

Sir George Monoux College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1998-99**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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Contents

Paragraph

Summary

Context

The college and its mission 1

The inspection 5

Curriculum areas

Mathematics 8

Information technology and computing 13

Media and performing arts 21

Social sciences 27

Cross-college provision

Support for students 33

General resources 41

Quality assurance 47

Governance 53

Management 61

Conclusions 69

College statistics

Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1997-98, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	9	60	29	2	-
Cross-college provision	18	54	24	4	-

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*
Sample size: 108 college inspections

Student Achievements

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

- as expected completions, which is the number of initial enrolments on qualifications where the student expected to complete the qualification in a given 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 the students have completed as expected (or are continuing with the prospect of late completion). 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 shown.

Summary

Sir George Monoux College **Greater London Region**

Inspected January 1999

Sir George Monoux College is a sixth form college in the London borough of Waltham Forest. The college produced a comprehensive self-assessment report that proved to be both rigorous and realistic. All sections of the college, including the governing body, had been involved in its production and inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report. The majority of the weaknesses had been addressed by the time of the inspection but, in some cases, it was too early to assess the full impact of some of the intended improvement which had been undertaken. Inspectors agreed with three of the four curriculum grades awarded by the college, and three of the five cross-college grades.

The college offers some provision in seven of the FEFC's programme areas. Provision in three of these areas was inspected. The main provision of the college covers GCE A level, GNVQ and two GCSE courses for 16 to 19 year olds. The college has made significant progress since the last inspection in all areas of its activity. The college's management is outstanding.

Programmes of study are well organised and the quality of most teaching and learning is good. GCE A level grades are generally in line with expectations based on students' GCSE entry scores and many subjects have achievements

which compare favourably with national averages for sixth form colleges. The average GCE A level point score per entry and per candidate have risen steadily over the past four years. GNVQ results are similar to national averages. Impartial advice helps students make informed choices about which courses to follow. Induction programmes are effective. There is a well-organised tutorial system which provides good support for students. Major developments have taken place in quality assurance since the last inspection and there are now effective review processes for courses and services which are reinforced by rigorous internal inspections. Governors are involved in the systematically organised strategic planning process. The recent organisational restructuring has been successfully managed in a manner that staff have found very supportive. Good planning is supported by reliable management information and the rigorous monitoring of progress on action taken. The accommodation and specialist equipment have been substantially improved since the last inspection. The college should address: aspects of teaching and learning in some areas; some poor GCSE results; low retention on some courses; the induction and training needs of governors; the monitoring of the effectiveness of the new learning support arrangements; and the careers support available for students not progressing to higher education.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Mathematics	3	Support for students	2
Information technology and computing	3	General resources	2
Media and performing arts	2	Quality assurance	2
Social sciences	2	Governance	2
		Management	1

Context

The College and its Mission

1 Sir George Monoux College was established in 1986 as part of a reorganisation of secondary education in the London borough of Waltham Forest. It is located on a single 17.5 acre site in Walthamstow. The main building is set back from the road in landscaped grounds, surrounded by two playing fields. The college serves a wide catchment area and 55% of its students live in the neighbouring London boroughs of Newham, Haringey, Hackney, Enfield and Tower Hamlets. In the area covered by the London East Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), within which the college is situated, there are six general further education colleges and four sixth form colleges. Unemployment in Newham and Waltham Forest at 11.1% and 7.1%, respectively, is higher than the average of 6.1% for Greater London.

2 In December 1998, there were 1,066 students at the college, all of them 16 to 19 year olds on full-time courses. The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has identified the college as one of a group of colleges which typically recruits a high percentage of students from disadvantaged areas. Over 80% of the students come from minority ethnic backgrounds and this is higher than the percentage of people from minority ethnic groups living in the London East TEC area. Of the students recruited in 1998, 53% are female. The college curriculum provision includes 28 general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects, seven advanced, six intermediate and two foundation general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs), general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) courses in English and mathematics and a City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) sports management course. In addition, all students can study for externally accredited information technology (IT) qualifications and have access to a range of leisure and recreational facilities.

3 The principal took up post in September 1996. The college's management, curriculum management and support services were restructured within the first two terms of the 1996-97 academic year. The college employs 81 full-time equivalent staff of which 43% are support staff. Staffing costs as a percentage of total income have reduced sharply since 1995-96 and in 1997-98 were 65%.

4 The college's mission is to provide high-quality education primarily for 16 to 19 year olds in a supportive and friendly environment where students come first. The college values:

- consistently high achievement
- good relationship with students
- the development of personal and social skills.

The Inspection

5 The college was inspected during the week beginning 11 January 1999. Before the inspection, inspectors considered the college's self-assessment report and reviewed information from other directorates of the FEFC. This included data on students' achievements from 1994 to 1997 which were derived from the individualised student record (ISR). This was supplemented by data provided by the college on students' achievements in 1997-98. These latest data were checked against class registers and pass lists from examining bodies. The college was given about two months' notice of the sample of provision to be inspected. The inspection was carried out by a team of nine inspectors and an auditor working in the college for a total of 40 days. Inspectors observed 46 lessons, plus some tutorials, and examined students' work and documentation about the college and its courses. Members of the team met governors, managers, staff and students and had discussions with the local TEC, the local education authority (LEA) and a head teacher of a local school from which the college draws a large number of its students.

Context

6 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1997-98.

Approximately 61% of the lessons observed were rated as good or outstanding, and 4% were less than satisfactory. This is a markedly improved grade profile since the last inspection and one which is similar to the averages of 65% and 6%, respectively, for all colleges inspected in 1997-98.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	9	12	12	0	0	33
GNVQ	0	4	3	2	0	9
Other, including GCSE	1	2	1	0	0	4
Total (No.)	10	18	16	2	0	46
Total (%)	22	39	35	4	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98 (%)	19	46	29	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*

7 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1997-98.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Sir George Monoux College	15.2	83
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98	10.4	77

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*

Curriculum Areas

Mathematics

Grade 3

8 Eleven lessons were observed including a session in the college's learning support workshop. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report but considered that the report failed to give sufficient weight to weaknesses in students' achievements and some aspects of teaching and learning.

Key strengths

- improvement in GCE A level modular mathematics results
- high quality of dedicated suite of mathematics classrooms
- 'drop-in' support for GCE A level students

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning in some lessons
- failure of teachers to use a variety of appropriate teaching methods
- inadequate feedback provided by teachers on some marked work
- teachers' lack of knowledge about additional support received by GCSE students
- very poor attendance and achievement in GCSE mathematics

9 The college offers GCE A level modular mathematics and further mathematics courses. A range of modules is available which gives students a good choice of outcome. Students are able to fall back on a GCE advanced supplementary (AS) qualification if they seem unlikely to achieve the full GCE A level. GCSE mathematics is offered as a full one-year course or a short revision course. A pre-GCSE mathematics course has been introduced recently. It is based in the learning support

centre which is intended also to serve the needs of GCSE students who may need extra help. Unfortunately, some mathematics teachers do not know which students are taking up this support and do not actively seek the information in order to improve the effectiveness of their own teaching. Additional support workshops for GCE A level students are timetabled to take place within the department and are clearly effective.

10 All lessons observed reached at least a satisfactory standard and some were good. The better lessons were well planned and teachers made frequent checks of students' understanding. Overhead projectors and whiteboards were used imaginatively and one teacher used a projector linked to a computer which was running a mathematical graphing software package. The teacher was then able to project accurate graphs on to a whiteboard and write notes on the image. There were some examples of poor lesson planning resulting in the aims and objectives for the lesson not being met. There was often a lack of variety in the teaching methods used and, despite the previous example, little use of IT in the classroom. Both of these points were noted in the college's self-assessment. Often teachers failed to ensure that students were effectively involved in class discussions and in one practical session where dice were being used to explore the concept of random statistics, the group was too large for all students to gain from what should have been a valuable learning experience. There is some sharing of good practice amongst mathematics teachers but this is limited to exchanges of written materials. There is not enough sharing of good practice on teaching methods. In marking students' work some teachers made detailed suggestions of how the work might be improved but others gave insufficient feedback on work. This did not accord with the college's overall marking policy.

11 The GCE A level modular mathematics results were low in 1996 but have improved

Curriculum Areas

steadily over three years to reach the national average for sixth form colleges in 1998. Retention has been poor but the college hopes that the overall improvement in attendance in the current year will lead to an improvement in retention. GCSE results are very poor, a fact recognised in the self-assessment report. In 1998, only 24% of students who completed the course attained grades C or above. Attendance rates in GCSE classes are very low. The GCSE course is intended as a revision programme for students who have already achieved at least grade E. In 1998, only 43% of GCSE students improved on their previous grade. This situation has persisted since the last inspection.

12 Staff and students of the mathematics department are fortunate to be the sole users of a suite of adjacent classrooms where the majority of the mathematics lessons take place. These rooms are decorated with a wealth of interesting mathematical posters and projects, creating a stimulating environment for the students. The value of having a departmental base is recognised as a strength in the self-assessment report. Students have access to various software packages in the learning support centre. A number of mathematical packages are available but few teachers use them in classroom teaching. Numeracy support software is used in the learning support centre. Mathematics teachers are well qualified.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in mathematics, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE mathematics	2	Expected completions	188	206	150
		Retention (%)	82	73	70
		Achievement (%)	35	25	24
GCE A level modular mathematics	3	Expected completions	61	85	88
		Retention (%)	97	61	66
		Achievement (%)	61	71	88
GCE A level further mathematics	3	Expected completions	+	7	14
		Retention (%)	+	100	64
		Achievement (%)	+	86	89

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

+course not offered

Curriculum Areas

Information Technology and Computing

Grade 3

13 Twelve lessons were observed including one in the college's IT centre. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report and found that the department was rigorous in its assessment of the quality of provision.

Key strengths

- high achievement in GCE A level IT
- thorough planning and monitoring of assessments
- good access to computing resources
- effective management with clear lines of communication

Weaknesses

- some poor teaching
- poor GNVQ advanced and intermediate retention rates
- low achievement on GCE A level computing course

14 There is an appropriate range of computing and IT courses for a 16 to 19 full-time student population. GCE A level computing and GNVQ advanced and intermediate programmes have been offered for a number of years. GCE A level IT was offered for the first time in 1996 and has proved to be a successful alternative for students who are more interested in computing applications than in programming. The computer literacy and information technology certificate is offered to all advanced level students in the college.

15 Of the lessons observed four were good or better, six were satisfactory, and two were unsatisfactory. The best lessons were well planned and aims and objectives were met.

Teachers presented the work clearly and ensured that the timing and demands of the work took account of the needs of students. Activities were varied to stimulate and maintain interest. Teachers made sure that all students were fully involved and gave appropriate support to individuals, as necessary. In a number of lessons observed teachers drew directly from their own practical experiences. For example, in an IT lesson, the teacher used an organisation chart and the details of the jobs of key individuals of a company well known to the college, in order to help the students use IT to examine the structure and relationships within the organisation.

16 The self-assessment report recognised that there are weaknesses in some of the teaching. In the less successful lessons observed, there was a lack of structure, and teachers failed to provide a level of work which was sufficiently demanding, so that effective use was not made of students' time. Students were not always given clear instructions on the tasks to be undertaken. In one class observed, the students were given the task of completing a series of questions in a handout. The majority of students did not understand the terminology used in the headings and as a result the teacher went round one by one explaining the task to each student. Some students had to wait a long time until it was their turn for help. In another lesson, students were asked to produce a questionnaire without any help on the design, the layout or types of questions that might be used.

17 There is an assessment plan for all courses, and homework and coursework is set regularly. Assessment is thorough; teachers provide constructive comments on how students may improve their work. Teachers highlight spelling and grammatical errors in students' written work and students are required to correct their errors. Students' notes are comprehensive and useful for revision purposes. Overall, students' written work is of an appropriate standard.

Curriculum Areas

18 GCE A level computing results were at or above the national average in 1996 and 1997, but declined in 1998. GCE A level IT results for 1998, the first cohort to complete, were extremely good. Pass rates in GNVQ advanced and intermediate IT, whilst not high, are close to the national average. The self-assessment report acknowledged that there are low retention rates on some programmes, particularly on the GNVQ advanced and intermediate programmes.

19 The department is effectively managed; there are clear lines of communication and clearly designated responsibilities. Schemes of work are available for all courses, although these do not always provide sufficient details of teaching methods or course content.

Procedures are in place to monitor students' attendance and punctuality and retention rates are improving. Effective procedures exist to identify students' additional literacy and numeracy support needs. This strength was recognised in the self-assessment report.

20 The considerable recent investment in computing equipment has ensured that students have easy access to IT within the department, in the learning centre and in the college's IT centre. The technology includes a good range of up-to-date software, printers, a scanner and the internet connection. The library is well stocked with appropriate books, magazines, CD-ROMs and videos. The current six-month appointment of an IT consultant has led to a number of initiatives in the teaching of computing and IT.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in information technology and computing, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	Expected completions	18	33	35
		Retention (%)	83	76	66
		Achievement (%)	40	88	61
GNVQ advanced IT	3	Expected completions	11	16	21
		Retention (%)	73	50	33
		Achievement (%)	25	50	57
GCE A level computing	3	Expected completions	53	61	54
		Retention (%)	74	54	69
		Achievement (%)	82	79	57
GCE A level IT	3	Expected completions	+	+	42
		Retention (%)	+	+	64
		Achievement (%)	+	+	93

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)
+course not offered

Curriculum Areas

Media and Performing Arts

Grade 2

21 Thirteen lessons were observed, including an orchestral rehearsal. Inspectors agreed with most of the college's judgements in the self-assessment report. Some weaknesses identified in the report had been addressed by the time of the inspection.

Key strengths

- carefully planned courses and well-organised teaching
- high achievement on most courses
- effective course team organisation and management
- good instrumental tuition provision
- good variety of extra-curricular activities in music and performing arts
- the wide range of specialist resources

Weaknesses

- some poor retention rates
- insufficient links to the media industry

22 There is an appropriate range of media and performing arts courses, including GNVQ intermediate and advanced media studies programmes, GCE A level courses in media, music and performing arts, and a GCE AS course in dance. There is good provision for instrumental tuition, and there are opportunities for all students to take part in extra-curricular activities, such as singing in a choir and playing in a chamber orchestra.

23 The majority of the lessons observed were good or outstanding. All the lessons were well planned and learning objectives were communicated clearly to students. Assignment briefs were clear and were supported by carefully constructed handouts. Students settled quickly to their tasks. Teachers took great care to explain technical terms and, consequently,

students could handle the vocabulary of their disciplines with confidence. Teachers made good use of questions and answers to test students' understanding of concepts. As stated in the self-assessment report, good relations exist between staff and students, and there is a shared understanding of high expectations. For example, students on GCE A level courses are highly motivated to undertake independent research and are keen to share their work with their teachers. Their research is often stimulated by imaginative assignments which for one performing arts group was based on an involvement with a professional dance company. In some lessons observed, teachers failed to vary their teaching methods when it would have been appropriate to do so. For example, on a number of occasions they did not organise the students to work in small groups when it would have been a more productive way of working.

24 Most students' written work is of a good standard and well presented. Practical work in the performing arts is of a very high standard with students displaying high-quality singing, movement, and performance skills. GCE A level media pass rates have been above the national average, as noted in the self-assessment report, but retention is low. GCE A level performing arts pass rates are consistently high; 100% in 1997 and 1998. GNVQ advanced media pass rates are above the national average, but retention rates for this course, not commented on in the self-assessment report, are low. The GNVQ intermediate media results have improved in each of the last three years and, whilst not high, had risen to the national average in 1998.

25 Departmental staff are well qualified and have experience of working in related professions. The organisation and management of courses is effective. Students' progress is carefully monitored and regular feedback is given to students on their progress. There is good liaison between teachers of individual subjects, and excellent use is made of the

Curriculum Areas

support technician in media lessons. There are not enough links with the media industry which could be used to enrich the teaching and learning, a point recognised in the self-assessment report.

26 The self-assessment report acknowledged recent improvements in accommodation and resources, particularly improvements to the theatre, which now provides a performance area which can be used more flexibly, and new

computer systems with digital editing and desktop publishing software. The relocated music accommodation has improved the opportunities for links to be made between music and other performing arts. The main teaching space for music is too small for ensemble work. Orchestral performances have to take place in the theatre which provides a larger space.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in media and performing arts, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ intermediate media	2	Expected completions	19	35	21
		Retention (%)	89	80	67
		Achievement (%)	35	46	64
GNVQ advanced media	3	Expected completions	+	12	21
		Retention (%)	+	67	62
		Achievement (%)	+	88	77
GCE A level media studies	3	Expected completions	48	50	68
		Retention (%)	69	70	76
		Achievement (%)	97	97	98
GCE A level performing arts	3	Expected completions	20	18	30
		Retention (%)	55	61	80
		Achievement (%)	91	100	100
GCE AS dance	3	Expected completions	12	11	19
		Retention (%)	83	45	84
		Achievement (%)	60	100	63

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)
+course not offered

Curriculum Areas

Social Sciences

Grade 2

27 The 10 lessons observed covered GCE A level courses in government and politics, law, sociology and philosophy. Inspectors agreed with several of the strengths and weaknesses contained in the college's self-assessment report. By the time of the inspection, significant progress had been made in addressing weaknesses identified in the report.

Key strengths

- confident, well-planned and often lively teaching
- good responses from students in oral and written work
- good GCE A level results in law, and government and politics
- thorough marking of students' work
- a good range of relevant, up-to-date library materials

Weaknesses

- poor punctuality
- poor retention in sociology and law
- little use of IT in teaching and students' work

28 Inspectors agreed with the view in the self-assessment report that teachers are experienced and teach confidently. Most lessons observed were good or better. Lessons are well planned to give a variety of appropriate learning activities in which students can contribute to discussion and think for themselves. In one sociology lesson observed, students were confronted with conflicting definitions of poverty and a lively debate ensued as students sought to determine their own criteria for poverty. In most cases, teachers and students work well together and a brisk and purposeful approach to learning is maintained. There are occasions,

however, when progress is affected by students who have not prepared effectively or who do not listen carefully to each other in discussions.

29 The self-assessment report did not indicate the quality of students' written and oral work. Many of their essays demonstrate a well-developed understanding of the subject matter and an ability to propose ideas persuasively. In a politics class observed, students had been asked to prepare presentations in groups on different aspects of the organisation of a political party. Two of the groups gave particularly full and thoughtful presentations, illustrated by well-produced display material. In most lessons, teachers provide good-quality handouts to guide students' work and provide them with necessary ideas and information. Teachers are responsive to the needs of students and devote time in and out of timetabled lessons to help individual students. Most students' work is marked thoroughly and teachers provide detailed written guidance on how students can improve their performance.

30 The college's self-assessment report identified the good pass rates over the past three years in GCE A level law and government and politics. Results in philosophy and sociology have not been as good but in 1998 improved markedly to reach the national average for sixth form colleges. Retention in sociology and law is poor, and in both subjects has been consistently below the average for other GCE A level subjects in the college. The self-assessment report indicated a problem of late arrivals at classes. Although there has been a concerted attempt in the college to address this problem, there was still poor punctuality amongst students during the inspection, especially in lessons at the beginning of the day and after lunch. Students who arrived late to lessons severely disrupted the learning of those already present.

31 The courses inspected were organised efficiently. There are schemes of work which set out clear and comprehensive schedules for

Curriculum Areas

teaching each subject. The development of these schemes of work is a direct response by the department to address a weakness identified in the department's own self-assessment. Staff work well together and co-operate effectively when sharing the teaching of different groups. There is an effective system of regular review of students' work against personal targets. The department evaluation for the last year used targets and performance indicators consistently and purposefully. The department makes good use of value-added information to analyse students' performance. Students' work and schemes of work revealed little evidence that

students are being encouraged to use and develop IT skills.

32 The students benefit from being taught in specialist rooms which have stimulating visual displays of relevant materials. A shared staff office provides scope for meetings and interviews with students. The library bookstock is adequate overall and contains good contemporary material. Liaison between teachers and library staff has developed over the last year; library staff attend some departmental meetings. The self-assessment report for this area did not comment on resources.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in social sciences, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCE A level government and politics	3	Expected completions	19	26	25
		Retention (%)	74	50	80
		Achievement (%)	100	92	85
GCE A level law	3	Expected completions	56	59	66
		Retention (%)	63	69	68
		Achievement (%)	57	93	93
GCE A level philosophy	3	Expected completions	12	18	16
		Retention (%)	58	61	94
		Achievement (%)	57	55	87
GCE A level sociology	3	Expected completions	56	73	86
		Retention (%)	63	66	58
		Achievement (%)	57	75	84

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

33 Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Action had been taken to address most of the weaknesses by the time of the inspection but it was too early to assess the full effectiveness of some of these new measures.

Key strengths

- impartial pre-enrolment guidance
- efficient, effective admission and induction procedures
- good tutorial system
- excellent guidance for students applying for higher education
- comprehensive advice for students on personal issues

Weaknesses

- low take-up of learning support
- little careers education for students wishing to enter employment

34 The college provides a comprehensive range of facilities to support students during their course of study. The management of these services is effective. Staff and students understand the scope of the services. The college has recently improved arrangements for monitoring the quality of support services through internal inspection.

35 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that students make informed course decisions based on impartial guidance and support. The college's prospectus is attractive, clear and relevant. It is supported by detailed course leaflets which are readily available through the guidance unit. College staff attend a wide range of careers events at schools in north-east London and the college organises three

open evenings for prospective students. Course application forms, which have been revised recently following consultations with students, are now clear and precise. Most students are interviewed within a month of submitting an application form by staff appropriate to their chosen course of study. Conditional offers of a place are usually made on the day of interview. The college provides comprehensive guidance for interview staff which is updated annually to reflect changes in administrative procedures and policies.

36 New students benefit from a well-structured induction programme during their first week at the college. The induction programme includes a one-day general introduction to the college, an address by the principal and a student fair. This programme is complemented by an introduction to a student's chosen course of study. The effectiveness of the induction programme is systematically monitored through questionnaires to students and by obtaining the views of staff.

37 As identified in the self-assessment report the college operates an effective tutorial system. All students have weekly timetabled tutorials in groups of up to 25. Teachers normally act as tutors for students whom they teach for one of their main subjects. Tutorials are timetabled to follow lessons taught by the tutor and this practice effectively ensures high attendance and allows flexibility in the way that the tutorial support can be provided. There is a well-established college tutorial policy, a set programme of core activities which is followed by all groups and a formalised system for monitoring students' progress.

38 The college's self-assessment report recognised that additional learning support arrangements have been inadequate to meet the needs of all students. In order to improve the quality of this provision, a learning support co-ordinator was appointed in August 1998 and the amount of staff time available to provide additional learning support has been increased.

Cross-college Provision

All first-year students are now screened during the induction programme to determine their numeracy and literacy support needs. The diagnostic tests are related to the demands of particular courses. Additional learning support is provided through formal and informal workshops and partly through partnership teaching arrangements whereby support teachers join timetabled lessons. Inspectors agreed with the college that the level of additional learning support is improving but concluded that attendance at support workshops is low.

39 Excellent support is offered by the college to students wishing to progress to higher education, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Students are provided with appropriate guidance throughout their course and are supported at every stage of their higher education application procedure. Comprehensive advice on admission to higher education is also provided by a private careers organisation with which the college has had a service agreement since January 1998. Inspectors agreed with the college that less emphasis is placed upon the careers support offered to students who wish to obtain employment. There is an insufficient range of formal and informal careers events, a lack of structured guidance on job seeking, and inadequate training in interview techniques.

40 As recognised in the self-assessment report, the college provides comprehensive support for students on personal issues. An experienced counsellor is available for consultation by students on two days a week. The guidance unit offers advice on a wide range of issues or refers students to outside agencies with which it has constructive relationships. The student handbook is an attractive and well-prepared document which lists internal and external support agencies. The student council is a representative student body which provides students with a range of social and recreational activities. Council officers have regular

meetings with the principal which often result in positive action to improve facilities for students.

General Resources

Grade 2

41 The college's self-assessment report identified the main strengths and weaknesses in the college's resources. Inspectors agreed with the college's overall judgement that there have been significant improvements in resources and accommodation since the last inspection.

Key strengths

- accommodation strategy clearly linked to the strategic plan
- many improvements in accommodation and equipment since the last inspection
- attractive and well-maintained site
- good access to IT facilities
- good range of sporting facilities

Weaknesses

- new computer facilities not yet fully integrated across the college
- some accommodation in need of updating

42 Sir George Monoux College is situated on a large, attractive site in the London borough of Waltham Forest. The original school and almshouse foundation was established in 1527 by George Monoux, a local master draper. The main building was completed in 1927 as Sir George Monoux Grammar School by Essex County Council, and is now a listed building. The main campus comprises the original buildings which were extended in the 1960s and 1980s, and several other buildings containing specialist art, science, performing arts and sports accommodation, and the student centre which houses the canteen. Inspectors agreed

Curriculum Areas

with the college's view that improvements made since the last inspection are a strength. The improvements include: better computer facilities; new seating in the theatre; specialist accommodation for leisure and tourism courses; the refurbishment of students' toilets; the creation of a conference suite in unused roof space above the canteen; and the provision of a prayer room for students. The reception area has been refurbished and provides a welcoming environment. The ambience of the college is enhanced by extensive displays of high-quality artwork produced by college students. Carefully organised security arrangements contribute to the safe and comfortable environment in the college.

43 The college's accommodation strategy is linked closely to the strategic plan and is updated annually. This strength was not identified by the college in its self-assessment report. The college's internal inspections are used to provide structured information on accommodation improvements that are required. College managers consult staff and students about proposed developments, and take account of their views when setting priorities. Information on room utilisation is considered when accommodation changes are planned. College managers have recognised that the college has more accommodation than is needed for current student numbers. This has allowed some classrooms to be converted for specialist purposes. The college employs a small team which is responsible for day-to-day maintenance and small building projects. The maintenance programme is well planned and takes account of the college's operational objectives. The quality of all maintenance and building work is evaluated after completion to ensure that the college gets value for money from contractors. The buildings are generally well maintained, but a few areas are in need of redecoration. Some older parts of the buildings need structural improvements.

44 Staff workrooms and offices are comfortable and most have a computer. There

is a separate common room for staff. Most classrooms are well decorated and are equipped with overhead projectors and whiteboards.

45 The development of IT is prominent in the strategic objectives of the college. There are good facilities to support learning, including an IT centre and the adjacent learning centre, each of which has 50 computer stations with modern software. The IT centre is used mainly for whole group teaching, and the learning centre as a 'drop-in' centre for students and staff. There are 60 private study spaces in the learning centre. There are strong links between the centres and curriculum areas to ensure that IT is integrated with courses. There are three IT classrooms, each containing 25 computers. Although most students can gain access to a computer when they need one, many of the computers have recently been replaced or upgraded, and there have been some problems with software incompatibility, and printing. Although the college recognised this weakness in its self-assessment report and has taken steps to remedy the problems, inspectors found that students were still encountering difficulties at the time of the inspection. The library has an adequate number of books in most curriculum areas, a good selection of specialist periodicals and CD-ROMs, and a wide range of video and sound recordings. The librarian consults teachers to ensure that the library stock is kept updated and relevant to course requirements. The library has sufficient private study spaces.

46 Inspectors agreed with the college that the provision of good sporting facilities is a significant strength. The facilities include extensive playing fields, a fitness room, basketball courts, and a sports hall. All are well used. Sporting activities take place each lunchtime in the college. The college acknowledged in its self-assessment report that there is insufficient space for students to socialise. The canteen has recently been refurbished, and provides a useful social area for students. In consultation with staff and students, the college has produced plans to

Curriculum Areas

landscape a large quadrangle in the college to provide a meeting area, an area for small-scale outdoor musical performances, and a covered seating area outside the canteen. There is good access to most of the college for students who use wheelchairs.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

47 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements about quality assurance in the self-assessment report but considered that some of the more recent improvements had not yet had sufficient time for their full effect to be realised.

Key strengths

- strong commitment to quality assurance
- thorough quality assurance procedures
- rigorous internal inspection process
- effective and realistic self-assessment process
- staff training closely linked to the strategic plan
- clear links between appraisal and staff development

Weaknesses

- some aspects of teaching and learning
- little use of quantitative targets to monitor the performance of college services

48 The college has thorough and well-documented quality assurance procedures, based on a quality framework which is linked to the strategic plan. There is a strong commitment to quality assurance among managers and staff. The college's quality assurance group has responsibility for developing and monitoring the quality assurance procedures. Chaired by the deputy principal, this group's membership is drawn from staff

across the college and includes a student representative. Internal inspections of all curriculum areas have been conducted involving graded lesson observations, extensive examination of documentation and performance data, and meetings with students and staff. Each inspection team is led by a senior manager and includes college staff and an external member. The inspection teams' reports have been analysed by the quality assurance group and considered by the board of governors. Action plans have been produced and, in many areas, considerable progress had been made by the time of the inspection. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that the inspections were carried out in a rigorous manner.

49 The college has recently produced its second annual self-assessment report. It is comprehensive and contains judgements which are based on robust evidence. The report was validated by an external panel including the principal of another college. The report is laid out in accordance with the headings in Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*. The grades awarded by inspectors during the inspection closely matched those in the self-assessment report. Internal arrangements for verifying courses are standardised across the college and are effective. A mock external verification programme validates the internal verification process to ensure consistency, before the visit of the external verifier.

50 All courses are reviewed annually and reported on in a departmental evaluation report. The reports adhere to a standard format and address key performance indicators, including students' actual performance compared with predicted GCE A level grades. Students' views are included in the final evaluation reports. Strengths and weaknesses of courses are identified and an action plan to improve the quality of the courses is produced. These evaluation reports are analytical and are reviewed after six months. In all but a few cases, targets for student retention and pass rates are set and college performance at subject

Cross-college Provision

level is compared with national averages. In its self-assessment report, the college acknowledged the slow development of quality assurance in college services. This has been partly addressed by recent internal inspections of induction and of library and IT services. Qualitative service standards are being introduced for cross-college support functions but some of these are not measurable and have not been used to monitor effectiveness.

51 Systematic lesson observations have been undertaken for all full-time and part-time teachers as part of the internal inspection process. Lessons were observed by senior managers and graded using a standard form. Teachers were given feedback on their performance and grade. Since September 1998, an additional system of peer observations has also been introduced, based on lesson observation by teachers from the same curriculum area. All teachers have had training in the necessary observation techniques. The judgements arising from peer observations are moderated by senior managers to ensure that the same criteria have been applied consistently across the college. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that the system is robust. Inspectors found a close correlation between the grades arising out of the inspection and those arising out of the college's internal inspections. There are aspects of poorer teaching and learning in some areas of the college which still need to be addressed. Whilst the grade profile of lessons observed during the inspection is similar to that for all colleges nationally, it is below that for sixth form colleges where the curriculum and level of work is similar to that in Sir George Monoux College. Other aspects of poor performance are still evident in a few areas including business studies, IT and mathematics where there are examples of poor or declining pass rates and/or retention rates on some courses.

52 Arrangements for staff development are good. There is a programme of staff

development based on an annual plan which addresses the training needs identified in the strategic plan, in staff appraisal interviews, and through the self-assessment and quality assurance processes. Individual staff development activities are formally evaluated and the overall value of staff development undertaken is reviewed annually. The staff development budget represents 1.75% of the college's budget. All staff are appraised annually by their line manager. The college has recently achieved the Investor in People award.

Governance

Grade 2

53 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college in its self-assessment report. At the time of inspection, a number of the weaknesses had been addressed.

Key strengths

- governors' high level of commitment to the success of the college
- effective monitoring of the college's performance
- involvement in strategic planning
- rigorous self-assessment
- formal recognition of the achievements of individual members of college staff
- effective clerking arrangements

Weaknesses

- inappropriate induction programme for governors
- underdeveloped processes for identifying training needs

54 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is adequate. The corporation substantially conducts its business

Cross-college Provision

in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC.

55 A high level of commitment from members of the corporation has helped to steer the college through a period of significant change over the last three years. Governors play an active and effective part in the development of the strategic plan, as acknowledged in the self-assessment report. At a two-day annual conference, governors meet with senior college managers and contribute to the development of the plan. During this event, governors carry out a rigorous self-assessment of the corporation's performance against well-defined criteria. Governors monitor the college's progress against operational targets at each corporation meeting. Individual governors are responsible for monitoring each of the college's five strategic objectives. Members of the corporation met recently with representatives of local community agencies and businesses to seek their views of the college and its role in local education provision.

56 The corporation has 12 members, of whom five are independent and one is a TEC nominee. The principal is a member and there are two co-opted members, two members elected from the staff of the college and one student member. The search committee has clear terms of reference. Job descriptions for members are prepared, and potential governors are interviewed against a specification which identifies the skills and experience required. Recent appointments reflect the corporation's desire to broaden its links with the local community. Governors have not undertaken a skills audit to compare the range of skills and experience needed by the corporation with those currently possessed by governors.

57 Training for most independent governors is largely restricted to presentations and briefings by college managers and activities included in the annual conference. The corporation has

recently embarked on a self-assessment and training needs analysis, although the training needs of individual members have yet to be identified. An induction training programme for new members has been developed but has proved impossible to implement due to the unrealistic demands it places on members' time.

58 Attendance at corporation meetings is good. Attendance levels are monitored and published in the staff bulletin. There are the following subcommittees: personnel, finance and general purposes; audit; the remuneration of senior staff; and the recruitment of governors. At a meeting of the corporation observed by inspectors, business was conducted professionally and members made effective contributions. College staff are able to attend corporation meetings as observers, and value the recognition given by governors to individual staff for their efforts and contribution in achieving the college's targets. There is a rigorous procedure for governors to assess the performance of senior postholders through an appraisal working group. The principal is appraised by the corporation chair plus the chair and another member of the personnel, finance and general purposes committee. The deputy principal and director of corporate services are appraised by the same group augmented by the principal.

59 As recognised in the self-assessment report, the corporation has a code of conduct and standing orders which are reviewed annually. The code of conduct does not take sufficient account of the recommendations of the Nolan report. A register of governors' interests is maintained and is updated regularly. The corporation has recently published a code of conduct on access to college information and a 'whistleblowing' charter. Minutes of meetings are made available in the college library, the post room and the reception area.

60 Clerking arrangements are effective. Agendas and most papers for meetings are sent out well in advance. Minutes are concise and

Cross-college Provision

state clearly the decisions taken. The minutes also record the time spent in discussing individual agenda items. This information has been used to inform the governors' self-assessment process. A calendar of meetings for the year has been prepared. The meetings have been appropriately scheduled, providing a structured and timely approach to considering and approving corporation business.

Management

Grade 1

61 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Minor weaknesses recorded in the self-assessment report were being addressed at the time of the inspection.

Key strengths

- effective management of change
- extensive involvement of staff in strategic and operational planning
- rigorous monitoring of progress in meeting objectives and targets
- good internal communications
- well-developed, reliable management information
- good financial management
- effective links with external bodies

Weaknesses

- there are no significant weaknesses

62 Since the previous inspection, the college has been restructured significantly. After a careful review of the curriculum, staffing costs have been reduced substantially. Staff speak highly of the procedures used by senior managers to bring about change and acknowledge the resulting benefits to the college's students and staff. All internally and externally derived college performance

indicators, including those for the quality of teaching, students' achievements, retention rates, and the quality of accommodation and specialist equipment, show an upward improvement. The college's senior management team comprises the principal, deputy principal, director of corporate services, the four heads of faculties and the manager of marketing and staff development. Nine heads of teaching departments report to the two heads of faculty responsible for the curriculum. Reporting lines, roles and responsibilities are understood by staff. As recognised in the self-assessment report, the recent appointments of a learning support co-ordinator and two 'student achievement co-ordinators' are indicative of the actions being taken to achieve the strategic objective of improving students' retention and achievements.

63 College staff and managers demonstrate an understanding of, and a commitment to, the college's mission and objectives. The college's three-year strategic plan is a clear, concise document which is soundly based on effective market research. As acknowledged in the self-assessment report, market research data from a range of different sources have been used to inform the objectives within the strategic plan. The college consults widely during the planning process, with college staff, local schools, the LEA, the TEC and higher and further education providers. As part of the strategic planning process, the college organises a well-received and productive annual conference for senior managers and corporation members. Realistic operational targets for the current year are specified within the strategic plan. The monitoring and reporting of progress against the targets is rigorous. Those responsible for monitoring the achievement of each target are identified, and a monitoring timetable has been set. A calendar for reporting progress to the corporation is published. Development plans produced by each department and the action plans arising from the college's self-assessment report are clearly linked to the annual

Cross-college Provision

operational targets. A thorough review of the achievement of operational targets is carried out annually by senior managers. Planning cycles are closely aligned with the college's quality assurance cycle.

64 Senior managers have recognised the support needs of middle managers in their relatively new role, and have recently introduced a mentoring programme designed to assist them. Communication within the college is effective. There is a published annual schedule of meetings and informative weekly news bulletins are circulated to all staff. Frequent progress reports and briefing papers on all aspects that may affect the college are sent to staff. Members of the senior management team, including the principal, make themselves readily available to staff. Most of the senior management team members participate in the observation of lessons which enables them to maintain an understanding of the work in each subject area. Meetings to review the progress of action plans are held regularly at all levels. Minutes and notes of meetings are well maintained and are easily available to staff. The academic board has been reconstituted and is generally valued by staff at all levels as a forum for shaping college policies and discussing the implementation of operational plans.

65 Staff are deployed effectively. Senior managers carefully plan the staffing required to support the curriculum and monitor the use of both human and physical resources to ensure that it is efficient. The college has been instrumental in developing a benchmarking process in collaboration with five other sixth form colleges across the country. The purpose of the exercise is to share good practice across a range of activities including staffing, quality assurance and premises management. As stated in the self-assessment report, there is appropriate, effective liaison with the TEC, the careers service, schools and other organisations. The principal is chair of the local action group

for national training and education targets and is a member of the East London Strategic Forum. All external organisations consulted by inspectors spoke highly of the college and its active role in the community.

66 The college has recently revised its equal opportunities policy. A senior manager is responsible for its implementation and there are a number of processes to monitor the effectiveness of the policy. However, the college recognises that the coherence of these arrangements needs to be improved.

67 Managers are supplied with timely and accurate information to support their work. Regular management information reports are available on set dates and additional information is readily available on request. An electronic class register system has assisted the college in measuring the effectiveness of its attendance policy and in monitoring whether retention and attendance targets are being met. This strength was acknowledged in the college's self-assessment report.

68 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The role of head of finance is performed by the head of corporate services, who is suitably qualified and experienced. The finance department is adequately resourced. The budget-setting process is well documented. Budget holders play an active part in the allocation of the budget. Each month the senior management team formally considers comprehensive management accounts for the college. Appropriate financial targets are set. As recognised in the self-assessment report, the financial health of the college is good. No significant internal control weaknesses have been identified by the internal or external auditors.

Cross-college Provision

Conclusions

69 The college produced a comprehensive self-assessment report through its quality assurance system. The report provided a sound basis for the planning and implementation of the inspection. The inspectors broadly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses of the provision identified in the report. However, there were some differences in emphasis between the judgements in the self-assessment report and those of the inspectors. Inspectors agreed with the curriculum grades in three of the four curriculum areas inspected and three of the five cross-college aspects. In the case of the one curriculum area, inspectors considered some poor students' achievements to be more significant than the college had. In one cross-college aspect, inspectors thought that the college had underestimated its strengths whilst, in a second, there had been insufficient time for the impact of some recent changes to be demonstrated.

70 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 1998)

Age	%
Under 16	0
16-18 years	93
19-24 years	7
25+ years	0
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (December 1998)

Level of study	%
Foundation	2
Intermediate	16
Advanced	82
Higher education	0
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (December 1998)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	345	0	32
Business	157	0	15
Hotel and catering	42	0	4
Health and community care	9	0	1
Art and design	188	0	18
Humanities	320	0	30
Basic education	5	0	0
Total	1,066	0	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 82% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (December 1998)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	40	6	0	46
Supporting direct learning contact	9	1	0	10
Other support	25	0	0	25
Total	74	7	0	81

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1996	1997	1998
Income	£3,356,000	£3,373,000	£3,125,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998	£20.81	£18.65	£19.69
Payroll as a proportion of income	75%	77%	65%
Achievement of funding target	104%	118%	109%
Diversity of income	5%	3%	3%
Operating surplus	£11,000	£13,000	£160,000

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

ALF – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1998)

Payroll – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1995	1996	1997	1995	1996	1997
1	Expected completions	139	30	22	3	8	5
	Retention (%)	87	93	82	100	88	80*
	Achievement (%)	38	82	67	0	100	0
2	Expected completions	1,190	956	1,166	12	17	26
	Retention (%)	90	80	74	100	71	73
	Achievement (%)	+	+	+	+	+	+
3	Expected completions	-	1,344	1,338	-	27	33
	Retention (%)	-	86	78	-	81	48
	Achievement (%)	62	69	76	62	61	58
4 or 5	Expected completions	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Retention (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Achievement (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Short courses	Expected completions	6	34	18	0	38	1
	Retention (%)	100	100	94	n/a	100	100
	Achievement (%)	50	53	100	n/a	39	n/a
Unknown/unclassified	Expected completions	100	87	83	3	7	6
	Retention (%)	91	77	81	100	43	67
	Achievement (%)	108	82	56	100	67	50

Source: ISR

-ISR data not collected

*ISR data may not be reliable

n/a not applicable

+data, through no fault of the college, do not provide a consistent comparison

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