

# **Sheffield Environmental Training**

**Inspection of FEFC-funded provision  
in external institutions**

**June 2000**

**REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE  
1999-00**

## ***THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL***

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

### ***Reinspection***

*The FEFC has agreed that colleges with provision judged by the inspectorate to be less than satisfactory or poor (grade 4 or 5) should be reinspected. A college may have its funding agreement with the FEFC qualified to prevent it increasing the number of new students in an unsatisfactory curriculum area until the FEFC is satisfied that weaknesses have been addressed.*

*Reinspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Reinspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports and confirm that actions taken as a result of previous inspection have improved the quality of provision. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work they inspect. The opinion of the FEFC's audit service contributes to inspectorate judgements about governance and management.*

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## **GRADE DESCRIPTORS**

*The procedures for assessing quality are set out in the Council Circulars 97/12 and 97/22. During their inspection, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and other aspects 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*

*In the first two years of the current four-year cycle of inspections, 26 external institutions were inspected. A single grade was awarded for the overall quality of FEFC-funded provision in each institution. The grade profile is shown below.*

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
<b>8%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>4%</b>

**Source:** *Chief inspector's annual reports for 1997-98 and 1998-99. Grades were awarded using guidelines in Council Circular 97/12, Assessing Achievement*

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# Context

**External Institution 28/2000**

**Inspection of FEFC-funded provision in External Institutions**

**Sheffield Environmental Training**

**Inspected March 1998**

**Re-inspected July 1999**

**Re-inspected June 2000**

1 Sheffield Environmental Training is located near the centre of Sheffield. It was established in 1992 as part of the urban regeneration programme in the city. The institution currently employs four full-time and four part-time staff as well as using freelance teachers. Sheffield Environmental Training is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. Its mission is 'to provide quality vocational training in environmental industries and to empower students to progress to sustainable employment, enterprise and further education'. It is governed by a voluntary board of directors who are also trustees of the charity.

2 Sheffield Environmental Training programmes run from March to April. In 1999-2000, the establishment enrolled 41 students; of these 88% were over 25 and 15% were women. It provides a single programme of training in environmental conservation, accredited by City and Guilds (C&G) at National Vocational Qualification Level 2 and 3. In 1999-2000, the level of funding received from the FEFC was £63,583 for 4222 units with the average level of funding per unit being £15.06. The FEFC provides 43% of the establishment's income. Other income is derived from different sources, including the European

Social Fund, the City of Sheffield Single Regeneration Budget and the New Deal-Task Force.

3 At the previous re-inspection it was identified that there was a need to:

- develop an overall programme incorporating NVQ competences at level 3
- set clear learning objectives for lessons and activities at level 3
- produce a structured tutorial programme to help students complete portfolios at NVQ level 3
- raise the proportion of students achieving NVQ level 3 in the set time scale
- take steps to involve all students in theory lessons
- ensure all opportunities are taken to develop key skills
- develop individual learning programmes and action plans for all students
- develop arrangements for identifying and providing learning support needs and study skills
- improve retention rates
- develop systematic preparation for employment, self-employment and progression
- establish regular self-assessment
- implement a system of appraisal and planned staff development
- clearly allocate all management functions and improve the management of NVQ level 3.

4 Provision at the time of the previous re-inspection was judged to have weaknesses which clearly outweighed the strengths and was awarded a Grade 4.

# The Re-Inspection

5 The second re-inspection took place in June 2000. Three inspectors held meetings with the directors, the programme manager, the senior tutor, teachers and administrative staff. Relevant documentation was examined, including information about the courses and students' achievements. Inspectors observed ten lessons, held discussions with students and examined students' work. Of the lessons observed, 40% were judged to be good, 50% were satisfactory and 10% were unsatisfactory. The attendance rate of the students in lessons was 73% and the average class size was seven.

6 Since the last re-inspection the centre has made improvements to lesson planning and teachers make the objectives of lessons clear to students. In some good lessons, classroom discussion is well-handled. The centre makes good use of its links with local organisations and real work experience projects. Inspectors agree with the self-assessment report that there are good facilities for practical teaching. Students present well-organised portfolios in which evidence has been carefully evaluated by staff. There is a high pass rate at NVQ Level 2 for students who complete the course. The centre has introduced a tutorial system, which is valued by staff and students. One-to-one tutorials have improved students' understanding of the NVQ course and encouraged personal action planning. At Level 3 the theory component of the course is well-structured. However, the centre has not yet developed a plan to ensure that all the practical requirements of the course are met. The collection of information on students' basic skills needs

at the start of the course is inadequate for diagnostic purposes. There is an inadequate system for providing identified additional support. Students' study skills and key skills are not developed. These weaknesses are acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Links with the Sheffield Careers Service have been strengthened. Students now receive two sessions a year with a careers adviser. The centre also provides help to students in compiling curriculum vitae and letters of application for jobs.

7 The centre updated its self-assessment report in May 2000. The system of self-assessment is now seen by staff as an effective way of monitoring systematically the quality of the organisation. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report.

# Conclusions and Issues

8 The centre produced an action plan after the previous re-inspection and the following actions have been taken:

- improvements in the tutorial system
- increased support for students' progression to employment
- effective planning to improve course structure
- use of feedback from students to inform planning review and provision of the induction programme
- increase in the resources available for staff development and training
- introduction of an appraisal system for all staff
- allocation of clear management roles and responsibilities which are understood by all staff
- systematic monitoring of quality within the centre
- recruitment of additional teachers
- identification of standing items relating to personnel, finance, quality and safety for meetings of the board of directors and general staff meetings.

9 These developments have resulted in improvements to the quality of provision, although some significant weaknesses still remain. The number of students achieving the level 3 award remains low. However, there has been a slight improvement in 2000, with one student achieving the award. There has been a small decline in retention in 2000. Staff have devised a system for individual learning programmes and action plans for students. These have not yet been implemented. There has been some progress in arrangements for

identifying and providing learning support needs, for example, for literacy, numeracy and study skills.

10 To improve the quality of the FEFC-funded provision, the centre should:

- raise the proportion of students achieving NVQ level 3 in the time scale set
- improve retention rates
- implement effective initial assessment and guidance
- develop provision of basic and key skills
- implement the student individual action planning process.

11 The FEFC provision was judged to have satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses and was awarded a Grade 3.