

Nelson and Colne College

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1999-00

THE
FURTHER
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FUNDING
COUNCIL

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

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

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

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Contents

Paragraph

Summary

Context

The college and its mission	1
The inspection	7

Curriculum areas

Biology, chemistry and physics	10
Mechanical and electrical engineering	15
Business, management and administration	21
Catering and hospitality	26
Government and politics, law, psychology and sociology	33
Basic skills	40

Cross-college provision

Support for students	46
General resources	55
Quality assurance	61
Governance	68
Management	78
Conclusions	86

College statistics

Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

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

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

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

Student Achievements

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

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

Summary

Nelson and Colne College

North West Region

Inspected May 2000

Nelson and Colne College is a tertiary college in Pendle with two main sites, one in Nelson and another in Colne. Of the college's students, 20% are recruited from disadvantaged areas as defined in the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions. The college was jointly inspected by teams of inspectors from the FEFC and the TSC. In preparation for the inspection the college produced a comprehensive and evaluative self-assessment report. Staff from all areas of the college contributed to its production. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths identified and found a few additional ones. They also agreed with many of the identified weaknesses, though some, particularly those relating to teaching and learning were understated. Inspectors supported the grades awarded by the college in three curriculum areas, but considered that important weaknesses had been understated in another three areas. They agreed with four of the college's cross-college grades and awarded a higher grade for management.

The college has successfully widened participation amongst people who would not normally attend college. It pays close attention to the implementation of its policies for equality of opportunity. It has achieved significant

improvements in achievement rates. Students enjoy well-managed support arrangements: effective induction activities, good learning support, effective counselling, welfare and financial support, and spiritual advice and guidance. Since the last inspection, the college has substantially improved its accommodation. Classrooms are comfortable and well furnished and the college is clean and well maintained. The college has a comprehensive quality assurance system effectively linked to strategic planning, self-assessment, and a well-planned and extensive internal inspection and audit cycle. The wide range of governors' skills is well deployed in support of the corporation, which effectively determines the strategic direction of college. The management of the college is excellent. There is a clear and effective management structure, good financial management, well-managed marketing and an outstanding range of productive external partnerships. The college should address: weaknesses in teaching; the failure to disseminate good practice in teaching; low retention and achievement rates on some courses; the inconsistent quality of tutorial support; some specialist accommodation that is not accessible to wheelchair users; inconsistent use of measurable targets and service standards; and governors' inadequate monitoring of the quality of educational performance.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Biology, chemistry and physics	2	Support for students	2
Mechanical and electrical engineering	3	General resources	2
Business, management and administration	2	Quality assurance	2
Catering and hospitality	2	Governance	2
Government and politics, law, psychology and sociology	3	Management	1
Basic skills	3		

The College and its Mission

1 Nelson and Colne College has been the sole provider of post-16 education in the Pendle District since 1973. Most of its work is based at the two main sites, in modern accommodation at Nelson and in a modernised ex-grammar school building in Colne. Other provision is offered in the Pendle Business Centre, in the training services building in Colne, and in numerous community locations throughout Pendle. The college is also responsible to Lancashire County Council for providing non-vocational courses for adults.

2 Pendle Borough in East Lancashire is a mixture of industrial towns, small villages and open countryside. It has a population of 84,349 and a labour force of 30,157. Some 45% of workers are employed in manufacturing industries compared with 21% nationally. About 74% of companies registered in Pendle employ fewer than 25 people. The current unemployment rate is 3.2% compared with an average of 4% for Lancashire as a whole. There are pockets of high unemployment, including wards where youth unemployment is very high. On the 1999 Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions index of local deprivation, Pendle is the 61st most deprived district authority, with 12% of the population living in wards which are among the 10% most disadvantaged in England. People from minority ethnic communities, mainly of Pakistani heritage, account for 10.3% of the population of Pendle, and 67% of them live in the five most socio-economically deprived wards.

3 There are two 11 to 18 secondary schools within 6 miles of Nelson, and four other further education colleges within East Lancashire. Nelson and Colne College draws its students principally from Pendle but students are also being attracted from elsewhere in East Lancashire and from over the Yorkshire border. The college works in collaboration with a number of partners in Pendle, in East

Lancashire, and in the wider region. There is a range of active links with local schools and a number of Pendle Partnership initiatives. The college also contributes to subregional activities in East Lancashire and is a member of the East Lancashire Local Learning Partnership. Collaborative links have been established with other colleges in the region both in East Lancashire and more widely through joint initiatives with colleges elsewhere in the North West. The college is an associate college of the University of Salford.

4 The percentage of pupils gaining five general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) passes at grade C or above is lower in Pendle than it is nationally. In 1999, the figures were 40% and 49%, respectively. In 1999, only 61% of school-leavers in the borough continued in full-time education, which is marginally below the East Lancashire average. The college offers a substantial range of provision in eight of the 10 programme areas funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). There is an academic and vocational curriculum from pre-foundation to higher education levels for school-leavers and adults. In the current academic year, the college has enrolled 1,688 full-time students, 82% of whom were 16 to 19 year olds, and 5,248 part-time students, 86% of whom were over 19 years of age.

5 The five-strong senior management team comprises the principal, deputy principal and three directors. The deputy principal is also the director of corporate affairs and clerk to the corporation. The directors are responsible for curriculum, student support, and finance and information services, respectively. There are six teaching divisions, each responsible for an area of the curriculum and each managed by a head of division. There are also 12 service-area units supporting the college's activities. The college is one of the largest employers in the Pendle area. It employs a full-time equivalent of 153 teachers and 173 support staff.

Context

6 The college's mission is 'to provide high-quality education and training which serves the needs of the communities of Pendle and beyond' and involves a commitment to support the individuals and organisations in these communities to achieve their goals. The mission is underpinned by strategic aims, that identify the opportunities the college seeks to provide. These are:

- 'a sixth form education of the highest attainable standard
- a choice of work-related education and training programmes of the highest professional quality
- quality lifelong learning opportunities enabling adults to identify and achieve their goals
- support for employers in the development of a highly skilled and well-qualified workforce.'

The achievement of these aims is governed by principles of equality of opportunity, economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The Inspection

7 The college was inspected during the week beginning 8 May 2000. Inspectors had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. An inspector attended a full corporation meeting before the inspection. Data on students' achievements for 1997 and 1998 were taken from the FEFC's individualised student record (ISR). Inspectors checked college data for 1999 against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists from awarding bodies. They found them to be reliable. The college was notified of the sample of its provision to be inspected approximately two months before the inspection. The FEFC inspection was carried out by 12 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 52 days. Inspectors observed 70 lessons and eight tutorials, examined

students' work and a variety of college documents. They met governors, managers, staff and students and consulted the local training and enterprise council (TEC) and other key partners. There was a concurrent inspection by Training Standards Council (TSC) inspectors of some areas of work-based training in which the college was involved. Where it was appropriate to the FEFC inspection framework, evidence gathered by the 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 78 lessons inspected, 62% were judged to be good or outstanding and 6% were found to be less than satisfactory. The profile of lesson observation grades for the college nearly matches the national average.

Context

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level and GCSE	5	8	5	2	0	20
GNVQ	1	7	7	0	0	15
NVQ	1	4	0	0	0	5
Other vocational	5	5	5	1	0	16
Other*	4	8	8	2	0	22
Total (No.)	16	32	25	5	0	78
Total (%)	21	41	32	6	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, basic skills and access courses

9 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Despite a local public transport strike on one day of the inspection, students' rates of attendance at lessons observed by inspectors was slightly better than the national average. On average, classes were smaller than the average size of classes nationally. However, the classes seen during the inspection included eight tutorial groups and some basic skills groups, that were designed to have low numbers.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Nelson and Colne College	10.0	80
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

Biology, Chemistry and Physics

Grade 2

10 Inspectors observed 13 lessons in biology, human biology, chemistry, physics and science. They agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment, but identified a few additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- high pass rates in general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) biology and chemistry
- some outstanding teaching and learning
- teachers' strong support for students in and outside lessons
- good learning resources

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory retention and achievement rates on some courses
- insufficient checking of students' understanding in a few lessons

11 The college offers an appropriate range of science courses for school-leavers and adults. Recruitment for GCE A level science subjects has remained steady over the last three years, but the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate did not run in 1998 and the BTEC national courses did not run in 1999 owing to lack of recruits. Courses are well organised and managed well. The curriculum is reviewed and developed regularly and the college is responsive to identified needs and to widening participation. A short full-time course in the summer has been successful in attracting young people to foundation level science and engineering. Programmes are enhanced by visits and entries in science competitions. Students on the BTEC national diploma course benefit from a work experience placement.

12 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that science teaching is effective. Of the 13 lessons observed, nine were good or outstanding and none were unsatisfactory. This compares favourably with the national profile for programme area 1. The rate of attendance at lessons observed (89%) was also higher than the national average. In the best lessons, work progresses at an appropriate pace and there is a good balance between activities directed by the teacher and activities in which students take the initiative. Teachers give clear explanations of concepts and processes and check students' understanding. In most lessons, students are attentive and co-operative. Practical work is well planned and well organised and there is good attention to health and safety. In a few lessons, teachers place insufficient demands on students and fail to check individual students' understanding by questioning them. Students are set work regularly and receive useful feedback on their progress. Assessment is appropriate and accurate. There is good support for students who require additional help with their studies. Workshop sessions are provided in each subject and teachers provide help to individual students outside lessons when necessary. Second-year GCE A level students benefit from useful revision lessons in preparation for their examination.

13 On many science courses, students' achievements have improved over the last three years. GCE A level chemistry pass rates have increased from 76% in 1997 to 86% in 1999. GCE A level physics pass rates have risen from 68% to 81% over the same period. As noted in the self-assessment report, pass rates in GCE A level biology and human biology have been consistently above national benchmarks between 1997 and 1999. The percentages of students achieving high grades in GCE A level chemistry and in human biology have risen consistently and are now well above national benchmarks. Only 35% of students starting GCSE science courses, however, achieved passes

Curriculum Areas

at grades C or above in 1999 and pass rates for GCE A level human biology evening class students fell from 43% in 1998 to 33% in 1999. Although, students' retention has improved in some subjects, there is no consistent pattern and, in some cases, retention rates have been unsatisfactory. In 1997, 1998 and 1999, retention rates for GCE A level human biology were 61%, 53% and 81%, respectively, and for GCE A level chemistry, 83%, 63% and 79%, respectively. Retention rates for GCE A level physics have declined from 74% in 1998 to 68% in 1999, a weakness recognised in the self-assessment report. There is a good rate of progression to higher education. In 1999, 72% of students who studied at least one science subject went on to university.

14 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that there are good learning resources in science. All lessons take place in laboratories that have been refurbished to a high standard. There are appropriate preparation rooms and storage areas. Students' practical work is supported by sufficient equipment and consumables and there is good support from technicians. Useful worksheets and summary notes are provided in most lessons. There is a useful bank of learning resources for physics on the college intranet. Students are also referred to appropriate websites.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in biology, chemistry and physics, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE science	2	Number of starters	32	29	58
		Retention (%)	96	90	83
		Achievement (%)	26	35	42
GCE A level biology (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	46	58	45
		Retention (%)	76	74	78
		Achievement (%)	91	97	100
GCE A level human biology (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	28	17	18
		Retention (%)	61	53	81
		Achievement (%)	87	100	85
GCE A level chemistry (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	47	63	49
		Retention (%)	83	63	79
		Achievement (%)	76	92	86
GCE A level physics (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	37	35	39
		Retention (%)	70	74	68
		Achievement (%)	68	69	81
BTEC national diploma	3	Number of starters	13	13	14
		Retention (%)	85	100	85
		Achievement (%)	*	83	90

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

*unreliable data

Curriculum Areas

Mechanical and Electrical Engineering

Grade 3

15 Inspectors observed 11 lessons in electrical, electronic and mechanical engineering. The self-assessment report overstated some strengths and failed to identify some weaknesses. Some weaknesses remaining from the last inspection were not identified in the self-assessment.

Key strengths

- good provision for entry level students
- well-managed courses
- above average attendance rates
- good retention rates on most courses
- good progression rates from other college courses

Weaknesses

- pass rates below the national average on City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) courses
- some weak teaching
- insufficient learning resource centre resources
- inadequate use of information and learning technology
- lack of investment in specialist equipment
- some engineering laboratories which are too small

16 The college has good provision to widen and increase participation for entry level students from disadvantaged areas in the locality. The majority of these are Asian heritage students who do not have standard entry qualifications and may not have well-developed English language skills. Engineering staff are developing links with local primary schools by delivering an electrical and

electronic road show in the schools. The aim of the show is to support the national curriculum and, eventually, to increase the number of women recruited to engineering courses. There are strong links with companies sending part-time students to the college. The lack of a functioning advisory board was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. The issue has now been addressed by reconstituting the engineering advisory board.

17 Schemes of work and lesson plans are effective and well recorded. Weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report have subsequently been addressed. Students clearly understand the assessment requirements of their courses and they usually have an assignment timetable. Full-time students have timetabled tutorials during which they receive a range of appropriate support and guidance, including careers guidance. They have access to counselling. They are also tested on entry to determine any needs for learning support. Support for students on the access to foundation engineering course is good. The students receive good guidance when they enter the course, and they help to draw up their own individual learning programmes, tailored to their abilities and needs. Many young people on this course receive additional language support and achieve basic skills qualifications whilst in college. There is some unsatisfactory teaching. For example, teachers' use of directed questioning fails to motivate students or to get them interested in their work. Students on full-time courses do not have work placements. Part-time students have no initial assessment of their need for learning support and no formal tutorials. They are encouraged to attend the college one evening a week when a member of engineering staff is available to facilitate resits of tests and to provide help in completing assignments.

18 Average attendance in the lessons observed was 10% above the national average for engineering lessons. As identified in the

Curriculum Areas

self-assessment report, retention rates are also well above national benchmarks. There is good progression from access and level 2 full-time courses to higher level courses within the college. Some pass rates, however, are below national averages. They are particularly poor on C&G courses.

19 Courses are, in the main, well managed and course files are comprehensive. Students and their parents or employers are well informed of progress. There are three reports a year on each student. The qualification for which students on the access foundation course are aiming is inappropriate, given their needs and abilities. The majority of students have achieved a number of units towards the BTEC first certificate, but none have yet completed the qualification. The recording of retention and achievement data for engineering students has not been accurate in the past, but managers consider that the data produced for 1998-99 are more reliable. Although full-time students complete quality assurance questionnaires on three occasions during their course, some part-time students are not given the opportunity to express their opinions. Although the data from questionnaires are collected and processed, course leaders summarise responses manually.

20 Since the last inspection, the information technology (IT) equipment has been updated and is fit for current purposes. However, the use of IT in engineering courses, a weakness identified at the last inspection, continues to be underdeveloped. In the mechanical engineering workshops, there is a lack of some up-to-date machines and some conventional machine tools are in need of replacement. This was also identified at the last inspection. The micro-electronics equipment used by the students is dated and unreliable and some engineering laboratories are too small for the group using them. There is good use of display materials in laboratories. The range of books in the learning resource centre is inadequate and there are too few copies of existing stock.

Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ intermediate	2	Number of starters	14	15	15
		Retention (%)	79	87	93
		Achievement (%)	*	77	93
BTEC first certificate (including access to foundation engineering)	2	Number of starters	27	27	36
		Retention (%)	89	89	86
		Achievement (%)	33	**	**
C&G 4351 computer-aided design	2	Number of starters	98	77	49
		Retention (%)	86	29	78
		Achievement (%)	10	27	29
C&G 2280 mechanical production competences	2	Number of starters	8	*	40
		Retention (%)	100	*	88
		Achievement (%)	75	*	37
C&G 2280 mechanical production competences	3	Number of starters	#	9	8
		Retention (%)	#	100	100
		Achievement (%)	#	0	12
BTEC national certificate	3	Number of starters	13	34	23
		Retention (%)	92	100	87
		Achievement (%)	75	*	100
BTEC national diploma	3	Number of starters	14	13	12
		Retention (%)	79	92	75
		Achievement (%)	45	*	89

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

*unreliable data

**not entered for full award

#course not running

Curriculum Areas

Business, Management and Administration

Grade 2

21 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering business, professional and management programmes. There were three self-assessment reports relating to this programme area, each adopting a different way of presenting strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the key judgements in the reports. Inspectors from the TSC observed training in business administration.

Key strengths

- much good teaching and learning
- high retention and achievement rates on full-time business courses
- good support for, and relationships with, students
- effective assessment and internal verification
- well-managed provision and effective teamwork

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates on some professional and management programmes
- missed opportunities for learning in some lessons

22 The range of business, management and professional programmes reflects the needs of students and the local community. A level 1 'fresh start' course has successfully replaced GNVQ foundation business. GNVQ foundation and intermediate units are provided in collaboration with four local schools. The college concentrates on local needs in its professional and management programmes. There is effective internal verification, the quality of which has been commended by

external bodies. Programme teams meet regularly to review and plan provision. As recognised in the self-assessment reports, meetings are minuted, appropriate actions are identified, and divisional heads subsequently take responsibility for implementing and monitoring these actions. There are many examples of detailed schemes of work but some schemes provide an inadequate basis for planning.

23 The college has conducted its own inspection of teaching and learning as a means of informing its self-assessment. Inspectors agreed that there is much good teaching. Links with previous learning are established and lesson activities are carefully planned. Students are provided with opportunities to operate individually and in groups, planning, researching and presenting their work. Teachers encourage GNVQ students to make effective use of the Internet. Students' understanding of aspects of business is developed through well-planned visits and outside speakers. Teachers establish good relationships with students. They make effective use of question and answer sessions and tasks to assess what students have learned. Students speak highly of the consistent support from teachers both in and out of lessons. On professional and management courses, teachers make good use of the experiences which students bring from their own work situations. For example, GNVQ advanced students prepared curricula vitae and letters to prospective employers for presentation to part-time employed students acting as members of an interview panel. Assessment procedures are clear and well recorded and students receive effective feedback on their performance. In some lessons, the students are not well motivated and teachers miss opportunities for learning. Students of GCE A level business studies are not encouraged to use sufficiently varied resources when working on their own. The average rates of attendance in lessons

Curriculum Areas

observed was satisfactory, at 82%. However, class registers indicate that attendance at GNVQ intermediate lessons is sometimes poor.

24 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that there are good retention and achievement rates on full-time level 2 and 3 business studies programmes, several of which are above national averages. In several cases where retention and achievement rates had fallen below national averages in previous years, they had improved in 1999. Achievement and retention rates are more variable on professional and management programmes. Poor results over a two-year period have led to the removal of part-time GCSE programmes. Students' coursework and portfolios are generally of an appropriate or higher than expected standard. On GNVQ programmes there has been an improvement in the use of IT. For one GNVQ advanced assignment on business planning, some students produced excellent computer-designed overhead projector

transparencies. Several professional and management projects show good application of theory to organisational analysis and many management students can identify particular achievements at work which result from their courses. There were examples of good essays and good project work from GCE A level students.

25 Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced. The substantial number of part-time staff are given a suitable induction. They work well in teams with full-time staff and bring up-to-date work experience to business and management programmes. The self-assessment reports identified the need for industrial and commercial updating for full-time staff. Several staff have since undertaken work placements. Business and professional courses are well accommodated in modern classrooms and IT workshops. The new Pendle Business Centre is excellent for management courses. The range of textbooks and journals in the learning resource centre is inadequate.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ intermediate (full-time course)	2	Number of starters	33	20	26
		Retention (%)	76	85	79
		Achievement (%)	72	59	74
Professional and management	2	Number of starters	14	39	52
		Retention (%)	86	74	96
		Achievement (%)	50	35	92
GNVQ and GCE A level business (full-time course)	3	Number of starters	100	82	87
		Retention (%)	83	80	76
		Achievement (%)	78	74	83
National certificate and GCE A level business (part-time course)	3	Number of starters	45	33	7
		Retention (%)	69	30	86
		Achievement (%)	90	30	83
Professional and management	3	Number of starters	197	110	36
		Retention (%)	97	95	69
		Achievement (%)	58	37	20

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

Curriculum Areas

Catering and Hospitality

Grade 2

26 Inspectors observed 11 lessons in catering and hospitality. The self-assessment report was comprehensive. Inspectors agreed with the main strengths and weaknesses and identified others. Inspectors from the TSC observed training in hospitality for work-based trainees.

Key strengths

- well-managed teaching programmes
- good progression routes from one programme to another
- good teaching
- programmes developed to meet individual students' needs
- well-resourced work environments

Weaknesses

- some poor retention and achievement rates
- inadequate monitoring of achievement data

27 The college offers a range of programmes in catering and hospitality that provides good progression routes for students. Courses range from pre-foundation to advanced level and include national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1, 2 and 3 in food preparation and cooking, and GNVQ at advanced level. Other programmes offered are in professional cookery, food hygiene, cake decoration and sugar craft. All students gain the basic food handlers' qualification as part of their course. The section has well-developed links with industry both locally and nationally.

28 As stated in the self-assessment report, programmes are well planned and managed to industrial standards. A well-structured induction programme provides students with a

good knowledge of their programme of study and helps to identify the correct level at which they enter. Initial assessment of learning needs is undertaken during induction and the college provides good additional support for those who require it. Teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and teachers employ a variety of teaching strategies to facilitate students' preferred methods of learning. Teachers use examples of good industrial practice to promote students' understanding of the industry. Students are encouraged to gain industrial experience during their studies. Well-resourced work environments within the college offer a variety of appropriate learning opportunities, as the self-assessment report states. The college encourages students to enter a variety of national competitions and students' successes have enhanced the college's reputation both locally and nationally.

29 Schemes of work are well structured and detailed, and offer clearly defined objectives. Students negotiate individual programmes of study with staff. Many students achieve units which are additional to their main programme of study. Assignments are well planned and industry based. They are accurately marked and teachers provide appropriate written comments. There are examples of the good use of IT and photographs to record evidence. Assessments are recorded, but there has been insufficient monitoring of achievement. Internal verification is not adequately planned and assessors are not provided with the appropriate information.

30 All teachers participate in regular programme reviews but there is no involvement of students. The college conducts college-wide surveys of students' opinions, using questionnaires. There is a catering advisory committee, comprising representatives of industry, which takes an active interest in the college's programmes. The committee seeks ways to support and enhance students' knowledge and experience, as the

Curriculum Areas

self-assessment report recognises. Students are made aware of the standards they are achieving and parents are invited to the college to discuss their progress.

31 Some programmes have lower than average retention and achievement rates. Although recruitment to the GNVQ advanced hospitality and catering programme declined, the retention rate is above the national average, at 91%, and the achievement rate has risen to 73%. In 1999, the achievement rate on the NVQ level 2 in food preparation (62%) was below the national average, although the retention rate rose from 75% to 91% between 1997 and 1999. The retention rate for the NVQ level 2 in food and drink service has risen to 91% and the achievement rate to 80%, both above national averages. In 1999, NVQ level 1 had a retention rate of 72% and an achievement rate of 85%, again above the national average. As stated in the self-assessment report, students have a good

record of progression to employment and to higher education. Their success is celebrated by an annual awards evening and several of the awards are sponsored by industry.

32 Teachers have good industrial experience and are well qualified. Recently, three teachers undertook a period in industry to update their knowledge and to learn about the skills which industry now requires. The experience they gained was shared with students. As identified in the self-assessment report, most practical areas are well resourced and well maintained. Equipment for cake decoration is inadequate. There are good displays of students' work and of materials relating to competitions and visits, throughout the department. Good learning materials are available to students on the college intranet. Books in the learning resource centre do not fully reflect current trends within the industry.

A sample of retention and achievement rates in catering and hospitality, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
NVQ catering and hospitality preparing and serving food (one-year course)	1	Number of starters	*	*	18
		Retention (%)	*	*	72
		Achievement (%)	*	*	85
NVQ catering and hospitality food preparation and cooking	2	Number of starters	20	31	44
		Retention (%)	75	77	91
		Achievement (%)	100	58	62
NVQ catering and hospitality serving food and drink – restaurant	2	Number of starters	25	41	33
		Retention (%)	64	66	91
		Achievement (%)	100	68	80
GNVQ advanced hospitality and catering	3	Number of starters	16	4	12
		Retention (%)	100	75	91
		Achievement (%)	100	67	73

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

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Government and Politics, Law, Psychology and Sociology

Grade 3

33 Inspectors observed 11 lessons on GCE A level, GCSE and access to higher education courses. They agreed with most of the strengths in the self-assessment report, but found that some weaknesses had been understated. Aspects of teaching and learning were found to be a weakness.

Key strengths

- effective teaching on government and politics and access courses
- above average pass rates on full-time GCE A level courses
- good retention and achievement rates in GCSE social science
- good accommodation

Weaknesses

- insufficient checks on students' learning in some lessons
- some dull teaching
- poor retention rates on most courses
- insufficient feedback on students' work
- information and learning technology inadequately integrated with other aspects of work

34 The college offers a wide range of humanities courses, catering predominantly for 16 to 18 year olds. Access courses are provided for full-time and part-time adult students and there is part-time evening provision in GCE A level psychology. The number of adult students is declining. The number of full-time students fluctuates, but recruitment to GCE A level psychology improved last year.

35 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the curriculum is organised effectively. Teams meet regularly, complete self-assessment reports and strive to make

improvements. The quality of self-assessments varies between courses. Performance indicators are used effectively to measure and monitor performance but there was insufficient rigour in the use of value-added indicators. On some courses, schemes of work and lesson plans are of a high standard but the inspectors did not agree that this was the case on the majority of courses.

36 Of the 11 lessons observed, seven were good or outstanding and two were unsatisfactory, which is below average for the programme area. The best teaching was on government and politics and access courses. In the better lessons, teachers used a range of methods to help students learn. In a GCE A level law lesson, students worked successfully in small groups to prepare reports on examination topics to present to the rest of the group. A similar exercise was conducted in a psychology revision lesson. In some lessons, the teaching was lifeless and learning outcomes were not always clear. Teachers failed to question students enough as a means of involving them in discussion of the topic and checking their understanding. Some teachers do not vary sufficiently their methods of working and do not take account of the different needs and abilities of students. This weakness was understated in the self-assessment report. In less satisfactory lessons, teachers relied too heavily on talking to the class and failed to make the most of students' contributions.

37 The quality of marking and written feedback varies between subjects and teachers, a weakness not identified in the self-assessment report. On access courses, effective use is made of standard forms for giving feedback. In law, and in government and politics, students' work is well annotated and the feedback is constructive. In other subjects, however, written feedback is not detailed enough. There is insufficient comment on performance and a lack of thoroughness in correcting spelling, punctuation and grammar. Insufficient attention is paid to the development of subject-specific

Curriculum Areas

skills and key skills. There are no systematic arrangements for induction to individual subjects.

38 The self-assessment report recognises that retention and achievement rates vary across courses and that some are poor. In GCE A level government and politics, and in law, examination pass rates are consistently above national averages as are the rates for students achieving higher grades. For full-time GCE A level psychology students the pass rate improved significantly between 1998 and 1999, but retention rates are consistently below the national average. Retention rates for GCE A level government and politics are above the national average but in GCE A level law they are consistently below average. Pass rates in

A summary of retention and achievement rates in government and politics, law, psychology and sociology, 1997 to 1999

GCE A level sociology are consistently high but retention rates, although improving, are consistently below the national average. On the part-time evening course in GCE A level psychology, pass rates and retention rates are significantly below the national averages for adult students. Retention rates and achievement rates in GCSE social science are consistently good. Progression rates to higher education vary significantly from subject to subject. In GCE A level law they are excellent.

39 Teaching staff are well qualified. They have relevant degrees and substantial teaching experience. Accommodation is excellent. Most rooms contain appropriate display material. There is good access to the Internet and to IT facilities. IT as a learning resource across all courses is insufficiently integrated with other aspects of work. There is also a lack of specialist software, particularly in psychology.

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE psychology	2	Number of starters	*	25	6
		Retention (%)	*	40	67
		Achievement (%)	*	40	50
GCSE social science	2	Number of starters	20	17	21
		Retention (%)	95	100	90
		Achievement (%)	84	65	63
GCE A level government and politics	3	Number of starters	17	11	22
		Retention (%)	76	91	86
		Achievement (%)	92	100	89
GCE A level law	3	Number of starters	42	40	34
		Retention (%)	69	75	68
		Achievement (%)	69	90	87
GCE A level psychology (daytime provision)	3	Number of starters	106	80	62
		Retention (%)	73	62	66
		Achievement (%)	71	78	92
GCE A level psychology (part-time evening course)	3	Number of starters	*	29	31
		Retention (%)	*	66	52
		Achievement (%)	*	42	44
GCE A level sociology	3	Number of starters	39	35	47
		Retention (%)	56	63	68
		Achievement (%)	76	95	81

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

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Basic Skills

Grade 3

40 Inspectors observed 12 entry level and level 1 basic skills lessons in college and at seven community venues. They agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They also identified additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- responsive and flexible provision that helps to widen participation
- well-structured and effectively managed basic skills provision for adults
- good learning environments for college-based provision
- appropriate use of accreditation

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped basic skills provision in vocational programmes
- inadequate resources and learning environments in community venues
- some unsatisfactory teaching
- some poor recording of progress and achievement

41 The inspection of basic skills provision included literacy and numeracy for adults, elements of the 16 to 19 'fresh start' programme and basic skills provision for students on vocational programmes. The 'fresh start' programme is for students at entry level and level 1 in business and care and is jointly planned and delivered by the appropriate vocational section and the access section of the college. The access section offers basic skills courses for adults in the college and the community. Teachers from vocational sections provide basic skills tuition to students on their own programmes, with some support from access section staff. Learning support is

provided on individual programmes or students receive support in the workshops provided for adult basic skills.

42 Basic skills provision is well planned and well managed, a strength not identified in the self-assessment report. Since the last inspection, the college has taken action to address weaknesses in basic skills across the college. Teachers in the access section work effectively as a team. Communications are good and there are effective processes in place for extending provision and widening participation. Programmes are thoroughly documented and the documentation, where used effectively, assists staff in planning the curriculum and reviewing the progress of students. Quality assurance procedures are rigorous and the self-assessment accurately states the strengths and weaknesses of the provision.

43 Of the 12 lessons observed, seven were judged to be good or outstanding, slightly above the national average for the programme area. In the better lessons, students are encouraged to participate in a range of group and individual activities. Teachers are well organised and used a variety of teaching methods. In one community-based lesson students were actively engaged in a lively debate about a film that they had seen, and the work they subsequently produced was excellent. In another lesson, the teacher effectively managed students of widely varying ability, who were involved in a group exercise on communication. Role-play, discussion and practical activity were used effectively. In other lessons, teaching was limited to supporting students individually as they worked through a series of worksheets. There was a lack of activity to stimulate students and learning opportunities were lost. Poorer lessons were often ill-planned and failed to meet students' learning needs. In a numeracy lesson, for example, students were reading magazines and picking out items to list on a piece of paper. The activity was not demanding enough and the

Curriculum Areas

students showed little interest. The college identified the variable quality of the teaching as a weakness in its self-assessment report.

44 Students on basic skills courses have their achievements accredited by the National Open College Network (NOCN). Achievement rates are satisfactory. The self-assessment report judged students' achievements on the core programme to be a strength, and their achievements in vocational areas to be a weakness. In 1998-99, 439 students gained at least one credit, 23% achieved the full award, and 20% progressed to level 2 programmes. Attendance at the lessons observed was 71% which is near the average for the programme area. The average group size was 8.9 which is above the sector average. The overall retention rate in 1998-99 was 87% which is above the sector average for similar programmes.

45 College-based resources are good. The access work area is an attractive and stimulating learning environment, well equipped with a range of information and learning technology and with paper-based resources. Community-based provision lacked appropriate resources. In some venues, staff had access to laptop computers, but general resources were poor and much of the teaching accommodation was drab. The majority of lessons observed had two and sometimes three teachers present. In addition, there were support workers working with individual students. The majority of staff have good qualifications, relevant to teaching basic skills. The strengths and weaknesses of the resources were identified in the self-assessment report.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Literacy including NOCN (foundation accreditation in mathematics and English) ¹	Entry and 1	Number of starters	*	227	184
		Retention (%)	*	91	98
		Achievement (%)	*	65	97
Numeracy including NOCN (foundation accreditation in mathematics and English) ¹	Entry and 1	Number of starters	*	86	73
		Retention (%)	*	91	96
		Achievement (%)	*	60	91
Basic skills summer school NOCN (foundation accreditation in mathematics and English) ¹	Entry and 1	Number of starters	#	49	69
		Retention (%)	#	100	94
		Achievement (%)	#	100	81
Key skills: communications in vocational programmes ²	1	Number of starters	#	#	59
		Retention (%)	#	#	81
		Achievement (%)	#	#	60
Key skills: application of number in vocational programmes ²	1	Number of starters	#	#	59
		Retention (%)	#	#	81
		Achievement (%)	#	#	38

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

¹figures include partial achievements

²new provision in 1998-99

*comparable data not available

#course not running

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

46 The self-assessment report identified strengths and dealt openly with weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the report.

Key strengths

- well-managed support arrangements for students
- effective pre-entry procedures and induction activities
- good learning support
- effective counselling, welfare and financial support, and spiritual advice and guidance

Weaknesses

- some inadequate tutorial support
- inadequate support for evening class students

47 The student services unit is based in a relatively small area near the Barrowford Road main entrance. It is a well-used facility. Information about services is clear and well presented. Support services for students are well managed. Staff teams have a sense of purpose and hold regular and productive meetings. They review their work regularly and produce action plans and targets that are monitored systematically. The student services staff support teachers by providing staff development and publishing good practice guides.

48 The college has effective pre-entry procedures that ensure that students take suitable courses. Students are well informed about the college and its programmes through recruitment events such as 'taster' days, road shows and open days. Bilingual staff are available to give information. Successful recruitment and information events for the

Asian community are also held in neighbourhood locations. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the college has extensive and productive links with schools and external agencies. The college works closely with local agencies to encourage adults and disaffected young people to participate in further education.

49 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that most students receive a comprehensive induction to the college and its services. There is an induction handbook, guidelines and checklists for tutors. There are separate guidelines for late starters and for staff teaching on part-time programmes. Arrangements for evaluating the effectiveness of induction are good. Examples of good practice relating to induction are shared as part of the college training programme. The service area validation committee regularly audits the induction programme and identifies good practice. Students' views on induction are sought and the results are analysed. Students commented favourably on their induction programme and most felt it to be purposeful and useful.

50 There is good provision for students who need learning support. Many students who require extra support, have their needs identified early, often prior to enrolment, through liaison with schools. All new 16 to 19 year old full-time students undertake a thorough initial assessment in communication and application of number. Where necessary, they are referred to appropriate specialists for additional assessments. There are 60 teaching staff and 26 non-teaching assistants who are involved in providing additional support, and the support is effective. Students with sensory impairment and specific learning difficulties are well supported. Bilingual support is also provided when needed. There are efficient measures for monitoring the effectiveness of support arrangements. Staff and students have the opportunity to comment on the quality of

Cross-college Provision

provision at the periodic reviews. The results and destinations of students who have received support are monitored.

51 The self-assessment report recognises that support arrangements for some part-time evening class students are inadequate. Better monitoring of registers has revealed that retention rates for these students are poor. The college has made some progress in improving the situation. Student services have made it easier for part-time students to seek advice by opening for an additional three evenings a week at the Reedyford site. Part-time students also receive information about induction and support services through their teacher and central student services. However, there is still insufficient checking to ensure that all part-time students receive an adequate level of support.

52 As acknowledged in the self-assessment report, tutorial arrangements and the quality of tutorial support vary, so that not all students receive the same benefits from the system. Only three of the eight tutorials observed by inspectors were judged to be good or outstanding and some tutorials were unsatisfactory. All students have a personal tutor and full-time students have weekly tutorials. Individual action-planning and review is an integral part of programmes and some tutors work to clear specifications for the conduct of tutorials. The college has only recently begun to monitor the quality of tutorials through its lesson observation programme.

53 There is effective counselling, welfare and financial support. Links with the curriculum are good. Counsellors regularly contribute talks on stress management in tutorials. There is good access to spiritual guidance in several faiths. The Muslim support worker provides an Islamic viewpoint. A lively weekly discussion group for Asian girls has recently been developed. Students benefit from a wide range of extra activities, including sport and music.

Achievements of students are celebrated publicly within the college and at annual awards evenings. Students have the opportunity to join a student council. The college nursery, and childcare in community venues, provide a valued service.

54 Students have appropriate access to careers guidance. Up-to-date information about progression opportunities is located in the student services area. Careers advisers from the East Lancashire Careers Service provide a helpful service two days a week. Help for students wishing to apply for higher education is given efficiently in tutorials and by central support services staff. Bilingual staff who speak Punjabi are available to give advice and guidance where required.

General Resources

Grade 2

55 Inspectors were generally in agreement with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- a substantial improvement in the quality of accommodation
- good classroom accommodation
- productive links between the resource centres and curriculum staff
- clean, well-maintained buildings

Weaknesses

- some specialist accommodation not accessible to wheelchair users
- slow progress in implementing the risk assessment action plan

56 There has been a substantial improvement in accommodation since the last inspection. The college has implemented its accommodation strategy, refurbishing buildings and

Cross-college Provision

concentrating its provision on two main sites. At present, the college operates from five sites in Nelson and Colne. The accommodation at Barrowford Road, Colne is of a good standard and there is full access for wheelchair users. Adjacent to the main building is a well-equipped catering block, where the college has installed, in the practice kitchen, some equipment which is adjustable for height, to enable students in wheelchairs to work independently. Hairdressing and beauty has been relocated to the basement of the catering block and £125,000 has been spent on refurbishing the area.

57 The main site at Nelson has been refurbished in phases since 1994. It houses classrooms and laboratories which are of a good standard and which are generally well equipped. The Pendle Building was built as an addition to the Nelson site in 1998. It is a modern, attractive building with good facilities, providing the location for one of the resource centres. There are some problems with the ventilation in classrooms, which the college has recognised. An area formerly occupied by motor vehicle engineering has been refurbished for the performing arts and music. The accommodation includes two recording studios, a performance area and music rooms. There is also a computer room for music students, but the eight workstations provided are not sufficient for a full class. Some specialist facilities in photography and languages are not accessible to wheelchair users, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report. The college has leased space in the Pendle Business Centre. The space can be adjusted according to needs and it provides a modern facility appropriate for attracting business customers. This training facility is also open to staff members for meetings and management training courses.

58 In the last three years, the college has spent £900,000 on enhancing its computer facilities. Equipment in rooms is upgraded or

replaced on a rolling programme. The ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students is 1:6.5. Students' access to computers has been improved. In some areas, students are provided with a designated workspace offering specialist research materials and computers. There are also computers in both resource centres and at student support services, but these are not installed with the specialist software used in the curriculum. The resource-based learning unit was set up in September 1997 to support staff. Resource-based learning staff have been active in producing materials to be used in the curriculum and have developed both the staff and student intranets, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. The unit includes a reprographic service with colour printing, photocopying and collating facilities. The college has recently won the Beacon award for the integration of resource-based learning in five curriculum areas.

59 There are generally well-equipped learning resource centres at both main sites. The centres have zoned areas for silent study, group study and computer work. Staff had an input into the design of the resource centre at the Nelson site, which has good access for wheelchair users. The centre contains a range of books, videos and CD-ROMs, although the currency and availability of the material varies by subject area. The virtual library catalogues the resources held in curriculum areas and there are good links between learning resource centre staff and curriculum teams which have led to the production of topic files. The opening hours of each learning resource centre have been adjusted to meet demand. Students still perceive a problem with silent study capacity at peak times. The self-assessment report recognised this weakness.

60 As acknowledged in the self-assessment report, the estate is well maintained and clean. A maintenance budget is used for specific projects designated as priorities by senior management and to effect repairs as required.

Cross-college Provision

The college has a health and safety officer who has responsibility for a wide range of health and safety matters. The college commissioned a risk assessment survey of all areas in January and February 1999. Work has been done to disseminate the findings to appropriate members of staff, but progress has been slow on taking action on the findings. The college has a number of recreational facilities for students. These include students' common rooms, refectories, a sports hall at each main site, and football and rugby pitches.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

61 Inspectors generally agreed with the college's assessment of its strengths but found that some had been overstated. Some additional weaknesses were identified.

Key strengths

- a strong commitment to continuous improvement
- a comprehensive quality assurance system linked effectively to strategic planning and self-assessment
- a well-planned and extensive internal inspection and audit cycle
- significant improvements in achievement rates
- a comprehensive and rigorous system of staff review
- a wide range of channels for obtaining feedback from customers

Weaknesses

- inconsistency in the use of measurable targets and service standards
- slow progress in improving teaching and learning in some areas

62 Inspectors agreed that college managers and most staff are committed to improving the quality of provision. The senior management

team, with the principal taking the lead, is involved in internal inspection and audits, and in the work of validating committees, and the quality committee. The college has achieved a range of external quality awards which includes Investors in People, The Charter Mark and the Basic Skills Agency (BSA) and Beacon awards. Student achievement rates at levels 2 and 3 have shown a steady improvement over the past three years and are now significantly above national benchmarks. The college is in the top 10% nationally for GCE A level points per student and retention figures for the whole college remain around the national average. Quality assurance procedures, however, have been slow to bring improvements to teaching and learning in some areas of work.

63 Inspectors agreed that there is a comprehensive quality assurance system and that quality assurance is an integral part of strategic planning. All programme and service areas complete logbooks, using quality standards and targets to identify the strengths and weaknesses of provision and all areas implement action plans, as appropriate. However, the targets set are sometimes not quantifiable and some service level standards are too general. There is good use of benchmarking data for retention and achievement. The college makes comparisons with benchmarks for the whole sector rather than the lower benchmarks which apply to further education colleges only. The value-added system which the college identifies as a strength applies only to GCE A level and it is not used to set targets for individual subjects. There is a well-planned and well-organised schedule of internal inspections and audit that includes external members from a group of partner colleges. Arrangements with the other colleges have also enabled judgements to be moderated. Lesson observation is well established and staff have been trained for this. All new part-time staff are observed within their first term. The logbooks produced by the programme and service areas, together with the

Cross-college Provision

results of internal inspection, are presented to the validating committees, which make recommendations for improvement. Progress reports have to be submitted within three months. Reports from the validating committees are presented to the college quality committee, which includes representatives of the governors. Internal inspection, audit and validating committee summary reports are published on the college intranet. The logbooks and reports inform self-assessment reports that in turn inform divisional and strategic plans.

64 The college charter is readily available and well designed. There are separate charters for full-time, part-time and adult students and for employers. This strength was recognised by the college. The standard of presentation of the charter for part-time students is not as high as for other versions of the charter. Charters are available in Urdu, on cassette and in sign language and they are displayed around the college. The charter is reviewed annually by a charter group, following a customer survey. A report is then sent to the quality committee. There is no effective evaluation of whether entitlements are being met. Comments received as part of the survey tend to be general.

65 The college uses a wide range of channels to obtain feedback from customers. It identified this as a strength and inspectors agreed. The channels include students', employers' and parents' surveys, focus groups, recorded complaints and compliments and a variety of tutor group questionnaires. The college has a number of advisory committees and liaison panels and student council representatives meet regularly with the principal. Issues arising from the feedback from customers are raised with the appropriate manager for action. Improvements have resulted, although analysis of feedback at programme level is inconsistent. Outcomes of the feedback are circulated and are available on the college intranet.

66 There is a comprehensive system of staff review to which the outcomes of classroom observation contribute. All staff, including those working eight hours or more, are reviewed annually. Others are circulated with a questionnaire. Training needs are identified across the college and are prioritised under headings related to the strategic plan. Procedures are well documented and the outcomes of training have to be specified. The budget is held centrally. There is no systematic targeting of staff development to improve teaching and learning. The college had identified the need to update the industrial and commercial experience of staff as a weakness and some progress has been made in addressing this.

67 The self-assessment involved all members of staff and governors. The process was underpinned by extensive validation procedures involving external agencies. The report in general was comprehensive and evaluative and was derived from the self-assessment logbooks of individual subject areas.

Governance

Grade 2

68 Inspectors and auditors generally agreed with the judgements of the college in the self-assessment report. They found that some strengths had been overstated and that one important weakness had not been identified.

Key strengths

- effective deployment of the wide range of governors' skills
- effective determination of the strategic direction of college
- a good induction and formal programme of training for governors
- effective arrangements for reviewing individual governors' performance
- open conduct of corporation business

Cross-college Provision

Weaknesses

- inadequate monitoring of the quality of educational performance
- underdeveloped links between governors, staff and students

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

70 A strength identified in the self-assessment report is the broad range of skills and experience which governors bring to the college. Their collective experience in accountancy, law, education, business, public service and the community is well used in support of the work of the corporation. A search committee carefully identifies the needs of the corporation before filling vacancies. The corporation has approved a nomination and appointment procedure that includes advertising for new governors in the press. There is a carefully planned induction and a well-attended formal programme of training that reflects the needs of the corporation and of individual governors.

71 The corporation has re-determined its membership in accordance with the modified instrument and articles of government. It now has 14 members including the principal. At the time of inspection, there were no vacancies. The corporation meets nine times a year. There are six committees: policy and resources, quality, remuneration, curriculum, search and audit. Some committees' terms of reference require revision to reflect their remit. Comprehensive management accounts are considered monthly by the policy and resources committee and by the corporation at each of its meetings. The audit committee has not operated in accordance with its terms of

reference and has not met fully the requirements of Council Circular 98/15, *Audit Code of Practice*.

72 There are effective systems for reviewing the performance of individual governors and operating procedures of the corporation. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. Each governor has a carefully structured annual review with the chair. As a result, training needs and other necessary action are identified. A detailed analysis of comments on the working of the corporation is also produced. Effective action is taken to make improvements. For example, governors considered that significant progress had been made in the effective management of the corporation's time. The corporation has only recently adopted a set of performance indicators by which its effectiveness may be judged.

73 Governors regularly review the college's mission and effectively determine its strategic direction. At a normally well-attended annual evaluation event with senior managers they consider the continued appropriateness of the mission and the extent to which the college has achieved its strategic objectives. An annual plan is approved by governors. Its implementation is carefully monitored. The principal is appraised annually by the chair of the corporation against specific targets and performance indicators. These relate closely to the strategic plan.

74 Governors do not effectively monitor performance on the full range of college courses. The corporation has received some information on retention and achievement. However, it has not considered sufficient information in a suitable format to enable it to properly assess students' performance on college courses. The corporation has recently established a curriculum committee. Its terms of reference do not specifically include the monitoring of performance. Governors are closely involved in validating the self-assessment reports of all areas of the college's operation, through their membership of the college quality committee.

Cross-college Provision

75 The self-assessment report acknowledges that links between the corporation and college staff and students are underdeveloped. Staff presentations on curriculum issues prior to corporation meetings are highly valued by governors. Attendance by governors at college events and advisory committees is generally poor. Meetings between the policy and resources committee and representatives of the student executive have been poorly attended by students.

76 The clerk to the corporation is directly accountable to the chair of the corporation, who undertakes his annual appraisal. Corporation and committee agendas and papers are sent out in good time, in advance of the relevant meetings. Minutes are prepared and distributed promptly. Members are kept well informed about developments in college governance. The clerk, who is also the deputy principal, presents his own reports on estates and personnel matters to the corporation and to the policy and resources committee. This is not in line with best practice.

77 The corporation conducts its business openly. Minutes of corporation and committee meetings are readily available in the college and their availability is advertised. The college holds a public annual general meeting and publishes an annual report. The corporation has adopted a code of conduct and formal standing orders to guide the conduct of meetings of the corporation and its committees. It has approved a 'whistleblowing' policy. The register of interests has been completed by all governors and by staff who have significant financial responsibility.

Management

Grade 1

78 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report. They considered that most of the

identified weaknesses had been addressed by the time of the inspection, but found one additional weakness.

Key strengths

- successful implementation of strategies to widen participation
- strong links between strategic and operational planning
- a clear and effective management structure
- wide-ranging and effective channels of communication
- good financial management
- a well-managed marketing unit, providing high-quality services
- the strong promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities
- good use of an accurate and responsive management information system
- an outstanding range of productive external partnerships
- strong links with, and support for, employers

Weaknesses

- insufficient sharing of good practice in teaching and learning

79 Inspectors agreed that the college's strategic planning and review processes are clear, well documented and well supported. Staff have a sound understanding of the college's strategic direction and their contribution to it. The published annual cycle of strategic and operational planning, review meetings and seminars helps to involve staff at all levels. Divisional objectives are cross-referenced to strategic objectives and the annual operating statement. Divisional plans are reviewed three times a year. Targets are monitored and action for improvement is identified, where appropriate.

Cross-college Provision

80 The curriculum and service functions of the college are well organised and well managed. Job descriptions and individual work targets, both of which are reviewed annually, support clear reporting lines. Accountability is also exercised through the termly reviews of divisional plans, a strength recognised by the college. Working relationships between senior and other managers are excellent. The senior management team meets weekly and has regular planning days to which other staff contribute. There are scheduled meetings for all other teams. Staff consider that they are well supported and have good opportunities to shape their own work and to contribute to college-wide issues. College policies are reviewed every other year. Formal committees, with clear terms of reference, implement and monitor these policies. The deputy principal chairs the regular meetings of the joint consultative committee, which comprises representatives of recognised trade unions and of management.

81 Communications are highly effective. Scheduled meetings, newsletters, electronic mail and the college intranet ensure that staff are well informed. The college identified communication with part-time teachers as a weakness. Action taken to address this issue has greatly improved the management and support of these staff. Arrangements for sharing good practice across the college do not focus sufficiently on teaching and learning; a weakness not identified in the self-assessment report. Although strengths and weaknesses are identified from lesson observations, managers are not systematically sharing good practice or strategies for addressing weaknesses.

82 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. Since incorporation, the college has had an average level of funding unit significantly below the national average. Nevertheless, it has achieved historic cost surpluses in each of the past two years and similar surpluses are planned over

the period of the current three-year financial forecast. There are positive general reserves. The financial plans contain clearly defined financial objectives against which performance is monitored each month. The comprehensive financial regulations were recently updated. Budget holders receive timely monthly reports on actual and committed expenditure. Detailed management accounts, with an appropriate commentary, are prepared monthly for review by the policy and resources committee and the senior management team. The internal and external auditors did not identify any significant weaknesses in their most recently available annual reports.

83 Since the last inspection, there have been significant improvements in the accessibility, reliability and usefulness of management information. Data is accurate. Returns are timely. Managers and staff have direct access to the system and can print out a range of reports. They use these well to inform course planning and review, to monitor action on aspects such as equal opportunities and widening participation and to help set targets. Inspectors agreed that marketing is systematic and effective. A detailed marketing plan sets out the research and promotional functions of the marketing unit. The unit gathers information from a wide range of sources to produce a needs analysis. This is circulated to managers at all levels and informs strategic and operational planning. Promotional activities and publicity materials are carefully designed and targeted. The unit evaluates their impact and cost effectiveness.

84 The college effectively promotes and monitors a comprehensive equal opportunities policy. The equality of opportunity committee, on which students are represented, meets regularly. It reports progress on its annual action plan to the academic board and to the governors. As the college recognises, members of the committee are active in implementing the policy. For example, they participate in recruitment and selection and sit on all

Cross-college Provision

interview panels. They circulate reports on student participation, on courses by gender and ethnicity, and they encourage sections to carry out studies to identify and overcome barriers to participation.

85 Inspectors agreed that the college has productive partnerships with a wide range of regional and local organisations. Links with employers in particular have greatly improved since the last inspection. The college is an active member of the East Lancashire Partnership. It works productively with the Pendle Partnership and has successfully pursued a robust widening participation agenda through this link, as well as involving a range of community groups, voluntary organisations, the youth and community service and East Lancashire Careers Service. There are good links with higher education. The college is an associate college of Salford University, a link that has improved progression for students who find it difficult to move away from home. Over 400 students progress to higher education every year. The college has maintained its effective strategic and operational links with East Lancashire TEC and has established strong links with other colleges in the locality and the region. The college works hard to widen participation in education and training.

Conclusions

86 The college's self-assessment report was comprehensive and evaluative. Its format followed the guidelines of Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*. Inspectors found that the report formed a useful basis for planning and undertaking the inspection. They agreed with most of the strengths identified and found a few additional ones. They also agreed with many of the identified weaknesses, though some, particularly those relating to teaching and learning, were understated or overlooked. The college had addressed some of the weaknesses identified in its self-assessment report prior to inspection. Inspectors agreed with three of the six curriculum area grades in the report, but awarded lower grades for the other three. They agreed with four of the college's cross-college grades and awarded a higher grade for management.

87 The 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	3
16-18 years	24
19-24 years	10
25+ years	62
Not known	1
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (November 1999)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Level 1 (foundation)	42
Level 2 (intermediate)	13
Level 3 (advanced)	24
Level 4/5 (higher)	3
Non-schedule 2	18
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	239	939	17
Agriculture	18	27	1
Engineering	161	218	5
Business	233	783	15
Hotel and catering	144	151	4
Health and community care	194	749	14
Art and design	275	691	14
Humanities	406	921	19
Basic education	18	769	11
Total	1,688	5,248	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 20% 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>Per- manent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	92	61	0	153
Supporting direct learning contact	40	10	2	52
Other support	94	24	3	121
Total	226	95	5	326

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£8,255,000	£8,057,000	£8,457,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£15.97	£15.85	£16.20
Payroll as a proportion of income	78%	70%	71%
Achievement of funding target	109%	101%	100%
Diversity of income	30%	28%	28%
Operating surplus	-£541,000	-£86,000	-£72,000

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 and 1998), college (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)

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	537	1,273	1,074	1,928	1,931	2,061
	Retention (%)	87	88	88	85	69	85
	Achievement (%)	62	45	40	42	61	61
2	Number of starters	868	1,143	991	632	803	754
	Retention (%)	83	81	81	82	76	82
	Achievement (%)	47	61	67	64	67	74
3	Number of starters	1,657	1,753	1,593	504	471	496
	Retention (%)	75	76	78	88	76	77
	Achievement (%)	78	80	86	48	50	71
4 or 5	Number of starters	1	14	7	14	43	43
	Retention (%)	100	79	100	93	72	93
	Achievement (%)	100	9	100	80	40	76
Short courses	Number of starters	233	237	141	2,730	1,137	1,480
	Retention (%)	97	82	94	93	59	85
	Achievement (%)	38	24	54	37	58	58
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	335	368	485	1,574	1,430	1,023
	Retention (%)	84	81	88	89	68	92
	Achievement (%)	51	75	79	22	70	84

Source: college

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