

An Evaluation of the Work of the Inspectorate, 1999-2000
Report from the Inspectorate
The Further Education Funding Council
February 2001

The Further Education Funding Council

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

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

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.*

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Summary

In the college year 1999-2000, the inspectorate completed its work programme by inspecting: 112 sector colleges; Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) funded provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in 12 independent colleges; nine dance and drama schools, and further education provision in six external institutions and two higher education institutions. Inspectors also conducted three curriculum surveys, of agriculture, construction and business studies and worked with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) to undertake nine area-wide inspections of provision for 16 to 19 year old students. There were reinspections of 28 curriculum areas in 23 colleges where provision had previously been judged unsatisfactory and of 45 cross-college areas in 24 colleges. Inspectors provided briefing events for college staff, and training for part-time registered inspectors. They also contributed to the development of FEFC policy and initiatives in areas such as the standards fund, college accreditation, benchmarking and improving the quality of basic skills provision.

Colleges continued to comment favourably on their experience of inspection. Their evaluations confirmed that they generally found inspectors' judgements fair. In evaluations of inspection, 94% of responses from colleges indicated that they found the aspects of inspection they graded as satisfactory or better; 73% were graded good or outstanding. This compares with 95% satisfactory or better in 1998-99. Colleges appealed against 29 (2.5%) out of 1,184 grades awarded for inspected provision. Four grades were changed after a review of additional inspection evidence. The inspectorate exceeded its publication target for 1999-2000.

During 2000-01, the inspectorate will: complete its agreed work programme; continue to provide training programmes for inspectors and college nominees; provide support for colleges through the work of college inspectors; administer and monitor the use of the standards fund; contribute to FEFC initiatives that will help colleges raise the standard of their work.

The inspectorate will also continue to prepare thoroughly for the transfer of the inspectorate's work to the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI), and Ofsted in April 2001. The inspectorate will also contribute to preparations for the establishment of the national Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and 47 local LSCs.

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Introduction

1 The inspection arrangements of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) have been in operation since September 1993. The main purpose of this report is to provide an evaluation of the inspectorate's work during the college year 1999-2000. The report focuses primarily on the inspection of colleges in the further education sector. It was considered and recommended for publication by the quality assessment committee (QAC), which oversees the work of the inspectorate.

Background

2 *The Further and Higher Education Act 1992* requires that the FEFC shall:

- a. *'secure that provision is made for assessing the quality of education provided in institutions within the further education sector; and*
- b. *establish a committee, to be known as the 'quality assessment committee', with the function of giving advice on the discharge of their duty under paragraph (a) above and such other functions as may be conferred on the committee by the Council'.*

3 In order to meet its responsibilities for quality assessment, the FEFC established the inspectorate. The terms of reference of the inspectorate and the QAC are at annex A and further information about the inspectorate is included in annex B.

4 The purpose of inspection is to provide information and judgements that will enable the FEFC to fulfil its duties. Inspection also aims to promote continuous improvement in further education, raising standards and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors focus on the quality of students' learning, their standards of achievement and the effectiveness of colleges' arrangements to support the delivery of these. All the work inspected is assessed in terms of its strengths and weaknesses. Judgements about quality are summarised using grades which are awarded to each curriculum area inspected and to each cross-college area. Grades are awarded on a five-point scale, with grade 1 signifying provision which is outstanding and grade 5 signifying provision which is poor.

5 The QAC agrees the inspectorate's work programme and receives all inspection reports, including the chief inspector's annual report. Each year, the FEFC submits a report to the secretary of state on quality and standards in further education. This is based on an annual report from the QAC.

The Inspection Programme

6 The inspectorate's programme of work for 1999-2000 included inspections of:

- 112 colleges in the further education sector
- 12 independent establishments making provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- six external institutions
- nine dance and drama schools
- further education provision in two higher education institutions

- 28 curriculum areas in 23 colleges and 45 cross-college areas in 24 colleges where provision was previously judged to be unsatisfactory.

7 College inspections were carried out using the inspection framework set out in Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*. Prior to its inspection, each college was asked to assess and grade its provision, using *Validating Self-assessment* as a guide, and to prepare a self-assessment report. The scope of subsequent curriculum area inspections was determined on the basis of the college's self-assessments and the need to inspect a representative sample of work within the college and the sector as a whole. When planning their inspections, inspectors took into account other indicators of college performance held by the FEFC. Prior to inspection, each college was visited to check the validity of its data on student retention and achievement.

8 Each inspection team comprised full-time and registered part-time inspectors, and a member of the FEFC's audit service. Each team also included a college nominee, a representative of the senior staff of the college being inspected. The nominee was able to observe all aspects of the inspection and to bring factual information to the attention of the inspectors. On average, inspectors spent 45.5 working days, and auditors 4.9 days, assessing each of the further education colleges included in the 1999-2000 programme – a slight increase in days compared with the 1998-99 programme. This reflects, in the main, an increased emphasis on the inspection of literacy and numeracy during the year.

9 Inspectors observed and graded 9,577 lessons, involving 98,357 students, and scrutinised almost 22,200 examples of students' work. They awarded 634 grades for curriculum areas. They also awarded 550 grades for the five aspects of cross-college provision covered by the inspection framework: support for students, general resources, quality assurance, governance, and management.

10 The inspection programme included regular visits to each college by a designated college inspector. College inspector visits are designed to build up a knowledge of each college's work and its local context. The college inspectors also monitor the college's self-assessment process, implementation of the college's post-inspection action plan and targets set for student retention and achievement. They also offer guidance to colleges preparing for accreditation or making plans for quality improvement supported through the standards fund for further education.

11 Inspectors carried out curriculum surveys of agriculture, construction and business studies. They carried out surveys on open and distance learning, teaching theory in practically based subjects and tutorial work. In addition, they surveyed aspects of college management including: college action plans; measures to combat social exclusion; governing bodies and quality; improving retention and achievement; supporting part-time teachers; using value-added data; target-setting; and the introduction of plans for curriculum 2000.

Joint Working with Other Inspectorates

12 The inspectorate worked in close partnership with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Training Standards Council (TSC) in the nine area inspections carried out during 1999-2000. In addition, the inspectorate carried out joint inspections with the TSC in 49 colleges. Four inspectors joined teams, set up by the chief inspector of prisons, to inspect the provision of education and training in 12 prisons.

College Responses to Inspection

13 All colleges are asked, but not obliged, to evaluate their inspection and to return their assessment to the FEFC. Evaluations provide an opportunity for colleges to grade and comment on aspects of their inspection. Colleges' evaluations are considered by regional inspection teams and copied to the chief inspector's office for analysis. They help the inspectorate assess what may need to be done to improve the quality and consistency of its work. Colleges' views are sought in two stages:

- on completion of their inspection
- after receiving the inspection report, when they are considering subsequent actions.

14 In 1998-99, 64% of inspected colleges responded with completed evaluation forms. This level of returns was considered insufficient by the inspectorate. Action was therefore taken to set and meet a target for returns in 1999-2000. As indicated below, the target was exceeded with returns from 82% of inspected colleges received by the end of August 2000.

Issue addressed in 1999-2000

The inspectorate aimed to ensure that at least 75% of inspected colleges return their evaluation forms.

Progress made in 1999-2000

The inspectorate put in place a number of strategies to achieve an improved response rate from colleges. This included standardising regional approaches to request the return of evaluation forms and reviewing the data entry system which records response information. By the end of August 2000, 82% of inspected colleges returned their evaluation forms, exceeding the inspectorate's target.

15 Colleges were invited to assess 13 aspects of inspection by assigning grades to each of them on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being outstanding and 5 being poor). Colleges awarded a total of 1,085 grades for their inspections, of which 94% indicated that they found the graded aspect of inspection satisfactory or better. This compares similarly with 95% in 1998-99. Table 1 provides a summary of grades awarded by colleges, for each aspect assessed.

Table 1. Summary of colleges' graded responses included in stage 1 evaluations of inspections, 1999-2000

Aspect of inspection	% assessed to be outstanding or good	% assessed to be satisfactory	% assessed to be less than satisfactory
The quality of links with the inspectorate	76	17	7
The length of notice for receipt of the self-assessment report at FEFC	68	27	5
The length of notice for receipt of student achievement data at FEFC	59	36	5
The appropriateness of the selection of curriculum areas to be graded	55	38	7
The management of the inspection	79	11	10
The clarity of guidance about the inspection	78	15	7
The value of meetings between members of the inspection team, staff and other representatives	78	15	7
The effectiveness of communication between inspectorate and college during the inspection week	79	13	8
The value of having a college nominee	98	2	0
The appropriateness of the scope and scale of the inspection	60	29	11
The professionalism of the inspectorate team	77	16	7
The quality of the feedback	71	22	7

Note: percentages subject to rounding. Sample size = 92 colleges.

16 Analysis of college evaluations confirmed that there was no significant relationship between grades awarded by inspectors during an inspection and subsequent grades awarded by the college when evaluating the inspection. There were no significant regional variations in grades awarded by colleges, and no significant differences in grades awarded by different types of college. Analysis of grade profiles suggests that colleges most valued:

- having a college nominee
- the professionalism of the inspectorate team
- the management of inspections
- the clarity of guidance given about inspections
- the quality of links with the inspectorate
- the length of notice for receipt of the self-assessment report at the FEFC
- the effectiveness of communication between the inspectorate and the college during the inspection week
- meetings between members of the inspection team and college staff and other representatives
- the quality of feedback on inspection findings.

17 Colleges had the most concerns about:

- the length of notice given for receipt of student achievement data at the FEFC
- the appropriateness of the scope and scale of inspections
- the selection of curriculum areas to be graded
- joint inspections.

18 In the second stage of evaluation, colleges were invited to assess five aspects of their inspection. Only a small number of colleges chose to return these evaluations. The use of the stage two questionnaire was reviewed during 1999-2000. It was decided to retain this to enable colleges to express the value of inspection reports if they were keen to do this. A summary of college responses to the stage two questionnaire in 1999-2000 is set out in table 2. As in previous years, it indicates that all aspects assessed were judged to be satisfactory or better by the great majority of colleges. All respondents indicated that their inspection report had been used to support staff development within their college.

Table 2. Summary of colleges' graded responses included in stage two evaluations of inspections, 1999-2000

Aspect of inspection	% assessed to be outstanding or good	% assessed to be satisfactory	% assessed to be less than satisfactory
The usefulness of the inspection to the college	63	25	12
The consistency between the interim feedback to the college and the published report	56	25	19
The clarity of the published report	88	12	0
The consistency between the inspection report and the FEFC's audit report	71	14	15
The clarity of issues to be addressed by the college	50	50	0

Note: percentages subject to rounding. Sample size = 16 colleges.

19 Colleges' evaluative assessments and comments provide a useful input to the inspectorate's own internal quality assurance arrangements. The analysis of evaluations is considered by the inspectorate's quality monitoring group and proposed actions are approved by the chief inspector's/senior inspectors' committee. The analysis is also presented to the quality assessment committee.

20 An account of actions taken during 1999-2000 on issues previously raised through college evaluations is shown below.

Issues identified for the inspectorate to address in 1999-2000

The consistency of support and guidance given to colleges in the preparation of their self-assessment

Action taken: Guidance for college inspectors was reviewed and updated.

Ways of minimising any disruption caused by changes in personnel allocated to inspection teams

Action taken: Additional guidance on interpreting aspects of the Inspection Handbook covered this point.

The best mechanisms for the interaction of the audit service and the inspectorate in the inspection of governance and management

Action taken: These issues were considered by the inspection and reporting group. A new guidance note on inspectors and auditors inspecting governance was issued to inspectors and auditors.

The ethnic and gender mix of inspection teams, and their awareness of cultural diversity issues

Action taken: A new form of monitoring the gender and ethnicity of inspection teams was introduced and is now an integral part of the regular reports to senior inspectors on usage of part-time inspectors.

The basis of selection of curriculum areas to be inspected and the clarity of the rationale of choices given to colleges

Action taken: Additional guidance issued to inspectors on interpreting aspects of the Inspection Handbook covered this point.

The apparent negative impact of a small number of inspectors' approaches

Action taken: In addition to the usual support and monitoring of inspectors' work by the reporting inspector and senior inspector, arrangements were made for reporting inspectors to be informed if part-time inspectors on their team are newly trained inspectors or if previous assessments of their performance indicate they need further support.

The importance of the reporting inspector dealing rapidly with the limited number of problems as soon as they arise

Action taken: It was considered that the usual arrangements for managing inspectors cover this.

Reporting arrangements for cross-college aspects

Action taken: It was considered that the usual arrangements for managing inspections cover this.

Consistency in inspectorate practice and effective teamworking

Action taken: Further guidance notes issued to inspectors, and regular reviews of college inspections address these matters.

21 The outcomes of evaluations returned in 1999-2000 were considered during the autumn term of 2000-01. It was agreed by the chief inspector's/senior inspectors' committee that, in view of the termination of the FEFC inspectorate's work in March 2001, significant policy changes would not be appropriate. However, the committee determined that, in the

interim, all regional inspection teams should consider the analysis of college evaluations. Regional teams were directed to take particular note of the many positive written comments in colleges' evaluations, as well as those indicating a need to review:

- continuity in college and reporting inspectors in the few months leading up to inspection
- the best mechanism for the interaction of the audit service and the inspectorate
- the selection of areas to be inspected
- training and supporting new college and reporting inspectors, and part-time inspectors
- arrangements for feeding back, including on cross-college areas of inspection
- meetings with governors
- joint inspections
- those few cases where colleges express concern about their inspection, to see if there are common factors involved.

22 Subsequent actions taken by regional teams should be within the current framework of guidance for inspections and should be recorded.

Appeals Against Inspection Grades

23 The willingness of inspectors to discuss their inspection findings openly with college staff continues to ensure that colleges understand how judgements have been reached by inspectors and the great majority of inspections run smoothly. Nevertheless, a few colleges each year are unhappy with their inspection or its outcomes. Colleges are entitled to appeal against judgements made by inspectors according to procedures agreed by the FEFC and published in the *Inspection Handbook* and Council Circulars 96/24, *Conduct of the Council's Business* and 96/25, *Complaints about the Council's Administration*. They may appeal successively to the:

- regional senior inspector (about judgements or the process of inspection)
- chief inspector (about judgements or the process of inspection)
- chief executive of the FEFC (about the process of inspection)
- FEFC's ombudsman (about the process of inspection).

24 Colleges wishing to appeal against inspection judgements are required to provide additional evidence to support their appeal. This is reviewed together with existing evidence and, if appropriate, additional inspection is arranged.

25 The inspectorate monitors appeals as part of its quality assurance arrangements. Of the colleges inspected in 1999-2000, 16 (14%) appealed against one or more of the grades awarded. The majority appealed against only one grade. In total, appeals were received against 29 grades (2.5% of those awarded). This is a lower ratio of appeals than in 1998-99. Appeals in 1999-2000 comprised:

- 14 curriculum grades
- 15 grades for aspects of cross-college provision.

26 Tables 3 and 4 give a more detailed breakdown of the appeals. Overall, 24% of the appeals related to provision already judged by inspectors to be good (grade 2). The data indicate that there has been a further decline in appeals against judgements about governance and management. In 1999-2000 these appeals represented only 21% of the total grades appealed against compared with 51% in 1998-99 and 67% in 1997-98. This is taken as one indicator of a growing realism on the part of senior managers and governors about these aspects of college operations.

Table 3. Graded aspects of provision subject to appeal, 1999-2000

	Grades subject to Appeal (no.)
Curriculum areas	14 (14)
Support for students	4 (4)
General resources	1 (1)
Quality assurance	4 (2)
Governance	3 (12)
Management	3 (10)
Total	29 (43)

Note: figures in brackets are for 1998-99

Table 4. Distribution of grades subject to appeal, 1999-2000

	Grades subject to appeal (no.)
Grade 2 awarded	7 (11)
Grade 3 awarded	11 (17)
Grade 4 awarded	10 (12)
Grade 5 awarded	1 (3)
Total	29 (43)

Note: figures in brackets are for 1998-99

27 Consistent procedures were followed in dealing with all appeals. Of the 29 appeals received from the 16 colleges:

- 19 were resolved by regional senior inspectors
- nine were referred to the chief inspector (including eight from one college)
- one was withdrawn
- four grades were amended as a result of appeals.

Publication of Inspection Reports

28 The inspectorate has a target of publishing 85% of college inspection reports within 10 working weeks of the inspection. In 1999-2000, the inspectorate exceeded this target, publishing 92% of reports within 10 working weeks of the relevant inspection. Eight reports were delayed by appeals and one because the college had difficulty supplying statistics for publication at the annex of the report.

Follow-up to Inspections

29 Colleges are requested to draw up an action plan following the publication of their inspection report. They have up to four months to respond to this request. Each action plan is evaluated by the inspectorate to see whether it realistically addresses the issues identified in the inspection report. College inspectors monitor and record the progress each college is making in achieving the objectives set out in its action plan.

30 Since 1994-95, arrangements have been in place to restrict growth in the number of students studying in curriculum areas judged to be unsatisfactory during college inspections. These restrictions are lifted if reinspection indicates that the quality of provision has improved sufficiently. The arrangements have proved to be a powerful incentive for colleges to address weaknesses in provision. During 1999-2000, 28 curriculum areas in 23 colleges were reinspected. In all but six of these reinspections, previously unsatisfactory provision was judged to be satisfactory.

The Council's Internal Audit of Procedures for Evaluating Inspections

31 A review of the arrangements for obtaining, analysing and taking account of colleges' evaluations of inspections was carried out in May 1999 by BKL Weeks Green, the Council's provider of internal audit services.

32 The internal auditors concluded that there were adequate controls to achieve the objectives the Council has set for the system for obtaining, analysing and taking into account colleges' evaluations of inspections. They did, however, make a number of recommendations for improving the system.

Issues addressed in 1999-2000

The inspectorate has responded to internal auditors' recommendations with an action plan to effect improvements to the system.

Progress made in 1999-2000

- *set targets for the proportion of college evaluation forms returned*
- *set timescales for the return of evaluation forms across regions*
- *produced an interim national report on colleges' evaluations that was considered by the inspection and reporting group before the inspection programme for 2000-01 began*
- *included in the annual report to the QAC, an analysis of the previous year's responses, a report on the actions taken as a result, an analysis of the current year's responses and a report on any further action required*
- *standardised the regions' approaches to colleges, for example using standard letters to request the return of evaluation form*
- *established a system for entering data from colleges evaluation forms efficiently between the regions and the central inspectorate office.*

The actions summarised above addressed each element in the agreed action plan. On presentation of evidence relating to all actions in August 2000, the FEFC audit service signed off the actions as complete.

Policy and Other Developments During the Year

33 The inspectorate makes a significant contribution to the development of FEFC policies and initiatives on quality. During 1999-2000, for example, inspectors:

- worked in close collaboration with Ofsted and the TSC to develop a common post-16 framework for inspections from April 2001
- contributed to the development of Council policy and initiatives in areas such as the standards fund, college accreditation, benchmarking, including extending these arrangements to over 350 providers of further education funded by the Council that are not sector colleges
- contributed to implementation of the recommendations in Sir Claus Moser's report on basic skills, *Improving Literacy and Numeracy: A fresh start*, in order to help the sector improve the standards and quality of its literacy and numeracy provision.

34 The inspectorate has links with a wide range of external organisations, including those concerned with particular areas of the curriculum and with educational policy-making. There is regular liaison with the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA), which includes briefings on the outcomes of the work of the inspectorate. In 1999-2000, the inspectorate also contributed to over 200 events organised by FEDA and other organisations.

Conclusions

35 In 1999-2000, the inspectorate fulfilled its terms of reference by:

- inspecting and reporting on the quality of provision in 112 further education colleges
- inspecting 12 independent colleges making provision, funded by the Council, for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- inspecting six external institutions funded by the Council and nine dance and drama schools
- inspecting further education provision in two higher education institutions
- conducting national surveys on agriculture, construction and business
- reinspecting 28 curriculum areas in 23 colleges and 45 cross-college aspects in 24 colleges
- publishing the chief inspector's sixth annual report.

36 In addition, the inspectorate achieved its objectives, and the objectives set by the QAC, by:

- maintaining a programme of college inspector visits
- training full-time and part-time registered inspectors in each of the programme areas
- continuing training for college nominees
- contributing to a range of Council policy and guidance documents, and initiatives associated with quality
- continuing its programme of training sector staff to become part-time registered inspectors
- contributing to staff training events organised by FEDA and other organisations
- maintaining links with external bodies associated with curriculum development and quality assessment
- inviting colleges to evaluate inspections and responding to these with actions to improve inspection
- dealing with challenges to its judgements through agreed procedures
- meeting its target for publishing inspection reports
- assessing and assuring the quality of its own work.

37 During 2000-01 the inspectorate aims to:

- complete its work programme for the year
- keep the quality of its work under review
- conduct area-wide inspections of 16 to 19 year old students in conjunction with Ofsted and the TSC
- make thorough preparations for the changes outlined in the *Learning and Skills Act 2000*, by working towards transition to new arrangements involving the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI), Ofsted and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

Terms of Reference

The inspectorate's terms of reference

The inspectorate's terms of reference, as agreed by the Council, are:

- a. to assess standards and trends across the further education sector and advise the Council, its committees and working groups on the performance of the sector overall;
- b. to prepare and publish reports on individual institutions;
- c. to identify and make more widely known good practice and promising developments in further education and draw attention to weaknesses that require attention;
- d. to provide advice and assistance to those with responsibility for, or in, institutions in the sector, through day-to-day contacts, its contribution to training, and its publications;
- e. to keep abreast of international developments in post-school education and training.

The quality assessment committee's terms of reference

The quality assessment committee's terms of reference are:

- a. to advise the Council on the quality of education provided:
 - i. in institutions within the sector
 - ii. in institutions for whose activities the FEFC provides, or is considering providing, financial support (in which respect, it will be necessary to have regard to the advice from local education authorities, the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools and the Higher Education Funding Council for England);
- b. to recommend to the Council and keep under review methods for assessing quality;
- c. to receive assessment reports on the quality of education and advise on any necessary action;
- d. to report annually to the Council, including an evaluation of the overall quality of education in the sector;
- e. to advise on other matters as requested from time to time by the Council.

The Inspectorate

In 1999-2000, the organisation of the inspectorate was, in the main, unchanged. The inspectorate comprised 74 full-time inspectors, two inspectors with fractional posts, nine senior inspectors and the chief inspector.

Inspectors work in regional teams and are members of national curriculum teams aligned to the FEFC's 10 programme areas. Each regional team is managed by a senior inspector. Regional teams within the inspectorate liaise with other Council directorates.

Full-time inspectors were supported in their work by part-time registered inspectors. On 1 September 1999, there were 318 part-time inspectors on register. On 1 September 2000, there were 338. Fifty-seven part-time inspectors achieved registration during 1999-2000. Twenty-five withdrew from the register, and a further 14 were removed after a review of the register and there were two new registrations for 2000-01.

The cost of the inspectorate in the financial year 1999-2000 was £6.9 million, representing approximately 27% of the FEFC's running costs and 0.2% of the overall programme budget for further education provision of about £3.3 billion.

Training

The inspectorate continued to provide training programmes for full-time and part-time registered inspectors. The inspectorate's annual conference took place in September 1999 followed by a national conference for part-time registered inspectors. In January 2000 a briefing event was held for inspectors on the standards fund. A further event was held with the TSC in September 1999 on joint inspections. Training was also provided for full-time and part-time inspectors on inspecting literacy and numeracy across colleges to support the inspectorate's initiative in this area.

In October 1999, a three-day briefing, training and assessment event was run for 13 prospective part-time registered inspectors and 13 new full-time inspectors. Of the 13 part-time registered inspectors that took part, 11 were registered, one failed to reach the required standard and one withdrew.

During 1999-2000, 72 part-time inspectors were awaiting completion of training. Of these 72, 57 successfully achieved registration before 31 August 2000, four failed to reach the required standard, seven withdrew. Four are still to complete training.

Monitoring the inspectorate's work

There were regular meetings of regional and programme area groups. These groups meet at least once a term. Regional inspection teams are expected to meet every six weeks. Their agendas include fixed items such as:

- briefings and information from the chief inspector and senior inspectors' committee

- updates on issues, including the standards fund, accreditation, arrangements for transition to ALI, Ofsted and LSC
- the programme for, and management of, college inspections
- the deployment and use of part-time registered inspectors
- the profile of grades awarded during inspections
- evaluation of college inspections
- the development and management of national surveys.

The inspectorate has an inspection and reporting group with a small working group (the quality monitoring group) which monitors the quality of the inspectorate's work and advises the chief inspector accordingly.

The chief inspector and senior inspectors meet on a monthly basis. Their meetings include items on all aspects of the inspectorate's work in the context of the Council's corporate plan and preparation for the changes heralded in the *Learning and Skills Bill* and the subsequent Act. Senior inspectors also regularly review expenditure and progress against the objectives in the inspectorate's operational plan, and report on these to the FEFC.