

# South Tyneside College

REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE  
1999-00

THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL

*THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
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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

## South Tyneside College

### *Northern Region*

Inspected October 1999

South Tyneside College is a large tertiary college in the north east of England. It offers a broad range of provision for school-leavers and mature students in nine of the 10 FEFC programme areas. A particular feature of the college is its provision related to the marine industries, which is the largest in the United Kingdom. The self-assessment report used for the inspection was the third produced by the college.

Governors and staff at all levels were involved in developing the report. Self-assessment is now an integral part of the college's quality assurance system, which has been extended and revised since the previous inspection. The report was thorough. It contained action plans to address identified weaknesses and many of the actions were being carried out or had been completed by the time of the inspection. Inspectors concurred with the great majority of the judgements in the report. Their profile of lesson observation grades matched that resulting from the college's own programme of observations. The grades awarded as a result of the inspection are in close agreement with those suggested in the self-assessment report.

Provision in six of the FEFC programme areas was inspected together with aspects of cross-college provision. The nautical science

provision is outstanding. Teaching in this area is particularly good. The college benefits from strong leadership and a mature, well-understood management structure. The principal and his colleagues are trusted by staff, by the business community, and by other providers of education and training in the region. Governors work hard on behalf of the college, both locally and in the international maritime community.

Governance and all aspects of management are good. Arrangements for assessing and supporting students with limited skills in literacy and numeracy are effective. Pass rates on most courses are at or above national averages but retention rates on some courses are poor. A whole-college strategy for improving retention is being implemented in 1999-2000. Excellent specialist facilities support the nautical, marine engineering, and fabrication and welding courses. The college has well-resourced general learning centres and has recently opened specialist centres which are already having a positive effect on students' learning. Grounds and buildings are well maintained and there are extensive sports facilities. The college should continue to work to improve: retention rates; consistency in guidance and tutorial arrangements; some of its accommodation; the quality assurance framework; arrangements for reporting to the board; and the computerised management information systems.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Science	2	Support for students	3
Nautical science	1	General resources	2
Marine engineering, fabrication and welding	2	Quality assurance	2
Business and management	2	Governance	2
Hospitality and catering	2	Management	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2		
English and modern foreign languages	2		

## The College and its Mission

1 South Tyneside College is one of the largest colleges in the further education sector in the north east of England. It offers a broad range of courses across nine of the 10 Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas. The college's main site, residential accommodation and administrative offices are at Westoe, about 1 mile south of South Shields town centre. The other major site is at Hebburn, about 6 miles from South Shields. Specialist marine courses are provided at purpose-built centres on the river Tyne and at the mouth of the Tyne estuary. Outreach facilities in South Shields and Jarrow act as information centres and operate some courses. The college was founded in 1837 as the Marine School of South Shields. This developed into the Marine and Technical College which merged with Hebburn Technical College in 1984. The newly formed institution became a tertiary college when the local authority reorganised its post-16 provision in 1989. As well as serving the further education needs of its local area and the region, the college is the largest centre for marine education in the United Kingdom. It attracts students from all parts of Britain and from about 40 countries around the world.

2 The Metropolitan Borough of South Tyneside is bounded to the north by the river Tyne and to the east by the North Sea. It extends to Gateshead in the west and Sunderland in the south and includes South Shields, Hebburn and Jarrow. The total population is around 160,000. In the last two decades, the economy of South Tyneside has seen fundamental and widespread change. The traditional industries of shipbuilding and repair, steel-making, manufacturing, transport and coal mining have declined. The unemployment rate, at 11.6%, is one of the highest in Britain. More than three-quarters of the jobs in South Tyneside are now in the service sector. The largest employers are the Metropolitan Borough Council and the area health authority.

3 In the borough, secondary education is provided by ten 11 to 16 comprehensive schools, one 11 to 18 comprehensive school and five special schools. Most of the pupils who decide to continue in full-time education go to the college. Within a 10-mile radius of the college, there is another tertiary college, three general further education colleges, and a sixth form college. A number of state and private schools in the surrounding authorities also provide post-16 education. The proportion of South Tyneside's 16 year olds choosing to continue in full-time education in September 1998 was low, at 53%, compared with the national figure of 67%. The demographic trends for the area predict a 10% increase in the number of 16-year-old school-leavers over the next two years. In 1999, 37% of pupils in the borough of school-leaving age achieved five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) qualifications at grade C or better, compared with the national figure of 47%.

4 The college has seven academic faculties supplemented by a number of cross-college functional units. The principalship comprises the principal and two vice-principals supported by the directors of administration and finance. This group, together with the heads of faculty and the four heads of the main cross-college units, make up the senior management team. Most key functions, such as recruitment, marketing, programme delivery, staff development and quality assurance, are devolved to the faculties with a degree of central co-ordination. Each faculty is divided into departments, each comprising a number of course teams with responsibility for designated curriculum areas.

5 In July 1999, the college had 15,949 students of whom 3,620 attended full time. Students aged 16 to 18 accounted for 16% of enrolments. Approximately one-third of the students were engaged in studies related to the marine industries. The college employed 384 full-time equivalent teaching staff of whom 321

# Context

were on full-time contracts and 306 full-time equivalent support staff of whom 270 were full time.

6 The college, in its mission statement, gives a commitment to meeting the needs of each of its students. The aims which the college has set itself include:

- expansion of education and training opportunities for the 16-plus age group
- enhancement of its marine provision
- support for the economic regeneration of the borough and the region
- development of a high-quality entitlement core curriculum
- securing equal opportunities for all
- development of the college's role in the community
- provision of high-quality courses through the development of effective self-assessment systems.

and data. They met students, governors, staff and representatives from the Tyneside Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

8 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons observed and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. The proportion of outstanding grades awarded to the college is appreciably above the national average.

## The Inspection

7 The college was inspected during the weeks beginning 11 and 18 October 1999. Before the inspection, inspectors reviewed the self-assessment report and considered information from other directorates of the FEFC. Inspectors used data on students' achievements for 1997 and 1998 derived from the college's individualised student record (ISR) returns to the FEFC. Achievement data for 1999 were supplied by the college and checked by inspectors against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining boards. They were found to be generally reliable. The college was notified of the sample of its provision to be inspected approximately two months before the inspection. The inspection was carried out by 11 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 54 days. Inspectors observed 93 lessons and tutorials, and examined students' work. Members of the inspection team examined college documents

# Context

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	7	8	5	2	0	22
GCSE	0	2	2	1	0	5
GNVQ	2	4	2	1	0	9
NVQ	5	19	7	0	0	31
Other vocational	6	7	4	1	0	18
Other*	4	2	2	0	0	8
Total (No.)	24	42	22	5	0	93
Total (%)	26	45	24	5	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*

\*other includes three tutorials involving students in disciplines which were not directly inspected

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

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
South Tyneside College	10.8	87
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99	11.2	78

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



# Curriculum Areas

## Science

### Grade 2

10 Inspectors observed 17 lessons in general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level), national diploma and access to higher education courses. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report but considered that the strengths identified in teaching were overstated.

#### Key strengths

- effectively managed courses
- well-planned lessons
- good GCSE and GCE A level pass rates
- high-quality resources

#### Weaknesses

- some ineffective teaching
- poor retention rates on some courses

11 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the college's self-assessment report that the faculty and its constituent departments are managed well. Department heads meet regularly with the head and deputy head of faculty to plan curriculum developments, for example developing self-study materials. Faculty policies, and planning documents linked to the college's strategic objectives, are used effectively. All meetings have appropriate agenda and minutes. There is a good team spirit throughout the faculty. Targets are set and monitored for enrolment, retention and pass rates, and for the added value in performance relative to that predicted by entry qualifications. GCSE and GCE A level enrolments are buoyant. However, attempts to diversify into vocational courses have been unsuccessful. Neither the general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) nor the national diploma in science have recruited new students in 1999.

12 There is a large variation in the quality of teaching. Effective schemes of work and brief lesson plans have been written for all courses. These are used routinely and ensure that lessons are generally well designed. In the best lessons, the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject was contagious. They made excellent use of board work, overhead projectors, demonstrations, practical work and audiovisual technology. Students in some of these lessons were motivated to continue discussion on related topics in their own time. As stated in the college's self-assessment report, practical work is integrated well with other aspects of science courses. Careful instruction leads to improved practical techniques. The weaker lessons were uninspiring and ineffective. Insufficient effort was made to break down barriers between students and to instil confidence. The teaching sometimes failed to meet the needs of the more able GCSE students. The majority of students' work was marked well. However, there were examples of work marked with insufficient care and accuracy.

13 On average, students on advanced level science courses obtain higher grades than those predicted on the basis of their entry qualifications. Inspectors agreed with the college's claim in the self-assessment report that students on GCE A level courses perform consistently well in external examinations. For example, the biology and chemistry pass rates are considerably better than national average at both A to E and A to C grades. Students studying to improve their GCSE grades achieve pass rates at grade C or above which are better than the national averages for all colleges in the sector. The number of students on vocational courses is small but the achievement rate on these courses is also good. However, the retention rate on a number of courses is low. In GCE A level biology the retention rate has declined from 72% to 47% over the last three years. In contrast, the retention rate for GCE A level physics has improved from 59% to 82% over the same period. Students' written work is

# Curriculum Areas

generally sound although their portfolios are sometimes poorly organised. Some students exhibit outstanding practical skills.

14 Teachers and support staff work well together. They value each other's contribution to the learning process. As the self-assessment report states, staff are generally well qualified and have relevant teaching experience. The laboratories are efficiently managed and are maintained to a high standard. There are good teaching aids in most rooms, for example, biological models and television monitors linked to microscopes. These are frequently and effectively used. Materials and equipment for practical lessons are produced in good time and they are stored safely when not in use. Science students have the benefit of a recently established learning centre. This has a good selection of paper-based resources but lacks more sophisticated learning support material. The college library is situated within the science teaching block and this gives students good

access to its resources. The library stock of science books is good and is carefully monitored by library staff and teachers to ensure its continued relevance.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE science subjects - biology, chemistry, human physiology and health, physics	2	Number of starters	181	128	118
		Retention (%)	70	62	64
		Achievement (%)	28	46	49
GCE A level biology	3	Number of starters	106	126	122
		Retention (%)	72	64	47
		Achievement (%)	93	98	96
GCE A level chemistry	3	Number of starters	85	87	53
		Retention (%)	67	48	77
		Achievement (%)	96	93	93
GCE A level physics	3	Number of starters	51	71	38
		Retention (%)	59	66	82
		Achievement (%)	93	79	97

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

# Curriculum Areas

## Nautical Science

### Grade 1

15 Inspectors observed 11 nautical science lessons. They agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Some identified weaknesses had been addressed by the time of the inspection.

#### Key strengths

- high-quality teaching
- good curriculum management
- outstanding pass rates
- excellent specialist resources
- strong links with the maritime industry

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient written feedback on some students' assignments

16 The college offers a wide range of specialised nautical science courses for the maritime industries. Shipping and offshore oil companies sponsor or employ almost all the full-time and short-course students. Many courses lead to statutory Maritime and Coastguard Agency qualifications. These include the certificates of competency required for employment on board ship. Other qualifications are approved by the Merchant Navy Training Board and the Offshore Petroleum Industry Training Organisation. The structure of deck officer cadet training has changed in recent years and is now based on national vocational qualifications (NVQs). During their period of training, which lasts for between three and four years, cadets have alternate periods in college and at sea. They may achieve NVQs at levels 2 and 3, a higher national diploma in nautical science, a watch-keeping certificate, and a range of specialist seamanship qualifications. Other students attend the college for periods of between half a day and two academic terms to

achieve one of the many specialist qualifications necessary for their employment. All courses are well managed. Course teams meet regularly to discuss course content, teaching methods and assessment grading criteria. Their conclusions are appropriately minuted.

17 The standard of teaching in some of the lessons observed was outstanding, and in all but one of the rest it was good. None was unsatisfactory. Teaching is well planned and lessons are carefully structured. Students are given well-produced course notes for many of their subjects. Teachers use high-quality overhead projector slides supported by good board work to illustrate their teaching. In most lessons, they use effective questioning to check students' understanding. Teachers draw on their own and their students' experience at sea to exemplify the topics being taught. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that there is a good rapport between staff and students. In the basic fire-fighting course, officers from the local fire brigade taught the students the principles and action of fire extinguishers. The standard of instruction was outstanding. The officers used coloured slides and a range of different fire extinguishers to illustrate the lesson. They explained the principles and uses of fire extinguishers in a simple and clear way, and used humour and surprise to maintain students' interest. Students later used the extinguishers to put out controlled fires. When marking students' assessments, some teachers do not provide students with sufficient guidance on what they should do to improve their grade.

18 Students are highly motivated. As noted in the self-assessment report, retention and pass rates for all nautical science courses are exceptionally high. The overall retention rate for cadets completing their programme has exceeded 70% for the last three years and in 1999 was 93%. Only one student who has completed a cadetship has failed to achieve the overall award.

# Curriculum Areas

19 Nautical studies teachers are well qualified. Most have been senior ships' officers and some have experience of commanding vessels. They maintain good links with employers, training organisations, the statutory authorities and examining bodies. Some teachers are members of technical committees established to address the national training needs of the shipping industry. Teachers have regular meetings with employers to report the progress of their trainees.

20 The college has an exceptional range of specialist equipment and facilities to meet the training needs of the modern merchant navy. These include a survival tank, capable of simulating rough sea conditions, in which students gain experience and practice survival

techniques. There are specialist fire-fighting training facilities and a lifeboat gantry from which enclosed lifeboats are launched onto the river Tyne. The college has two ship simulators in which students gain experience of maintaining a bridge watch at sea. The newer one provides a highly realistic simulated environment in which students, including employed ships' captains, navigate the most congested of the world's seaways while unforeseen circumstances are introduced to test their responses.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Short courses	1	Number of starters	353	1,448	1,209
		Retention (%)	100	99	100
		Achievement (%)	99	100	100
Short courses	2	Number of starters	1,193	1,066	1,294
		Retention (%)	100	100	100
		Achievement (%)	98	97	99
Deck officer - watch keeping	3	Number of starters	117	393	244
		Retention (%)	97	98	100
		Achievement (%)	90	86	89
Short courses	3/4	Number of starters	684	862	633
		Retention (%)	96	98	100
		Achievement (%)	100	100	100
Deck officer - management	4	Number of starters	288	798	729
		Retention (%)	99	98	100
		Achievement (%)	97	89	85

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

# Curriculum Areas

## Marine Engineering, Fabrication and Welding

### Grade 2

21 Inspectors observed 11 classes. They broadly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified by the self-assessment report.

#### Key strengths

- carefully structured courses
- productive links with local and national employers
- high retention rates
- generally good pass rates
- some excellent teaching resources

#### Weaknesses

- some poor teaching

22 Marine engineering, and fabrication and welding, are two departments in the faculty of marine and mechanical engineering. The marine engineering department works closely with shipping companies. It contributes to cadet training, and provides courses leading to senior engineer certificates of competency, and higher education courses. The cadet and senior engineering courses attract students nationally and internationally and are carefully designed to meet the needs of major shipping companies. Courses operated by the fabrication and welding department cover welding, plating, fabrication, and pipe-working. The department collaborates closely with many of the ship repair and offshore rig companies based on the rivers Tyne and Wear, and also with local engineering companies. Technician courses are offered in a variety of attendance modes. Practical training starts at 08.00 hours each day, in line with local companies. The strength of each department's links with local and national employers is noted in the self-assessment report. Both departments provide courses for industry at economic rates

covering a wide range of marine engineering, fabrication and associated safety activities. This full-cost work generates a substantial amount of income.

23 Most of the teaching is satisfactory or better, but inspectors observed examples of poor practice. Detailed lesson plans are available. Schemes of work are provided for each subject but they are often no more than a list of topics and teaching dates; few make reference to teaching methods. Lessons usually begin with a review of previous work and finish with a summary of the material covered. In most lessons, teachers provide students with prepared notes, some of which require students to add additional information. This arrangement generally works well and allows teachers time to develop the subject material further. In a few lessons, students spend too much time copying notes from overhead transparencies or from the board. As the self-assessment notes, teachers make frequent references to relevant industrial applications. However, teachers sometimes fail to check each student's understanding. Practical work is well organised. Appropriate academic support is provided for students. For example, in marine engineering, extra tutorials are provided in the evenings for both cadet and senior engineer students.

24 The self-assessment report notes the generally high levels of students' achievements. Retention rates are good: on most merchant vessel engineering NVQ courses, and on some City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) 229 fabrication and welding courses they are over 90%. Retention rates on senior engineering courses, typically of 12 weeks duration, are normally close to 100%. Students' motivation is particularly strong as they are sponsored by their company or have to take a break from employment to undertake the course. On the national certificate in fabrication and welding, the retention and pass rates are around the national averages. Pass rates on the C&G 229 courses are generally well above the national

# Curriculum Areas

average for level 2 and level 3 craft courses. Pass rates on merchant vessel engineering NVQ courses are close to 100%. Students on the provision for senior engineers attend their courses as a statutory requirement for promotion. Nationally, about half of these students pass the examinations at the first attempt. Most of those who fail retake the examinations at a later date, generally at South Tyneside College but sometimes elsewhere. The college offers a free two-week revision period for returning students.

25 The self-assessment report comments on the high quality of the specialist resources. Marine engineering courses use both general and specialist engineering workshops. Classrooms used by marine engineering courses at the South Shields site have carpets and modern furniture and are generally of good quality. A specialist learning centre, which contains good-quality information technology (IT) and other resources, is open during the day and evening. The college's excellent engine room simulator contains both real and simulated equipment. Various propulsion systems, such as diesel-electric, can be

represented. In one successful lesson, four senior engineering students quickly settled in to working as a team in the simulator. The teacher programmed in a series of faults. Alarms required students to move over two deck levels and they demonstrated good communication skills. Students worked in a calm, professional manner. After the exercise they had detailed debriefings on their operational performance both as a team and as individuals. The fabrication and welding workshop occupies a large, open-plan area on the Hebburn site. Seventeen of the 64 welding bays are to industrial standards. The pipe-fitting area has new equipment and the plating area has a modern, computer-controlled plasma cutter and a computer-controlled punch. The central stores facility is well organised. One drawing office is in poor condition. Teachers in both departments are well qualified. Some technicians are part-time teachers. They have specialist skills for particular courses, for example, lifting and slinging.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in marine engineering, fabrication and welding, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Craft fabrication and welding, and welding NVQs	2	Number of starters	208	206	92
		Retention (%)	100	83	90
		Achievement (%)	53	84	61
Craft and technician fabrication and welding, marine vessel engineering	3	Number of starters	119	270	396
		Retention (%)	99	91	97
		Achievement (%)	90	93	83
Senior engineer	4	Number of starters	544	566	567
		Retention (%)	97	98	94
		Achievement (%)	*	*	50

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

\*data unreliable



# Curriculum Areas

## Business and Management

### Grade 2

26 Inspectors observed 12 lessons on business and management courses. They agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report.

#### Key strengths

- high pass rates on some courses
- extensive management provision
- good teaching
- high-quality student portfolios

#### Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on some courses
- unsatisfactory quality of some teaching materials

27 The management provision enables students to progress from introductory level to degree courses. Opportunities are provided for dual accreditation through NVQ awards and institute of management awards at levels 4 and 5. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that all courses are well managed. Teams use common documentation and processes, though minutes of meetings are variable in terms of quality and usefulness. Courses are evaluated effectively and appropriate actions are identified and recorded. Targets are set for enrolment, retention and pass rates, and progress toward targets is monitored by curriculum managers. Students on the GNVQ advanced business course are offered the opportunity to go on a European study visit, and on an industry week which involves local employers. Work experience is effectively integrated with other aspects of the course and students use the information gained in industry in their assignments. Management courses include a residential element which benefits team building and the understanding of

management styles. Students are provided with self-study materials to use when their work shift patterns do not allow them to attend lessons. Lecturers provide support in the workplace to help students prepare evidence for their NVQs. The college provides an increasing number of tailor-made courses for local companies.

28 Teaching is generally good. Most, but not all, schemes of work identify the intended learning outcomes and required resources. The quality of learning materials varies widely. For example, in preparation for one lesson, the teacher had collected an extensive range of topical and useful data which were presented in a clearly understandable way; in another lesson, students were given scrappy, handwritten notes which had been photocopied badly. Teachers do not share or exchange their teaching materials systematically. Most lessons contained a variety of learning activities including small group work, and sharp, clearly explained and illustrated lectures. They were conducted in a relaxed and professional style and good use was made of the students' work experience. In several lessons, students engaged in lively debate using appropriate technical language which demonstrated their understanding of the topic. As indicated in the self-assessment report, assessment on all courses is thorough and the students receive helpful written and oral feedback.

29 All management courses have good retention and achievement rates. For example, 16 of the 18 students who started the institute of management diploma course in 1999 completed it, and 15 passed. The supervisory management diploma enrolled 11 students who all completed the course and achieved the award. The GCE A level business studies course recruits well and pass rates are above the national average. GCSE pass rates are good but retention rates are sometimes poor. Over the last three years, pass rates have fallen on the GNVQ courses. The quality of student portfolios from a range of courses is impressive; they are well organised

# Curriculum Areas

and presented, and include many examples of thorough research. Institute of management portfolios are justifiably praised in the self-assessment report. They demonstrate a high standard of investigation and professional reporting. Some projects have resulted in changed practices at the student's place of work. Students work effectively in groups. They follow instructions well, and achieve results within tight deadlines.

30 Teachers are well qualified and many have appropriate commercial experience. They are well deployed to make full use of their specialist knowledge. The faculty experienced significant staff turnover in 1998-99 and as a result some courses, particularly the GNVQs, were disrupted. Accommodation is appropriate and generally well equipped. Management training rooms are furnished to a high standard. The new learning resource centre is not yet fully equipped, but students already appreciate their improved access to textbooks and the Internet.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE accounting and business studies	2	Number of starters	23	34	47
		Retention (%)	56	47	51
		Achievement (%)	85	88	88
GNVQ intermediate business	2	Number of starters	17	11	10
		Retention (%)	89	61	67
		Achievement (%)	94	73	50
GNVQ advanced business	3	Number of starters	42	39	32
		Retention (%)	74	80	71
		Achievement (%)	88	90	75
Supervisory management certificate	3	Number of starters	11	28	21
		Retention (%)	92	85	88
		Achievement (%)	90	100	76
GCE A level business studies	3	Number of starters	35	74	51
		Retention (%)	73	68	75
		Achievement (%)	91	78	88
Institute of management certificate	4	Number of starters	12	15	20
		Retention (%)	93	89	87
		Achievement (%)	92	100	100

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



# Curriculum Areas

## Hospitality and Catering

### *Grade 2*

31 Inspectors observed 14 lessons in hospitality and catering. They agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report but identified some additional strengths and weaknesses.

#### Key strengths

- effective teaching
- high achievement rates at NVQ levels 1 and 2
- good provision for students with learning difficulties
- well-resourced learning centre

#### Weaknesses

- low retention and achievement rates on GNVQ courses
- insufficient links with industry

32 The college offers a good range of provision in hospitality and catering from level 1 to level 3. Programmes include full-time and part-time NVQ provision in food preparation, food and beverage service, and supervisory skills, and full-time GNVQs at intermediate and advanced level. There are also several popular non-vocational courses and a growing provision for ships' cooks. Projects in the community include the organisation of a schools meals competition, and there are strong links with special schools. Enrolments for GNVQ courses are low and falling. Action plans in the self-assessment report acknowledged the need to develop strategies to address this. Courses are well managed. Course teams, which include student representatives, meet regularly and maintain clear records of meetings. Resulting recommendations for action are followed through conscientiously. All courses have well-presented, informative handbooks, which are appreciated by students.

33 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that lessons are well planned and effectively taught. Schemes of work are thorough, well organised and complemented by detailed lesson plans. Teachers use an appropriate range of teaching methods to extend students' knowledge and skills. Their carefully considered approach to practical work helps to develop students' technical and social abilities. Learning is carefully and effectively managed in situations where students have markedly different ability levels and learning requirements. In some practical lessons, students on NVQ level 3 programmes worked in a supervisory capacity alongside those on level 1 and 2 programmes. They were able to allocate and share tasks appropriately. Students with learning difficulties receive effective support. Where appropriate, learning support staff work alongside students in practical areas. Teaching is industrially relevant and the department has good informal relations with a major employer. However, not all students undergo relevant work experience and there is no programme of industrial visits or visitors. Assignments are interesting, challenging and vocationally relevant. Students' work is marked conscientiously and constructive comments are added to help them improve their performance. The internal verification system is effective. Students' progression is carefully monitored and recorded.

34 In many of the lessons observed, students worked co-operatively and were enthusiastic about their courses. One full-time student on an NVQ course had encouraged his father to join the course. They both now study in the same group. The self-assessment report identified the strengths and weaknesses in retention and pass rates. Retention rates on GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses fell below the national averages in 1998-99. The GNVQ advanced pass rate has been significantly below the national average for the past three years. NVQ level 1 retention rates have been somewhat lower than the national average for the past two years, but

# Curriculum Areas

the pass rates are good. The NVQ level 2 food and beverage service course has retention and pass rates which are appreciably above national averages. Good retention rates and pass rates were also achieved in 1997 and 1998 on the NVQ level 2 food preparation and cooking course, but this was not sustained in 1999 when the course attracted a relatively high proportion of New Deal students. The number of students on the ships' cooks course has doubled over the past three years and the course has high retention and pass rates.

35 The self-assessment report recognises the mixed quality of the specialist teaching accommodation. The restaurant bar and reception areas are well furnished and attractive. Kitchen areas are adequate but need some refurbishment. The restaurant opens for only three days each week and sometimes a lack of customers affects the realism of the work.

Changing facilities for students have been improved recently and are now satisfactory. A coffee shop at the Hebburn site, used by staff and students, provides a realistic work environment for hospitality and catering students who have learning difficulties. The new learning resource centre, which contains good IT facilities and other specialist resources, is already used well by students. The college library has an appropriate range of books and trade magazines. Staff have relevant industrial experience. Part-time teachers work successfully as part of the team.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Ships' cooks	1	Number of starters	23	29	44
		Retention (%)	100	98	97
		Achievement (%)	100	98	100
NVQ provision	1	Number of starters	42	52	41
		Retention (%)	93	79	78
		Achievement (%)	74	100	94
NVQ food preparation and cooking	2	Number of starters	34	41	35
		Retention (%)	79	88	57
		Achievement (%)	88	92	70
NVQ food and beverage service	2	Number of starters	*	30	20
		Retention (%)	*	90	85
		Achievement (%)	*	100	94
GNVQ advanced	3	Number of starters	17	19	17
		Retention (%)	89	84	59
		Achievement (%)	26	69	30

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

\*low number of starters

# Curriculum Areas

## Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy

### Grade 2

36 Inspectors observed 13 lessons in hairdressing, beauty therapy and complementary therapies. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but found a few additional weaknesses.

#### Key strengths

- excellent pass rates
- thorough monitoring of students' progress
- high mutual regard between students and teachers
- success in external competitions

#### Weaknesses

- poor and declining retention rates on some courses
- insufficiently demanding tasks in some lessons

37 The college offers a wide and appropriate range of full-time and part-time courses leading to NVQs in hairdressing and beauty therapy, and to some specialist awards in complementary therapy. Students can extend their studies through additional certification in IT, men's hairdressing and media make-up. They take part in promotional events. For example, they have collaborated in theatrical productions with the performing arts department. Inspectors confirmed the claim in the college's self-assessment report that courses are well managed by a cohesive and enthusiastic team of staff. Teams meet regularly for planned meetings and also informally according to circumstances. Courses are generally well organised and well planned. Teachers use lesson plans, schemes of work and course files to good effect. Course documentation is thoroughly maintained and regularly reviewed.

38 In the best lessons, teachers demonstrate sound subject knowledge. They devise an appropriate variety of activities to ensure that students' learning needs are met. The aims and learning objectives of the lesson are explained to students. Regular checks are made on the understanding of each student. A few lessons were less effective because teachers failed to provide sufficiently demanding activities for the students. For example, students spent too much time listening to the teacher reading from a handout or copying notes from overhead transparencies. Few students wordprocess their assignments or make other appropriate use of IT. This weakness is not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. In all practical lessons, students' progress and achievements are monitored effectively and recorded carefully. Teachers provide students with regular feedback on their performance. Students have a high personal and professional regard for their teachers and respond positively to constructive criticism. The learning environment is productive and professional standards are maintained. Students' portfolios are regularly checked and teachers advise how they might be improved. The system for internal verification is effective. Regular reviews with each student ensure that progress towards targets is monitored and action is taken if necessary. The help provided to improve students' basic skills is effective.

39 Students on level 3 courses produce excellent written work. On some level 2 courses, students' written work lacks depth and is poorly presented. Pass rates on all courses are excellent. For example, in 1999 all students completing NVQ level 2 hairdressing and complementary therapy courses obtained their qualification. In the same year, retention was good on NVQ level 2 beauty therapy and aromatherapy courses. In contrast, retention rates on full-time NVQ level 2 hairdressing courses and NVQ level 3 beauty therapy were poor at 44% and 40%, respectively. The retention rate on the part-time NVQ level 2

# Curriculum Areas

make-up and manicure course was particularly low at 19%. Actions have been taken in response to these low retention rates but it is too early to judge their effectiveness. The self-assessment report identified the strengths in achievement rates and weaknesses in retention rates. Students generally carry out practical activities competently, safely and to professional standards. Strenuous efforts are made to enrich the experience of students by entering them for regional and national competitions. In the last two years, the college has achieved a high rate of success. Students have won eight regional and two national competitions. Most students progress to related employment.

40 Teachers are well qualified and have appropriate industrial experience. All have assessor awards and many have an internal

verifier award. Technicians support learning effectively. They possess assessor qualifications and are able to provide assessment opportunities in the salon reception areas. The beauty salons have recently been upgraded but the hairdressing salons are in need of redecoration. Both are well equipped. There is a lack of display work throughout the department. The hairdressing and beauty department has an adequate range of books, study guides and other learning materials. The library also has a good range of related texts but few are regularly borrowed. There are no IT resources in the department.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
NVQ hairdressing (full time and part time)	2	Number of starters	73	105	43
		Retention (%)	77	78	72
		Achievement (%)	94	91	100
NVQ beauty therapy	2	Number of starters	*	26	31
		Retention (%)	*	77	84
		Achievement (%)	*	94	92
NVQ hairdressing and beauty therapy	3	Number of starters	19	16	17
		Retention (%)	74	69	59
		Achievement (%)	78	100	100
Body massage certificate	3	Number of starters	28	39	28
		Retention (%)	61	85	79
		Achievement (%)	82	100	100
Diploma in aromatherapy	3	Number of starters	12	26	29
		Retention (%)	92	88	93
		Achievement (%)	100	100	100

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

\*course did not run

# Curriculum Areas

## English and Modern Foreign Languages

### Grade 2

41 Inspectors observed 12 lessons in English and modern foreign language courses. They agreed with the findings in the college's self-assessment report. Some weaknesses had not been identified and others had been addressed prior to the inspection.

#### Key strengths

- effective teaching of English
- good use of the taught language in foreign language lessons
- high pass rates in GCE A level English and foreign language courses at levels 1 and 2
- thriving distance learning course
- effective use of the Internet by GCE A level foreign language students

#### Weaknesses

- poor pass rates in GCE A level foreign language courses
- low retention rates on GCSE and GCE A level foreign language courses
- insufficient use of the library by English students

42 English and modern foreign languages are two departments in the faculty of humanities. In each department, communications between staff are good. They work well together in teams and share resources and good practice. There is a wide range of well-managed courses in English and modern foreign languages which are offered in a variety of modes of attendance. For example, in English there are language and literature courses at GCSE and GCE A level and an access to higher education course. Full-time and part-time foreign language courses include French, German, Spanish, Italian, Arabic and Portuguese. An innovative course leading to a

diploma in public service interpreting can be studied through distance learning. The diploma, available in 16 languages, is specific to the professions of health or law.

43 Teachers use visual aids and worksheets successfully to encourage students to work to their maximum potential. Students appreciate the high levels of support given to them by their teachers. Teachers of English employ effective classroom techniques that maintain students' interest and stimulate high-quality discussion. For example, a lesson on *King Lear* included: direct reading of the text by students and the teacher; an explanation of the story line; closer analysis of the text in terms of tone and language; and an exploration of how scenes might be directed in a stage performance. Most foreign language lessons are conducted successfully in the taught language. In one lesson, students were learning how to use the Internet. The teacher, ably supported by the German language assistant, instructed the students entirely in German, and the Internet search engine used was the German language version. In a few foreign language lessons there was too much reliance on textbooks and photocopied materials. In others, opportunities were missed to exploit specific language concepts in detail. Some students regret that they have been unable to learn and work abroad. However, students of French will spend a month in France this year and a similar opportunity for students of Spanish to visit Spain is planned for next year.

44 Students of English are articulate and respond well to questions. They do not value the library and make insufficient use of it. There are a large number of candidates for GCE A level English language and English literature. Pass rates on these courses are high and above corresponding national averages. Students of foreign languages take a lively part in lessons and have good pronunciation. In one lesson, the students' impressive command of French allowed them to joke in a good-natured way

# Curriculum Areas

with their teacher. Many foreign language students use the Internet effectively. Pass rates for GCSE and beginner courses in foreign languages are good. For example, in 1999 all candidates for GCSE Spanish obtained grade C or above. Achievement rates on the diploma in public service interpreting course are also good. Over the last three years, pass rates on GCE A level foreign language courses have been poor. Retention rates on GCSE and GCE A level foreign language courses are low. The self-assessment report did not identify the weaknesses in retention.

45 Teachers are well qualified and competent. As the self-assessment report indicates, the study of modern languages is supported by good learning resources. A refurbished language laboratory is used well. The work of students of English is attractively displayed in the teaching rooms. Examples included a pastiche of *All the World's a Stage*, a pictogram of *King Lear* with examples of alliteration, personification, and repetition, and charts relating to plays students had read or seen. The library has a good stock of English literature including a good selection of paperbacks and videos.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in English and modern foreign languages, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Modern languages	1	Number of starters	-	72	203
		Retention (%)	-	63	47
		Achievement (%)	-	64	60
GCSE modern languages	2	Number of starters	102	136	72
		Retention (%)	54	39	49
		Achievement (%)	74	37	80
GCSE English	2	Number of starters	194	184	174
		Retention (%)	62	75	65
		Achievement (%)	46	47	46
GCE A level modern languages	3	Number of starters	74	83	70
		Retention (%)	66	61	56
		Achievement (%)	44	37	62
GCE A level English	3	Number of starters	222	225	189
		Retention (%)	78	80	72
		Achievement (%)	86	85	84
Diploma in public service interpreting	4	Number of starters	*	*	287
		Retention (%)	*	*	86
		Achievement (%)	*	*	99

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

\*data unreliable

-courses not offered



# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### *Grade 3*

46 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but considered that some strengths were overstated and identified additional weaknesses.

#### Key strengths

- effective induction arrangements
- well-managed and valuable assistance with literacy and numeracy
- good support for applicants to higher education

#### Weaknesses

- some inequities in the arrangements for course and careers advice
- aspects of the arrangements for careers advice, guidance and education
- inconsistencies in the quality of tutorials

47 The college has established productive working relationships with local schools. The school liaison group has representatives from each faculty. Regular visits to each school enable college staff to inform pupils of the opportunities available to them. Some faculties have established good links at curriculum level with schools, for example, joint work in health and social care on developing appropriate GNVQ materials for disaffected pupils. The college's guidance policy states that it aims to provide all students with the opportunity to have an impartial guidance interview. Prospective students who express an interest in a particular course are directed to an interview within the relevant faculty. For these students, there is no guarantee that wider options will be fully explored. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

48 Inspectors agreed with the college's claim that induction to the college is well organised and effective. Arrangements enable students to find their way around the college, to hear about the range of services available and to understand the structure of the courses for which they have enrolled. The college provides a wide range of services for students including: careers advice and information; counselling; a free bus service between the main sites; advice on welfare rights; childcare; chaplaincy; and financial help from the college's access fund. Staff in the college's student services unit provide a good service for those students who request help or who attend on the advice of their tutor. Some tutors do not follow up students' contact with the unit in order to inform their later tutorials.

49 The college's current tutorial service is based upon the recording of achievement and individual action-planning; there is no taught tutorial curriculum. The tutorial service is viewed as a strength in the self-assessment report, but inspectors did not agree. Senior managers are leading a full-scale review of tutorial arrangements and developing a retention strategy which is to apply to all faculties. The review highlighted inconsistencies in the quality of tutorials and these were confirmed by inspectors. The review report indicates that a significant number of students did not have the tutorials to which they were entitled through the commitments in the college charter. Many students reported that their support from tutors was excellent, but a significant minority were dissatisfied. The extent to which students' personal and social skills are developed is variable. It depends on individual tutors and the courses on which the students are enrolled. Staff within the student services unit have produced a comprehensive and detailed guide for tutors which is a useful resource document. Many teachers lack specific training to support them in their tutoring role. There are few opportunities for tutors to meet together to share good practice and resources.

# Cross-college Provision

50 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college's procedures for identifying full-time students who need support in basic literacy and numeracy are comprehensive and lead to effective support. The basic skills support service is well managed. All full-time students on programmes up to and including level 3 undertake a screening test during induction to identify those who might need additional support in literacy or numeracy. A letter is sent to each student to explain the outcome of the test and to outline any action needed. Further diagnostic assessments of those students identified as needing help result in effective support programmes. A variety of strategies for providing the support, including partnership teaching between specialist basic skills staff and vocational tutors, helps students relate this work to their main programmes. Procedures for identifying the basic skills support needs of part-time students are less well developed.

51 The college has a wide range of good-quality careers resources. Staff from the local careers service provide information and guidance but their impact is over-dependant on students requesting an interview. There is no structured careers education programme for the large number of non-employed students whose courses do not have this as an integral and compulsory element. As stated in the self-assessment report, staff within the student services unit provide effective support for students applying to higher education institutions. Students studying GCE A level courses attend a general briefing session and are given an information pack to support them through the application process. Student services staff contact vocational tutors and offer to speak to groups of students about the application process. They collect information about students from tutors and write the confidential statements required by higher education institutions. The student services staff also check the quality of each student's personal statement and ensure that the applications are submitted on time.

## General Resources

### *Grade 2*

52 Inspectors broadly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report.

#### Key strengths

- effective learning centres with up-to-date IT facilities
- well-maintained grounds and extensive sports facilities
- well-planned site maintenance schedule
- good outreach centres in strategic locations

#### Weaknesses

- some poor public areas and facilities
- lacklustre residential accommodation

53 As stated in the college's self-assessment report, the main campuses at South Shields and Hebburn are in pleasant, well-maintained grounds with extensive car parking facilities. Security across the college is good. Sports fields for football and rugby are available on both sites. Other sports facilities include squash courts and a gymnasium. The extensive residential accommodation is set in pleasant grounds and has good dining facilities. However, it is in need of refurbishment. Nearby there is a social centre for residential students which is highly valued. There are insufficient common room facilities for students. Small crèches are located at each main site. The outreach centres at Jarrow and South Shields are conveniently located for those who live, work or shop in the town centres, and are easily reached by public transport. A cyber café is being developed in the basement of the South Shields outreach centre.

54 The accommodation strategy, written in 1997 after considerable work with consultants, remains a useful document. The emphasis in recent years has been on the improvement of specialist teaching areas, for example art and



# Cross-college Provision

design. The college's analysis of data from an annual space utilisation survey is insufficiently rigorous. All general facilities and specialist rooms are accessible to people with mobility difficulties. If access proves difficult for individual students, the college re-timetables the provision into other rooms. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that facilities for students with sight impairment are limited.

55 The entrance to the Hebburn site, which was criticised in the last inspection report, has been redesigned and is now more hospitable. The entrance, reception and student services areas at the South Shields site lack a clear identity. Despite the opening of the residential dining facilities to students generally, the South Shields refectory is crowded at peak times. Maintenance and cleaning arrangements are well planned and well managed. All maintenance work is discussed with the appropriate heads of faculties prior to implementation. Some corridors, public areas and toilets have been refurbished to a high standard. As the self-assessment report identifies, some corridors are still poorly lit and have worn floor coverings, and a number of toilets remain in need of refurbishment. Some staff workrooms are overcrowded or untidy.

56 The main learning centre on the South Shields site is well used. IT equipment is kept up-to-date through a three-year leasing contract, and there is an extensive range of general purpose and specialist software. The demand on computers is high from students studying through open learning and from classes timetabled to use the facilities. The main learning centre has extensive opening hours and this alleviates some of the pressure. However, individual students wishing to use computers during the day sometimes have to wait. Access to IT has been improved by establishing new specialist learning centres, within faculties, which are electronically linked to the main centre. Heads of faculty work effectively with the head of learning resources to decide which

software packages should be available to their staff and students through this network. In total there are about 550 machines on the network and a further 60 standalone machines. Teachers do not have ready access to IT except through the learning centres. Each faculty has four modern computers for staff use but a number of staff workrooms are not linked to the academic network.

57 Library staff divide their work between the libraries on each main site and this helps provide a common approach to the services provided. The libraries share the same cataloguing system. Texts and other paper-based resources within the specialist learning centres are not yet included in the catalogue.

## Quality Assurance

### *Grade 2*

58 Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses contained in the self-assessment report. Some of the weaknesses had been addressed by the time of the inspection. A few weaknesses had been given insufficient weight.

#### Key strengths

- well-established quality assurance procedures
- thorough analysis of students' achievements
- effective course review processes
- good opportunities for individual staff development
- thorough and realistic self-assessment

#### Weaknesses

- some omissions in the coverage of the quality assurance framework
- failure to fully comply with some aspects of the framework

# Cross-college Provision

59 The college's commitment to assure the quality of provision is appropriately reflected in its aims and strategic objectives, the quality policy and the developing quality framework. The quality committee meets frequently and oversees the arrangements for quality control and self-assessment. Some of these arrangements have been introduced or strengthened since the last inspection. The college holds ISO 9002 for the services it provides at economic rates for business.

60 The college's overall achievement rates consistently place it in the top quarter of general further education and tertiary colleges nationally. However, it is on the median when retention rates are compared, and there has been a significant downward trend in retention rates over the last three years. The college sets itself retention and achievement targets. In 1998-99, most of the aggregate achievement targets were met but the college acknowledges that it failed to meet its retention targets.

61 An overarching quality framework has been introduced and this addresses a weakness noted in the last inspection. The framework defines the scope, aims and procedures for assuring the quality of most aspects of the college's provision. It lists documentary requirements, standards of performance, and prescribes monitoring and reporting arrangements. Quality assurance and self-assessment arrangements have been successfully integrated. The framework does not cover all aspects of the college's operation. For example, it does not include the residential provision or validation arrangements for new courses.

62 As the self-assessment report notes, student retention and achievement data are thoroughly analysed and compared year on year. For its general education provision, the college has a longstanding system for predicting GCE A level performance at subject level from GCSE grades on entry. Targets are set at course,

department and faculty level and reports are written on the extent to which targets have been met. Faculties are required to provide a written report to the principal on those courses which perform less well than expected.

63 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that there are strengths in the arrangements to assure the quality of teaching and learning. Annual course reports are well structured and thoroughly completed. Strengths and weaknesses are identified and an action plan compiled. Faculty review teams consider each report. The implementation of action is reported upon at the next annual review. Internal inspections of areas of provision are conducted rigorously and result in written reports and action plans. However, the planned frequency of inspections has not been met. Curriculum managers are familiar with the actions which are intended to address identified weaknesses but these actions are not always formally recorded. Senior managers cannot readily check that improvements are being made. A rigorous programme of lesson observation is well established. The profile of observation grades produced by the college system closely matched that resulting from inspection.

64 Questionnaires are used extensively to ascertain the views of students. Some, for example those on tutorial provision, are collected at college level. Others, such as those relating to teaching and learning, are administered at course level and are not aggregated to give a whole-college view. The views of employers are collected in a variety of ways, including questionnaires. The views of students and employers informed the recent review of the college charters. The college does not formally monitor how well it meets all its charter standards. A recent survey of employers' views indicated that the college is not fully meeting its charter commitments, for example on reporting the attendance of employed students.

# Cross-college Provision

65 The college produced its third self-assessment report in preparation for the inspection. The judgements in the report were moderated by a college panel which included FEFC part-time inspectors. The report contains action plans to address weaknesses, and dates for the review of their implementation. Many of the actions had been implemented by the time of the inspection. The report clearly identifies strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors concurred with the great majority of the judgements in the report. Some parts of the report make insufficient use of the extensive internal analysis of achievement data produced by the college.

66 The college gained the Investor in People award in 1998. All new staff receive an appropriate induction to the college and to their area of work. Staff are appraised every two years. The process is intended to be supportive and to satisfy the staff development needs of the individual. The college's staff development programme is also informed by the quality assurance processes. Staff speak highly of induction and appraisal and readily provide examples of resulting staff development. Individual staff development events are thoroughly evaluated and there are appropriate mechanisms to ensure dissemination to others. Staff development, for example for management training and IT, has sometimes supported the college's strategic direction. However, the links between the college's strategic priorities and the staff development programme are insufficiently structured. The clear and detailed annual report on staff development does not evaluate how well activity has supported the college's priorities.

## Governance

### *Grade 2*

67 Inspectors and auditors broadly agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report but found additional weaknesses. Some actions to remedy weaknesses identified in the report were completed by the time of inspection.

#### Key strengths

- good contribution to setting the college's strategic priorities
- effective use of members' expertise
- good use of work plans to evaluate board performance
- the diligent work of the finance committee

#### Weaknesses

- aspects of reporting on non-financial matters
- infrequent financial reporting to the board

68 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 governance. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC.

69 The board has re-determined its membership and has approved proposals to bring membership into line with new statutory requirements by March 2000. It has agreed procedures for the nomination and appointment of new governors, and has made these procedures available to the public. The average level of attendance at board meetings for 1998-99 was low at 71% and this is an acknowledged weakness in the self-assessment report. Reasons for absences are understood and the board has produced a schedule of board

# Cross-college Provision

and committee meetings to try to improve attendance. It has not set targets for attendance.

70 The skills and experience of governors are used effectively to conduct the board's business and this strength is included in the self-assessment report. For example, a working party of governors and managers has overseen the successful installation of the £3.5 million marine simulation unit. Governors have identified the skills of current board members but they have not assisted the selection process for new members by formally identifying the additional skills which the board requires. The board has only two female members, but both student members due to join the board at their next meeting in December 1999 are women.

71 New governors are provided with a useful briefing pack. The lack of training events for governors was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. The board has addressed this through a planned schedule of training events for the whole board. There is no formal procedure to identify individual member's training needs or to address these through the training programme.

72 Minutes of board and committee meetings, together with the register of governors' interests, are kept in the college libraries. Their availability is advertised in reception areas. All governors and senior managers complete the register of interests annually. Clerking arrangements are efficient. Agendas and supporting papers are sent in good time and minutes are prepared and distributed promptly. The 'whistleblowing' policy was distributed to all staff with their payslips. Some board procedures need updating, for example the long-established code of conduct does not reflect fully the recommendations from the Nolan committee. A comprehensive standing orders document has been revised recently to reflect new statutory requirements.

73 The board meets five times a year. Its committees have appropriate and comprehensive terms of reference. The audit committee does not fulfil some aspects of its terms of reference, for example reviewing the performance of the college's external auditors. Members of committees receive comprehensive reports to assist them to monitor the college's performance against targets. The finance committee fully considers monthly financial reports and an accompanying commentary. The board receives the minutes of the finance committee but does not receive financial reports with sufficient frequency. This weakness is being addressed in the present financial year. The board is provided with reports on academic achievement annually and at other times. These reports include a useful executive summary and comparisons with national benchmarks.

74 The board receives an annual monitoring report on the college's performance on equal opportunities; it has asked for more detail in future. It also accepted the recommendations of the premises committee in regard to the annual health and safety report. The board has not requested, or received, reports on how the college is performing under its charters. It receives reports on all complaints against the college, including those involving charter standards.

75 Governors work hard to support the college. They help to uphold its standing locally and with the international maritime industries. The board annually reviews the college's mission and establishes clear strategic priorities for the college. A revised strategic plan for 1999 to 2002 was agreed at the July 1999 board meeting. In order to inform the strategic objectives, the board receives presentations from senior managers which include analyses of the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities relating to their areas of responsibilities. The board's active part in determining the college's strategic direction is included as a strength in the self-assessment report.

# Cross-college Provision

76 The governors considered their responsibilities and performance, based on the relevant terms of reference, in preparing the self-assessment report for the inspection. Governors have agreed work plans for the board and most committees, which identify key tasks for the year. The work plans are used to set targets for the board and the committees, and performance against them is reviewed to measure effectiveness.

## Management

### *Grade 2*

77 Inspectors and auditors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report.

#### Key strengths

- strong and trusted leadership
- clearly defined management structure
- active and effective academic board
- thorough strategic planning
- lead roles in regional partnerships
- good financial management

#### Weaknesses

- shortcomings in computerised management information systems
- slow progress in determining the unit costing of courses

78 The principal and vice-principals provide strong leadership which is trusted by staff in the college, and by those with whom the college has established relationships. The management structure is well understood by staff. These strengths are identified in the self-assessment report. Faculties and their constituent departments are managed effectively. Their managers are ably supported by a number of cross-college co-ordinators. All senior managers, including heads of faculty, have

cross-college responsibilities. Roles and duties are well defined. The senior management team's weekly meetings benefit from the firm chairmanship of the principal, who also monitors progress thoroughly. This team is at the hub of almost all college developments. Care is taken to effect change with the minimum disturbance to existing good practice. Decisions are communicated efficiently to most staff through heads of faculty. Some staff at the Hebburn site occasionally feel insufficiently informed. Most staff are fully aware of the main issues facing the college. They are proud of the college's achievements and its diversity of provision.

79 Strategic planning is thorough and well informed by detailed labour market information and analysis of needs. An informative summary of the college's strategic plan is provided to all staff. The industrial liaison unit is fully involved in planning. For example, it produced a comprehensive mid-year needs analysis for planning purposes in February 1999. The college's strategic plans are translated to operational plans at faculty level. Progress under faculty plans is monitored to assure the achievement of college targets. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that progress on determining the unit costing of each course has been slow and as a result, management decisions relating to internal resource distribution are not fully informed.

80 As the self-assessment report indicates, the large academic board is successful in promoting and developing academic issues across the college. There is healthy competition for membership in annual elections. Minutes of the academic board, including recommended actions, are widely available around the college. The academic board has established a wide range of subcommittees and working parties that are chaired by the principal or one of the vice-principals. They make regular reports and recommendations to the board and these are thoroughly debated. The general education



# Cross-college Provision

management team meets weekly to determine and implement policies relating to the college's general education courses. It provides a comprehensive report to the academic board annually. The core curriculum group also reports to the board and has successfully encouraged course teams to incorporate elements such as key skills in their provision.

81 Cross-college working groups have developed a number of succinct policies but the strategies for implementing these policies sometimes lack important information and measurable timescales. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college has been slow to implement some initiatives in a consistent way across the faculties.

82 The college is a trusted partner in many education and training initiatives in the region. It has taken a lead role in developing a wide range of liaison activities and collaborative arrangements. The principal represents the northern region colleges on the North East Regional Assembly. He represents the Tyne and Wear colleges on the board of Training Development Resource, which is a company set up by the major training providers in the area to establish a centre for engineering excellence. The college led a successful bid to the collaboration fund for £877,000 and this secured new engineering equipment for its six partner colleges. South Tyneside College declined to benefit from the bid. Tyneside TEC has directed single regeneration bid funding to the college as part of the government's New Start initiative.

83 Equality of opportunity is given a high priority in the college. The principal takes a lead role. He is supported effectively by an equal opportunities working party with wide representation from across the college. Good action plans are produced each year by the working parties. They take into account audits and surveys that assess progress in assuring equality of opportunity. Despite this good

practice, a disability statement summary which contains inappropriate terminology was widely distributed.

84 The college has improved its computerised management information system since the previous inspection but some aspects remain unsatisfactory. The accuracy of the centrally held data has been improved through the employment of specialist staff attached to each faculty. As a result, the quality of the reports which are produced by the system is improving. Curriculum managers continue to have insufficient access to the information held centrally. Some have developed their own databases. The information held in these often does not match central data. The college is developing its own local information network. At this early stage it is limited to course outline documents and some learning materials.

85 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good, a strength which is identified in the self-assessment report. The college is in a sound financial position. The principal and the director of finance monitor the monthly management accounts closely. Other members of the senior management team only receive financial reports on the areas for which they are responsible. The college has an appropriately qualified and experienced finance team. Appropriate objectives for the finance team are clearly defined. Reports from the internal and external auditors do not indicate any significant weaknesses in internal control. Financial regulations are clear and comprehensive. Budget holders receive timely reports of actual and committed expenditure against budget.

# Cross-college Provision

## Conclusions

86 The college's self-assessment report was thorough, clear and well written. Its preparation involved governors, and staff at all levels of the college. Inspectors found the report useful in planning the inspection. They found close correlation between their judgements and those of the college. By the time of the inspection, action had been identified or taken to address weaknesses included in the report. The profile of lesson observation grades resulting from the college's programme of observations closely matched that of inspectors. In one aspect of cross-college provision, inspectors considered that it had been over-rated. In all other aspects of cross-college provision, and in all curriculum areas, inspectors concurred with the grade suggested in the self-assessment report.

87 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 (July 1999)

Age	%
Under 16	0
16-18 years	16
19-24 years	17
25+ years	67
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 1999)

Level of study	%
Level 1 (foundation)	33
Level 2 (intermediate)	28
Level 3 (advanced )	32
Level 4/5 (higher)	7
Non-schedule 2	0
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	497	1,912	15
Agriculture	7	1	0
Construction	13	202	1
Engineering	1,584	4,579	39
Business	323	1,301	10
Hotel and catering	129	120	2
Health and community care	338	1,895	14
Art and design	190	613	5
Humanities	459	1,258	11
Basic education	80	448	3
Total	3,620	12,329	100

Source: college data

## Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 45% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July 1999)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	321	6	57	384
Supporting direct learning contact	76	3	1	80
Other support	194	31	1	226
Total	591	40	59	690

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



# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£20,185,000	£20,379,000	£21,613,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£18.85	£17.77	£17.25
Payroll as a proportion of income	74%	73%	70%
Achievement of funding target	108%	103%	101%
Diversity of income	36%	38%	41%
Operating surplus	-£384,000	-£454,000	-£290,000

Sources: Income - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

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

Payroll - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

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

Diversity of income - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

Operating surplus - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

### 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	979	1,327	915	3,358	2,118	2,058
	Retention (%)	93	93*	85	93*	88*	82
	Achievement (%)	62	59	69	63	70	76
2	Number of starters	1,059	1,305	1,260	875	1,086	1,503
	Retention (%)	79	79	76	77	73	68
	Achievement (%)	83	82	80	71	79	87
3	Number of starters	1,684	2,067	2,527	1,472	1,342	1,697
	Retention (%)	95	84*	82*	80	77	77
	Achievement (%)	76	79	82	85	75	87
4 or 5	Number of starters	2	24	32	114	141	196
	Retention (%)	100	92*	94	93*	91	92*
	Achievement (%)	100	88	96	88	75	91
Short courses	Number of starters	1,576	2,070	1,528	8,909	7,878	10,878
	Retention (%)	97	96	96	98	96	95
	Achievement (%)	95	90	92	93	88	90
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	2,302	1,893	1,327	3,545	2,550	2,252
	Retention (%)	93	95	89	96	91	96
	Achievement (%)	98	95	87	91	90	90

Source: ISR

\*ISR data may not be reliable

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