significant expansion, particularly in provision for part-time students, in line with the college's mission to 'provide education for all'. However, ambitious targets for growth set in 1997 have not been met and provision at level 1 and below is underdeveloped. The links between strategic and operational planning are insufficiently strong. For example, although almost half of the corporate objectives in the current strategic plan relate to the curriculum, the associated

operating statement does not make clear how most of them will be achieved nor how progress towards them will be monitored.

58 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that not all staff have hitherto complied fully with college policies and procedures, for example, in relation to students' attendance and punctuality. Since the report was produced there has been some improvement, and in the lessons observed attendance and punctuality were satisfactory.

59 Despite improvements since the last inspection, students' achievements on most of the college's programmes are poor. Too often those who achieve a qualification do so long after the target date in their learning agreement with the college. Some achievements go unrecorded. Teachers have little trust in the accuracy of the management information with which they are supplied and use their own records when planning or assessing the quality of provision. They do not fully take into account national benchmarking data when analysing their students' performance and setting targets. These are significant weaknesses which do not appear in the self-assessment report. The college has recently engaged an external agency to maintain its students' records.

60 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that communications between the college's permanent members of staff are good. Electronic mail is widely used. The senior management team and the college management team meet regularly. However, agreed actions are not always satisfactorily followed through. Unit managers, curriculum co-ordinators and non-teaching co-ordinators, who manage support areas of the college, also hold regular meetings with their teams. Since the last inspection the college has successfully met its objective of reducing staffing costs. This has largely been achieved by reducing the number of full-time permanent staff and by drawing on the services of large numbers of part-time staff

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who are employed by an agency. The college recognises that it has difficulty in maintaining good communications with its part-time teachers. In an effort to offset this it offers them payment to attend team meetings, but few take up the offer. Senior managers, especially the principal, have established links between the college, the local community and some key national organisations.

61 Managers have wide-ranging roles. The unit managers have extensive responsibilities for which they are not yet fully trained. In some curriculum areas the demands of effective communication with, and management of, part-time teachers place too heavy a burden on the relatively small numbers of permanent staff. Some part-time teachers are course leaders. There are no clear job descriptions for course leaders and their roles lack clarity. This hampers target-setting and appraisal.

62 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. The college is financially sound. It has substantially improved its financial position since the last inspection. Small operating surpluses have been achieved in the last two years and similar surpluses are expected over the period of the current three-year financial forecast. The average level of funding of £16.20 in 1998-99 is low. The college has an appropriately qualified and experienced finance team. Financial objectives are broadly based and not clearly stated in the strategic plan. The financial forecast was not prepared in time for it to be approved by the corporation before it had to be submitted to the FEFC. The financial regulations were recently updated and include a fraud and irregularity procedure, but they have not been reviewed by the internal auditors. The finance and property committee and the senior management team review the management accounts and appropriate cashflow forecasts monthly. The management accounts do not include financial details for the current month

and the commentary is unhelpfully brief.

Governors have questioned the effectiveness of reporting on the enterprise unit. The latest business plan reflects a consequent refocus of the function of the enterprise unit. The resources made available for internal audit are not extensive.

Conclusions

63 The college's self-assessment report was the second it had produced. It was clearly laid out and concise and provided a useful basis for planning the inspection. It contained examples of good practice and identified actions both to improve strengths and to tackle weaknesses. It was updated shortly before the inspection. Most of the judgements in the report were supported by reference to sources of evidence rather than to the evidence itself. Examples of routine practice were frequently represented as strengths. The report contained judgements on teaching and learning but few judgements on students' achievements. Inspectors concluded that the college overstated the quality of most of the aspects of its provision and found weaknesses not identified by the college in all but one area.

64 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 1999)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	1
16-18 years	12
19-24 years	17
25+ years	68
Not known	2
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 1999)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Level 1 (foundation)	14
Level 2 (intermediate)	38
Level 3 (advanced)	19
Level 4/5 (higher)	6
Non-schedule 2	23
Total	100

Source: college data

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

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	44	1,186	19
Engineering	121	317	7
Business	72	537	9
Hotel and catering	62	1,882	30
Health and community care	212	1,052	19
Art and design	89	128	3
Humanities	44	761	12
Basic education	13	31	1
Total	657	5,894	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 3% 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 1999)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	46	0	0	46
Supporting direct learning contact	13	0	0	13
Other support	48	0	0	48
Total	107	0	0	107

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£4,028,000	£4,206,000	£4,778,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£18.22	£14.99	£16.20
Payroll as a proportion of income	64%	63%	59%
Achievement of funding target	142%	101%	100%
Diversity of income	17%	20%	20%
Operating surplus	£2,000	£3,000	£4,000

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

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

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

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

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

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

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
1	Number of starters	595	446	143	878	689	369
	Retention (%)	76	81	82	80	83	76
	Achievement (%)	12	11	58	33	30	48
2	Number of starters	538	482	287	728	716	784
	Retention (%)	67	73	78	73	84	89
	Achievement (%)	27	36	61	50	36	47
3	Number of starters	927	335	299	2,279	684	843
	Retention (%)	78	73	78	89	86	90
	Achievement (%)	14	65	69	17	42	64
4 or 5	Number of starters	20	7	4	199	46	73
	Retention (%)	90	73	50	85	89	90
	Achievement (%)	12	65	50	30	42	37
Short courses	Number of starters	448	681	575	3,981	5,456	4,007
	Retention (%)	85	94	93	95	98	97
	Achievement (%)	64	53	68	77	80	76
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	0	0	0	0	0	21
	Retention (%)	0	0	0	0	0	-
	Achievement (%)	0	0	0	0	0	-

Source: ISR

-ISR data not collected

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