

# Rugby College of Further Education

REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE  
**1999-00**

THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL***

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

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## Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

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

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

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

## Student Achievements

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

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

# Summary

## Rugby College of Further Education

### *West Midlands Region*

#### Inspected March 2000

Rugby College of Further Education is a general further education college which offers courses in all FEFC programme areas. The college was jointly inspected by teams of inspectors from the FEFC and the TSC. Work in five FEFC programme areas and aspects of cross-college provision were inspected. The college had updated its self-assessment report in preparation for the inspection. Inspectors were in broad agreement with the judgements in the self-assessment report. They considered, however, that some of the stated strengths were no more than standard practice, and they found both strengths and weaknesses the college had not identified. Inspectors agreed with four of the grades for the five curriculum areas and with four of the five grades for cross-college provision.

The proportion of lessons judged to be satisfactory or better is similar to that for the sector as a whole. Comparatively, however, fewer lessons were outstanding. Better lessons were carefully planned and teachers used a variety of teaching methods productively. In some of the poorer lessons, teachers failed to check students' understanding. Some full-time courses include work experience as an integral part of the students' learning programme; other courses do not. Over the three most recent years for which there are ISR data available (1996 to 1998) student retention and

achievement rates have improved on some courses but have declined on others. In general, they were at or above the national average for the sector.

Since the last inspection, the college has improved its provision of student services. After receiving effective and impartial pre-entry guidance, students are given a thorough induction to the college. The college has continued to improve its accommodation and make it accessible to students with restricted mobility. Staff are beginning to make effective use of the college intranet. Staff development is well managed. The views of staff and students about the college and its services are gathered, taken into account in the self-assessment process, and acted upon in order to improve provision. The college makes good use of the expertise of the governors. Corporation meetings are well attended and business is conducted effectively. Since the last inspection, the college has strengthened its links with the local community. The college's practice in implementing its equal opportunities policy is outstanding. The college should improve: students' attendance; the quality of teaching and curriculum management in some areas; student retention and achievement rates on a number of courses; the arrangements for additional learning support; the utilisation of accommodation; the quality of course reviews and action plans; the governors' monitoring of curriculum issues; arrangements for managers and governors to monitor compliance with health and safety regulations; and its management information.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Business studies	4	Support for students	3
Hospitality and catering and leisure and tourism	3	General resources	2
Health and community care	2	Quality assurance	3
Art and design and performing arts	2	Governance	2
Basic skills	3	Management	3

## The College and its Mission

1 Rugby College of Further Education is situated close to the town centre in a semi-residential area. The college was formerly called East Warwickshire College of Further Education but changed its name in 1996 to clarify its geographical location. The college attracts students from a wide area, including Northamptonshire and Leicestershire. In 1996, the college was involved in establishing a successful single regeneration budget-funded centre in a disadvantaged area of the town. This attracts adult unemployed students, many of whom are from minority ethnic groups. The college has 22 centres in the local community.

2 The college is one of five further education colleges in Warwickshire. In the town of Rugby, there is a major independent school, two single-sex grammar schools, a comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 18 and four schools for pupils aged 11 to 16. Over recent years, the college has worked with these four 11 to 16 schools to strengthen the post-16 provision in the town.

3 The local economy is buoyant and the unemployment rate is under 2.4%. The borough has a population of 84,500 and a working population of 29,500. The total number of people employed in Rugby has increased by 16% over the last four years. The largest employment sectors are distribution, hospitality and manufacturing, followed by finance, public administration, education and health. There are few large employers in the town, the vast majority being small to medium-sized enterprises.

4 In March 2000, there were 5,222 students enrolled at the college, of whom 16% were full-time and 84% part-time students. Of the college's students, 85% were aged 19 and over. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups was 8% compared with a proportion of persons in the local population from these groups of 5.6%.

5 In the last five years, the college management has been restructured periodically. Its senior management team comprises the principal, directors of finance and quality, and three directors with cross-college roles in addition to their faculty responsibilities. Within the three faculties, there are seven schools each with a curriculum manager. In addition, there are middle managers for cross-college and business support areas. In March 2000, the college employed 25 middle and senior managers, 130 full-time equivalent teaching staff and 101 full-time equivalent support staff.

6 The college provides courses in all of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas. The highest number of enrolments is in health and community care. Some curriculum areas are very small, notably agriculture and construction. Courses leading to the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate and advanced level are offered in eight vocational areas. There is a broad range of full-time and part-time vocational provision from levels 1 to 4 including courses leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in seven vocational areas. A small number of courses in general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects are also available. There is a small amount of degree level work in the college. The college has a managing agency which fulfils contracts for the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise. A training and business development unit specialises in providing training for employers, both locally and nationally.

7 The college aims to implement its mission to provide good-quality education and training that satisfies the individual and corporate needs of all sections of the community through lifelong learning. In pursuit of this aim four key strategic priorities have been identified. These are to: 'improve participation and achievement rates for all students; work with a range of partners to promote individual learning to

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support personal development as well as economic development in the community; improve the college physical environment and level of physical resources to support our programmes; develop all staff to high levels of information technology (IT) competence, supported by appropriate technical expertise’.

## The Inspection

8 The college was inspected during the week beginning 6 March 2000. Inspectors had previously evaluated the college’s self-assessment report and considered information about the college provided by other directorates of the FEFC. Inspectors used data on students’ achievements drawn from the college’s individualised student record (ISR) returns to the FEFC for 1997 and 1998. Inspectors checked the college’s own data on students’ achievements for 1999 against primary sources, such as class registers and pass lists issued by the examining bodies. They found some data to be unreliable. For example, some students’ achievements were better than the data suggested. There was an insufficient amount of reliable data available relating to students’ achievements in basic skills. For this reason

### Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GNVQ	0	6	5	2	0	13
NVQ	1	6	5	0	0	12
Other vocational	3	8	3	2	0	16
Other*	4	10	5	1	0	20
Total (No)	8	30	18	5	0	61
Total (%)	13	49	30	8	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99 (%)	20	45	29	6	0	100

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

\*includes basic education

there is no table of achievements in the basic skills section of the report. The inspection was carried out by 10 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 47 days. Six inspectors from the Training Standards Council (TSC) worked with the inspection team during the inspection. The TSC inspectors concentrated on work-based training in manufacturing, construction, engineering, business administration and health care and public service. Where it was relevant to the FEFC inspection framework, evidence gathered by the TSC inspectors was taken into account when grading the college’s FEFC provision. FEFC inspectors observed 61 lessons, scrutinised students’ work and examined college documents. Meetings were held with governors, managers, teachers, other college staff and students.

9 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 observed, 62% were judged to be good or outstanding and 8% were less than satisfactory. This compares with 65% and 6%, respectively, for all colleges inspected in 1998-99.

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10 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 (%)
Rugby College of Further Education	8.1	72
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99	11.2	78

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



# Curriculum Areas

## Business Studies

### Grade 4

**11 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering business administration, GNVQ business, GCE A level business courses, and professional courses in management and accountancy. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report but identified additional strengths and weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- good pass rates on NVQ level 2 business administration courses
- students' well-organised portfolios
- good range of courses

#### Weaknesses

- aspects of curriculum management
- poor or declining retention and achievement rates on some full-time business courses
- insufficient emphasis on consolidating students' learning
- little allowance for different learning abilities of students
- insufficient updating of the commercial and industrial expertise of staff

12 The college offers a good range of business and professional courses including GNVQs, GCE A level business studies and accountancy, Edexcel Foundation and Chartered Institute of Marketing certificates, and courses leading to the qualifications of the Association of Accounting Technicians and the National Examining Board for Supervisory Management. There is a wide range of business administration courses from level 1 to degree level.

13 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that course documentation is well organised. Schemes of work and lesson plans

are detailed and specify appropriate objectives, suitable classroom activities and clear learning outcomes. Some aspects of curriculum management are unsatisfactory. Many part-time staff teach on the courses and it is not always easy for them to attend staff meetings and take part in curriculum development and course reviews. Furthermore, there has been a high turnover of staff recently. The national diploma public services course has had three course leaders over the last year and the current course leader is a part-time member of staff. The public services course team has met infrequently during the current academic year, as few teachers have been able to attend meetings.

14 The best lessons are well planned and have clear objectives. In these lessons, teachers use resources well. They ensure that the students are fully absorbed in tasks which extend their knowledge, engage a wide range of their skills, and motivate them to succeed. In these lessons, students are motivated and engage in a range of activities. Reference to topical issues and the use of case studies excite the students' interest. In professional courses, teachers encourage students to draw on their own background knowledge of the workplace and explore ideas and topics through lively and well-managed discussion. On business administration courses, students make good use of learning materials which they can work through on their own and at their own pace.

15 Some teachers place insufficient emphasis on consolidating students' learning. In many lessons, they do not check whether students have understood the work or have kept a satisfactory record of their learning. In some instances, teachers expected students to answer questions immediately and allowed them insufficient time to reflect before responding to them. Some students sat silently throughout the lesson and made no attempt to become actively involved. Group work was often poorly managed. Apart from lessons where students have an individualised learning programme,

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there is little attempt to encourage students to work at a pace that suits them. Some lessons move at either the pace of the slowest or the fastest student. In many lessons, the teachers allowed a few students to dominate discussion. Student's work experience is more ably managed and better organised on some full-time courses than others. With the exception of the GNVQ advanced course, most full-time courses include a period of well-planned work experience, with good supporting documentation for students and employers related to learning activities in college. On the national diploma public services course, however, work experience documentation for students and employers is underdeveloped.

16 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that students have access to an appropriate range of specialist resources. The office technology workshops provide a good learning environment, and contain an appropriate range of up-to-date equipment and software. Teaching rooms are well maintained, clean, and well equipped with audiovisual resources. Whilst the self-assessment report recognises that staff are well qualified, it fails to acknowledge the lack of arrangements for staff to update their industrial experience on a regular basis.

17 Guidelines for the well-designed assignments are clear. Students' written work is often of good quality. Students' portfolios on the GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses are well maintained and carefully organised, and show that students have acquired an appropriate range of skills. Students' progress is regularly monitored. Teachers use standard documentation to give students constructive feedback on the quality of their work. Spelling or grammatical errors are corrected. The quality of written feedback to students on the GNVQ advanced course, however, is poor.

18 Student achievement rates are good on many administration courses. In 1999, all students on the NVQ level 2 business

administration course obtained their qualification. The achievement rate on the wordprocessing stage 2 course was 89%. The retention and achievement rates on many business studies courses are poor or declining. On the GCE A level business course, the retention rate has declined from 88% in 1997 to 52% in 1999 and the pass rate in the past three years has been well below the national average for the sector. In 1999, the achievement rates on both the GNVQ advanced and intermediate courses were below the national average.

# Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE accounting	2	Number of starters	17	19	14
		Retention (%)	71	100	71
		Achievement (%)	100	68	50
NVQ business administration	2	Number of starters	54	62	25
		Retention (%)	80	77	78
		Achievement (%)	84	80	100
Wordprocessing stage 2	2	Number of starters	*	43	23
		Retention (%)	*	79	83
		Achievement (%)	*	91	89
Integrated business technology stage 2	2	Number of starters	*	*	102
		Retention (%)	*	*	96
		Achievement (%)	*	*	93
GNVQ advanced business	3	Number of starters	46	36	24
		Retention (%)	52	81	79
		Achievement (%)	70	54	65
GCE A level business	3	Number of starters	17	26	23
		Retention (%)	88	85	52
		Achievement (%)	20	41	50
National certificate business studies	3	Number of starters	39	25	25
		Retention (%)	56	76	80
		Achievement (%)	100	88	100

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college 1999

\*low numbers

# Curriculum Areas

## Hospitality and Catering and Leisure and Tourism

### Grade 3

**19 Inspectors observed 11 lessons on NVQ and GNVQ courses. They agreed with a number of the judgements in the self-assessment report. Inspectors also found some strengths and weaknesses the college had not identified.**

#### Key strengths

- careful planning of lessons
- effective teaching in the hospitality and catering realistic working environment
- students' good pass rates on NVQ courses
- well-developed vocational, social and teamworking skills of hospitality and catering students

#### Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory retention rates on a number of courses
- declining pass rates on GNVQ leisure and tourism courses
- lack of varied and effective teaching methods on leisure and tourism courses
- lack of key skills provision for craft catering students

20 The college offers an appropriate range of provision in hospitality and catering and leisure and tourism. These include courses leading to GNVQ at advanced level, NVQs at levels 1 to 3 in hospitality and catering, and travel services, and a range of additional courses. The school of service industries has an organisational structure that is clear and understood by staff. Communications are good. There are regular meetings, but the minutes do not record action points. The school's operational plan relates to the college strategic plan. It also takes into account relevant findings in the self-assessment report. It shows who has responsibility for

ensuring objectives are met and who is responsible for monitoring progress towards meeting them. The plan also specifies the dates by which actions must be completed. The plan's outcomes are not sufficiently quantifiable.

21 Teaching and learning are well planned. Teaching schemes and lesson plans are appropriately detailed, have clear aims and objectives, cover the awarding body syllabuses and are vocationally relevant. Teaching in the college kitchens and dining and bar areas is good and takes place in a realistic and commercial environment. This was a strength at the previous inspection. Inspectors did not agree with the finding in the self-assessment report that there is a wide range of teaching methods on leisure and tourism courses. In most lessons, the range is narrow and the methods themselves are not effective. In some lessons, teachers failed to provide summaries of the key points. In a few theory lessons some students were disruptive. Most students have regular periods of work experience but the GNVQ leisure and tourism students do not. There is no provision of key skills for craft catering students.

22 Students on hospitality and catering programmes have appropriate vocational and social skills and work effectively in teams. Food is prepared to a high standard and is well presented and served. The self-assessment report did not acknowledge these strengths. The quality of students' portfolios ranges from satisfactory to good. Some craft catering students' portfolios are poorly presented. The college has a successful record in catering competitions.

23 All teachers hold relevant professional qualifications and many have appropriate trade experience. Most hold vocational assessor awards and teacher training qualifications. As indicated in the self-assessment report, specialist accommodation for hospitality and catering and leisure and tourism is good and includes production and training kitchens, a restaurant, a licensed bar, fitness centre, sports

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hall and a travel shop. The travel shop is, however, only open for a few hours each week and at times when some students are unable to use it. There is an appropriate range of large equipment of industrial standard. Some small kitchen equipment is in short supply or is in unsatisfactory condition. The student changing rooms and the restaurant toilets are unsatisfactory.

24 Student retention rates vary considerably and in some instances, they are poor. The retention rate on the CENTRA pastry cooks and patissiers programme was excellent. Retention rates on the NVQ cookery programmes at level 2 were good in 1997 and 1999 but poor in 1998. In leisure and tourism, the retention rate on the NVQ travel services course has improved from below the national average for the sector in 1997 and 1998, to around the national average

in 1999. The retention rate on the GNVQ leisure and tourism course at advanced level has been mainly poor. In 1998, the retention rate on the GNVQ intermediate course was also poor. It improved significantly the following year, however, but the number of students on the course was low. In 1997 and 1998, all students on the NVQ course in food and preparation and cooking at level 2 obtained the qualification. The pass rate on the basic hygiene certificate course has been mainly above the national average. Students' achievements on the NVQ travel services course were good and significantly above the national average. The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge as a weakness, the decline in the pass rates on the GNVQ leisure and tourism courses at advanced and intermediate levels, from outstanding to very poor.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Chartered Institute of Environmental Health basic food hygiene certificate	2	Number of starters	145	395	309
		Retention (%)	100	100	100
		Achievement (%)	98	83	94
NVQ catering and hospitality (food preparation and cooking)	2	Number of starters	25	*	14
		Retention (%)	88	*	86
		Achievement (%)	100	*	83
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	Number of starters	14	13	4
		Retention (%)	64	38	50
		Achievement (%)	89	60	50
CENTRA pastry cooks and patissiers (basic year)	2	Number of starters	11	*	12
		Retention (%)	91	*	100
		Achievement (%)	70	*	83
NVQ travel services	2	Number of starters	25	36	21
		Retention (%)	68	64	86
		Achievement (%)	100	78	86
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism	3	Number of starters	10	10	18
		Retention (%)	50	90	56
		Achievement (%)	100	75	44

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

\*data not valid

# Curriculum Areas

## Health and Community Care

### Grade 2

**25 Inspectors observed 11 lessons on health, social care, early childhood studies and counselling courses. They agreed with most of the strengths and some of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Several weaknesses originally identified in the report have since been successfully addressed.**

#### Key strengths

- good-quality teaching and learning
- vocationally well-qualified teachers
- effective use of teachers' professional experience in teaching
- students' good retention and achievement rates on part-time and short courses
- successful management of franchising and community links

#### Weaknesses

- students' poor retention and achievement rates on the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) diploma course
- narrow range of full-time courses

26 The college offers a course leading to a GNVQ in health and social care at advanced level, the CACHE caring for young children course, and the CACHE diploma course in nursery nursing. Following low enrolments on several full-time programmes, the range of full-time course provision has been significantly narrowed. For example, no level 2 full-time programmes are currently available. This deficiency was not identified in the self-assessment report but plans to remedy it have been made. GNVQ advanced courses are offered on a 'roll-on roll-off' programme basis. This arrangement has been well managed and

students' needs are met effectively. There is a broad range of provision of part-time and short courses, including the Institute of Welfare Officers diploma in welfare studies and a range of counselling courses from introductory to advanced certificate level.

27 Franchising and community links are successfully managed across the programme area. An effective quality assurance process has been established. There are good links with work experience placements. The college works well with other local providers in a consortium to offer education and training leading to NVQs. As the self-assessment report acknowledged, students on care and childcare courses benefit from the opportunity to work for NVQs in care and early years care. There has been a substantial development of courses at centres away from the college, which leads to a counselling certificate accredited by the National Open College Network (NOCN). Student retention and achievement rates are improving following their close monitoring through the quality assurance process.

28 The quality of most teaching and learning was good or outstanding. In most lessons, students were involved in a variety of learning activities which were lively and well organised, vocationally relevant and appropriately demanding. In one outstanding lesson for counsellors, Egan's three-stage model was explored by group discussion of a case study. The teacher questioned the students closely and effectively about the theory and practice of counselling and gave a clear summary of the salient points made during discussion. In another lesson, nursery nurse students implemented plans to produce 'story boxes' as visual and practical aids to story telling in their work placements with nursery aged children. The teacher provided a framework within which students worked to produce a finished product that focused on the language development of the children. As well as carrying out careful planning, students were expected to make a

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comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of their story box. Lessons for the second-year students were appropriately demanding.

Assignments are well designed and students are given clear instructions on how to carry them out. A few lessons lacked momentum and a clear sense of purpose. In these, the teacher talked too much and failed to involve the students in discussion, or in activities which extended their knowledge and skills.

29 Staff are well qualified and they have a wide range of experience and expertise directly related to the vocational courses offered. A programme of staff development has been undertaken to address some teachers' lack of recent industrial experience identified in the self-assessment report. The college has identified some other weaknesses identified through self-assessment such as students' poor attendance and lack of punctuality, and students' low take-up of additional learning support on one full-time programme. Students speak positively of their learning experience, the good-quality tutorial support they receive, and the learning facilities, including computers. Teaching rooms are adequately equipped.

30 Student retention and achievement rates on first aid at work, counselling, and the Institute of Welfare Officers diploma in welfare studies courses are good, comparing favourably with national averages where these are available. Student retention and achievement rates on the CACHE diploma in nursery nursing course, however, are poor and declining. The college is attempting to improve these rates through more rigorous implementation of its attendance and punctuality policy and by introducing organisational changes in line with the recommendations of the awarding body's external verifier. Students' written work is of good quality.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
First aid at work certificate	1	Number of starters	933	978	594
		Retention (%)	100	100	100
		Achievement (%)	99	97	97
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	Number of starters	33	20	10
		Retention (%)	45	70	90
		Achievement (%)	85	82	86
CACHE diploma in nursery nursing	3	Number of starters	42	35	39
		Retention (%)	48	89	62
		Achievement (%)	92	70	67
Advanced certificate in therapeutic counselling	3	Number of starters	19	27	18
		Retention (%)	84	74	83
		Achievement (%)	56	65	100
Institute of Welfare Officers diploma in welfare studies	4	Number of starters	20	17	17
		Retention (%)	60	88	82
		Achievement (%)	92	87	100
NOCN accredited 'Relate' programme**	Not Known	Number of starters	*	38	1,494
		Retention (%)	*	97	98
		Achievement (%)	*	78	100

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

\*course did not run

\*\*this course is specifically designed for the relationship guidance charity



# Curriculum Areas

## Art and Design and Performing Arts

### Grade 2

**31 Inspectors observed 14 lessons, covering courses in art and design, media, performing arts and popular music. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report, but found some strengths and one weakness the college had not identified.**

#### Key strengths

- wide range of courses
- curriculum enrichment through well-planned external activities
- varied range of effective learning methods
- students' good achievements on all courses
- students' progress and good practical work
- students' success in progressing to further study
- enthusiasm of the well-qualified teaching and support staff

#### Weaknesses

- students' poor attendance at many lessons
- some unsatisfactory schemes of work and poor lesson plans
- falling retention rates on some courses
- unsatisfactory features of some specialist facilities

32 The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses in art, design and performing arts, as the self-assessment report states. The courses are timetabled flexibly to allow students to choose a mode of attendance that suits them. The courses offer clear progression opportunities within the college and

to higher education. There are opportunities for students to gain additional units and awards and to enrich their experience through external activities. These include public performances in drama and music, and study visits for art and design students to cities in the United Kingdom and other European countries.

33 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that staff make use of a wide range of learning approaches. Staff work well together in teams. They engender a strong affection for the particular attributes of their subject area and they share this with their students. Students are highly motivated and they are committed to their studies. They respond well to the enthusiasm of staff. Working relations between students and staff are excellent. The learning methods in lessons are effective and, in some instances, excellent. In an exemplary musical performance workshop, students gave a short recital, and performed in turn. Each performance was thoroughly evaluated by fellow students who received help through careful prompting from the tutor. Most lessons are well prepared. The quality of some lesson plans and schemes of work is poor. Teachers fail to make sure that all students understand the lesson. Students' attendance at the lessons inspectors observed was low, at 69% overall. Some classes were too small to allow the students to engage in activities through which they learn to work with one another, such as group projects, or structured debate and discussion. Students are well informed about their progress, through regular tutorials and systematically recorded feedback. The written feedback which students receive on their assignment work does not always state the extent to which the students have fulfilled the specified objectives for their learning tasks.

34 Teachers and technical staff are well qualified academically, as the self-assessment report states. Many part-time staff have up-to-date experience of professional practice or higher education and they draw on this

# Curriculum Areas

effectively in their teaching. There are no arrangements whereby full-time staff can benefit from this experience other than by engaging in joint teaching activities with part-time staff. Specialist accommodation and facilities are well maintained and mostly fit for their purpose. They are also used flexibly for a variety of different teaching and learning activities. The specialist IT facility has been upgraded recently. Some aspects of the specialist resources are unsatisfactory. For example, the drama studio lacks soundproofing and convenient storage space. The video editing facility is adequate for individual post-production work, but cannot be used easily for teaching groups of students. Students are appreciative of the library and resource centre. Book and periodical collections meet students' needs, but there is over demand for key texts when students are engaged in some project work.

35 Students' achievement rates on most courses are above the national average for the sector. In 1998, the pass rate on the GCE A level art studies and photography courses were 89% and 100%, respectively, over 20% above the national average. All students passed on the music performance course. All students passed on the art and design foundation studies diploma course and this achievement rate is 20% higher than the national average.

Retention rates on most courses are satisfactory or good. They are less satisfactory on a small number of courses in art and design, and the national diploma in graphic design course; in 1998, the retention rate on the latter was 70%, 7% below the national average. This low retention rate was acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Data for 1999 indicate problems with students' retention on a few courses. Students acquire specialist skills progressively throughout their courses and their practical work is good. Students perform confidently in music and drama productions. An extensive programme of public performances by students helps to cement the college's links with the local community. As the self-

assessment recognises, the success of students in gaining places in higher education constitutes a key strength of this curriculum area.

# Curriculum Areas

**A summary of retention and achievement rates in art and design and performing arts, 1997 to 1999**

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Other qualifications (short courses) EMFEC preliminary certificate in design and visual skills	1	Number of starters	19	19	98
		Retention (%)	95	95	96
		Achievement (%)	100	89	93
Other qualifications (24 weeks and over) art and design	1 and 2	Number of starters	129	165	150
		Retention (%)	90	81	79
		Achievement (%)	84	73	77
GCSE art and design and performing arts	2	Number of starters	52	44	22
		Retention (%)	85	91	73
		Achievement (%)	100	83	94
Other qualifications (24 weeks and over) flexible certificate in music and dance	2 and 3	Number of starters	206	224**	165
		Retention (%)	86	88**	58
		Achievement (%)	97	100**	100
GCE A level art studies/ fine arts	3	Number of starters	53	50	26
		Retention (%)	92	96	73
		Achievement (%)	90	55	84
GNVQ and precursors diploma in art and design foundation studies	3	Number of starters	35	27	26
		Retention (%)	69	85	77
		Achievement (%)	96	100	100

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

\*data unreliable

\*\*checked by inspectors

# Curriculum Areas

## Basic Skills

### Grade 3

**36 Inspectors observed 13 lessons in literacy, numeracy, and additional learning support, at the college and in the local community. Inspectors considered that the self-assessment report overemphasised strengths and omitted several key weaknesses. They found both strengths and weaknesses the college had not identified.**

#### Key strengths

- good teaching of basic skills
- carefully negotiated individual learning plans
- volunteer tutors' valuable help and assistance for students
- effective response to the needs of the local community

#### Weaknesses

- poor curriculum management
- lack of rigour in quality assurance
- students' low retention and attendance rates on some courses

37 Basic skills provision includes courses in basic skills for adults, and additional learning support offered through workshops, or as an integrated part of vocational programmes. The provision is offered at the main college site and at a range of centres in the local community. In 1998-99, there were 161 basic skills students. All were part-time and 139 received some additional learning support with basic skills. The college also has a support service for students with dyslexia.

38 There is an adequate range of basic skills provision. However, the college has not identified how it is meeting the learning needs of students specifically in relation to basic skills, on courses below level 2. The college has a suitable diagnostic system for identifying the

more general needs of students for additional learning support. Some students, however, do not receive the support they require. In some cases, no support at all had yet been provided for students in a particular group. In other instances, all students received the same support and it was not differentiated to take account of the needs of individual students. This weakness was not identified in the college's self-assessment report.

39 Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to helping their students to succeed. They plan lessons well and bear in mind the individual needs of students. In the best lessons, students worked at an appropriate pace and learning activities were suited to their differing aptitude and abilities. The initial assessment of adult students' basic skills and reviews of students' progress are carefully recorded. Students negotiate a detailed individual learning plan with long-term aims as well as short-term objectives. Students' progress against individual goals is recorded session-by-session and reviewed effectively on a termly basis.

40 Staff and students have good relationships. Staff support the students and help them learn effectively. Basic skills students benefit from the skills and experience of volunteer tutors, all of whom are qualified or have been on appropriate training programmes. They offer support to tutors, along with well-judged assistance and encouragement for students. Good-quality learning resources have been developed which take account of students' individual experience and aim to meet students' needs. The learning resources at one of the centres in the local community are particularly effective. Most teaching takes place in adequately furnished rooms. The self-assessment acknowledges as a weakness, the underdeveloped use of IT in the teaching of basic skills.

41 The management of basic skills provision across the college is weak, particularly in respect of leadership and operational planning.

# Curriculum Areas

The basic skills management group, established to support the development of basic skills provision across the college, has met only twice since its formation. There is a lack of rigour in quality assurance arrangements in respect of the teaching and learning of basic skills. Performance indicators are not used effectively. With one exception, all courses are taught by part-time staff. Part-time staff are committed to helping the students succeed. They are, however, not involved in course planning or target-setting. They find it difficult to attend meetings. Arrangements for providing part-time staff with support, staff development and a good communications system, are underdeveloped. The college is working to remedy these deficiencies.

42 The college liaises closely with a range of other providers and community organisations, including the local authority. During the past year, the college has doubled its number of centres in the local community from 11 to 22. Many of these centres provide tuition in basic skills, either through family literacy sessions, or lessons in basic English and numeracy. The college is developing basic skills provision in the workplace. Through its partnership with a local residential home, the college is providing basic skills training for care assistants in the workplace.

43 Students make good progress. The achievement rates of those who enter for qualifications are high. Arrangements for recording students' primary learning are inadequate, however, and some data on students' achievements are inaccurate. In 1998-99, the retention rate on basic skills courses averaged 67% which is below the national average for the sector. The average class size in the lessons observed was 5.25 compared with the national average for the sector of 7.5 in basic education classes. Students' attendance in the classes inspected averaged 56%, compared with a national average of 74% for basic education classes.

# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### Grade 3

**44 Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. They found some further weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- effective pre-entry guidance
- good management of marketing
- thorough induction process
- effective careers guidance

#### Weaknesses

- some unsatisfactory tutorials
- imprecise action-planning
- poor arrangements for additional learning support
- students' lack of awareness of the availability of external counselling services

45 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that pre-entry guidance is effective. Recruitment and interview processes aim to ensure that students are admitted to courses that meet their needs. Impartial guidance includes recommending students to apply for courses at other colleges if appropriate. The student services centre is well located next to the reception area. There is effective co-ordination of admissions, personal and financial counselling, the enrichment programme, and careers guidance. Few staff possess advice and guidance qualifications. Useful links with local schools include the provision of careers guidance for year 11 pupils and 'taster' vocational courses for pupils in year 10. The college holds open days and advice sessions. Marketing is well managed. Marketing co-ordinators meet regularly with staff responsible for the curriculum. The attractive and well-designed prospectuses

include a brochure for mature students and a CD-ROM version. The college has recently repeated its success in 1997, in gaining a national award for one of its prospectuses. The well-designed interactive college website gives a range of helpful information.

46 Induction procedures are well planned, as the self-assessment report states. A thorough induction checklist is adapted to meet the respective requirements of full-time and part-time students at centres away from the main college. Students find information about college facilities and course requirements helpful. They are also made aware of assessment requirements and the costs associated with their course. Students wishing to change courses are appropriately advised.

47 All full-time students receive a weekly tutorial and are entitled to at least one individual tutorial each term. Each curriculum area is responsible for its own tutorial programme. The tutorial co-ordinator promotes good practice and plans helpful staff development for tutors. A tutorial working group meets regularly to review the effectiveness of the tutorial system. Priority is now given to following up students' absences. Progress reports on full-time students aged 16 to 18 are sent to parents. Two parents evenings are held each year. An 'at risk procedure' identifies students who may be likely to withdraw and their progress is kept under close review. Students' reasons for withdrawing from courses are carefully analysed. Group tutorials include optional workshops at which students may receive careers guidance and help and advice on personal issues. Some tutorials sessions were unsatisfactory. Many part-time courses have no tutorials. Students complete action plans for organising their studies and improving the quality of their work. The content of the action plans, however, was insufficiently clear or precise. The forms on which the action plans are specified do not allow for the students, with help from staff, to set out detailed measures for improving their performance.

# Cross-college Provision

48 There have been recent changes relating to the management of additional learning support. All full-time students are given a diagnostic assessment in literacy and numeracy but only a few part-time students receive any form of initial test. The self-assessment acknowledges the need for better recording of additional learning support. Support is given individually and in groups. In some lessons, a learning support teacher works alongside the course teacher. Take up of learning support by full-time students has been low. Despite substantial action which aims to ensure students receive additional learning support promptly, there are still instances in which several months elapse between the identification of a student's need for learning support and the provision of assistance. The extent to which provision of additional support leads to any improvements in student retention and achievement rates has not been analysed. The college's disability statement covers relevant areas but is not written in clear and simple language. Students with dyslexia are given additional support and care is taken to identify students with other needs, for example those with hearing or sight impairment. Sufficient specialist equipment is available in the resource centre for these students.

49 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that careers guidance is well developed. Separate service level agreements with each curriculum area, in respect of careers guidance, are a distinctive feature. Students are encouraged to engage in career planning early in their courses. They benefit from a useful careers library and have access to careers advice in tutorials, visits by external speakers, help in the preparation of curricula vitae and practice interviews which are video-recorded. The job vacancy board in the library is updated weekly. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that the quality of careers guidance for students is good and that there is effective liaison between the careers service and the college. Students also spoke highly of the careers advice they receive.

50 There are clear criteria relating to the distribution of additional financial support to students. Requests are carefully considered. In recent years, there have been several changes in the way in which counselling support is provided. A professional counsellor from an external agency is now available on one day a week. Awareness of the service is not well developed and the take-up of counselling is low. Childcare support is offered either through the nursery or by giving financial support to enable parents to purchase childcare outside the college. The college offers a small programme of sporting and leisure enrichment activities which is managed by a full-time student liaison officer.

## General Resources

### *Grade 2*

**51 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. Some of the strengths relating to learning resources were overstated.**

#### **Key strengths**

- accessibility of most accommodation to students with restricted mobility
- good IT facilities
- effective refurbishment of much of the accommodation

#### **Weaknesses**

- significant underuse of accommodation
- deficiencies in library provision

52 There is one campus consisting of four main buildings and a few smaller ones. The largest building accounts for about two-thirds of the total floor area. It accommodates nearly all of the general teaching rooms and the learning resource centre. The other three buildings house specialist facilities for engineering, art

# Cross-college Provision

and design, and performing arts. Most social areas are satisfactory. The recreational and sports needs of students are met by hiring local facilities to supplement the college's sports hall and recently opened gymnasium. Most staff have adequate work areas. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that most of the accommodation is easily accessible to students with restricted mobility. The accessibility of the accommodation to these students was identified as a strength in the last inspection report. Since that report was issued, the college has made further improvements in respect of the accessibility of its buildings. The social areas and nearly all teaching rooms are accessible to students who use wheelchairs.

53 The self-assessment report gives clear evidence of the poor use of accommodation. A survey over two weeks last term showed that just over half of the rooms were being used and that on average, they were only one-quarter full. The allocation of rooms and the monitoring of their use are not fully effective. In the last year, the college has introduced centralised computerised timetabling but this is not yet operating effectively.

54 A five-year maintenance plan is in its second year of operation with priorities clearly identified. Structural and electrical works are major elements of the plan. Although the college has invested heavily in the extensive refurbishment of its buildings over this period, there is a considerable amount of high-priority work still to be done. The plan is regularly reviewed and updated. Many areas have been improved to a high standard. The reception area has been upgraded and is welcoming. Signposting has recently been improved and is generally clear. Over the summer period, the poor general teaching rooms identified in the self-assessment report as a weakness were upgraded. This included lowering ceilings to improve the acoustics, thus correcting a weakness identified in the last inspection. Those rooms still to be refurbished are adequate.

55 Rooms containing general learning resources are effectively grouped in one area to form a learning centre. A broad range of facilities is available and the students have good access to staff for assistance. The centre includes two computer rooms, a library area and range of study areas that meet the needs of students who wish to work alone or in a group. Inspectors could not agree with the finding in the self-assessment report that the space for study is generous; it is only just adequate for the number of students at the college. The centre is rarely full, however, and the college acknowledges that many students do not make use of the benefits it offers. Insufficient monitoring of its use is carried out to assist the future planning and development of this facility. Performance targets for its use are not set. The budget for books was increased significantly this year, from a relatively low base. When the expenditure on books by the library is added to that by curriculum areas, the total level of spending on books is satisfactory. This increase is a response by the college to the deficiencies it has identified in the library. However, there are shortcomings in the bookstock in many curriculum areas. For example, there are not enough books, or the range of the stock is narrow. Some texts are dated and there are shortages of non-book material. Some curriculum areas have not been sufficiently involved in reviewing the bookstock.

56 All computers are networked, give access to the Internet and are capable of running the college's range of up-to-date software. Following a recent upgrade, many are high specification machines. There is a relatively high number of computers, giving a ratio of about one computer to six full-time equivalent students. Curriculum areas are well resourced with IT equipment. The proportion of computers allocated for students who wish to work on their own in the resource centre is relatively low, but is adequate to meet current demand. The college recognises that this proportion needs to be increased and has plans



# Cross-college Provision

to do this as demand builds. The first stage will be to ensure that all teaching takes place in the computer rooms and that the resource centre computers are reserved for supervised private study. The college is starting a phased development of the network facilities. A well-planned intranet for students is being developed. Arrangements for students to store and handle their work on the network are underdeveloped as are individual log-in accounts. An intranet for staff was introduced last year. This provides staff with an increasing range of options and a valuable source of information and support for administrative work. Most staff have adequate access to computers but in some areas, the number of computers available for use by staff is low. Staff may use electronic mail.

## Quality Assurance

### Grade 3

**57 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report.**

#### Key strengths

- well-managed staff development programme linked to planning
- effective arrangements for gathering the views of students, employers, parents and staff
- comprehensive reviews of the effectiveness of college charters

#### Weaknesses

- inaccurate data on students' achievements
- lack of rigour in course reviews
- poor action plans to improve the quality of provision

58 The college has policies and procedures for the continuous improvement of provision. Many

of these procedures are being updated. However, the policy on quality assurance makes little reference to service standards in support and cross-college areas. The quality assurance arrangements include the International Standards Organisation 9002 system and are regularly audited by the college and British Standards Institution auditors. Most staff demonstrate good understanding of the well-documented procedures and systems for reporting on quality. Some quality assurance manuals, however, are neither easy to understand nor are they readily accessible to staff.

59 Staff understand the self-assessment process well and most played a useful part in it. The self-assessment process, however, was not always sufficiently rigorous and it failed to cover some key aspects of provision. Some features of provision which the self-assessment report described as strengths are no more than standard practice. The quality of action plans for improving provision are poor. Many lack clear, measurable targets. Actions to be taken are often vague and none has resource or cost implications.

60 The process for observing lessons is satisfactory. Since it was introduced in 1994 there have been four significant changes in order to make the process one of effective evaluation, rather than mere observation. Until 1998, teachers could choose the person who observed them in the classroom but the observation process did not lead to adequate evaluation of learning methods. In 1998-99, this process was changed and teachers are now observed by line managers who identify the strengths and weaknesses of the lessons they observe. This has subsequently been improved to include a better evaluation of students' learning. Records of lesson observations do not always show a clear correlation between the strengths and the weaknesses and the grade awarded. The evaluation of learning was not always adequately detailed in the 1998-99

# Cross-college Provision

records of observations. Action is now being taken to rectify this weakness. Inspectors awarded lower grades for lessons than the college's line managers did and they judged more lessons to be unsatisfactory.

61 There are two college charters, one is for employers and the community, and the other is for students. Inspectors agreed that both charters are clear and well presented and they provide relevant information in plain English. They define effectively the college's commitments to provide particular services for its clients. Many of the statements of commitment are referenced to more detailed statements of policy or practice. A number of measurable targets are specified against which the college's performance may be monitored. Groups of staff and students drawn from various college areas undertake regular and comprehensive reviews of the charters. Recent improvements include providing a named person to respond to enquiries from employers.

62 Arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures for curriculum areas are inadequate. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, the college has failed for several years to provide systems that produce accurate data on students' achievements. Staff have found it difficult to monitor progress in improving students' performance. The quality of many course reviews is poor. Some are badly presented and lack rigour. References to key strengths and weaknesses are missing, and there is no analysis of trends in students' performance. There is little use of performance indicators and benchmarks in course reviews. Most business support areas have service standards to work to, but in a few areas such as management information systems, these have yet to be developed. As the self-assessment report identifies, the formulation of action plans is poor. The plans contain insufficient detail on how weaknesses will be rectified.

63 Line managers appraise most staff regularly including part-time staff who teach for a significant number of hours a week. Some managers have to appraise large numbers of staff. The college is piloting a revised appraisal process which aims to be more rigorous in evaluating the performance of staff. It is, however, too early to judge its effectiveness. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that systems for identifying the training needs of staff are well managed. Staff are provided with training which helps the college to fulfil its strategic and operational objectives. During the appraisal process, staff agree their training needs with their managers. These are taken into account in the college's detailed staff development plan. Staff development activities to meet college priorities are provided through internal training programmes over a two-week period each year, and these are well attended.

64 The college gathers students' views on the quality of provision through a range of questionnaires. These are complemented by employers, parents and staff. The responses to the questionnaires are taken into account in the self-assessment process, and also when staff evaluate the admissions procedures, teaching and learning methods, assessment procedures and student support services. The responses are carefully analysed and summarised. Action has been taken on the responses and this has led to improvements, such as the upgrading of accommodation and the building of a new gymnasium.

# Cross-college Provision

## Governance

### Grade 2

**65 Inspectors and auditors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report but regarded some of the strengths as overstated. Some weaknesses had been addressed by the time of the inspection. They found weaknesses the college had not identified.**

#### Key strengths

- high levels of attendance at corporation and committee meetings
- effective conduct of corporation business
- good use of governors' expertise
- effective operation of the search committee

#### Weaknesses

- governors' failure to give sufficient attention to their statutory responsibilities for health and safety
- insufficient monitoring of curriculum issues by governors

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

67 The corporation has 15 members, including five women and a member from the minority ethnic communities. There are no vacancies. Governors have a range of expertise that has been used well for the benefit of the college. For example, two governors advised on year 2000 compliance issues. A skills audit has recently been undertaken. The search committee, which includes two external,

co-opted members, has advised the corporation on appointments of governors within the newly determined categories of membership. Only one appointment now has to be made to comply with the requirements for these new categories. The committee also carefully evaluates the contribution of existing governors prior to their reappointment. Appointment procedures comply with the Nolan recommendations and include a job description and person specification.

68 Governors' induction includes a pack of relevant information and briefings from college staff. Each year, governors are asked to identify their training requirements. Recent in-house training sessions have covered funding and curriculum 2000. A number of governors have attended external training events. As noted in the self-assessment report, governors' activities within the college are now regularly reported at corporation meetings.

69 The corporation meets four times a year, with additional meetings as necessary, and corporation business is conducted efficiently. Governors appreciate the timely receipt of agendas and papers. The clerk to the corporation, who is also director of college services, has a detailed job description covering the key functions of his role. The attendance record of governors at corporation and committee meetings over the last 12 months has been good. Comprehensive standing orders govern the conduct of the meetings, although the corporation has yet to institute a formal, annual review of its decision-making procedures. In addition to its search committee, the corporation is supported by its finance, audit, employment policy, quality assurance and remuneration committees. The terms of reference for all committees except the finance committee are appropriate; those for the finance committee do not reflect its responsibilities fully.

70 Auditors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that governors have closely monitored the college's finances. The

# Cross-college Provision

corporation successfully oversaw the college's financial recovery between 1995 and 1998. However, there has recently been a forecast of a potentially significant financial downturn for 1999-2000. Discussions about appropriate action for dealing with this have taken place between senior management and the chair and vice-chair of the corporation, and at a special meeting of the finance committee. The whole corporation was formally made aware of the proposed action shortly after the inspection. Governors receive the management accounts at both finance committee and corporation meetings. In addition, all governors receive the accounts monthly. Governors do not, however, receive any reports on the college's small subsidiary training company as it is regarded as an integral part of the college's activities. This lack of reporting on the training company is contrary to recent FEFC guidelines. The audit committee produced an annual report to the corporation, in advance of the requirements of Council Circular 98/15, *Audit Code of Practice*. The committee is independently clerked and its membership includes an external co-optee with financial expertise.

71 With the exception of the few confidential items, corporation agendas, minutes and papers, and committee minutes are available for public scrutiny and may be obtained from the clerk. Declarations of interest are completed and annually updated by all governors and staff with financial responsibility. The code of conduct has not been updated to bring it fully into line with the Nolan recommendations. The corporation holds an annual general meeting and produces an annual report that includes a range of information about the college.

72 In their self-assessment report, governors recognised a need to strengthen their understanding and monitoring of curriculum issues. Governors have taken steps to improve their understanding of the curriculum by establishing links with curriculum schools. They have held useful meetings with managers. The quality assurance committee was established in

October 1998 to strengthen governors' monitoring of the college's academic performance and quality assurance procedures. It has received and discussed reports on quality and performance and has been supportive towards the college's self-assessment process. The committee's work has been hampered by unreliable data and it has not been able to give the corporation a clear appraisal of the quality of the college's academic performance. Targets set by the corporation for students' retention and achievements were unrealistic.

73 Governors have undertaken an annual self-evaluation of their performance for the last two years. They have established a number of measures for assessing their performance. The self-assessment failed to identify a serious shortcoming in governors' discharge of statutory responsibilities for health and safety. Governors have received no reports on health and safety since October 1998.

## Management

### Grade 3

**74 Inspectors and auditors agreed with a number of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They considered that some strengths had been overstated and they found a weakness the college had not identified.**

#### Key strengths

- clear lines of accountability
- productive external links and partnerships
- effective promotion of equal opportunities

#### Weaknesses

- inadequate management information
- lack of clear performance criteria in operational plans
- poor management of health and safety

# Cross-college Provision

75 The college has undertaken one major and several minor restructurings since the last inspection. The senior management team comprises the principal and five senior managers. The team meets weekly and produces clear minutes that are widely circulated. Staff understand the management structure and there are clear lines of accountability. Some areas of the college have experienced a lack of continuity in staffing and their management has been poor.

76 The self-assessment report stated that student retention and attendance rates had improved steadily. Over the three years to 1997-98, retention and achievement rates improved in some areas and declined in others but most were at or above the national average for the sector. Attendance rates for the lessons observed during the inspection were low.

77 Strategic planning has improved since the last inspection. The use of market research to influence strategic planning is in the early stages of development. The strategic plan has clear strategic objectives and a useful needs analysis, but a weak risk analysis. Strategic objectives are clearly cross-referenced in the operational plans for the college, curriculum and business support areas. However, many of the operational plans lack precise criteria by which success can be measured and few of the resource implications are costed. Some school plans include targets for student recruitment but there are few other quantifiable targets.

78 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. Following serious financial difficulties identified in 1994-95, the college completed a formal recovery plan one year ahead of schedule. The college produced operating surpluses in 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98. In 1998-99, the college failed to achieve its unit target and there was an operating deficit of £244,000. Forecasts covering the period 1999-2000 to 2001-02 indicate declining solvency. In

particular, the current year's forecast out-turn is for a significant deficit rather than the small surplus originally budgeted. Senior managers are considering a range of measures to address this situation. As noted in the self-assessment report, the executive monitors the financial health of the college monthly, through the review of detailed, user-friendly accounts. The accounts do not, however, contain a 12-month rolling cashflow forecast. Cash is now forecast to be well below budget at the end of the current year. The director of college services and the head of finance possess recognised professional accountancy qualifications. Budgets are extensively delegated and reviewed quarterly. The college's financial regulations are comprehensive and have recently been updated. The reports of the internal and external auditors indicate that, in most areas, the college has sound systems of internal control. However, the reports highlight significant weaknesses in the student record system which management has been slow to address.

79 Communications within the college have improved. There is wide use of electronic mail and the college intranet. Regular briefings by the principal and a staff newsletter keep staff informed of college and national developments. Most teams meet regularly although there is no published calendar of regular college meetings. Some staff say they do not feel well informed about salient issues or are unsure of how to make their views known.

80 Inspectors agreed that there is a comprehensive policy on equal opportunities. This is complemented by action plans for the promotion of equal opportunities that are carefully monitored by the equal opportunities working party. Senior managers are committed to ensuring that the policy and procedures are effective. The policy is reviewed annually. Progress in implementing it successfully is reported to the senior management team and the employment policy committee of the corporation. Recently, the college has appointed

# Cross-college Provision

a college co-ordinator for widening participation. Since this appointment was made, the number of centres in the local community has increased from 11 to 22. The TSC inspectors judged the college's practice in equal opportunities to be outstanding.

81 As the self-assessment report recognises, the college has many productive external links and partnerships and it has strengthened those with the local community. The college works closely with local partners, including voluntary groups, to provide particular courses such as those in basic skills for adults. Links with a local university and local businesses have led to courses for adults in primary schools and in the workplace. The college provides musical and other educational activities for hundreds of school children annually. Its liaison with the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise is particularly good. The college has effective links with many local employers and schools. Through its productive collaboration with the local education authority (LEA) and the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise, the college has been successful in helping year 10 and 11 pupils at risk of permanent exclusion from school.

82 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that there are weaknesses in the college's computerised management information system. There have been problems for a number of years. The college has encountered difficulties in producing accurate data and it has been late with some of its returns to the FEFC. College managers have been unable to make effective use of ISR data. The situation is improving following the recent appointment of a new manager and faculty registrars. The college has yet to develop a comprehensive management information policy.

83 The management of health and safety is poor, a weakness not identified in the self-assessment report. Following recent staff changes, responsibility for health and safety has

been reassigned. The staff now responsible for health and safety are receiving training to enable them to obtain appropriate additional qualifications. The college's health and safety policy has not been updated since 1996. There is no college action plan to promote good health and safety practice, although work is in hand to devise one. Although there have been reports to senior managers from the health and safety committee, no annual report on health and safety was produced for 1998-99.

## Conclusions

84 The self-assessment report and its updated version provided a useful basis upon which to plan and carry out the inspection. The self-assessment process is well understood by staff. Action-planning, however, to rectify weaknesses identified through self-assessment is underdeveloped. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses stated in the report but they considered some strengths were no more than normal practice. They also found both strengths and weaknesses the college had not identified. Inspectors did not agree with some of the self-assessment findings in relation to student retention and achievement rates and they found some of the data in respect of these to be inaccurate. The inspection team found that the college had been overgenerous in its grading of one curriculum area and one of the cross-college areas.

85 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 (March 2000)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	2
16-18 years	11
19-24 years	10
25+ years	75
Not known	2
Total	100

*Source: college data*

## Student numbers by level of study (March 2000)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Level 1 (foundation)	17
Level 2 (intermediate)	22
Level 3 (advanced)	18
Level 4/5 (higher)	4
Non-schedule 2	39
Total	100

*Source: college data*

## Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (March 2000)

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	71	700	15
Agriculture	22	5	1
Construction	25	49	1
Engineering	49	323	7
Business	102	419	10
Hotel and catering	91	136	4
Health and community care	119	1,636	34
Art and design	186	290	9
Humanities	90	580	13
Basic education	59	270	6
Total	814	4,408	100

*Source: college data*

## Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 8% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

## Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (March 2000)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	66	53	11	130
Supporting direct learning contact	22	3	0	25
Other support	94	5	2	101
Total	182	61	13	256

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

# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£7,311,000	£6,982,000	£6,834,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£19.09	£17.75	£17.23
Payroll as a proportion of income	57%	61%	65%
Achievement of funding target	104%	101%	95%*
Diversity of income	32%	31%	29%
Operating surplus	£582,000	£86,000	-£244,000

Sources: Income – Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college audited accounts (1998), college (1999)

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

Payroll – Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college audited accounts (1998), college (1999)

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

Diversity of income – Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college audited accounts (1998), college (1999)

Operating surplus – Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college audited accounts (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	143	125	102	1,193	1,171	1,230
	Retention (%)	86	82	75	82	76	81
	Achievement (%)	66	76	61	55	79	63
2	Number of starters	503	493	422	823	1,065	1,808
	Retention (%)	79	74	81	87	77	93
	Achievement (%)	52	81	66	51	87	80
3	Number of starters	358	456	414	651	864	788
	Retention (%)	83	68	79	81	80	85
	Achievement (%)	41	83	66	45	81	50
4 or 5	Number of starters	9	8	7	104	83	88
	Retention (%)	100	100	57	84	75	81
	Achievement (%)	0	83	100	37	84	74
Short courses	Number of starters	555	380	368	5,899	3,763	5,438
	Retention (%)	97	97	97	98	98	98
	Achievement (%)	89	91	87	91	77	59
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	132	267	262	1,090	1,204	675
	Retention (%)	79	72	86	88	80	90
	Achievement (%)	68	88	71	61	83	60

Source: ISR



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