

Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education

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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Contents

Paragraph

Summary	
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Context	
The college and its mission	1
The inspection	7

Curriculum areas	
Science	10
Construction	15
Business	20
Hospitality and catering	27
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	32
Health and care	38
Basic skills	45

Cross-college provision	
Support for students	51
General resources	58
Quality assurance	64
Governance	71
Management	80
Conclusions	88

College statistics	
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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

Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education *Eastern Region*

Inspected May 2000

Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education, a large general further education college, draws most of its students from Norfolk, including half from the city of Norwich. The college's self-assessment report provided a clear and accurate assessment of its work. The report was self-critical and evaluative. The evidence to substantiate the strengths and weaknesses was extensive. Data on students' achievements were thoroughly analysed and compared with national benchmark data. The college took appropriate account of students' achievements and rates of retention in its assessment. Inspectors substantially agreed with the judgements in the report. By the time of the inspection, the college had made good progress in addressing some of the weaknesses.

The college provides a wide range of courses in nine of the 10 programme areas funded by the FEFC for school-leavers, adults and industry. Provision in five of these areas was inspected together with basic skills and other aspects of cross-college provision. Most teaching is at least satisfactory. The proportion of good or outstanding lessons matched the national average. Courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy are outstanding. Students' achievements have improved significantly over

the last three years. There has been an overall decline in retention rates although some improvement has been achieved in the current year. Course reviews are not sufficiently thorough. Specialist equipment and resources are good. Students have access to a wide range of student services and there are comprehensive arrangements for guidance. Tutorial arrangements are generally good but some tutorials are ineffective. There are weaknesses in the monitoring of students' progress and their plans for improvement. Significant improvements have been made to accommodation since the last inspection. Students have good access to an extensive range of learning resources and well-run IT facilities. Quality assessment benefits from thorough, appropriately detailed and sound analysis of students' achievements. Governors are closely involved in strategic planning and monitor the college's finances effectively. However, some procedures for the operation of the board are not fully documented. The college management structure is clear and internal communication is effective. Good arrangements for external liaison have enabled the college successfully to widen participation in further education. The college should improve: the co-ordination of provision for basic skills; the low take-up of learning support; the arrangements to monitor the quality of courses; the recording and monitoring of students' progress; and the low level of the retention rate on some courses.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Science	3	Support for students	2
Construction	2	General resources	2
Business	3	Quality assurance	3
Hospitality and catering	2	Governance	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	1	Management	2
Health and care	2		
Basic skills	3		

The College and its Mission

1 Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education is a large general further education college. The main site is located near the city centre. There is also a training centre located in the Mile Cross area of Norwich about 3 miles from the main site. Courses are offered at a number of centres in the community including in the towns of Swaffham, Dereham and Diss. The college provides a wide range of courses from foundation to postgraduate level. Courses are provided for school-leavers, adults and industry in nine of the 10 programme areas funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The college draws most of its students from Norfolk, including half from the city of Norwich. There are 52 secondary schools in the county, of which 25 have sixth forms. In 1999, the participation rate in the Norwich area for 16 to 19 year old students on full-time courses was 73.2% of the age group. It is only in the last few years that the rate has been close to the national average.

2 Norfolk has a population of 783,000 of which minority ethnic groups comprise 2%. The unemployment rate in Norwich, at 3.7%, is lower than the county average of 4.2% and the national average of 4.1%. Opportunities for employment are mainly in the service industries, and include: hospitality and tourism; banking and finance; public administration; health; and manufacturing. Small and medium-sized businesses predominate; 93% of companies have fewer than 25 employees. However, 46% of all employees work in companies with 200 or more employees.

3 Over recent years the economic profile of Norwich has changed following the loss of some of the larger, longstanding employers. These changes have increased co-operation between public and private sector organisations. Through the Norwich Area Development Agency and the Norfolk economic initiative 'Shaping the Future', they are working in partnership

towards economic regeneration. The college has made a significant contribution to developing new skills in the workforce in fields such as information technology (IT), advanced engineering and hospitality and tourism. Student destination surveys show that nearly 40% of leavers (over 3,500 students a year) enter, or continue in, local employment after completing their courses at the college.

4 In 1998-99 the college enrolled 2,362 full-time and 9,910 part-time students whose courses were funded by the FEFC. Of these, 19% of full-time students and 81% of part-time students were aged 19 years or over. The college has formed a partnership with the six other further education colleges in Norfolk and north Suffolk to widen participation in education and training and attract funding for associated developments. The college also works in partnership with higher education providers. It is a regional partner of Anglia Polytechnic University and a member of the Regional Federation of the University of East Anglia. Excluding those working in prison establishments, the college employs some 1,300 staff, of whom 334 are full-time equivalent teachers and 347 full-time equivalent support staff.

5 The senior management executive group consists of the principal, the director of finance, two assistant principals responsible, respectively, for curriculum and for staffing, and the quality systems manager. The curriculum is organised into 15 curriculum centres, including prison education.

6 The college's mission states that, 'Norwich is a dynamic community which seeks to become: the prime access point to lifelong learning and achievements in the community it serves; to be the major contributor to the economic health, wealth and community life of its region'.

Context

The Inspection

7 The college was inspected in May 2000. The inspection team had previously reviewed the college's self-assessment report and considered information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. The information included data on students' achievements for 1997 and 1998, which were derived from the college's individualised student record (ISR). The college provided achievement and retention data for 1999. Inspectors checked these data and found them to be accurate. The inspection was carried out by a team of 14 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 56 days. Meetings were held with college governors, managers, other college staff and students. Inspectors observed 79 lessons, evaluated students' work and examined college documents. Five inspectors from the Training

Standards Council (TSC) worked with the inspection team during the inspection. The TSC inspectors concentrated on work-based training supported by the college in construction, engineering, manufacturing, hospitality and care programmes. They spent 20 inspector days based at the college. They observed instruction sessions and interviewed trainees, employers and college staff. Where it was appropriate to the FEFC inspection framework, evidence gathered by TSC inspectors was taken into account when assessing 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 lessons inspected, 64% were judged to be good or outstanding and 11% less than satisfactory compared with national averages for 1998-99 of 65% and 6%, respectively.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	0	2	3	1	0	6
GNVQ	0	7	5	2	0	14
NVQ	7	16	4	1	1	29
Other vocational	1	10	2	2	0	15
Other (including GCSE)	2	5	6	2	0	15
Total (No)	10	40	20	8	1	79
Total (%)	13	51	25	10	1	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*

Context

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

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education	10.0	74
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

Science

Grade 3

10 Inspectors observed 10 lessons. They agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. Some strengths were overstated and key weaknesses were not identified.

Key strengths

- good progression to higher education from the access to natural sciences programme
- effective action-planning with individual students on the general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) programme
- the good range of equipment in laboratories

Weaknesses

- the unsatisfactory revision programmes for courses at GCE A level
- the low rates of retention in some subjects
- inadequate arrangements for monitoring and review of subjects

11 The college offers a suitable range of GCE A level/GCE advanced supplementary (AS) and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) science subjects and an access programme in natural sciences. Biology GCSE forms part of a 'fresh start' programme for adults returning to education. There are opportunities for students to progress to modular science degree programmes in biology. There are clear arrangements for the co-ordination of the GCE A level programme. Among all subjects studied in science there is no systematic monitoring, reporting or review of targets for student retention or attendance throughout the academic year. Annual self-assessment reports for subjects are not thorough

and there is insufficient consideration of retention and achievement data in assessing the quality of learning. Analysis of student satisfaction questionnaires is not used effectively in subject self-assessment reports. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report.

12 Inspectors' assessment of teaching and learning on the access programme matched the positive views of students about their experiences. In a lesson for access students on plant pigments and photosynthesis, effective use was made of an ultraviolet/visible spectrophotometer to provide a spectrum of the pigments which they had extracted. The lesson was well structured and enabled students to gain skills in using advanced scientific instruments not usually available in further education colleges. Students' assignments in the access programme are assessed against clear criteria, are well annotated and provide effective feedback for students. In the GCE A level lessons students were revising for their examinations. The revision programme lacked a suitable range of activities. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. Little use was made of independent learning resources. Attendance in some of these classes was poor. However, in GCSE lessons approaches to revision were more effective. In one GCSE lesson the tutor had responded to student requests for revision of the syllabus by looking at the characteristics of living organisms. Students used live snails and a model of a human torso to review, for example, growth, movement and reproduction. The students found this approach challenging and contributed effectively to a well-managed discussion. Students carried out practical work competently. Practical lessons were well organised; there were well-written risk assessments and appropriate emphasis on safe working practices. The self-assessment report highlights the careful attention paid to health and safety. In some lessons insufficient

Curriculum Areas

attention was given to the organisation of students' notes. Some schemes of work lack sufficient information about student activities and assessment methods and few make reference to the use of IT or independent learning resources. The tutorial system is used effectively to monitor students' progress, and records of agreed actions are maintained in tutorial files.

13 Laboratories are well maintained. Some have been modernised and are able to be used efficiently for both theory and practical work. Further education students are able to benefit from the good range of equipment used in the higher education provision including chromatographic equipment. This advantage is identified in the self-assessment report. A new dedicated 'drop-in' IT suite complements the resources in the college's learning centre. The range of independent learning resources is inadequate. Some handouts and materials were of poor quality and handwritten. There is a wide range of science texts and periodicals in the library together with videos and a small range of CD-ROMs.

14 The self-assessment report provided a thorough analysis of data on rates of student retention and achievement. Retention rates on the majority of one-year courses including GCSE, GCE A level and the access course are mostly above sector averages, as the college in its self-assessment identifies. However, the number of students completing two-year GCE A level programmes is well below sector averages. Overall achievement on GCSE and GCE A level programmes broadly matches averages for the sector. However, achievement on the two-year GCE A level chemistry course is consistently below sector averages. The access to natural sciences programme is successful; achievement rates and percentages of high grades are well above national averages. High proportions of the students progress to higher education, for example 96% of students who completed in 1998 progressed to higher education.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of achievements and retention rates in science, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE sciences (biology, chemistry, physics, human physiology and health)	2	Number of starters	131	114	110
		Retention (%)	84	75	70
		Achievement (%)	34	41	44
GCE A level biology	3	Number of starters	86	79	72
		Retention (%)	71	82	72
		Achievement (%)	53	65	62
GCE A level chemistry	3	Number of starters	48	47	34
		Retention (%)	71	68	71
		Achievement (%)	48	61	67
GCE A level physics	3	Number of starters	46	42	27
		Retention (%)	63	57	74
		Achievement (%)	54	78	63
GCE A level human biology	3	Number of starters	68	54	67
		Retention (%)	79	80	66
		Achievement (%)	70	67	57
Access to higher education (natural sciences)	3	Number of starters	34	29	31
		Retention (%)	88	93	61
		Achievement (%)	93	78	100

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

Curriculum Areas

Construction

Grade 2

15 Inspectors observed 10 lessons. They agreed with most of the college's judgements in the self-assessment report, and noted the progress that had been made in addressing some of the weaknesses. Inspectors from the TSC inspected training in boat building and furniture making for 154 work-based trainees, observed 11 trainees and interviewed 22.

Key strengths

- good teaching
- effective student review and action-planning
- some excellent pass rates in 1999
- good standards of practical and assignment work
- well-equipped specialist accommodation

Weaknesses

- lack of work placements for full-time students
- poor retention rates on many intermediate craft courses
- poor pass rates in 1997 and 1998
- lack of craft provision at foundation level

16 The school of construction provides a wide range of courses at craft, technician and supervisory levels. However, there is a lack of craft provision at foundation level within the school. Some students are enrolled on courses for which they are not suited. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. Links with employers are good. A part-time general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) course, designed and run by the college, meets the specific needs of the local steel industry. Short courses for industry include gas installation and testing. The college worked

with partners to enable a group of unemployed students to gain a carpentry and joinery qualification while they helped in the building of 14 houses. Reports of students' performance are sent to parents of full-time students and employers of part-time students. The school's detailed development plan includes actions to address poor performance.

17 Most teaching is good. The percentage of lessons graded good or outstanding is significantly higher than the national average for construction. Teachers regularly record and monitor students' progress. They set students clear short-term and long-term goals. Lessons are well planned and learning resources are systematically identified. Good attention is given to the development of key skills for full-time students. Most teachers question students effectively to check that they understand the topic being studied. For example, at the end of a lesson in which students had serviced gas appliances, they were asked to explain the problems that had arisen, the checks they had undertaken and what should be included on a service record form. Handouts are well produced, up to date and easy to understand. Visits to major construction sites stimulate students' interest. Safety precautions are strictly enforced in workshops. In a few lessons the use of the overhead projector and the quality of transparencies were poor. Teachers do not insist that students keep the wood occupations workshops tidy nor arrange for full-time students from different craft areas to work together. There is no work experience programme for full-time students, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report.

18 Teachers are appropriately qualified and some have recent industrial experience. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the purpose-built workshops provide good specialist training and assessment facilities. The college has invested significantly in a gas safety and assessment centre. Laboratories for civil engineering and concrete

Curriculum Areas

testing are well equipped. Classrooms used for technician courses are well decorated and well furnished. Many classrooms and corridors feature interesting displays that relate to aspects of construction. Surveying equipment is modern. Consumable materials and samples of modern materials are readily available. The college's library has sufficient technical reference materials and journals. Students have good access to IT facilities including computer-aided design facilities, but computers are not available in workshops and there is little appropriate software. There are insufficient storage areas for materials and students' work in the wood occupations workshops.

19 Most students produce practical work of a good standard and work safely. Many portfolios of work and written projects are completed thoroughly, but few include photographic

evidence or witness statements. In 1999, pass rates were significantly above the national average on many courses, for example level 2 courses in brickwork and carpentry and joinery. All carpentry and joinery students who completed their level 3 courses achieved the qualification. The achievement rate on the GNVQ advanced was high. However, in 1997 and 1998 there were poor pass rates. Retention rates on many intermediate level craft courses are below the national average. In 1999, the retention rates for level 2 courses in plumbing and carpentry and joinery were poor. The self-assessment report acknowledged poor retention rates, but did not give sufficient emphasis to some poor pass rates. Retention and achievement data for students due to complete their courses in 2000 indicate a continuing trend of improvement.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Foundation vocational (construction crafts) basic wood skills	1	Number of starters	10	14	*
		Retention (%)	100	86	*
		Achievement (%)	10	0	*
Foundation vocational (technician studies)	1	Number of starters	30	27	42
		Retention (%)	77	89	81
		Achievement (%)	52	46	71
Intermediate vocational (construction crafts) brickwork, wood occupations, plumbing	2	Number of starters	147	268	205
		Retention (%)	65	48	48
		Achievement (%)	49	49	83
Advanced vocational (construction crafts) brickwork, wood occupations, plumbing	3	Number of starters	11	28	42
		Retention (%)	100	100	79
		Achievement (%)	82	86	91
Advanced vocational (technician studies)	3	Number of starters	45	46	56
		Retention (%)	62	65	68
		Achievement (%)	54	60	79

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

*less than 10 starters

Curriculum Areas

Business

Grade 3

20 Fourteen lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed with most judgements in the self-assessment report, but considered that the college had overstated the quality of teaching.

Key strengths

- a broad range of courses and good progression routes
- well-planned and well-monitored work experience
- most achievement rates at or above the national average
- good accommodation and resources

Weaknesses

- some ineffective lesson planning and teaching
- insufficient attention to the learning needs of students
- some poorly organised students' class notes and files
- ineffective management of some courses

21 As the self-assessment report recognises, the college offers a broad range of business, professional and secretarial courses. Students are able to progress from intermediate level to higher education. Many of the accounting and administration courses are adapted to meet individual students' needs, for example through the use of study workshops and individual guidance sessions. On most courses students benefit from regular individual support, particularly in administration programmes. This strength is not sufficiently recognised in the college's self-assessment report.

22 Following the appointment of a new head, the business school has been restructured and some responsibilities of staff have been changed. There is a clear development strategy

and realistic targets to raise standards have been set. Section managers meet regularly with the head to review progress. Course teams have considerable autonomy in the planning, organisation and review of their courses. Course teams in the secretarial and administration area meet regularly to share information, review course activities and update records. There is ineffective management of some business and accounting courses. Some staff are unaware of the full extent of curriculum and assessment arrangements for the whole course and teach their own subjects in isolation. Some teams meet infrequently and procedures for internal verification and course review are weak. Students were critical of timetabling on several courses, a weakness not recognised in the self-assessment report.

23 Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject areas and of examination requirements. In effective lessons, teachers use an appropriate range of methods to help students learn including small group discussions, role-play and investigative projects. For example, following research into the funding of charities, GNVQ students presented their findings as part of an imaginative role-play exercise. There are weaknesses in teaching which are not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Of the 14 lessons observed, eight were graded as good and four as less than satisfactory. The unsatisfactory lessons are poorly planned and lack clear objectives. In these lessons teachers often talk too much and fail to relate the subject to students' experience or to check that they are understanding the work. Little account is taken of the different needs of individual students.

24 As recognised in the self-assessment report, work experience is well managed and contributes significantly to students' learning. GNVQ assignments make good use of students' work placements and provide an opportunity for students to develop their key skills. The college has strong links with local legal practices and

Curriculum Areas

the health services and students on the legal and medical secretarial courses gain useful placements with local employers, which often lead to permanent employment.

25 The dedicated accommodation, particularly for business and accounting courses is good. Rooms are attractively furnished and IT equipment is of industry standard and easily accessible to students. There is a good range of specialist books and resources in the library.

26 As the self-assessment report acknowledges, achievement rates on most courses are good and are better than the averages for the sector. For example, the diploma for medical secretaries and the GNVQ

advanced diploma in business had very good achievement rates in 1999. Achievements for the Association of Accounting Technicians courses have consistently improved over the last three years and were above national benchmarks in 1999. Most students produce satisfactory assignments. The work of administration students is well presented. Students' files and notes in business and accounting are often untidy and carelessly organised. Errors are sometimes left uncorrected by teachers. Many students lack good note-taking skills and their files are not useful for revision or reference. These weaknesses are not recognised in the self-assessment report.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ intermediate business	2	Number of starters	44	38	40
		Retention (%)	77	89	73
		Achievement (%)	76	91	76
NVQ Association of Accounting Technicians accounting	2	Number of starters	52	48	43
		Retention (%)	96	96	91
		Achievement (%)	47	57	69
GNVQ advanced business	3	Number of starters	57	54	53
		Retention (%)	67	87	64
		Achievement (%)	66	94	85
GCE A level business studies and accounting	3	Number of starters	94	136	130
		Retention (%)	72	74	75
		Achievement (%)	74	56	79
NVQ Association of Accounting Technicians accounting	3	Number of starters	76	60	64
		Retention (%)	93	98	91
		Achievement (%)	38	49	59
Diploma in medical secretarial studies	3	Number of starters	32	33	31
		Retention (%)	84	94	87
		Achievement (%)	78	84	89

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

Curriculum Areas

Hospitality and Catering

Grade 2

27 Inspectors observed 12 lessons. They agreed with some of the judgements in the self-assessment report but found additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors from the TSC considered provision for 41 trainees, observed 5 trainees and interviewed 14, both at the college and in the workplace.

Key strengths

- the high standard of teaching in the food and beverage operations
- well-organised teaching
- outstanding achievement on GNVQ and reception programmes
- the well-developed vocational, social and teamworking skills of full-time students
- the wide range of specialist accommodation and equipment

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory retention rates on some courses
- inadequate development of the skills of part-time students
- inadequate industrial updating for staff

28 As the self-assessment report indicates there is an appropriate range of courses from entry to degree level in hospitality and catering. The college's 'Hotel School' is one of the few centres that maintains a full-time hotel receptionist programme. Bakery programmes are offered only on a part-time basis. A range of modes of attendance is available that includes full-time, part-time and short courses. Students have the opportunity to take a range of additional qualifications, for example awards for customer care and food safety. Responsibility for managing the curriculum is clearly defined and the management team and some course

teams hold regular meetings. The school's operating statement is underdeveloped.

29 Teaching is well planned and of a good standard. The number of lessons graded 1 and 2 was above the national average for the sector. Most practical lessons are well taught. In the realistic work environments teaching develops the occupational and social skills of full-time students well. Tuition takes account of both the students' individual learning requirements and the need to produce and serve food to a high standard under pressure as required by the industry. This strength in the provision was not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Many teaching schemes and lesson plans are appropriately detailed, have clear aims and objectives, cover the awarding body syllabuses and are vocationally relevant. Some schemes are unsatisfactory, comprising only lists of topics, dates and times. Most teaching of theory is good but in some instances the range of teaching methods is too narrow. Most students have regular programmes of work experience. The development of the skills of part-time students is ineffective. Teachers did not pay sufficient attention to students' knife work, organisation of work areas, and selection of suitable equipment. Appropriate attention is given to the development of students' key skills.

30 As the self-assessment report indicates there is a wide range of specialist accommodation and equipment. The school has specialist Chinese cooking equipment including a duck oven, a steamer for dim sum and a wok range. The pastry kitchen is not well organised and the ventilation in the larder is poor. Some equipment is obsolete and the school does not have an equipment replacement policy. Learning materials are vocationally relevant. The library provides a sound range of specialist books, videos and periodicals. Library staff have produced a helpful leaflet on hospitality and catering Internet sites. Although teachers have relevant vocational knowledge and experience there has been very little recent

Curriculum Areas

industrial updating. Most have training assessor awards and teacher training qualifications.

31 The student retention rate overall is satisfactory but inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that a number of key courses had poor rates. In 1999, there were examples of retention rates below the national benchmark, some significantly so, for example, national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 2 reception. Some achievement rates have improved over the last three years. Food preparation and cooking at NVQ level 2 has improved significantly since the very poor achievement rate in 1997 and the GNVQ advanced hospitality and catering has maintained very good achievement over the

same period. Most full-time students have good technical and social skills and work effectively in teams. In the school's food and beverage operations the food that students prepare is of a high standard and presented and served well. These strengths in provision were also identified at the previous inspection. The standard of students' portfolios ranges from satisfactory to good. Some craft catering students' portfolios are not well presented. The college has an established and successful record in hospitality and catering competitions. For example, the college was a finalist in the main competition for hospitality and catering students at the industry's major trade exhibition in February 1999.

A summary of achievements and retention rates in hospitality and catering, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
C&G 3320 cookery certificate/certificate in professional cookery	1	Number of starters	51	54	37
		Retention (%)	80	81	86
		Achievement (%)	76	91	66
NVQ catering and hospitality, food preparation and cooking	2	Number of starters	21	84	113
		Retention (%)	90	63	62
		Achievement (%)	16	49	76
Chartered Institute of Environmental Health basic food hygiene certificate	2	Number of starters	281	1,205	871
		Retention (%)	100	100	96
		Achievement (%)	66	89	93
NVQ catering and hospitality (serving food and drink – restaurant)	2	Number of starters	*	32	92
		Retention (%)	*	84	63
		Achievement (%)	*	74	88
NVQ catering and hospitality reception	2	Number of starters	13	24	26
		Retention (%)	100	96	42
		Achievement (%)	100	83	100
GNVQ advanced hospitality and catering	3	Number of starters	34	16	22
		Retention (%)	82	69	64
		Achievement (%)	89	100	93

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

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy

Grade 1

32 Inspectors observed 12 lessons. They agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but identified additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good or outstanding teaching
- the consistently high standard of teaching materials
- the high level of students' practical skills
- the achievement of a wide range of additional qualifications by students
- very good achievements in beauty therapy
- a well-managed and well-planned curriculum
- outstanding accommodation and equipment for beauty therapy

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of IT
- some poor teaching of science

33 The college offers a broad range of hairdressing and beauty therapy courses leading to NVQs from level 1 to 3. Part-time and intensive courses meet the needs of mature students and those in employment. The range of beauty courses has been increased since the last inspection to include holistic therapies. Courses are well managed through regular meetings which are well recorded and result in clear actions. A wide variety of visits and presentations from speakers improve students' opportunities to learn on both hair and beauty courses. Internal competitions are used effectively to encourage and promote artistic

skills. A well-organised work experience programme provides appropriate and high-quality placements for students.

34 Teaching, which is of a high standard and very well planned, motivates students and maintains their interest. Most of the lessons observed were good or outstanding. Students' learning is planned to ensure a balance between theoretical and practical work. Well-organised lessons are supported by coherent schemes of work. However, science lessons, taught by another section in the college, are not always well planned and some are poor. The self-assessment report did not identify this weakness. Practical hair and beauty sessions are well organised and well managed. In a lesson which caught their imagination students worked creatively on fashion, make-up and hairdressing, and used an extensive range of resources including photography. Photographic techniques were clearly explained. Students are encouraged to make a full contribution to lessons, they answer questions well and with enthusiasm. The work in the college salons reflects good commercial practice and provides students with access to a considerable range of clients and many assessment opportunities. Experience in the workplace improves students' skills. Although a final report is produced, by students on their work placement, there is no formal assessment which contributes to the NVQ. Tutorials are well managed. All students have a personal and a course tutor and an entitlement to at least one individual tutorial each term. The many strengths in teaching were identified in the self-assessment report.

35 Students demonstrate good practical skills, work confidently with clients and achieve high professional standards. In a first-year practical hairdressing lesson students used advanced techniques skilfully on clients. Creativity is stimulated and developed through workshops that focus on photography, fashion, and media. These sessions provide students with the opportunity to produce a personal photographic

Curriculum Areas

portfolio which is used when seeking employment. Portfolios in both hair and beauty are well organised and there are some outstanding examples of excellent portfolios which demonstrate a high level of IT skills. However, there is insufficient opportunity for students to practise their IT skills in their vocational area. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

36 The very high standard of accommodation and equipment was clearly identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. Since the last inspection, a good level of sponsorship from both hair and beauty companies has made a significant impact in improving and updating accommodation and equipment. The beauty salons were opened in summer 1999 and provide spacious and very well equipped accommodation for students. Both hair and beauty salons represent excellent commercial environments and enable students to prepare effectively for employment. As the self-assessment report identifies learning materials are of a high standard, regularly updated and effectively used in all courses. Staff are well qualified and experienced.

37 Students' achievements are above the national average for nearly all courses and outstanding in beauty therapy. In 1999, the pass rate in NVQ level 2 beauty therapy was 92% compared with the national average of 68%, and 92% at level 3 compared with a national average of 84%. The retention rate for students is generally good and improved in the last year. For example, there was a significant increase from 1998 to 1999 in hairdressing at level 2 and a dramatic increase at level 3. There is a very high level of success in additional qualifications on both hair and beauty courses. Hairdressing students gain manicure and make-up certificates and a reception diploma. Beauty therapy students take first-aid awards, the reception diploma and the anatomy and physiology certificate.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of achievements and retention rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
NVQ hairdressing	1	Number of starters	*	*	99
		Retention (%)	*	*	75
		Achievement (%)	*	*	96
NVQ beauty therapy	2	Number of starters	45	57	132
		Retention (%)	76	74	79
		Achievement (%)	88	88	92
NVQ hairdressing	2	Number of starters	51	150	150
		Retention (%)	92	64	71
		Achievement (%)	60	76	76
NVQ hairdressing	3	Number of starters	14	4	12
		Retention (%)	93	67	100
		Achievement (%)	31	50	92
NVQ beauty therapy	3	Number of starters	18	*	25
		Retention (%)	78	*	96
		Achievement (%)	100	*	92
International Health and Beauty Council cosmetic make-up	3	Number of starters	*	19	48
		Retention (%)	*	79	85
		Achievement (%)	*	93	68
International Institute of Health and Holistic Therapy aromatherapy, reflexology, body massage	3	Number of starters	81	120	84
		Retention (%)	89	91	86
		Achievement (%)	93	85	97

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

*courses not running

Curriculum Areas

Health and Care

Grade 2

38 Inspectors observed 11 lessons. They agreed with most of the judgements identified in the self-assessment report but considered that insufficient attention had been paid to teaching and learning. Inspectors assessed training for 36 trainees in health care and professional services, observed seven trainees and interviewed 15.

Key strengths

- most achievement rates well above national averages
- well-planned teaching
- well-organised and effective work experience
- effective tutorial support
- comprehensive and helpful feedback on students' assessed work
- good opportunities for progression to advanced courses

Weaknesses

- ineffective organisation of some lessons
- declining retention rates
- poor standards of attendance and punctuality on some GNVQ courses
- ineffective arrangements for additional support

39 The college offers a wide range of full-time, part-time and evening courses in childcare and health and social care. Courses for adults have been developed in partnership with employers. Many students progress from intermediate to advanced level courses and in some cases from foundation to advanced courses.

40 Courses are well managed. Targets are set and reviewed, and progress against action plans is monitored. Some course reviews are insufficiently detailed or lacking in critical

assessment. Effective use is made of staff and student evaluation to improve courses. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that work experience is well organised and improves students' learning. Students on work experience are visited by college staff; the liaison arrangements are effective. Placement supervisors contribute to the assessment of students' progress. Placements arranged in primary schools, which have significant numbers of children on roll from minority ethnic communities, improve students' awareness of ethnic diversity. The self-assessment report identified the high levels of awareness among students on issues affecting equality of opportunity.

41 Most teaching is well planned. In the most effective lessons teachers organise an appropriate range of learning activities, draw extensively on students' experience in the workplace and skilfully relate theory to practice. In a childcare lesson, students learned and practised games that required co-operation and evaluated their relevance to the management of children's behaviour. In a health and social care lesson students used role-play to illustrate good and poor care practice. Students on childcare and education certificate courses worked in pairs to identify circumstances in which a child's symptoms would require a doctor to be contacted; they completed a quiz at the end of the lesson which indicated how much they had learned.

42 Students had insufficient opportunity to contribute to some lessons as too much time was spent going over assignment briefs. In a few lessons there were insufficient checks that students fully understood the work. Tutorial support is effective. Comprehensive records are kept and there is effective planning and review of the action taken to remedy weaknesses in students' performance. Attendance rates and students' progress are closely monitored. Students are encouraged to take advantage of opportunities for additional learning support but

Curriculum Areas

take-up and attendance are inadequate. Standards of attendance and punctuality were poor on some GNVQ courses.

43 A wide range of relevant written and electronic resources are available to students; they are provided with up-to-date reference materials. The teaching of application of number for GNVQ students is relevant to the vocational area and supported by well-designed study packs. Students are encouraged to use information and communications technology to support their learning. However, during lessons childcare students do not have the chance to evaluate educational software in comparison with books and other educational resources. Most staff are well qualified and experienced. Inspectors did not agree with the self-assessment that lack of access to computers and inadequate industrial updating were significant weaknesses.

44 As identified in the self-assessment report, students' achievements are good. Those for the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) diploma, Edexcel national diploma and certificate, GNVQ intermediate and advanced are above national averages. Retention rates are declining on most courses although in most cases they are close to national averages. The retention rate for GNVQ foundation declined sharply between 1998 and 1999. As acknowledged in the self-assessment report, retention rates for the GNVQ advanced are poor. Students make good use of assignment planning documentation. Students on the national diploma courses produce some excellent portfolios recording their experience of and reflections on professional practice. Tutors' comments on students' work which are in some cases exemplary, are usually appropriately detailed and constructive and provide a sound basis for improvement.

Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ foundation health and social care (one-year course)	1	Number of starters	25	31	25
		Retention (%)	96	87	72
		Achievement (%)	79	81	67
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	Number of starters	20	20	21
		Retention (%)	90	95	100
		Achievement (%)	83	58	86
Certificate in childcare and education	2	Number of starters	65	40	44
		Retention (%)	91	95	75
		Achievement (%)	47	71	88
GNVQ advanced health and social care (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	42	46	36
		Retention (%)	62	50	44
		Achievement (%)	62	71	100
BTEC national diploma/certificate (nursery nursing)	3	Number of starters	82	79	97
		Retention (%)	91	83	78
		Achievement (%)	92	97	97
CACHE diploma in nursery nursing (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	58	71	60
		Retention (%)	100	75	75
		Achievement (%)	62	85	91

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

Curriculum Areas

Basic Skills

Grade 3

45 Inspectors observed 10 lessons. They agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report but found an additional strength and an additional weakness.

Key strengths

- the wide range of basic skills provision
- the vocational relevance of most students' assignments
- high attendance and retention rates
- good support for part-time staff

Weaknesses

- lack of co-ordination of basic skills across the college
- poor monitoring of students' progress
- some ineffective teaching
- insufficient use of IT

46 The scope of the inspection included basic skills provision within the college and the community. As the self-assessment report recognises, there is ineffective co-ordination of basic skills across the college. Provision of individual support for literacy and numeracy is the responsibility of the college's learning support service. Responsibility for other aspects of basic skills teaching is divided between the centre for foundation studies and the centre for community education. Some teaching of key skills at level 1 is managed within the vocational areas. There is no overall plan for the development and monitoring of basic skills across the college. There are examples of good practice such as the 'Working with Words' project for individuals in the community who are recovering from drug abuse. However, there are no arrangements for sharing good practice. The college was addressing this weakness and at the time of the inspection was seeking to

recruit a member of staff to co-ordinate basic skills.

47 Inspectors agreed that procedures for assessing and recording students' progress in basic skills are generally poor. Initial screening is rudimentary and most students referred for additional support do not have any further assessment. The action plans used for recording individual students' progress are inadequate. They do not record the progress made by an individual student in developing specific literacy and numerical skills over time. There are some examples of better practice. Students on some NVQ level 1 courses are given practical assignments in which basic skills are well integrated with the vocational context. These arrangements enable tutors to assess students' skills more effectively and address individual needs.

48 Most of the teaching observed was satisfactory. There was, however, a low proportion of teaching that was good or outstanding: 33% compared with the programme area average of 54% in 1998-99. The more effective teaching is well planned; a range of tasks involve group and individual work. For example, in one lesson the teacher asked the group to identify some of the important issues involved in communicating effectively in every day life. The students worked in pairs to gain information from each other and then reported their findings to the whole group. Inspectors agreed with the college that a general strength of teaching is the vocational relevance of the tasks set for students. In the less effective lessons, teachers pitched the subject at too high a level and did not match the tasks to individual needs. There is insufficient use of IT in teaching and, where it is employed, there is insufficient opportunity for students to master and consolidate their skills. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. The marking of students' work is not sufficiently thorough or meticulous. In some cases, basic errors in grammar and

Curriculum Areas

punctuation are not corrected. The need to monitor standards more carefully is acknowledged by the college.

49 Many staff lack sufficient specialist skills. About half of the teachers have a basic skills qualification. Some staff are currently undertaking further qualifications. Part-time teachers on the community and foundation courses are well supported. They are well informed about curriculum developments and attend meetings and some staff development events. This strength was not recognised by the college. The accommodation used for some courses is not satisfactory. It is often noisy and there are no IT facilities.

50 Attendance during inspection was 82%, well above the national average. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the level of student retention is high on discrete basic skills courses. The data on students' achievements do not accurately reflect students' progress or the achievement of qualifications. Therefore a table of student achievements has not been included. Teachers do not routinely keep summative records of achievement and not all students are entered for a qualification. Progression of students to level 2 courses is good in health and social care and hairdressing. In other programme areas, the college recognises that there is insufficient opportunity for students to progress to level 2.

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

51 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the college self-assessment report, but identified an additional weakness.

Key strengths

- good pre-entry advice and guidance
- effective arrangements for supporting transition from school to college
- wide range of personal and welfare services
- well-defined arrangements for student induction and tutorials
- good additional support for students with physical and sensory disabilities

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory arrangements for learning support
- ineffective recording of some students' progress
- some inadequate tutorials

52 Inspectors agreed with the college that there are good arrangements for supporting the transition from school to college. There is a wide range of events, presentations and tours of the college for school pupils. The needs of disaffected year 10 and year 11 pupils are met through a dedicated programme, 'Streets Ahead', which incorporates the study of vocational subjects at the college.

53 As the self-assessment report notes, other aspects of pre-entry advice and guidance are also effective. Students benefit from a well-situated information centre where there is a comprehensive range of publicity and guidance materials. Specialist advice is available from a team of well-qualified advisers. The college works in partnership with other colleges and the adult education service to promote opportunities in further education and training. An example

of successful collaboration is the 'learning shop' located in the city centre. During 1998-99 the shop provided initial advice to 17,000 people.

54 Inspectors agreed with the college that students generally receive good tutorial support. All full-time students have a one-hour tutorial each week and there is provision for individual progress reviews. Part-time students on courses of more than 180 hours also benefit from regular tutorials. There are standard tutorial and induction procedures but tutors are able to shape tutorial sessions to suit their students' needs. A senior tutor monitors standards, observes tutorials and checks student records. A positive development is the appointment of three student liaison officers each of whom works with a group of curriculum centres to support students at risk of leaving the college. Inspectors agreed with the college's evaluation that there is some poor tutorial practice. Records in some student files are superficial, or missing and some action plans are not sufficiently thorough. Attendance at some tutorials is erratic and a few tutors do not successfully implement the college procedures.

55 There are satisfactory arrangements for providing support for transition to further learning and employment. The college careers adviser, advisers from Norfolk Careers Service and tutors work co-operatively to provide a programme of careers education. Individual guidance is available and progress is monitored through tutorials.

56 A comprehensive range of personal services are available to students and include financial support, counselling and advice on accommodation. The services are well publicised and well used by students. There is effective liaison between staff in support services and the specialist advisers. Inspectors agreed with the college that the additional support for students with physical and sensory disabilities is effective. Specialist staff for these students are based in student services. Good links with local schools and other centres are

Cross-college Provision

leading to increased enrolments among these students. There is an active student access forum and an advisory committee with governor and external representation. Tutors are supported on an individual basis and through staff development opportunities and useful handbooks which have been produced in the college. There are effective arrangements for providing careers advice to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

57 Additional learning support for students with poor basic skills needs is unsatisfactory. This weakness is not recognised in the self-assessment report. The test used for assessing the level of need of full-time and part-time students is not suitable for students on level 2 courses and above. The provision of additional learning support is over-dependent on students seeking individual help from the college's learner centre. It is unclear who has responsibility for ensuring that students receive additional support. Procedures for assessing students' basic skills needs beyond initial screening are too rudimentary. Although specialist assessment for dyslexia is effective, there is inconsistent practice on further diagnostic assessment for basic skills. Less than one in five of students who are identified as needing support are receiving it. Some staff providing support lack specialist qualifications in this area.

General Resources

Grade 2

58 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They identified one additional weakness.

Key strengths

- significant improvements in accommodation since the last inspection
- good learning resources

- up-to-date and well-supported IT facilities
- good access for students using wheelchairs

Weaknesses

- the poor quality of accommodation in a few areas
- insufficient communal facilities for students
- insufficient study spaces

59 The college has systematically upgraded the quality of its accommodation since the last inspection. Significant improvements are noted in the self-assessment report. In a major project modern specialist accommodation has been built for construction and engineering courses. Accommodation for hair and beauty courses has been much improved. Accommodation for hospitality and catering has been rationalised. The huts previously used for teaching have been taken out of use. On-site traffic has been reduced and some pedestrian-only areas have been created. Specialist and general teaching accommodation has been reorganised to provide coherent curriculum areas. The first phase of a programme of upgrading specialist and general teaching rooms has been completed. The college acknowledges in its self-assessment that further improvements are required. Some accommodation for teaching staff is crowded and of poor quality. There are two phases of upgrading of accommodation to be completed. The use of rooms is closely monitored. A termly survey is undertaken to check actual room usage against the timetable allocations. Maintenance programmes are effectively planned. The accommodation is generally well maintained, clean and tidy.

60 The college in its self-assessment recognises the comprehensive range of learning support services located in the library, the

Cross-college Provision

learner centre, and the key skills centre. The combined library and learner centre facilities are located in adapted rooms, an adjacent 'mobile' room and a purpose-built extension which has recently been completed. The library and learner centre contain a good range of facilities including provision of books, separate quiet and group study areas, computing facilities, the careers library, and various specialist support areas for, for example, students who are dyslexic. The number of study spaces is substantially below what is required for the current number of students. This weakness in provision was not recognised in the self-assessment. The number of students using the library and learner centre has increased significantly over the last three years. The service provided by the library and learner centre is highly valued by students. There is an extensive range of books, journals, video and electronic media. The book catalogue and reservation and loan systems are available on the internal computer network and are accessible to college students through the college website. Brief, informative written guides help students to use the library and learner centre resources.

61 The substantial investment in IT services since the last inspection is noted in the self-assessment. Over 900 computers are accessed through a common network. Most curriculum areas have dedicated computing facilities. In the learning services centres 100 computers are available on an open access basis. Modern commercial standard general software is accessible to all students, and industry standard specialist software is available in curriculum areas. Approximately 35% of the computers for academic use provide access to the Internet. Staff have ready access to computers. Three teams of IT support staff provide a good level of support for network operations and IT developments.

62 The self-assessment report recognises that social and recreational areas for students

require further improvement. There is no student common room area. There is a large sports hall and a small fitness room. However, the sports hall and adjoining drama centre have yet to be refurbished. The two student refectories in the Wroxham building have been refurbished recently. There is a modern café in the Norfolk building. The hotel school also operates facilities that are open to students. The college has no sports fields or pitches and uses nearby sports provision when it is required. There is a modern nursery for 50 young children.

63 As the self-assessment report notes, all major areas in the college are easily accessible to students who use wheelchairs. The college plan shows access points for students who have to use wheelchairs. Symbols differentiate between access which is only possible on foot, and where access is possible by a ramp. They also indicate the location of toilets for students with physical disabilities. This information is displayed at various locations around the college. Where necessary, car parking is arranged close to their teaching area for students who use a wheelchair.

Quality Assurance

Grade 3

64 Inspectors agreed with most of the college's judgements on quality assurance in the self-assessment report but concluded that insufficient weight had been given to weaknesses in quality assurance at course level.

Key strengths

- firm commitment to continuous quality improvement
- a self-critical and evaluative self-assessment report
- thorough and effective analysis of students' achievements

Cross-college Provision

- effective linkage of the well-managed staff development to strategic priorities

Weaknesses

- insufficient thoroughness in the review and evaluation of courses
- ineffective development and implementation of plans for improvement at course level
- underdeveloped use of targets and performance indicators at course level

65 Inspectors agreed with the college that the policy of continuous improvement is an established strategic priority. The policy sets out the framework for quality assurance which covers all areas of the college's work. A comprehensive curriculum manual for quality assurance includes appropriate details of the procedures to be followed by teaching areas. Policies and procedures are readily available to staff on the college's intranet. A senior manager has responsibility for the development and implementation of systems for quality assurance. The clearly defined committee and reporting structures are well understood by staff.

66 The college produced its third self-assessment report in preparation for the inspection. It is self-critical and evaluative. The evidence to substantiate the strengths and weaknesses is extensive. Data on students' achievements were thoroughly analysed and compared with national benchmarking data. Appropriate action plans in the self-assessment report identify clearly the target date for completion and the staff responsible for taking action and for monitoring progress. As an addition to its preparation for the inspection, the college provided a comprehensive supplement to the self-assessment report on student performance for 1999. It indicates that, overall, students' achievements have improved significantly over the last three years but that there has been a decline in the overall retention

rate. Inspectors agreed with the college that some initiatives have been introduced to improve retention rates. Course teams set targets for rates of retention and achievement for the first time in 1998. However, course teams gave insufficient attention to an analysis of the achievement of these targets and the setting of subsequent targets for improvement of standards.

67 The self-assessment report noted that the procedures for assuring quality were not always effectively implemented at course level. The significance of this weakness had been underestimated. Many course reviews are not completed thoroughly and some are inadequate. Action plans are imprecise and do not address all the weaknesses identified by course teams. Staff responsible for taking action and target dates for completion are not always stated explicitly. Although course teams meet regularly, some do not meet sufficiently often to monitor effectively the implementation of plans for improvement. Many teams do not carry out an effective annual progress review of courses. These weaknesses are not identified in the self-assessment report. Boards of study for each curriculum centre meet three times each year to monitor the results of annual course reviews and the progress being made on action plans. However, there is not a standard procedure for reporting from course teams to boards. The records of board meetings indicate a lack of thoroughness in reviewing courses. Procedures for internal validation and revalidation are well established; this strength is noted in the self-assessment report.

68 A well-devised lesson observation scheme was introduced in 1998. The strengths and weaknesses of teaching throughout the college are thoroughly analysed. However, the evaluations from lesson observations are not used effectively in planning either improvements in the quality of provision or staff development activities. Reports from external verifiers are systematically monitored, as is noted in the self-

Cross-college Provision

assessment report. Prompt remedial action is taken to address issues raised and progress is tenaciously monitored. Students are represented on most major college committees. Students' views about the college are gathered annually from a representative sample of students and generally show high levels of satisfaction. Students' responses to questionnaires on courses are not used effectively by course teams. Procedures for gathering the views of employers and parents are underdeveloped.

69 Inspectors agreed with the college that complaints are thoroughly analysed and investigated. The academic board and the corporation receive a detailed annual report on complaints. The charter clearly states both the college's commitment to the community which it serves and the commitment which it expects from students and staff. Appropriate arrangements are in place to monitor charter commitments. The college acknowledges that it has not met its target to update the charter annually. Since the last inspection the college has made steady progress in developing service level agreements with measurable performance indicators for business support areas.

70 The college achieved Investor in People status in 1997 and was reaccredited in 2000. The planning of staff development is explicitly linked to corporate objectives. Staff development activities are well resourced, well planned and thoroughly evaluated. Their effective promotion contributes to a high level of participation by staff. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the biennial peer appraisal scheme for academic staff is not fully effective and that there is insufficient control over the quality of appraisals. The process does not provide managers with a sound overview of staff development needs. Personal development plans have recently been introduced to rectify shortcomings in the appraisal system.

Governance

Grade 2

71 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths in the self-assessment report and with one of the two weaknesses identified. They found additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- the constructively critical approach of the board
- good use of governors' skills and expertise on behalf of the college
- close involvement in strategic planning
- effective monitoring of the college's finances
- effective focus on the educational character and curriculum of the college
- effective monitoring of the performance of senior staff

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped evaluation of the board's performance
- incomplete documentation of the board's procedures
- the lack of systematic arrangements for the training of governors

72 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is good. The board 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.

73 The board has 20 members, of whom seven are business governors. Two student governors play a full part in both board and committee meetings. Nomination and appointments procedures for new governors are effective. However, current arrangements mean

Cross-college Provision

that several governors will retire at the same time. There are no arrangements for ensuring the continuity of the board in terms of membership. Inspectors and auditors agreed with the self-assessment report that governors have a wide range of relevant skills and experience, which is of benefit to the college. Some governors have attended external training events. College managers provide briefings on particular areas of work at most meetings of the full board. However, the training of governors was acknowledged as a weakness in the self-assessment report. At the time of the inspection there was no formal training plan or induction programme. A skills audit had not been completed.

74 Governors are strongly committed to the college's mission and to their role in developing the strategic plan. They reviewed the mission in August 1999. They are well informed about national and local issues which affect the college. The receipt of regular detailed reports enables governors to monitor progress against the strategic plan and regular financial reports enable them to monitor closely the college's financial position. They understand and consider the financial implications of developments within the college.

75 The board has established an extensive range of committees. Some committee terms of reference are not comprehensive and are not routinely reviewed. Board meetings have always been quorate. At the meetings observed by inspectors governors scrutinised the information which they were given and, where appropriate, challenged decisions constructively. The work of the board's curriculum committee reflects the importance which governors attach to matters affecting the curriculum. Governors take an active interest in the academic achievements of students. They receive and discuss data on students' achievements and retention regularly and ensure that each board agenda includes some items concerning the curriculum.

76 The board is well supported by the recently appointed clerk, who has relevant experience in the public sector. Another independent clerk services the audit committee. The business of the board is generally well managed. There is an agreed schedule of business. Agendas are sent out in good time, distinguish between items for discussion, report and approval and are accompanied by informative papers. Copies of minutes are available in the college library but their availability is not widely advertised. The board has not produced a comprehensive set of procedures for the conduct of its business, although some guidance documents exist. Governors and senior staff complete the register of interests which is updated annually. However, members do not sign a declaration of eligibility. Procedural weaknesses were not recognised in the self-assessment report. The board has agreed a code of conduct and a 'whistleblowing' policy which have been circulated to staff.

77 Inspectors did not agree with the self-assessment report that the board's links with staff and students are a weakness. Governors keep staff up to date on the board's work through regular items in the staff newsletter. Board meetings are held in different areas of the college. At the time of the inspection no governors had formal links with curriculum areas. Governors obtain the views of students through the student governors' contributions to meetings, the reports from the students' union and the receipt of the results of student satisfaction surveys.

78 There are constructive and effective working relationships between governors and senior staff. Governors are clear on the distinctions between their own work and responsibilities and those of the senior management executive. The board monitors the performance of senior staff systematically. It sets annual targets for the senior managers, both individually and as a team. The targets which are closely linked to the college's strategic

Cross-college Provision

objectives are reviewed halfway through the college year so that governors can monitor progress. An appraisal process identifies the personal and professional development needs of senior staff, a strength not identified in the self-assessment report.

79 Although the board takes an active role in the college's self-assessment process, it does not adequately review its own effectiveness. Governors have not set themselves targets, such as their attendance rate at meetings, nor identified performance indicators. They have not considered external views of their work when assessing their performance.

Management

Grade 2

80 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. They considered that progress had been made to rectify some weaknesses by the time of the inspection.

Key strengths

- a well-established and effective process for strategic planning
- a clear management structure
- effective internal communication
- effective external partnerships
- strong and effective financial management

Weaknesses

- inadequacies in management information
- ineffective implementation and review of some college policies
- underdeveloped use of market information by some teams

81 The management structure achieves an effective balance between the college's overall priorities and the degree of autonomy of the

curriculum centres. Responsibilities and lines of accountability are clearly defined. Each senior manager, including the principal, holds operational responsibility for a specific cross-college area. All senior managers and heads of curriculum and support services meet regularly. A devolved management system giving increased delegated authority to the 15 heads of curriculum centres is being developed. A curriculum working group provides an effective forum for debating and influencing curriculum policy and implementation. However, inspectors found weaknesses in the management of the curriculum. Some curriculum managers have not yet fully adapted to new roles and responsibilities. The college lacks a systematic programme for the regular review of all policies and guidelines and the monitoring of their effectiveness. The commitment to the annual review of the charter has not been fulfilled. Inspectors found that some policies are not being effectively implemented, for example those relating to tutorial provision and internal verification.

82 Inspectors agreed that strategic planning is effective. There are clear and appropriate strategic priorities, associated objectives, and indicators of success. Specific targets, as well as the mission, are reviewed on an annual basis. Each curriculum centre conducts a needs analysis and identifies strategic priorities. Centre operating statements take account of the college's strategic objectives and are reviewed and monitored at three stages in the year. Since the last inspection, the college has taken effective measures to become more efficient, to diversify its sources of income and increase enrolments. Action has also been taken to improve the level of students' achievements. FEFC benchmarking and performance indicator data for the period 1995-96 to 1997-98 together with the college's data for 1998-99 demonstrate a sustained improvement in achievements. Achievement rates have risen from a low base to a level that is now above the average for general further education and tertiary colleges. The

Cross-college Provision

college recognises that it needs to address declining levels of student retention rates on full-time courses.

83 Inspectors agreed that communications within the college are good. Staff receive regular information through a variety of forums which include briefings by the principal and 'roadshows' with curriculum centre staff when areas of development are discussed. In addition, college bulletins, newsletters, and 'team briefing' papers on specific developments, such as curriculum 2000, keep staff well informed. Centre heads hold regular briefing meetings which give staff the opportunity to discuss and respond to college matters. The college's intranet contains minutes of meetings and college policies and procedures.

84 The corporate marketing and communications strategy contains an outline of the marketing 'vision', a broad indication of labour market intelligence trends, and a summary of marketing 'tools' and activities. However, it does not clearly identify designated responsibilities, targets, milestones or measurable outcomes. The use and analysis of market information is underdeveloped in some curriculum teams. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. However, inspectors agreed that the college makes effective use of a broad range of partnerships to achieve its strategic aim of widening participation in further education. One major result has been the significant growth in provision at the college for educationally and socially disadvantaged groups. The college is a founder member of the 'Learning City' partnership to promote lifelong learning and has active membership of 'The Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Project'. The college has a good working relationship with the local careers service and effective networking arrangements with other training providers and the Norfolk and Waveney Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

85 Good progress has been made in improving the computerised management information system. A new system was purchased in 1999 which has enabled the college to remedy significant weaknesses in the completeness, timeliness and accuracy of data obtained from the system. The new system also produces more reliable information for staff and managers. College staff have invested considerable time in updating and correcting data on students' achievements using kitemarked software.

86 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The college has maintained high levels of reserves and solvency and has produced an operating surplus for a number of years. Identifying efficiency measures is a routine element of the budget preparation process. Management accounts are produced monthly but the format does not enable full oversight and stewardship of college finances. A large and experienced finance team includes the director of finance who is a full member of the college senior management team. The strategic plan sets out clear objectives for the college's finances but performance indicators in the operating plan have not been fully developed. Student number statistical returns to the FEFC have been persistently late. The reports of the internal and external auditors have not identified any serious weaknesses in the college's internal control.

87 There are comprehensive equal opportunities policies for staff and students. The equal opportunities committee for staffing reports regularly to the senior management executive and to the corporation staffing committee. The equal opportunities committee for students meets three times a year to monitor the implementation of the equal opportunities policy.

Cross-college Provision

Conclusions

88 Inspectors found the self-assessment report provided a clear and accurate assessment of the college's work. The report was self-critical and evaluative. The evidence to substantiate the strengths and weaknesses was extensive. Data on students' achievements were analysed thoroughly and compared with national benchmark data. The college took appropriate account of student rates of achievement and retention in its assessment. Appropriate action plans in the self-assessment report identify clearly target dates for completion and the staff responsible for taking action and for monitoring progress. As further preparation for the inspection the college provided a comprehensive supplement to the self-assessment report on student performance for 1999. Inspectors agreed with six of the final grades awarded by the college for the seven curriculum areas selected for inspection. One grade was higher than in the college's assessment. Inspectors also agreed with three of the five grades which the college awarded for aspects of cross-college provision. One grade was higher and the other lower than the college had awarded.

89 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 (December 1999)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	0
16-18 years	26
19-24 years	20
25+ years	54
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (December 1999)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Level 1 (foundation)	18
Level 2 (intermediate)	30
Level 3 (advanced)	32
Level 4/5 (higher)	17
Non-schedule 2	3
Total	100

Source: college data

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

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	543	258	11
Construction	229	435	9
Engineering	368	342	10
Business	714	660	19
Hotel and catering	668	171	11
Health and community care	622	441	15
Art and design	357	199	8
Humanities	683	497	16
Basic education	61	46	1
Total	4,245	3,049	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 7% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (September 1999)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	309	25	0	334
Supporting direct learning contact	80	13	0	93
Other support	214	35	5	254
Total	603	73	5	681

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£24,831,000	£24,778,000	£25,366,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£20.05	£18.32	£17.61*
Payroll as a proportion of income	74%	69%	67%
Achievement of funding target	105%	98%	95%
Diversity of income	44%	46%	49%
Operating surplus	£24,000	£711,000	£177,000

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)

*provisional data

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
1	Number of starters	326	491	989	464	473	805
	Retention (%)	83	88	80	82	77	78
	Achievement (%)	46	41	79	33	43	75
2	Number of starters	1,454	1,575	2,590	1,150	1,336	1,629
	Retention (%)	81	73	73	84	71	74
	Achievement (%)	45	64	83	49	67	86
3	Number of starters	2,013	1,880	2,028	1,941	2,424	2,116
	Retention (%)	71	72	69	84	85	78
	Achievement (%)	65	72	79	56	46	73
4 or 5	Number of starters	17	9	18	264	258	480
	Retention (%)	82	78	78	81	79	71
	Achievement (%)	79	100	92	49	66	73
Short courses	Number of starters	599	285	345	1,039	1,088	5,758
	Retention (%)	78	82	88	84	79	85
	Achievement (%)	60	32	75	54	61	77
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	699	1,358	10	5,383	5,884	69
	Retention (%)	97	97	70	88	87	58
	Achievement (%)	58	74	100	52	66	90

Source: ISR

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