

Leeds College of Music

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

Leeds College of Music

Yorkshire and Humberside Region

Inspected May 2000

Leeds College of Music is the only specialist college of music in the further education sector. Almost half of the college's full-time students enrol on higher education courses. Most students come from outside Leeds. A small proportion of the further education students are from overseas. The college works closely with the other seven further education colleges in Leeds and is a member of the West Yorkshire consortium of further education colleges. It is a member of the Association of European Conservatoires. The self-assessment report the college drew up in preparation for the inspection was the second it has produced. All staff were involved in its production. Inspectors found the self-assessment report helpful to them in their planning and implementation of the inspection.

The college provides a distinctive range of courses in music and associated technologies which meet the needs of school-leavers and those seeking access to higher education and employment in the music industry. The college has made good use of governors' extensive expertise and experience. Governors have a close involvement in setting the strategic direction and monitoring the progress of the college. Management is effective. The strategic planning process is systematic. Accommodation

is particularly good and is used efficiently. Much of it is easily accessible to those with restricted mobility. Library and specialist music resources are excellent. Students benefit from the range and depth of teachers' professional expertise. Much of the teaching is good. Students' work is of a high standard and the college provides many opportunities for performance. Although pass rates are high in music technology programmes, retention rates are poor. Good welfare and counselling advice is available to students. The college should improve: aspects of governance; the maintenance of records on students; student retention rates on a number of courses; aspects of quality assurance; the learning experience for students on the preliminary course; tutorial practice and the arrangements for additional learning support. The college should also fully implement the staff appraisal system.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Further education music technology programmes	3	Support for students	2
Further education music programmes	2	General resources	1
		Quality assurance	3
		Governance	2
		Management	2

The College and its Mission

1 Leeds College of Music is a specialist college with approximately 769 full-time and 2,204 part-time students on further and higher education courses. The college was established in 1971. Its origins date back to 1961 when Leeds City Council created a music centre. The college occupies purpose-built accommodation at Quarry Hill close to the centre of the city. This building was erected in 1997. The West Yorkshire Playhouse and the Yorkshire Dance Centre are nearby. A new concert hall development is being planned, in conjunction with Leeds City Council and a national broadcasting corporation for use in the academic year 2001-02. The college provides some technology classes at the East Leeds Family Learning Centre, situated some 3 miles away.

2 The college offers provision in four of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) programme areas. Its courses range from certificate and national diploma to postgraduate level. Further education courses include those leading to national diplomas in music techniques and practice, music technology, commercial music production and management, popular music, construction and repair of musical instruments, national certificate in DJ technology, general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE), and a preliminary course and the access to higher education course. Until 1998-99, the FEFC funded the majority of the college's provision. As a result of funding changes, this is no longer the case, and it now funds less than half; most of the remainder is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). The college has been successful in increasing the number of students, particularly on its higher education courses. Leeds City Council funds some community education courses and some are self-funding.

3 In 1999-2000, there were 432 full-time and 31 part-time students on further education courses. The college is organised into four areas: higher education, further education music, further education music technology, and community education. The director of studies is responsible for the management of the curriculum and is assisted by a head of student support, and two heads of studies who between them have responsibility for performance, quality assurance and staff development. The senior management team consists of the principal, the director of studies, the director of resources and the director of finance. In November 1999, the college employed 39 full-time equivalent teachers and 48 full-time equivalent support staff.

4 The college plays a significant role in the cultural life of Leeds. There are close links with the neighbouring Leeds Centre for Indian Music and Dance and the college hosts an annual programme of concerts held in the college's recital room and in venues throughout the city. The college has also established the annual jazz educators' conference at which local, national, and international speakers present papers. The college offers degree and postgraduate courses validated by Leeds University. Recently, the Open University has validated a four-year bachelor of music degree. The college also has a long-standing partnership with Leeds Metropolitan University to offer joint degrees incorporating music technology. The city of Leeds has one of the largest labour markets in the United Kingdom. Approximately 390,000 people are in employment out of a total population of almost three-quarters of a million. The services sector employs 78% of the workforce. Unemployment, at approximately 4.6%, is lower than the regional and national averages. The number of long-term unemployed persons is high, however, and there are areas of the inner city where the unemployment rate is over 10%.

Context

5 Through its mission statement, the college is committed to providing good education and training for musicians, music teachers and associated technologists. The college aims to fulfil its mission by offering a broad range of courses to students with a wide range of abilities. Students with little or no previous experience may follow courses in the college leading to degree level and beyond. The college believes it is beneficial for students at different levels within further and higher education, to work together.

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected in May 2000. Inspectors had previously considered the college's self-assessment report and reviewed information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. The college was notified of the sample of its provision to be inspected approximately two months before the inspection. The inspection was carried out by nine inspectors and an auditor over a total of 34 days. Inspectors observed 24 lessons. They examined students' work and documentation relating to courses. Meetings were held with governors, managers, teachers, support staff,

students and others with an interest in the college. Data for 1997 and 1998 were taken from the FEFC's individualised student record (ISR). Some data proved to be unreliable. Consequently, the report contains some incomplete tables of students' achievements. College data on rates of retention and achievement for students for 1999 were validated by inspectors. They used primary sources such as course registers and pass lists issued by awarding bodies. Most data were reliable. The data for a few courses, particularly those in music technology, were incomplete.

7 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Of the lessons inspected, 67% were good or outstanding. This figure is slightly above the average of 65% for all lessons observed by inspectors in 1998-99.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
Vocational advanced*	4	8	6	0	1	19
Other ⁺	0	4	1	0	0	5
Total (No)	4	12	7	0	1	24
Total (%)	17	50	29	0	4	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 GCE A level lessons

⁺includes access to higher education and GCSE

Context

8 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 (%)
Leeds College of Music	12.3	77
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

Further Education Music Technology Programmes

Grade 3

9 Inspectors observed 13 lessons in music technology, popular music, commercial music and DJ technology. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but considered that weaknesses relating to retention rates had been underestimated.

Key strengths

- high pass rates on all courses
- good level of students' participation in a wide range of music events
- up-to-date industrial expertise of teachers
- high standard of specialist equipment and facilities at Quarry Hill centre

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on most courses
- no full-time provision at level 2
- insufficient engagement of students in learning activities in some lessons
- poor soundproofing at East Leeds Family Learning Centre

10 The college offers a wide range of courses at level 3. National diploma courses are offered in music technology, commercial music production and popular music at the Quarry Hill centre and a one-year national certificate in DJ technology is based at the East Leeds Family Learning Centre. These innovative courses are unique in the region. All students study music theory. In order to broaden their studies, students may join instrumental and additional theory courses. In addition, students may enrol for any part-time course in the college. Students also take part in the college's numerous ensemble groups and choirs. The college is largely successful in making its courses openly

accessible to students without compromising the high standards it expects of them or their chances of progressing to higher education. However, there are no full-time courses at level 2. The college has developed a productive relationship with a regional television company and students are able to take part in the making of programmes. Students benefit from contact with guest teachers from the music business and take opportunities to work on community events such as the Asian Mela festival and perform at other music venues. DJ technology students promote their own events at music clubs in Leeds. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that courses are organised effectively. Each course is co-ordinated by a full-time teacher. Weekly team meetings are held and minutes are circulated to part-time teachers unable to attend. Record-keeping at course level is good. Courses are reviewed annually and includes analyses of students' opinions. The data on students' retention given in the course reviews are inaccurate.

11 Most teaching is satisfactory or better but no lessons were outstanding. The proportion of lessons graded at 1 and 2 was significantly lower than the national average for the programme area in 1998-99. Most teachers are experienced music technologists or performers. In the best lessons, teachers use a range of appropriate teaching styles. They constantly check that all members of the class understand the lesson by directing well-phrased questions at individual students. For example, all first-year national diploma students took a well-structured revision test to determine their knowledge of popular music. A wide range of recorded music from 1950 to 1970 was played and students were asked to identify and comment on the artist and the style. In less satisfactory lessons, the teacher expected too little of the students. In these lessons, students had little opportunity to express their ideas and engage in group discussion. Most students made good progress in practical lessons. For example, in computer music production lessons students demonstrated

Curriculum Areas

skills of a high standard. The standard of vocal and instrumental music was good in lunchtime performances, with bands bringing together students from different courses.

12 In the last two years, pass rates on all courses have been above the national average for the sector. In 1999, the majority of students completing courses in music technology, commercial music production and DJ technology achieved the qualification for which they were aiming. Whilst acknowledging that retention rates on many courses are poor, the college, in its self-assessment report, underestimated their significance. In 1999, courses leading to the BTEC national diploma in popular music and the BTEC national certificate in DJ technology lost nearly half their students. In 1998-99, the average retention rate for all music technology courses was 58.5%. There are good opportunities for students to progress to higher education courses within the college. In 1999, over 50% of leavers progressed to higher education courses. Inspectors agreed with the

self-assessment report that the attendance rate is below the average for the programme area. The college aims to rectify this weakness through implementation of a new system for reporting and following up students' absence.

13 Specialist accommodation at the Quarry Hill centre is good. Some rooms at the East Leeds Family Learning Centre have inadequate soundproofing and lessons in them are disturbed by external noise. Equipment and specialist rooms are readily available for students to use and enable them to develop their skills to the requisite level. Technical equipment is up to date, plentiful and of good quality. Music production equipment is particularly good. The college is used by industry as a computer music training centre; all computers have appropriate sequencing software. Students speak highly of the quality of musical instruments and band equipment. Technician support is good.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in further education music technology programmes, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
BTEC national certificate in DJ technology	3	Number of starters	*	*	67
		Retention (%)	*	*	55
		Achievement (%)	*	*	92
BTEC national diploma in music technology	3	Number of starters	**	**	57
		Retention (%)	**	**	60
		Achievement (%)	**	**	91
BTEC national diploma in popular music	3	Number of starters	**	**	23
		Retention (%)	**	**	52
		Achievement (%)	**	**	83
BTEC national diploma in commercial music production and management	3	Number of starters	*	*	29
		Retention (%)	*	*	69
		Achievement (%)	*	*	90

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

*course not running

**data incomplete or unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Further Education Music Programmes

Grade 2

14 Inspectors observed 11 lessons on the following courses: national diploma music techniques and performance; access to higher education; GCE A level music; and the preliminary course at level 2. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report but considered that the college had understated some strengths. They found some additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- much good teaching
- high pass rates on most courses in 1999
- good range of provision
- the variety of musical performance opportunities
- some work of a high standard
- outstanding specialist resources

Weaknesses

- low retention rates for students on the preliminary course in 1999
- narrow range of opportunities for students on the preliminary course
- poor soundproofing in some rooms

15 The college offers a wide range of courses at intermediate and advanced level. In September 1997, the advanced level foundation course was replaced by the national diploma course in music techniques and performance. This includes an Indian music option. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the range of course provision is good. The preliminary course at intermediate level provides students with an introductory year of music study. There is a one-year access course for adults seeking to enter higher education. Students take a core of theoretical, aural and historical studies together with instrumental or voice lessons, ensemble classes

and rehearsals. An experienced team of teachers organises the courses effectively. There are good opportunities for students to progress from the preliminary course to four advanced level courses, and to three degree level courses at the college. In addition to their musical studies, students may also study GCSE English and mathematics and GCE A level subjects, some by arrangement with another college in Leeds. There are evening courses in GCSE and GCE A level music.

16 Much of the teaching is good. In both theoretical and practical lessons students benefit from the range and depth of teachers' professional expertise. Teachers are encouraging as well as demanding. In many lessons, there is a good-humoured, productive atmosphere in which students concentrate well and make good progress. In rehearsals and practical lessons, teachers pay close attention to the students and give them help and advice with tact and sensitivity to help them improve the quality of their playing. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that concerts and workshops provide valuable curriculum enhancement. They considered, however, that the self-assessment report did not fully acknowledge the strengths in teaching. In lessons, students work well. Many of them contribute ideas and comments willingly. They are not afraid to make mistakes and learn from them. Some students' written and practical work is of a high standard. The styles of music-making in the college are varied and students at all levels have many opportunities for performance. Students on the access to further and higher education and national diploma courses benefit by playing alongside degree level students and more experienced musicians in the college's symphony orchestra and other ensembles. In rehearsals and recitals, students were giving highly skilled creative performances. Students whose playing and singing were less ambitious also demonstrated confidence and accomplishment. Most students are highly motivated but some do not arrive punctually for lessons.

Curriculum Areas

17 In 1999, pass rates on the full-time courses and the GCE A level courses were high, and all were over 90%. The GCE A level pass rate was above the national average for the sector.

Retention rates on some courses improved in 1999. For example, on GCE A level music the retention rate was poor in 1997 and 1998 but was slightly above the national average in 1999. The college acknowledges that poor retention of students was a weakness on the preliminary course in 1999 and as part of the inclusive learning initiative, it is providing support for younger students. Of the 26 students who started the course, 22 completed it in May 2000. However, the preliminary course has some significant weaknesses, which are not recognised in the self-assessment report. Some students on the intermediate level course only have seven hours of teaching a week and they do not have enough opportunity to engage in a wide range of appropriate learning activities. For example, their timetable does not afford

them opportunities for performance or ensemble work. Individual monitoring of progress is less well developed than on the advanced level courses.

18 Students have access to an outstanding library collection. There is a wide range and large number of books, journals, scores, music compact discs and videos. Students are able to follow computer programmes on aural and theory work, and these are designed to help them study on their own. All these resources are well organised. Students can borrow from a large stock of college instruments. There is easy access to pianos, keyboards and many less common and more expensive instruments, such as orchestral percussion, harpsichords and a collection of Indian instruments. Students have good access to practice and rehearsal rooms. Soundproofing is inadequate in some rooms, and students trying to work in them are sometimes distracted by intrusive noise. The college is addressing this problem.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in further education music programmes, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Preliminary course	2	Number of starters	*	22	17
		Retention (%)	*	82	65
		Achievement (%)	*	61	91
National diploma in music techniques and performance**	3	Number of starters	24	16	17
		Retention (%)	96	63	77
		Achievement (%)	87	70	92
Access to higher education	3	Number of starters	52	37	39
		Retention (%)	78	92	82
		Achievement (%)	70	71	91
GCE A level music (full time and part time)	3	Number of starters	16	31	27
		Retention (%)	*	*	78
		Achievement (%)	*	*	95

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

*data incomplete or unreliable

**1999 data – this course replaced the foundation course in Western music, accredited by the NOCN

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

19 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but found some additional strengths and weaknesses. The self-assessment report did not acknowledge in sufficient detail, weaknesses in group tutorials and additional learning support.

Key strengths

- effective pre-enrolment guidance
- excellent welfare and counselling arrangements
- tutors' provision of strong support for individual students
- extensive enrichment activities

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped arrangements for additional learning support
- shortcomings in tutorial practices

20 The college has well-established, effective arrangements for providing information and guidance about the college and its courses. The college prospectus and course leaflets are informative and attractively presented. College staff conduct music workshops in schools throughout the region, at which they also talk to pupils and provide information about college. Twice-yearly open days give prospective students a taste of the wide range of musical experiences offered: visitors may watch rehearsals, attend concerts and recitals and tour the college. All students are interviewed and where appropriate, auditioned. Over 25% of the college's FEFC-funded students live away from home. They receive extensive help and advice in finding suitable accommodation. In conjunction with a student accommodation agency, the college organises house hunting days in July and August. Students from

overseas receive a comprehensive information pack about living and studying in the United Kingdom.

21 During induction, all full-time students are assessed for their need for additional support in literacy and numeracy. As mentioned in the previous inspection report, the use of the same basic screening test for all levels is not sufficient. Those identified as requiring additional support are encouraged to attend individual sessions provided by the learning support tutor on two days a week. The low take-up of the support was identified in one of the curriculum sections of the self-assessment report. Of the 61 students identified as requiring support in 1999, only about 25% attended support sessions regularly. The college has insufficient resources for the provision of additional learning support. Arrangements to enable the learning support tutor to work more closely with teachers, course co-ordinators and the student support unit, are inadequate. Those students who attend the learning support sessions speak highly of them. The support for students with dyslexia is particularly well regarded by staff and students. The college also provides appropriate specialist equipment to assist those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

22 The student support unit makes an excellent contribution to students' welfare. Its team is well managed and provides easily accessible support relating to accommodation, counselling, careers information, and advice on finance and childcare. Following increasing use of the service, the unit has recently been strengthened. The team arranges a 'buddy' system, through which overseas students are paired with British students, to help them settle in to the college. Overseas students may also receive assistance from an emergency fund for international students. Student support staff arrange health education events, such as displays relating to world Aids day. The counselling service is available on four days a

Cross-college Provision

week, including a session in the early evening. The counsellor holds workshops on stress management and performance anxiety. Staff training has been held on drugs awareness and dyslexia. The strength of the student support unit was recognised in the self-assessment report.

23 Students speak highly of the strong day-to-day support they receive from their group tutors. However, as the college recognises, some of the academic and personal support provided in group tutorials is unsatisfactory. There is no agreed framework to guide tutors in planning and implementing the weekly group tutorial, and no job description covering the wider aspects of their role. Some tutorial groups are large. Some tutors have responsibility for a large number of groups and they are not always able to carry out reviews of students' progress regularly. Attendance at some tutorials is low. The self-assessment report does not include an action plan for addressing this weakness. However, the college's involvement in the Inclusive Learning initiative has prompted a review of support for students, as a result of which a senior tutor is to be appointed whose responsibilities will include the arrangements for group tutorials.

24 The close associations which teachers have with the music industry enable them to provide students with informal careers guidance. Tutors offer students guidance on making applications for jobs or courses in higher education. In addition, students have access to the college's careers library which has been awarded the Leeds Careers Guidance gold standard. It is conveniently situated off the main library and contains an extensive stock of careers information including CD-ROMs and videos. It covers a wide range of music-related and more general careers, including higher education. The college careers adviser is available every day and the well-publicised service is extensively used. Library staff have also been briefed to help students find relevant

information. Careers advisers from Leeds Careers Guidance visit the college from time to time to speak to tutor groups and offer individual help.

25 The college provides extensive enrichment activities. Students have good opportunities to play in ensembles and attend musical events of all kinds. The students' union organises a variety of social events, particularly during freshers' week. With support from the student welfare development worker, it is exploring ways of extending its activities. The staff-student liaison committee brings together staff from the student support unit with course representatives, and provides a useful channel for the voice of students to be heard. The committee has been instrumental in bringing about improvements in the resources for students.

General Resources

Grade 1

26 Inspectors agreed with the strengths stated in the self-assessment report and identified some additional strengths. By the time of the inspection, most weaknesses had been rectified.

Key strengths

- effective management and efficient use of accommodation
- particularly good specialist facilities
- excellent library and learning resources
- provision of good and accessible information technology (IT) resources
- easy access for students with restricted mobility
- well-maintained accommodation

Weaknesses

- some overcrowded staff accommodation

Cross-college Provision

27 There have been substantial improvements to the college's accommodation since the last inspection. The college has moved into new, first-rate and purpose-built accommodation at Quarry Hill, near to the city centre, replacing dilapidated premises. The majority of the college's FEFC-funded provision is located in this new accommodation. The college has recently rented some additional accommodation nearby for rehearsals but this is to be relinquished from September 2000 when the college will open refurbished premises for musical instrument technology. During 1999-2000, the college adopted further accommodation at the East Leeds Family Learning Centre as part of a collaborative project to provide opportunities in the community. Facilities at this centre are satisfactory. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that resources at the Quarry Hill centre are of a high standard. Students on further education courses benefit from the resources available for the college's higher education provision. General purpose teaching rooms and specialist rooms are good. They include three professional standard soundproofed recording studios with integral control booths, an electro-acoustic studio, a computer music studio with 25 workstations, rehearsal rooms, instrument practice rooms and a 107-seat recital room. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that there is easy access at the Quarry Hill centre for students with restricted mobility.

28 The standard of cleanliness and maintenance throughout the college is good. There is a delegated budget for maintenance and repairs. The college has only recently formally accepted responsibility for the Quarry Hill building from the contractors and is currently preparing a 15-year planned maintenance programme. Accommodation is managed effectively and used efficiently. The use of space is good, a strength not recognised

in the self-assessment report, and it is monitored through occasional surveys of room occupancy. The college has achieved most of the objectives relating to accommodation in its 1997-2000 strategic plan and at the time of inspection was preparing a new three-year accommodation strategy.

29 Teaching rooms are well decorated and all areas are carpeted. The college has an attractive bar and refectory area at the Quarry Hill centre where students may obtain refreshments and hot snacks at any time during the day until the late evening. The bar area provides a good ambience for regular music performances by students during lunchtime and in the evening. Refectory facilities are also available at the East Leeds Family Learning Centre. There is a good-sized staff common room and a students' common room. Students and staff are able to take out membership of a nearby sports club. The reception area is welcoming but some public areas lack wall displays. The majority of staff have access to a computer but some offices are overcrowded, a weakness not identified in the self-assessment report.

30 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college has an excellent library with a wide range of up-to-date specialist music materials. This includes books, subscription to 53 journals, 2,600 compact discs, 3,000 vinyl records, music scores, audio tapes, videos and CD-ROMs. The library also contains 14 modern computers. Library spending has increased during recent years and is high. A unique feature of the college is its excellent jazz music archive, which contains a large collection of specialist material dating back over 80 years. The library is open throughout the week and Saturday mornings. All library stock is catalogued and is easily accessible through the college intranet. There are no library facilities at the East Leeds Family Learning Centre but some specialist journals are kept there.

Cross-college Provision

31 Students have good access to modern computers. These are mostly located in the library and adjacent learning centre. The college has recently appointed an IT technician to provide support, rectifying a weakness identified in its self-assessment report. The learning centre contains 33 modern computers, which are used for timetabled lessons for part of the week and by students on a 'drop-in' basis at other times. A range of specialist software is available including an aural training package, a theory training package and music scoring software. The overall ratio of computers to students is high, at 1:8. All computers provide students with access to the Internet. Students are shortly to be provided with electronic mail facilities, which staff already have. The college has its own website, which is used primarily for promoting the college and for disseminating some course-related learning materials teachers have developed. The college participates in an intranet with several other local colleges. Through this learning materials may be shared.

Quality Assurance

Grade 3

32 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report and identified some additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- the strong commitment of staff to quality assurance
- effective teaching observation scheme
- extensive opportunities for staff development
- rigorous course review process
- effective use of service level agreements in business support units

Weaknesses

- failure to implement the staff appraisal system fully
- insufficient consideration of corporate objectives in the planning of staff development
- underdeveloped quality assurance policy and associated procedures
- no feedback to students about action on their responses to questionnaires

33 There have been improvements in the quality assurance system since the last inspection. The college's commitment to providing education and training of excellence is highlighted in its mission statement and reflected in its strategic plan and annual corporate objectives. Quality assurance arrangements cover all aspects of the college's work. As stated in the self-assessment report, all full-time staff understand and support the quality assurance system. However, part-time teachers are not involved to the same extent in the quality processes. The quality assurance policy and its associated procedures are not fully developed. The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge that there is insufficient management control over policy documents. Versions of documents are not withdrawn when they become outdated. Some do not indicate which member of staff should be contacted in order to obtain further information.

34 The college operates a well-established, rigorous and effective system of course monitoring and annual review. Reports are detailed and produced in a standard format across the college. Individual course reports are submitted to a board of studies before being scrutinised by the academic audit committee and presented to the academic board. The annual reports are used as the basis of the college's self-assessment process for curriculum areas. During the current academic year, the college has participated in an 'inclusive learning'

Cross-college Provision

initiative, which aims to improve retention and achievement rates on particular courses. Provisional data for 1999-2000 show that retention rates on these courses have already improved. The college has a well-established and effective teaching observation programme. Overall, the lesson grades awarded through this were similar to those the inspectors gave. The proportion of lessons graded as outstanding, however, was significantly below the national average for the sector.

35 Since the last inspection, support units have developed service level agreements that indicate the range and level of services they will provide. The standards of service the units achieve are compared with appropriate national benchmarks and the extent to which the units work together is monitored. Staff are establishing performance indicators and systems for measuring the performance of support units. For a number of years, the management information system has not produced reliable data. Course co-ordinators have had to rely on source documents and data from awarding bodies when compiling course statistics. A manager for information systems has been recently appointed to take action to rectify this weakness. In the absence of reliable data, the college has had difficulty in identifying overall trends in student retention and achievement rates.

36 In producing its self-assessment report, the college followed the guidelines in Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*. The annual self-assessment process is now an integral part of the quality assurance system. The perceptions and opinions of students and staff are collected regularly through a range of questionnaires, and are analysed. Students believe that their responses to questionnaires have been influential in bringing about improvements and change but they are not informed of specific action taken on them. Student representatives sit on boards of studies

and the staff-student liaison committee. They are provided with a handbook, which gives clear guidance on their role in both committees. The college has no arrangements for ascertaining the views of parents, employers or other users of the college. This deficiency was also identified as a weakness at the last inspection.

37 The college charter for students has recently been updated and a shortened version has been produced. Students report that they find this document easy to use. All students receive a copy of the charter during their course induction. The charter includes clear statements on students' rights and responsibilities, as well as guidance on the complaints and academic appeals procedures. For example, a section of the charter is devoted to guidelines on assessment and marking. The charter does not specify targets the college sets itself. The college does not monitor the extent to which the college meets its charter commitments.

38 Findings from lesson observations are taken into account when drawing up the staff development programme but they are not used in the staff appraisal scheme. The quality of teaching and learning in tutorials is insufficiently evaluated. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, the staff appraisal procedure is not fully implemented. For example, it has not covered the large number of part-time teaching staff. The college is currently addressing this issue and aims to appraise all part-time staff whose hours amount to more than 30% of a full-time teacher's programme. The staff development programme accounts for almost 2% of the college budget. The training needs of individual staff in relation to their work in curriculum areas and support units are identified through course reviews and staff appraisal. The college's overall objectives are not taken into account sufficiently during the annual planning of staff development activities.

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Governance

Grade 2

39 Inspectors and auditors found repetition of some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report. One of the weaknesses had been rectified by the time of the inspection. They identified additional weaknesses relating to the operation of the audit committee.

Key strengths

- good use of governors' broad expertise and experience
- governors' involvement in setting the college's strategic direction
- governors' monitoring of progress towards the achievement of corporate objectives
- effective clerking arrangements

Weaknesses

- failure of the audit committee to fulfil some of its responsibilities
- insufficient progress in rectifying outstanding weaknesses from the last inspection

40 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.

41 The corporation has 16 members; there are no vacancies. Five governors are female. Some governors are from minority ethnic groups. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, governors have a broad range of expertise which the college has used effectively. For example, many have a professional interest

in music and have been able to contribute to the development of the college's curriculum. The corporation is developing an induction checklist as part of an information pack provided for new members. Training is provided at away days and corporation meetings. The corporation has not undertaken a formal analysis, however, of governors' training needs.

42 Governors have a close involvement in setting the college's strategic direction and monitoring progress towards the achievement of objectives. For example, at a development day last March, the principal informed governors of the challenges facing the college over the next three years; governors debated key themes and reported back in a plenary. The corporation has formally approved annual updates to the three-year strategic plan 1997 to 2000, which include an operating statement and a résumé of progress towards meeting targets in the operating statement.

43 In order to inform them about students' achievements and other quality assurance issues, governors receive the minutes of academic board meetings and an annual summary report. The annual report contains a commentary on students' pass and retention rates. Tables show how the rates compare with those of the previous year. In the 1998-99 report, improved pass rates were noted although concern was expressed about full-time retention rates. The commentary did not specify action to improve retention rates. It did not give pass rates for the sector, against which the governors could compare the college's performance.

44 The search committee has advised the corporation on the changes required by the modified instrument and articles, although it has not fully implemented all the Nolan recommendations. In response to a recent skills audit, the search committee found a potential member with legal experience, to be appointed when a vacancy arises. The finance and general

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purposes committee meets five times a year and reviews the college's financial position and considers information on students' enrolments and employment matters. The remuneration committee carries out an annual appraisal of the principal against the achievement of corporate targets, using clearly documented procedures. The audit committee has not operated in accordance with its remit. It has failed to produce an annual report to the corporation on the college's systems of internal control and has not agreed indicators against which the performance of the internal and external auditors can be monitored. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report.

45 The clerk was appointed prior to incorporation and is highly experienced. He is also a senior postholder but has a separate job description for the clerking role. The clerk has yet to be appraised by the chair of the corporation. Clerking arrangements support the effective operation of corporation business, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Corporation and committee minutes are appropriately detailed. They are prepared and distributed promptly and agendas and supporting papers are sent out in good time. The corporation has established standing orders and a 'whistleblowing' policy and recently updated its combined code of conduct and code of ethics, which includes the Nolan recommendations on openness. The register of governors' interests is updated annually. Corporation minutes are published in the library; other information is available on application to the clerk. Governance matters are also published in the staff newsletter. There is minimal use of confidentiality in corporation and committee business.

46 Slow progress has been made in addressing some of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report. For example, arrangements for a regular review and evaluation of college policies were only formalised in March 2000; the corporation does

not receive an annual report on equal opportunities, although it did approve a new policy on equal opportunities last December. Clear criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the corporation have not been determined. The clerk monitors governors' attendance and reports on it to the corporation. Governors ensure their involvement in self-assessment through representation on the college self-assessment steering group.

47 In its self-assessment report, the corporation identified that its communications with staff needed improving. It has now provided an opportunity for staff and governors to meet at the end of some corporation meetings when governors make themselves available in the staff room for informal discussions. Governors attend the large number of college concerts and other public events. In addition, they have attended some lessons.

Management

Grade 2

48 Inspectors and auditors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- effective management
- efficient deployment of staff
- systematic process of strategic planning
- productive external links

Weaknesses

- significant deficiencies in the recording of student data

49 Management is effective. Leadership is strong. Following the significant increase in enrolments for higher education courses and a greater emphasis on pastoral support, the management structure is being changed from

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September 2000. From that date, there will be separate further and higher education departments and a new post of senior tutor. The college has a range of committees with appropriate terms of reference. The committees meet regularly. Agendas are clear and minutes of meetings are suitably detailed. Senior managers monitor the implementation of action plans arising from these committees. Students make a positive contribution to many of the committees. Communication between senior managers and staff is good. There is a monthly staff newsletter and an established open forum is held at different times in the year when the principal is available to discuss any concerns staff may have. The college recognises the difficulty in communicating with the large numbers of part-time teaching staff. Curriculum team meetings are scheduled on days when the largest proportion of part-time staff teach at the college.

50 Staff and other resources are deployed efficiently. In its self-assessment report, the college appropriately identified as a strength, its monitoring and control of staff overhead costs through a system whereby course costs are set against projected income. All staff in the college are required to sign a statement confirming their commitment to a recently revised equal opportunities policy. There has, however, been little staff development training during the last two years to help staff promote equality of opportunity more effectively.

51 Strategic planning is systematic. The current three-year plan has measurable objectives and contains an extensive commentary on the curriculum. The plan has annual operating statements. It specifies who has to take key decisions in order that objectives may be achieved, and the dates by which targets must be reached. Reviews of the progress towards the completion of objectives are undertaken mid-year as well as at the end of each academic year. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college is making

good progress towards achieving most of the objectives in the plan. The objectives are fixed for a three-year period. The college does not have arrangements for changing or modifying objectives if new circumstances arise, such as those relating to record-keeping on students. The college does not have a co-ordinated approach to marketing. As the self-assessment report recognises, there is no marketing strategy. A new marketing committee has been established and the college is reviewing its marketing activity, including the redesign of its website.

52 The college's links with external organisations are effective, a strength noted in the self-assessment report. The college liaises closely with the two local universities and offers a degree in music technology in conjunction with Leeds Metropolitan University. It also provides a new four-year degree course in music from the Open University. Through the college's partnership with the local council, students can participate in a range of city-wide musical concerts including lunchtime recitals. The college makes a significant contribution to the council's community education programmes, particularly at the East Leeds Family Learning Centre. A business advisory group, meeting annually, enables the college to liaise with national representatives of the music industry.

53 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. The college's finance team, which has undergone some recent staff changes, is now appropriately resourced, qualified and experienced. Financial regulations, supported by detailed procedures, are updated regularly. Management accounts are reported on a monthly basis to senior managers. The management accounts have recently been improved by the inclusion of balance sheet information but they do not include a monitoring statement about the college's financial performance, based on relevant performance indicators. Both the

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internal and external auditors, whilst issuing unqualified annual reports for 1998-99, have raised concerns about the student records system. Budget holders are provided with timely reports of actual but not committed expenditure against budget; they maintain additional systems for the monitoring of expenditure. A new accounting system is being further developed to give budget holders on-line access to details of expenditure to which they are committed.

54 In its self-assessment report, the college recognises that there are significant deficiencies in the recording of data on students through its management information system. Details of students transferring from one course to another, and students' multiple qualification aims have not always been recorded; data in respect of the start and end dates for some courses have been inaccurate. The college has encountered difficulties in recording accurate retention rates for courses lasting more than one year. The college has had a history of making late data returns to the FEFC and has now been provided with financial support to purchase a new, more comprehensive, student record system. Following the appointment of new staff, it has cleared the backlog of delayed ISR returns. The college now carries out regular manual checks of computerised records.

Conclusions

55 The college's self-assessment report was well presented. It provided a useful basis for planning and conducting the inspection. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in it but considered that some weaknesses relating to quality assurance, and the recording of student data were understated. Inspectors agreed with the grades for curriculum areas and with two of the five grades for cross-college provision given in the self-assessment report. Two of the grades the inspectors awarded were lower than those the college gave, and one was higher.

56 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 (November 1999)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	20
16-18 years	16
19-24 years	25
25+ years	39
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (November 1999)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Level 1 (foundation)	7
Level 2 (intermediate)	15
Level 3 (advanced)	18
Level 4/5 (higher)	8
Non-schedule 2	52
Total	100

Source: college data

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

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	0	6	0
Art and design	769	2,155	99
Humanities	0	10	0
Basic education	0	33	1
Total	769	2,204	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 37% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (November 1999)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	23	16	0	39
Supporting direct learning contact	17	1	1	19
Other support	28	0	1	29
Total	68	17	2	87

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£2,680,000	£2,849,000	£2,884,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£17.59*	£17.07*	£16.78*
Payroll as a proportion of income	70%	71%	70%
Achievement of funding target	105%	103%	95%
Diversity of income	38%	43%	45%
Operating surplus	£230,000	-£45,000	-£68,000

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 98/43 (1997), 00/10 (1998), college (1999)

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

Payroll – Council Circulars 98/43 (1997), 00/10 (1998), college (1999)

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

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 98/43 (1997), 00/10 (1998), college (1999)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 98/43 (1997), 00/10 (1998), college (1999)

*provisional data

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1997	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999
1	Number of starters	67	29	0	212	193	0
	Retention (%)	91	55	0	65	52	0
	Achievement (%)	23	67	0	42	38	0
2	Number of starters	63	85	*	253	262	*
	Retention (%)	68	72	*	67	65	*
	Achievement (%)	10	55	*	29	42	*
3	Number of starters	113	108	167	120	161	173
	Retention (%)	80	79	62	78	82	66
	Achievement (%)	85	71	78	71	76	81
4 or 5	Number of starters	n/a	28	18	n/a	69	83
	Retention (%)	n/a	100	78	n/a	100	77
	Achievement (%)	n/a	100	100	n/a	100	97
Short courses	Number of starters	3	6	0	27	30	0
	Retention (%)	67	100	0	93	87	0
	Achievement (%)	0	0	0	4	15	0
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	99	64	9	1,185	117	11
	Retention (%)	85	91	44	78	94	91
	Achievement (%)	100	44	100	9	78	90

Source: college

*data may not be reliable

n/a not applicable

FEFC Inspection Report 108/00

**Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
Website www.fefc.ac.uk
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