

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

**Good Practice
Report**

September 1997

Careers Education and Guidance


**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

The Further Education Funding Council 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 every four years. It also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and gives advice to the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

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SUMMARY

Colleges increasingly recognise the need to provide careers education and guidance of high quality. Improvements have been made in the majority of colleges but it is rare to find all the aspects of good practice which have been identified operating in one college. For example, in some colleges students applying to higher education receive more support than those seeking to enter employment.

Most colleges have improved their methods of providing information to students entering college. Many now have student services located at the entrance to the college. However, few colleges have sufficient trained staff to deliver careers guidance, especially at peak enrolment times. Many colleges claim that the careers advice they give is impartial. Such claims are more likely to be substantiated where a college can demonstrate successful networking arrangements with schools, other colleges, the careers service and a range of appropriate outside agencies.

Many colleges now offer a careers education programme to all their full-time students, but only to some of their part-time students. Careers education and guidance is offered either as part of the curriculum or as part of tutorial programmes. Careers education programmes within the curriculum usually contain an appropriate variety of activities, including talks from visiting speakers, visits, presentations on the training required for particular careers and opportunities to develop skills such as decision-making.

In the best practice, colleges have up-to-date resources and students are able to use appropriate computer programmes. In addition to careers education programmes, most colleges offer one-to-one guidance interviews for students, either with a member of the college staff or with an adviser from the local careers service. Fewer colleges have effectively incorporated careers education and guidance into

tutorial programmes or made it sufficiently relevant to the needs of individual students. Where it is working well, students have a careers action plan which is monitored regularly and which includes an analysis of their relevant work experience.

Generally, colleges have effective systems for helping students to gain places in higher education. They are less effective in helping students who are seeking employment. Students on vocational courses are more likely to be given information on methods of gaining employment than those on general education courses. Equal opportunities issues are being addressed in innovative ways in a few colleges. Careers education for students with learning difficulties is usually provided as part of the curriculum though some colleges pay insufficient attention to supporting these students when they leave college. Only a handful of colleges monitor their careers education and guidance against appropriate standards and performance indicators.

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INTRODUCTION

1 Recently, colleges have worked hard to improve the careers education and guidance which they provide. There has been growing awareness of the need for this, particularly since the publication of the government's papers on competitiveness (*Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win*, HMSO, 1994; *Competitiveness: Forging Ahead*, HMSO, 1995; *Competitiveness: Creating the Enterprise Centre of Europe*, HMSO, 1996), and the Department for Education and Employment's publication, *Better Choices: Putting Principles Into Practice* (1995). The need to address careers education and guidance has become more urgent since *The Education Act 1997* places new legal duties on colleges to work with the careers service. A guidance circular (6/97) entitled *Careers Education and Guidance in Further Education Colleges* has been issued by the DfEE. It summarises the requirements on colleges in respect of careers education and guidance resulting from the *Education Act 1997*. The National Advisory Council for Careers and Educational Guidance is currently working on developing standards for careers guidance and the Advice, Guidance and Counselling lead body has produced a framework of qualifications. Colleges are providing for a wider range of clients than hitherto and many are aware of the importance of careers guidance in improving retention rates and standards of achievement. The further education sector's contribution to the national targets for education and training is expected to include advice to students which enables them, as individuals, to make appropriate choices in respect of their training and employment. Despite the higher profile of careers education and guidance, however, many young people and adults still find it difficult to obtain good-quality information and guidance.

2 The legal requirement for colleges to produce a student charter includes the right of students to careers advice. The implementation of the charter is monitored during college inspections. A joint

Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) report, *16 to 19 Guidance*, published in 1994, identified a number of areas in which improvements were needed. These included collaboration between institutions, the development of student action plans and the priority accorded to work-related activities and staff training. The FEFC funding methodology is centred on three key stages for students' learning at college: on entry, on programme and at exit. Colleges are required to demonstrate that there is appropriate guidance which leads to a learner agreement. Inspection reports include a section on students' support.

3 The FEFC acknowledges the national work taking place in many organisations to map current practice and set standards. One closely allied piece of work is the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA) project report, *On Course For Next Steps: Careers Education and Guidance for Students in FE*. It identifies different approaches to careers education and guidance and maps the relative roles of careers services and college personnel. The report examines how colleges monitor their service and identifies areas for development. This FEDA report, and the work being carried out by the Careers Service Quality Assurance and Development Unit, also focuses on service level agreements between careers services and colleges.

4 The present report sets out what is meant by good practice in careers education and guidance within colleges in the further education sector. Specific examples and case studies are used to demonstrate the successful practice that helps students to make effective choices and progress to more advanced further education courses, higher education or employment. The report examines how equitable the access to good-quality careers education and guidance is for different groups of students: full-time and part-time students, school-leavers, adults, students on different levels of course, students

with learning difficulties, students who wish to progress to a more advanced further education course, those who want to apply to higher education and those whose objective is to enter employment directly from college.

5 The report is based on published college inspection reports and notes of visits compiled by college inspectors during their regular visits to colleges. It also draws on evidence obtained from inspectors' additional visits to a small number of colleges to look at particular schemes in greater depth. Good work is going on in a large number of colleges across the sector though it is rare to see all the aspects of good practice, which are identified in this report, operating in any one college.

WHAT IS GOOD-QUALITY CAREERS EDUCATION AND GUIDANCE?

6 Good-quality careers education and guidance is planned as a process which takes place throughout a student's time in college. The former Unit for the Development of Adult and Continuing Education (UDACE) described the process as:

- **informing** – the impartial presentation of information
- **advising** – helping the student to choose the most appropriate option
- **counselling** – working with the student to help them clarify their career aims and tackle any difficulties
- **assessing** – using informal and formal assessments to help the student understand their personal, social and vocational development in order to make good choices

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- **enabling** – supporting the student in dealing with complex or difficult information and in making applications to employers, colleges or other agencies
 - **advocating** – negotiating on behalf of the student
 - **reviewing** – using data to show students the range of alternatives available.

7 Colleges which offer good-quality careers education and guidance are likely to be practising most, if not all, of these activities. Their provision will include many of the following elements:

- a college policy on careers education and guidance, which includes a statement of the entitlement for part-time and full-time students
- a centrally co-ordinated curriculum framework supported by training and guidance for staff
- quality standards which are monitored systematically
- resource banks of good-quality learning materials
- well-qualified specialist teams
- service level agreements with a local careers service which meet the college's requirements, including the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- direct involvement of employers and higher education representatives
- careers education and guidance which is integrated with other aspects of the curriculum, a structured tutorial programme which includes careers education, or a combination of the two

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- a balance of careers-related activities extending across a student's learning programme, with a particular emphasis on specialised guidance or support at the exit stage
 - strategies for ensuring that part-time students in community-based provision receive their entitlement
 - up-to-date information on the local job market which is available to tutors and students
 - the collection, analysis and use of data on participation, retention and destinations to inform and improve careers education and guidance.

PRE-ENROLMENT INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

Provision

8 Colleges which are operating effective entry and enrolment procedures give a high priority to providing guidance which is impartial and which takes account of each individual's circumstances. In the best examples, staff help entrants to make appropriate choices not only by discussing with them the courses available, but also by helping them to consider the alternatives for further study or employment which may be available on successful completion of each course. Many colleges have improved the quality of the information they give by making it more accurate and more easily understood by students. Several colleges have located their student services close to reception in order to provide a welcoming centre for students which offers information and guidance on courses and advice on benefits. However, few colleges have sufficient trained staff to give good-quality guidance, particularly at times of peak

demand from students. In addition to careers specialists, some colleges have a team of staff drawn from several disciplines across the institution who are trained to offer general course guidance. Colleges are better able to demonstrate that the advice they give is impartial when they have made substantial efforts to gather information and advice by co-operating with other providers and with the relevant agencies.

Example 1a. A sixth form college in the North West region has staff from the local further education college present at its enrolment days and students are able to receive guidance on a wide range of study options.

Example 1b. At a further education college in Yorkshire and Humberside, the careers education and guidance unit is situated in the main foyer, next to the general reception and admissions area. Its glass frontage, opening onto the foyer, is welcoming and attractive. There are careers staff on the three main sites of the college and for other venues there are community education guidance workers.

Example 1c. A further education college in Yorkshire and Humberside has trained its interviewers. They must ask certain questions; for example, 'does the student know what progression routes are available and which are the typical routes that previous students have taken?'

Example 1d. At a sixth form college in Greater London the careers staff conducted some productive one-to-one counselling of students who were still unsure about their choice of course. They were careful to strike a balance between students' interests, aptitudes and abilities and they were well versed in the provision offered by other institutions in the area.

Example 1e. At a tertiary college in the West Midlands, potential students received advice from staff of the local careers service and from college careers staff in their own schools. Students said that this advice played an important part in deciding their final course of study.

Publicity

9 Colleges are becoming more skilled at publicising their provision: publicity materials are being aimed at identifiable groups of potential students; the literature takes greater account of the user, is more readable and easy to understand; and more varied forms of advertising, including videos, newspaper advertisements, market stalls, and posters on hoardings and buses, are being used to reach a wider public. Many colleges are now producing attractive prospectuses that aim to raise awareness of the opportunities in further education rather than simply to provide information about courses. Such prospectuses are often supplemented by leaflets designed to provide more detailed information on courses or to cater for particular audiences. A few colleges have reorganised their publicity to help students to relate courses to career pathways. In the following example, one college has organised its prospectus around a careers perspective.

Example 2. A tertiary college in the North West region has renamed its main prospectus 'Turning Ideas Into Careers'. Under each subject section the focus has moved from listing the programmes available to highlighting the main career areas. Courses have been re-grouped accordingly. There is a section called 'Media, Entertainment and Leisure' which lists job areas such as theatre, leisure management and arts administration. The course list, which is organised by level, then includes everything from general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) English to relevant national vocational qualifications (NVQs), general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) and City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) courses.

10 Few colleges have sufficient measures in place to ensure that adequate information and guidance is available for specific groups of learners such as speakers of other languages or students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Information on courses and careers is more likely to be translated into minority languages in colleges with a substantial number of students from minority ethnic communities. In some cases, bilingual guidance workers are also available to work with students and parents by making home visits and attending open evenings. A small number of colleges have careers and course information available in a form suitable for students with particular physical or sensory disabilities and some have modified the information to make it easier to understand for those who have difficulties reading complex language.

Example 3a. A college in Greater London ensures that staff with signing skills are available during enrolment. Guidance staff who speak languages other than English are identified through their badges.

Example 3b. A college in the North West region has a Mencap Pathway Employment Service based on the college campus. Close links have been developed with a range of local employers and students are helped and supported by the service as they take up employment. Currently, 21 students have been found placements and are being supported in the workplace.

Transition for School-leavers

11 Transition to post-school education or training for school-leavers is easier where there are well-established links between schools and colleges. Many colleges and schools have co-operated in developing programmes which enable pupils and their parents to find out what the college can offer. Curriculum links between school and college departments, and 'taster' courses, can provide useful opportunities for pupils to learn more about the options open to them. The examples below demonstrate some of the ways in which colleges have tried to help 16-year-old pupils to make their choices.

Example 4a. A further education college in the North West region runs workshops in the local schools. The aim is to raise awareness of the opportunities in further education, including subsequent career opportunities, rather than to sell the college's own courses. The work is carried out in small groups and this enables young people to explore their own needs.

Example 4b. All school-leavers bring a careers service action plan with them to college and this forms a useful basis for discussion at interview.

Example 4c. The ‘taster’ course at a sixth form college in the Northern Region enables young people to sample up to six different subjects before they enrol. They are allocated a personal tutor during the course and the same tutor remains with them if and when they start college.

Example 4d. A sixth form college in the West Midlands has partnerships with 11 local schools under which it provides careers guidance for pupils from year 7 onwards. Year 10 pupils visit the college and are shown around by students who are ex-pupils of the school. Year 11 pupils have the opportunity to discuss subject choices and careers with key staff from the college’s departments. They can also attend college as part of their school work experience programme. Potential students are referred to the neighbouring general further education college if it is felt that this best meets their career aspirations. A conference for new students, held each July, provides a further opportunity to discuss subject choices and careers.

Mature Students

12 For some time, the majority of students in many general further education colleges have been adult students, and most colleges, including many sixth form colleges, now recruit adults. Many colleges employ adult guidance workers who incorporate careers advice into their work or refer students to a trained careers adviser. Some colleges have flexible curriculum arrangements and good liaison with other organisations which help adults who may be thinking of returning to education or training. Some run advice and information sessions in job centres, shopping centres and other community venues as well as on employers’ premises. Creches are

sometimes available at college enrolment sessions. In the best practice, adults are encouraged to take time to match all the information on courses and career paths against their individual needs and circumstances. Skilled college staff are able to provide guidance on the financial implications of study, the accreditation of prior learning and second chance courses for those who are unsure or who need an introductory course. In some of the weaker pre-enrolment guidance sessions which were observed by inspectors, mature students were referred to subject specialists who gave them information rather than guidance and who tended to focus on courses designed primarily for young people.

Example 5a. Mature students interviewed during the inspection of a further education college in Yorkshire and Humberside felt they had been given clear, helpful and impartial advice. They were particularly appreciative of the opportunity to sample a number of programmes before making a decision.

Example 5b. A further education college in the East Midlands rents shop premises to provide advice in the summer. Staff visit local RAF camps, and field workers from the access team visit groups in the community to provide advice and guidance.

Example 5c. At an adult residential college, students were choosing modules on a diploma course in the context of their longer-term career goals. Many were interested in social work and the college had arranged talks from a social worker and related professions. This widened the students' interest in other options and gave them a more realistic view of social work.

Example 5d. At a further education college in the South West region, careers staff visited adult basic education classes in 'outreach centres' to discuss the next steps which students should take, in terms of courses and career goals. A careers guidance session for the class was followed by discussion with individual students. Students also had access to a database on training.

Example 5e. A tertiary college in the West Midlands has a policy and procedures for assessing and accrediting students' prior achievements. An initial assessment takes place at enrolment and this is used to guide students in their selection of courses. The procedure enables some students on management, administration, information technology and motor vehicle courses to achieve their qualifications over a shorter period of time than is normal.

Example 5f. A further education college in the Northern Region runs 'advice days'. There is an advice desk staffed by the local careers service and childcare facilities are provided. The college staff involved in these advice days receive appropriate training and work to guidelines. All teachers giving general advice to applicants are receiving extra training to ensure they have sufficient knowledge about careers.

MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Organisation of Careers within Colleges

13 Colleges are making progress in developing policies for careers education and guidance. Some provide a written statement of the advice and support which students are entitled to receive and have a careers programme together with a description of how the programme is to be delivered. Key features of well-organised careers guidance are: effective liaison between the college's central services and curriculum areas; clear descriptions of the roles of careers guidance advisers, subject staff and personal tutors; and understanding on the part of staff and students of the person responsible for monitoring a student's career plan. In some colleges, careers advisers who have an up-to-date knowledge of the curriculum are attached to specific departments. They attend departmental meetings and employers' boards and provide a particularly effective service to students.

14 In some colleges, careers education and guidance is a haphazard affair. Some students receive a good level of support; others, particularly those who do not take the initiative in seeking advice, receive little guidance. One college produced a careers policy in April 1994 but it was not implemented consistently across curriculum departments or between sites. It has now established a 'careers network', a college-wide group with representatives from each teaching area and the student support team, including two careers advisers, to develop and deliver careers education.

15 A small number of colleges have set standards and developed quality assurance procedures for their careers work. However, the majority of colleges give inadequate attention to careers education and guidance in their strategic plans and monitoring procedures.

Example 6. A further education college in Yorkshire and Humberside has a comprehensive policy statement, including aims, operational objectives and quality standards, and there are performance indicators covering 14 major aspects of its work. A statement on students' entitlement to careers advice and guidance includes a complaints procedure. Quality assurance is well developed: there are service standards, surveys of students' opinions and an end-of-year report.

Liaison with Careers Services

16 The level of collaboration between colleges and careers services varies considerably and this has implications for the number of trained staff which an institution requires. Some colleges have worked carefully with the careers service to produce a service level agreement which makes best use of the resources available. Such agreements involve organising the time available for careers service advisers: to enable them to work with particular groups of students; to ensure that they are in regular contact with staff in curriculum areas as well as with those in central student services; to allow them to attend key events, such as open days and induction; and to make them available to give advice following the receipt by students of their examination results. In other colleges, liaison is limited to arranging times for the careers adviser to be available in college for students to consult and advertising services or making appointments for students. Increasingly colleges are appointing their own qualified careers advisers.

Example 7a. At a further education college in the Northern Region, careers staff spend half their time teaching, mainly on the careers programme and half on one-to-one guidance interviews. Staff from the careers service are also involved. They have agreed to work within the college's careers guidance programme. They often slot into a session and work alongside the college's careers staff. Another further education college has its own qualified careers staff and the service level agreement with the local careers service focuses on supporting students enrolled on one-year courses who are aiming to progress to employment.

Example 7b. In a sixth form college in Greater London, an assistant principal responsible for students' progression works closely with the borough's careers adviser to produce a 'menu' of activities and events designed to provide information and guidance on careers. In consultation with their tutors, students access the items on the menu that best suit their own aspirations for progression. Careers advisers play a key role at enrolment and the college has on-line access to the careers service's employment database. Students express a high level of satisfaction with these arrangements.

Example 7c. At a further education college in the East Midlands, the county careers service is developing service level agreements with individual departments within the college to make closer links which meet the needs of particular students.

17 Effective liaison between college personnel and careers service staff is further illustrated in the following examples.

Example 7d. A further education college in the West Midlands has its own careers service and also has good links with the independent careers service run in partnership with the local education authority. Each curriculum area makes an agreement with the external service for the number of hours to be provided to students.

Example 7e. A further education college in the Northern Region contracts with the local careers service to provide careers advice to students. At least one careers adviser is in attendance at the college daily. In addition, each faculty negotiates with the careers service for the provision of advice to individuals or groups of students. Students speak positively about the quality of careers advice from student services, the careers advisers and their personal tutors.

Example 7f. A West Midlands sixth form college finds their link with the careers service brings current knowledge of the employment market which helps students to find work. The careers service adviser is an integral member of the college team. Some students have been able to keep the same careers adviser when transferring from school to college and this continuity has been helpful in reviewing progress.

18 Co-ordinated management of college and careers service work is highlighted in the following examples.

Example 7g. Careers education at a further education college in Yorkshire and Humberside is headed by a member of staff who has a careers service background. As part of an agreement with the local careers service, five careers advisers work with college staff. When they are in college, their work is managed by the college co-ordinator. The college also has members of staff who are careers educational advisers. They do not have formal careers qualifications but meet regularly in order to assess their training needs and receive staff development. A 'careers education guidance group' has been formed to update the experience of college staff and to discuss relevant topics.

Example 7h. The careers education service provided by one further education college is jointly evaluated with the local careers service on a yearly basis.

Example 7i. At a Yorkshire and Humberside sixth form college, the senior careers adviser from the area careers service attends the monthly meetings of the college senior tutors in order to plan careers work in the tutorial programme. Each team of tutors has an earmarked careers service adviser who attends the tutor team meetings. Communication between the external careers service, teachers, personal tutors and students is excellent and there is a strong sense of teamwork. Careers service staff and college teachers work together to ensure that group sessions cover the same ground.

Staff Development

19 Some colleges have recognised the need for staff development on careers guidance at all levels of the institution. Successful programmes have succeeded in raising awareness of the importance of careers education and guidance among all groups of staff, including senior managers, and in providing specialist training for key personnel.

Example 8a. A large further education college in the North West region has responded well to initiatives from the careers service to raise the profile of careers education work across the college. Sessions were held with senior staff and then with course tutors. Joint training activities between a college and the local careers service have involved both senior staff and course tutors. The college recognises it has some way to go to ensure that all students receive adequate careers guidance; however, the training has given a focus and priority to the work.

Example 8b. At a college which has a significant number of students with learning difficulties, some of the support staff have undertaken 'training in systematic instruction' and this is enabling them to provide effective support to students both in college and on work experience placements.

Example 8c. College careers advisers all have a diploma in careers guidance. Other qualifications include certificates in counselling and psychometric testing. Staff are working towards training and development lead body assessor awards in preparation for accredited careers education. Two of the staff have specialist qualifications in working with students who have learning difficulties. Students appreciate the ease with which they can contact staff and access up-to-date information which is provided in community venues as well as on main sites. Teachers are being trained through the RSA Examinations Board (RSA) competence-based course in guidance skills which will help them to teach accredited careers education as part of mainstream courses.

Example 8d. A further education college in Yorkshire and Humberside has a team of trained careers educational advisers who are competent to give guidance related to United Kingdom courses and careers or to refer students to appropriate external services. There are other advisers who fulfil a more limited role, depending on their knowledge, experience and position. The areas in which each person is authorised to give advice is carefully specified. Any enquiry by telephone, in person or in writing is referred to the most appropriate careers adviser.

CURRICULUM FOR CAREERS EDUCATION AND GUIDANCE

20 Careers education and guidance is provided by colleges in two main ways. Some provide it as an integral part of the curriculum; others as part of the tutorial programme. Students on pre-foundation and foundation level courses, part-time adult learners and students intending to progress to higher education, are likely to receive careers education and guidance as an integral part of the curriculum. This works well when there is a carefully planned syllabus with clear learning goals. Students following other programmes, including those on general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and GCE A level courses often have careers education and guidance delivered as a separate element, usually through tutorial sessions. The effectiveness of this approach depends on the college having a clear tutorial policy and a tutorial programme which includes careers education.

Careers Education and Guidance as Part of the Curriculum

Pre-foundation and foundation level courses

21 The best careers education on pre-foundation and foundation level courses for 16 to 19 year olds incorporates a broad personal and social programme aimed at helping young people make the transition to adulthood and working life. Such a programme is likely to have elements on:

- **self-assessment**, involving: individual aptitudes and preferences such as the wish to work with others or alone, outdoors or inside; the willingness to travel; and identification of the knowledge, skills and understanding that need to be acquired or that have been achieved already

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- **making choices**, involving recognition of: realistic and unrealistic options; what different jobs entail; the nature of the local job market; how the course helps to prepare for work; the benefits of further study; and progression routes to other courses
 - **understanding the world of work**, including: the skills necessary for employability, such as understanding line management and accountability in the workplace, asking for help, using initiative, dressing appropriately, relating to other workers, and time-keeping; how to use facilities such as the canteen or rest room; and keeping a work experience diary or work placement log
 - **preparing for progression to work or to another course or training**, including: job-seeking skills, interview techniques, making applications, finding and using relevant information, preparing a portfolio or record of achievement, using the careers service
 - **rights and responsibilities in the workplace**, including: health and safety, trade unions, understanding the pay packet, national insurance and income tax
 - **living independently**, including: the advantages and disadvantages of leaving home, budgeting, looking after oneself, leisure and other opportunities in the local community
 - **relationships**, including: making new friends, sexual relationships, contraception, the responsibilities of parenting, the family, and equal opportunities, including issues of ethnicity, disability, gender and religious belief
 - **citizenship**, including: the law and young people, how local and national government works, voting, current

affairs, the media, the work of voluntary organisations, self-help groups, and making a voluntary contribution to the community.

22 Colleges with a good careers education programme for pre-foundation and foundation-level students are likely to provide open days or evenings for parents at which information about the content of courses, details of students' progress and opportunities for advice about progression, benefits and other financial matters is provided.

23 Skilled staff use students' own experiences on vocational 'tasters', work experience or work placements and visits to different workplaces as starting points for a wide range of learning activities, including role-play, work in pairs, group discussion, and contributions from external speakers. For example, one further education college invited a local theatre education group to help students on a pre-foundation course try out different ways of handling difficult situations they had experienced on work placement.

Courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

24 Where pre-foundation and foundation-level students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in the best practice, colleges work in partnership with the careers service throughout the course. Such a partnership enables often quite complicated planning for students' progression to begin well before the end of the course. Where this planning is managed effectively, students are able to play a part in the decision-making. Successful provision provides opportunities for these students to develop the ability and confidence to speak for themselves about their futures.

Courses for disaffected young people

25 Other courses which provide a curriculum designed specifically around careers education and guidance include link or bridging courses for disaffected young people. These courses may provide a programme similar to those for students on pre-foundation and foundation-level courses but delivered in a deliberately low key and informal way. Many colleges make innovative use of local housing and community and youth centres to provide the right kind of setting.

Example 9a. In a college in a deprived inner city area, a project has been set up to give disaffected young people a positive experience of further education. The students are of different abilities but all have records of poor attendance and underachievement at school. The careers service plays a vital role in contacting young people in November and December after they have left school. The course provides a programme of training in self-confidence and interpersonal skills, key skills and vocational 'tasters'. All students produce a curriculum vitae and record of achievement. There is a small staff team to ensure continuity of approach. Students attend the project for 12 to 15 hours a week for five months and can then enrol for a full-time course. In one year, 24 out of 29 students progressed to other courses.

Courses for adult learners

26 Some part-time or short courses for adult learners are specifically designed to be a first step into further education. Such courses provide a supportive environment in which students can develop self-confidence and make choices about what they will do next. In the best provision, a high level of tutorial support is provided by a small group of staff who are skilled in working with adults and

have a good knowledge of local progression routes, including opportunities in other colleges. The curriculum is likely to include:

- assessment of students' prior learning
- information about learning support
- personal development, including assertiveness training, the development of self-confidence and self-presentation skills, teamwork and self-assessment
- key skills
- vocational 'tasters'
- study skills for those who may have had a long absence from study
- information about, and individual guidance on, progression
- individual advice and practical help on benefits, financial matters, and childcare
- links with local self-help groups and networks.

Example 9b. In one further education college, a student adviser is part of the staff team for the part-time course for adults. She used her knowledge of the local job market to design a pack of learning materials which students use to choose their vocational 'tasters' and to consider their longer-term goals. The pack describes the various skills required by local employers for certain jobs. It explains how different college courses can be used to acquire the skills and suggests which 'tasters' might be relevant. Students receive Open College accreditation for their individualised programmes of vocational 'tasters', study skills and personal development.

27 Mature students on access to higher education courses require specialised careers education and guidance. There is evidence that when this is provided as an integral part of the students' learning programme retention levels and examination results improve. The most effective provision includes the following elements:

- intensive and specialised guidance at entry which covers childcare and financial matters
- clear and realistic information about the demands of the course
- effective assessment of students' prior learning
- opportunities to negotiate an individual learning programme and regular reviews of progress
- a comprehensive induction programme
- introduction to a network of support provided by tutors, specialist careers staff, college counsellors, learning support staff and other students.

GCSE and GCE A level courses

28 In the best practice in general further education colleges, students studying for GCSEs and GCE A levels receive careers education as part of a centrally co-ordinated programme, planned by a central guidance unit or team of specialist staff. This cross-college approach means that all students receive their entitlement. Where arrangements are not co-ordinated but left to subject teams, planning and delivery is often patchy and inconsistent. Some subject tutors have little appreciation of the importance of careers education.

Vocational courses

29 In some cases, students are better motivated when careers education is integrated with their subject work. For example, some teachers arrange talks on career and progression opportunities in their own subject specialism. Vocational courses are more likely to have careers guidance built into them than general education courses. Some colleges make good use of the experience of their part-time staff, still working in industry, to improve careers guidance. A number of the examples of better curriculum development arise where programmes are tailored to suit local labour market conditions. For example, a college in the East Midlands has developed its course portfolio to meet its students' aspirations for self-employment in heating and ventilation.

Example 9c. A further education college in the Northern Region operates careers programmes within its engineering and construction provision. Students carry out assignments as part of their GNVQ course. These are designed to familiarise them with sources of information on job opportunities and higher education, including careers computer programmes. They work in teams to prepare presentations which include, for example, job descriptions.

Example 9d. Students who are interested in the uniformed services benefit from an accredited unit of work in careers education that is taught jointly by the careers staff and vocational tutors. Components include work experience and research. One project examined post-traumatic stress disorder in the police force. This kind of opportunity helps to give students a realistic understanding of the work involved.

Accreditation for careers education

30 Colleges are beginning to explore ways of accrediting careers education, partly as a means of motivating students. A minority of colleges now offer accreditation for careers education work. A Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) GNVQ additional unit on personal development for career planning is being piloted with advanced GNVQ business students in a further education college in Yorkshire and Humberside. Open College Networks are also being used to accredit careers programmes in some areas. Units available might include job-seeking skills, using the careers centre, drawing up curriculum vitae and the development of interview techniques. A structured, accredited course is valued by students and helps to increase their participation in careers activities. Units can be used with classes or with individual students. Students at a sixth form college in the South East region speak highly of their careers programme which is part of a wider personal and social development scheme accredited through the Surrey Open College Network. The Open College units can be used flexibly and provide specialisation, for example, for adult part-time students whose needs will be different from school-leavers.

Careers Education and Guidance as Part of the Tutorial System

31 Many colleges have a careers education programme which is delivered through the tutorial system. Programmes are usually in place for the first and second years of advanced two-year courses and for students on one-year courses. In addition to providing information, these programmes usually include opportunities for students to practise decision-making skills. One college programme included sessions on self-awareness, opportunity awareness, decision-making and transition management which covered applications to higher education, job-hunting techniques and career

action plans. Often, programmes include outside speakers, visits to careers conventions, higher education fairs and events sponsored by employers. Some programmes include compulsory sessions and optional sessions which cover particular careers.

32 The better careers education programmes allow scope for advice to individual students which help them to start from the point that they have already reached. On some programmes, students are repeating exercises already undertaken at school or on previous courses, from which they gain little benefit.

33 Most sixth form colleges take justifiable pride in offering to all their students, including those on GCSE and GCE A level courses, a broad personal and social education programme which incorporates careers education. The programme is often delivered in tutorial sessions.

Example 10a. At one sixth form college, GCE A level students receive two hours of tutorial time each week. They follow a structured programme designed to gain the Oxford and Cambridge Diploma of Achievement. The programme includes key skills, a project designed to enable students to explore possible higher education or careers options, and a module of philosophy and aesthetics. Students take part in discussions and role-play on topics such as drugs, HIV and relationships, using high-quality learning materials and videos from a central resource bank for tutors. There are also planned opportunities for students to review their progress in academic studies by using a form on which key milestones are recorded as a basis for discussion with their tutor.

Example 10b. At one sixth form college, all students receive a carefully staged programme aimed at job-seekers and those applying for higher education. Students begin their first term with a series of interviews with their personal tutor, senior tutor and principal or vice-principal. Induction is then spread over half a term. The college provides higher education evenings which parents can attend, outings to open days at universities, guest speakers, and easy access to the careers service. Senior tutors hold a database of all the college contacts with employers, higher education, careers service and other sources of advice. Students make extensive use of the database and other good-quality software to pursue their enquiries independently during tutorial time. All tutors follow a set scheme which includes advising students on their Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) applications, preparation for work experience and action planning. The college pays particular attention to students' guidance needs at the end of their course. A 'rescue service' is provided for students whose examination results fail to meet the requirements of higher education or their desired employment.

Involving employers

34 Careers education and guidance on vocational courses at intermediate level and above usually concentrate on helping students to find employment in a specific vocational area. Effective links with employers are vital.

Example 10c. In an agriculture and horticulture college, local employers take part in regular careers events and recruit part-time and seasonal staff on the college premises. Careers staff hold a database of local vacancies which students are taught how to use. Students must interview a selection of college staff about their current jobs and earlier employment as part of their careers education programme. They are able to get a realistic idea of the demands and rewards of a wide range of land-based careers.

Example 10d. At another college of further education local employers are linked to students on appropriate courses. Each employer contributes to six tutorial sessions a year, following guidelines produced by the college. Contributors provide information on the nature of their companies' business, career opportunities in the firm and what is involved in different types of jobs. Employers also take part in preparing students for interviews and advise on the preparation of curriculum vitae. A number of firms provide mentors for students on some courses. The college reports improved motivation amongst students and a more realistic appreciation of what a job entails.

Career action plans

35 The role of the personal tutor is vital not only in providing individual guidance but in helping students to reflect on careers education sessions and in making practical use of what they have learned. Some colleges have introduced a system under which students draw up their own career action plan. Effective use of action plans involves constant checking by both the tutor and the student to ensure that progress is being made towards achieving the

objectives identified in the plan. This process tends to be more successful for students on vocational courses or those applying to higher education. It is less well developed for students on other courses.

36 It is vital that a student's careers action plan and learning plan are linked. Students must be able to see how the learning that is taking place on their course helps them to achieve their career aspirations. Students are best able to see these links if the college makes available information about careers options and progression routes which is easy to understand.

Example 10e. In one college which has a good progression rate between part-time and full-time courses, a 'progression booklet' had been prepared setting out all the routes that students might follow. The booklet was used as a stimulus for discussion in tutorial sessions as well as a basis for action planning. Students were encouraged to identify the elements of their current course that might prepare them for the next step.

37 Students report that they value continuity of personal contact when discussing careers. Many find it difficult if too many different people are involved in advising them. A student at a college which had worked hard to provide good central careers advice was very complimentary about the advice he had received. He had seen a college careers adviser three times and this had helped him to think through his future. However, when pressed further, he was unsure of what practical steps to take to move on.

Example 10f. Students at a sixth form college in the Northern Region value the structured help they receive. All first-year students have a careers guidance interview leading to an individual action plan which they draw up within the first three weeks. They then have a weekly careers session. Three teachers deliver this programme using well-presented and thorough schemes of work which specify the objectives for each session and the assessment methods to be used.

Example 10g. In a further education college in the Northern Region, careers education is an integral part of the tutorial system. There are regular tutors' meetings with formal agendas and minutes. The second part of the meeting always focuses on careers education and its development. Students are encouraged to think about their own careers from the outset. The first session of their careers education programme consists of a research project on courses relating to their area of work.

Example 10h. A college in the East Midlands allocates each student to a careers tutor. Each careers tutor looks after seven tutorial groups and has responsibility for a specific area of specialist advice. The careers curriculum is introduced through the tutorial programme and supervised by the careers tutor.

38 The following are examples of methods which some colleges use to ensure careers education programmes meet students' individual needs.

Example 10i. Students at a sixth form college in the West Midlands have their ambitions and progress documented through a higher education or employment application log as part of their academic record.

Example 10j. Tutors at a further education college in the North West region receive a guidance checklist and support materials. Training is available and careers staff work closely with tutors. An unusual feature of the programme of individual and group activities is that students are given assertiveness training which develops their confidence in using the college's careers facilities and which also helps them at external interviews. A sixth form college in the East Midlands holds an activities week in July which aims to strengthen students' self-confidence in order to help them progress successfully to employment or higher education.

Example 10k. At a sixth form college in the West Midlands the careers education programme is compulsory. There is an integrated whole-college approach to careers education and students receive guidance on planning a relevant programme. Students' work experience is arranged to reflect their career plans and many students have changed their career choices after the work placement.

Example 10l. Careers education and guidance at a sixth form college in Yorkshire and Humberside is managed through the tutorial system. Senior tutors work in close liaison with the local careers service and the college's careers co-ordinator. Careers service staff offer a balance of group work and individual sessions as part of the tutorial programme. In addition, students are assisted in their career choice by subject teachers who regularly invite visitors to speak to the students and offer guidance related to their subject.

Careers guidance for adults

39 Careers education tutorial programmes have often been devised with the needs of full-time school-leavers in mind. Many access courses for adults have good arrangements for delivering careers guidance throughout the programme but on other courses, entitlement to careers education and guidance varies considerably. Adults joining full-time programmes or who attend part time for only a few hours a week, often receive little tutorial support. In some colleges, mature students gain effective careers guidance through the central student services. Some colleges have guidance sessions timed to allow evening students to attend before their classes begin.

Example 11a. Access courses often provide an excellent model of high-quality careers guidance. At a further education college in the West Midlands, care is taken to ensure every access student has an appropriate progression route. Students visit social services, occupational therapists or staff from other professions that they have expressed an interest in.

Example 11b. At a tertiary college in the South East region a careers adviser attends for 10 evenings a year to advise adults. The college organises a higher education evening for mature students and there are visits by representatives from a variety of jobs and professions.

Example 11c. In an East Midlands further education college, the advice and guidance team visits all the community centres used by the college to make contact with evening students and to give them the opportunity to arrange a guidance interview.

RESOURCES

40 Some colleges have good careers libraries which have up-to-date information. However, even where this is the case, students are not always encouraged to make effective use of them. Where material is out of date, it is often because the management of careers resources is inadequate. Most colleges place information on careers in the library or in a section of student services. Some have been successful in developing the same level of service on each of their sites. In addition to providing published information, a number of colleges have more varied resources which they have built up, using their own initiative. The careers library files at one college contained accounts of interviews at various higher education institutions, together with information on the make-up of the interview panel, the questions asked and students' impressions of the institution.

Example 12a. A further education college in Yorkshire and Humberside reports a 100 per cent increase in students' use of careers resources since it moved its careers and education guidance unit from the library to the main foyer two years ago. Students report it is easy to browse there and that there are plenty of interview rooms for private guidance. In addition to improved access, this move to a central location reflects the raised status of careers work.

Example 12b. Facilities at another college are open in the evenings and throughout the summer. A trained receptionist and a duty careers adviser are always available. Students find the user guides very helpful and reported they found the information easy to find.

Example 12c. A sixth form college in the West Midlands relocated its careers accommodation close to the student refectory to help publicise the service and draw attention to careers notices. The accommodation is permanently staffed and it is well used by students. They can drop in at any time to browse and obtain information. Initial guidance is always available, and appointments can be made for individual interviews with a careers adviser, usually at a few days notice. The careers room is like a well-supported open learning centre. Students interviewed found the service good.

41 A number of colleges have produced good-quality materials, particularly to support careers education within tutorial sessions. Some also make effective use of resources produced by the local careers services.

Example 12d. A college in the Northern Region uses handbooks for students which have been prepared by the careers service. The handbooks include practical information on the locality and a grid explaining which careers are advertised on different days in different newspapers. There are plans in Yorkshire and Humberside for on-line information from the careers service to be networked to all the site libraries of one college.

Example 12e. The student services section of a West Midlands sixth form college produces a user-friendly 'Careers Guidance and Information' booklet. The first page stresses that the careers area is there to help all students and there are photographs of key staff, including the local careers advisers. The booklet goes on to stress that staff are there to help 'guide students through the labyrinth of books, folders and prospectuses'. The services to students include use of the careers room to phone for job information, to make enquiries to universities or to peruse the newspapers for job vacancies. A careers bulletin is produced regularly.

42 The majority of colleges provide some careers computer programmes. A sixth form college in the Eastern Region has trained tutors in the use of software available for careers guidance. Many colleges include an introduction to the packages within their careers education programmes but few systematically monitor the use which is made of them in order to judge their effectiveness. In one example of poor practice, all students from a second year advanced course were given an introduction to the Education Counselling and Credit

Transfer Information Service (ECCTIS) by student services staff; the group was composed mainly of mature students, who were either not going on to higher education or had already completed their applications.

Example 12f. Careers-related information technology in a sixth form college in Yorkshire and Humberside includes ECCTIS, Microdoors, Kudos, Career Builder and a database of opportunities in Europe. The software is networked through the college and seminars are held on its use. The college pays the £10 fee for 'Coursefinder 2000' if the student follows it up with a careers service interview; all but two out of 50 who used it last year saw a careers adviser as a result.

NATIONAL RECORDS OF ACHIEVEMENT

43 There is scope in most colleges to make better use of national records of achievement in the careers education programme. In some colleges, they are used as an active tool in planning careers and, in one college, this is linked to a residential experience for full-time students to develop skills such as problem-solving and communication. There are instances of records of achievements contributing towards Open College Network credits and being used as part of compact arrangements to give certain students a better chance of gaining a place at their local university. In a more general way, students in one college who were progressing to higher education commented that the experience gained in maintaining their records of achievement was of great value when completing personal statements on UCAS forms.

CAREERS GUIDANCE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

44 Many colleges, in particular sixth form colleges, have developed sophisticated systems for helping students choose their course when applying to higher education. Careers libraries usually have all the necessary prospectuses and there are computer programmes to help students focus their choices. A number of colleges have produced booklets, which provide clear explanations of application procedures, and have set up tracking systems to monitor students' progress in preparing their applications. Students generally receive good support in preparing their personal statements. These are usually checked by a senior manager as well as the student's personal tutor. Students and parents often have the opportunity to attend higher education fairs and to make visits to university open days. Some colleges provide opportunities for students to obtain experience of higher education, for example, by sampling lectures, and some have compact arrangements which guarantee interviews at particular higher education institutions. Many colleges support students well after the publication of GNVQ advanced level and GCE A level results. Some have extensive experience of the clearing system and, in one of the colleges inspected, this was used to help students who had not attended the college as well as the college's own students. Tutorial programmes often cover related issues such as taking a year off from education, managing on a student grant, and benefits advice for mature students.

45 Some students are not given sufficient guidance in making an appropriate choice or in completing the UCAS application. The focus is often on the range of courses and there is insufficient attention to career paths at the end of higher education. A substantial number of colleges fail to prepare students adequately for interviews. The

following are examples of ways in which colleges have improved their careers programmes to help applicants to higher education.

Example 13a. In one sixth form college all offers which students in the previous year received from universities to which they applied are listed to help current students make realistic choices.

Example 13b. A sixth form college in the North West region runs a compulsory short course which explains higher education applications procedures. Advisers from the local careers service contribute to the course and offer individual interviews. The careers service also organises a higher education conference, hosted by the college, for all students in the borough. The conference is successful in providing a series of talks and workshops which give students opportunities to discuss careers with representatives from higher education.

Example 13c. Students at a sixth form college in the Northern Region have an extensive programme of university visits. There are also annual three-day visits to Oxford and Cambridge. External speakers, often previous students, give talks on careers, and visits to employers are arranged. Data on students' destinations are collected and widely distributed as a resource to help current students make their decisions.

Example 13d. One further education college produced a tutors' guide which provided advice on preparing students for higher education and monitoring their UCAS applications. As a result, the number of completed UCAS applications has increased.

Effective management of higher education applications is given a high priority in some colleges.

Example 13e. A further education college makes students collect UCAS forms from the careers workshop, so that applications can be logged and monitored and individual guidance given. Careers staff visit all GCE A level and GNVQ advanced groups to give initial guidance. Students are encouraged to visit higher education fairs (transport is provided) and open days and to find out the details of higher education courses, for example, using ECCTIS and Coursefinder 2000. Group sessions are arranged concentrating on the application form, in particular, the personal statement. Students are required to complete a practice form and are provided with useful handouts to help them. All practice forms are subsequently scrutinised by careers staff. The careers education and guidance staff co-ordinate the writing of references and provide a quality check. For part-time students, careers guidance staff often contact employers and others who have knowledge of the student. All applications are checked against the UCAS placement list to help in future planning. Students previously at the college return to brief students on access to higher education courses.

Example 13f. At a sixth form college in Yorkshire and Humberside, an external speaker from higher education holds an evening session with parents, followed next day by a talk to students. Local education authority representatives are also present to discuss grants. As part of a comprehensive programme, prospective applicants attend a higher education conference which is prepared for and followed up in tutorial time. Students look at actual examples of good and bad personal statements on UCAS forms and these are discussed in tutorials. Copies of the offers which universities made to students in the previous year are also provided to encourage students to make realistic applications.

CAREERS GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYMENT

46 A significant proportion of colleges do not give sufficient guidance and practical help to students aiming to enter employment. Some have recognised this and are starting to address the issue. In a tertiary college in the South West region, there are two careers co-ordinators, one concentrating on higher education, the other on vocational careers guidance.

Example 14a. A further education college in the South East region provides a wide range of help to students seeking employment through the college employment agency. A sixth form college in the West Midlands runs a jobclub every Friday. All students intending to go into employment are required to have an action plan and it is the tutor's responsibility to review these and monitor students' contact with the careers department. Another college arranges mock interviews with local companies. A fourth college provides comprehensive information about employment opportunities and students have the opportunity to explore this further through a series of lunchtime 'job-seeker' workshops.

Example 14b. A sixth form college in the Northern Region organises an impressive programme of workshops covering all the main career areas and a 'Help, I'm still not sure' workshop. This 'Jobwatch' programme has a session called 'HE or Not?' Another sixth form college helps students to consider the links between higher education, employment and the subjects they are taking. Questions covered include 'what links exist between specific careers and higher education?' and 'which of the careers students are interested in can be followed without entering higher education compared with those available only to graduates?'

Example 14c. A further education college in the West Midlands, which has its own careers service, maintains a database of job vacancies and the skills required by employers. A further education college in the East Midlands has set up its own employment agency which aims to approach employers directly to identify vacancies and match these to appropriate students.

Example 14d. In one sixth form college, three careers talks are put on concurrently once a month and students have a free choice about which to attend. Speakers include staff from the local further education college. Talks are followed up by small group sessions which, for those not seeking application to higher education, are general careers seminars led by a careers adviser. Students' attendance is monitored. At the annual careers convention, there are approximately 55 contributors, including local and national employers as well as further and higher education providers.

WORK EXPERIENCE

47 The majority of colleges offer work experience, though this is less well developed for part-time students and for those on general education courses. For students to gain most value from it, work experience should be an intrinsic part of a career action plan. It is most effective when it is linked effectively with individual research into jobs and when students are subsequently helped to gain as much insight as possible from the experience. Work shadowing is often effective, but less widely used. Some colleges offer the opportunity for work experience abroad.

Example 15a. In one further education college, there is a placement team to organise work experience for the college. Some 85 per cent of GCE A level students took up this opportunity last year. The course tutor is given the responsibility of ensuring that the work experience is relevant to their career path. Whilst students are out on work experience they have to complete a 'job study'. In some colleges, account is taken of students' past work experience, while at school, in order to avoid duplicating it.

Example 15b. A sixth form college in the West Midlands organises a programme of outside speakers from higher education and various professions. It has built up a good range of work placements with employers. Care is taken to ensure placements for students which are interesting and relevant to their career aspirations. Students have worked with members of parliament, the Welsh National Opera Company and the Lawn Tennis Association.

CAREERS GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND/OR DISABILITIES

48 Well-organised schemes of careers education and guidance offer students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities equal access with other students to all careers facilities. In one college, a specially adapted version of computer guidance packages is used. In another college, the group initially interviewing students with learning difficulties comprises the candidate, the admissions tutor, the college co-ordinator for students with learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities, together with a parent, carer, advocate, or careers adviser.

49 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities may require intensive and structured support to enable them to move successfully into employment. Colleges which help a high number of these students into work have designed schemes which enable staff to maintain some contact with the student after their course is ended. Sometimes this takes the form of visits to the students' workplace to provide guidance and support for both the student and the employer.

Example 16a. In one further education college, the vocational access course includes a weekly two-hour session on careers. In the session inspected, a group of five students was exploring attitudes to types of training and jobs (outdoors or indoors, living away from home, on-the-job training or a college course). Good in-house materials were used and the session was taught by a member of the careers staff with specialist qualifications in working with students who have learning difficulties. Teachers on the course are taking RSA qualifications in guidance skills.

Example 16b. The local careers service specialist adviser has close contacts with a sixth form college in Yorkshire and Humberside. She sees all students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities shortly after the beginning of their course and then visits the college once a week for consultation.

PROGRESSION AND DESTINATIONS

50 In colleges where careers education is good, counselling students on progression is not a hurried addition at the end of the course; it has been part of the thinking underpinning the guidance given at entry and the student's individual careers education programme. Where the provision is poor, students are often offered their first interview with the careers service towards the end of their course, when it is often too late to be effective.

51 Some colleges have devised ways of helping students to broaden their thinking about careers, beyond what may have become rather limited horizons.

Example 17a. A further education college in the North West region operates a very successful mentoring scheme, targeted in particular at Afro-Caribbean and Asian students. It aims to support them to obtain jobs in areas in which few of them have previously been recruited. Students are paired with relevant professional role models from their own communities. There is a student pack which includes a diary and evaluation form. One student gained a sponsorship in higher education as a direct outcome. He describes the benefits as numerous: professional guidance and academic support as well as developing self-confidence. A BTEC national diploma science student visited a presentation in the House of Commons entitled 'Black Women Mean Business', where she was introduced to the idea of networking. A student now studying at university was mentored by a senior management consultant and sums up the programme as 'absolutely brilliant—provided me with the tools to be successful'.

Example 17b. A further education college in the Eastern Region is working with a local higher education institution to persuade more students to broaden their goals. For example, students successfully completing GNVQ key skills units are given credit for their achievement when applying to degree and higher diploma courses.

Example 17c. Compact arrangements between a sixth form college in the South East region and higher education institutions have been effective in promoting the progression of disadvantaged students; in 1994 all but one of 41 compact students went on to higher education.

52 Effective information on the destinations of past students can supply useful material for careers programmes. Individuals who are successful in their careers after leaving college can provide role models for those still at the college. Data on destinations should also form part of the college's evaluation of careers programmes and help to improve them.

Example 18a. In one London borough the careers service carries out an annual destination survey on behalf of the college. The college considers that success with student destinations is closely linked to effective pre-enrolment advice and guidance. Consequently, admissions tutors are very careful to discuss students' aspirations and intended destinations with them before they enrol.

Example 18b. A large further education college in the North West region recognises that programmes in which careers education is an integral part of the provision also tend to provide good information on student destinations. The college ensures that information on destinations is made available in the advice and guidance centres so that prospective students have a picture of the careers available after completing the course.

Example 18c. At a further education college in the South East region, information collected on student destinations is used for evaluating the effectiveness of the tutorial programme.

Example 18d. A college in the East Midlands works closely with the careers service to track and monitor students when they leave, and former students speak highly of the college's continuing interest in their progress.

Example 18e. At a West Midlands sixth form college, destinations are monitored and this informs management decisions about the nature of the careers programme. For example, the work experience placement into production line work in the electronics industry was organised as a result of reports of students leaving after a few months because they were not aware of the type of work involved. A student reunion is organised close to Christmas, partly to gather feedback on how career choices have worked out. It has also provided information on the type of GCE A level best suited to a particular degree.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

53 The main strengths of careers education and guidance in colleges inspected were:

- management of the provision as a whole-college strategy, including a clear policy commitment and a statement of students' entitlement
- effective communication and networking with a range of appropriate agencies, in particular with the careers service
- a team approach to the planning and delivery of careers education and guidance, making the most effective use of resources available within and outside the college
- effective communication and planning between central student services and curriculum areas
- careers education which was well integrated with other aspects of the curriculum or is part of the tutorial programme
- an active approach to developing and monitoring students' action plans
- careers guidance which was integrated, where appropriate, with subject specialisms
- well-planned and effectively evaluated work experience
- staff development which enabled staff to undertake effective teaching and guidance roles
- quality standards which were set and evaluated
- concern to establish students' progression plans at the point of entry to the college
- equality in the importance accorded to all students, whatever their career aspirations.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

The following questions are designed to encourage discussion amongst college managers, specialist careers and guidance staff, tutors and curriculum managers about good practice.

College Managers

How does the college meet the requirement in the *Charter for Further Education* that all part-time and full-time students have the right to expect informed, impartial, supportive and timely careers guidance and counselling?

Has the college a policy on careers education and advice which includes a statement of intent about the provision of impartial guidance and the entitlement available for part-time students and which specifies how the policy is to be implemented?

How is the college's strategic objective, to increase the participation of students from groups which have not usually entered further education, linked to its careers education and guidance policy?

How will data on the participation of under-represented groups, for example adults with mental health difficulties, be used to focus careers education and guidance more effectively?

Has the college reached an effective service level agreement with the local careers service which enables it to make best use of external specialist expertise?

Does a senior member of staff hold responsibility for co-ordinating and managing the college's provision for careers education and guidance, in order to ensure consistency and the best use of resources? Is tutorial provision included in this responsibility?

How does the college deploy its resources effectively to ensure that all students receive appropriate and timely careers education, including advice at entry, on programme and at exit?

Has the college established quality standards for careers education and guidance? Do the standards cover tutorial provision? How will they be monitored?

How will data on retention, achievements and destinations contribute to a review of the quality of careers education and guidance?

Has the college mapped the different progression routes open to students after they have completed their course and has it made this information available to students?

How does the college meet the advice and guidance needs of students in community-based part-time provision? Are they aware of possible progression routes and do they receive practical advice on, for example, benefits and childcare, if they decide to move on to full-time provision?

Does the college plan and co-ordinate a common induction programme for all its students which includes information about the college, students' courses, their tutorial programmes, learning support, other support services, and access to careers education and guidance?

Does the college have a policy on the assessment of students' prior learning which is supported by effective training for key staff?

How does the college use its links with schools, training and enterprise councils, employers, higher education, health and social services, local education authorities, specialist careers services and others to develop local learning pathways and to ease students' transition into and out of further education?

Specialist Careers and Guidance Staff

Are the college's specialist careers and guidance staff managed and co-ordinated by a senior member of staff in order to provide the most effective service across the college sites?

Are college guidance teams trained and deployed to meet the different needs of adult students, women returners, members of different ethnic groups, part-time students, students wishing to progress to higher education, and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities?

Are statistics on participation in guidance opportunities collected and used to make services more effective?

Does the specialist team make the best use of its links with the local careers service?

Does the specialist team involve local employers to help students develop realistic expectations about work and to understand how their further education course could help them to achieve employment?

Does the team update its specialist skills and information including its understanding of local employment opportunities?

Are 'front of house' staff, for example receptionists and help-line staff, trained in appropriate guidance skills?

Can the specialist team use training opportunities to ensure that all college staff understand the services it provides and recognise the importance of careers education and guidance?

What use is made of computer-assisted guidance? Is the software in use suitable for the variety of students who could benefit from this resource?

Are students well informed about the services provided and do they know how to find members of the careers education and guidance team?

Is the information available to students accessible to those with reading difficulties, available in other languages, on audiotape, in Braille, provided at levels appropriate for students of different abilities?

Does the specialist team contribute to college enrolment and induction programmes to ensure that all students receive initial advice and guidance and information about how to access further assistance during their course?

Does the college provide easy initial guidance and advice for prospective and new students by using staff with general as well as specialist skills?

Does the specialist team contribute to the success of the college's programme of work placements by maintaining a database of contacts, by helping to establish quality criteria for placements and by assisting in preparing and supporting students on placements?

Does the specialist team contribute to training for tutors to ensure a consistent approach throughout the college to careers education and guidance?

How are links made between a student's individual guidance and careers plan and their individual learning plan in order to ensure that each supports the other?

Tutors

Does the college have a policy for tutorial provision, a description of the tutor's function, good-quality resource materials and effective training and guidance for tutors? How is the quality of tutorials monitored?

Do students receive a clear statement during induction about what they will learn in tutorial sessions?

How are tutors able to make best use of the expertise of the specialist team and careers advisers in contributing to tutorial sessions?

Have course teams used a framework and guidance provided by the college to develop appropriate curricula for tutorials? Are there clearly specified learning outcomes and methods for assessing and recording progress?

Has the college explored possible accreditation for tutorials? Are records of achievement and portfolios used in tutorials to record students' achievements?

How is the college's policy on lateness and absence implemented in tutorials to ensure rapid follow-up and support for students who may be experiencing difficulty?

Where appropriate, how are parents or employers informed about the content of a student's course and their progress?

How effectively are group discussion, role-play, visits, interviews, visiting speakers, videos and good-quality learning materials used in tutorials to prepare students for employment, further training, progression to another course or to higher education?

How effectively do tutors prepare students for work placements and support them through the use of work logs, diaries, preliminary visits, tutor visits, group and individual discussion?

How are strategies such as supported employment initiatives, staged follow-up, reunions, help-lines, 'rescue-services', drop-in facilities used to support students once they have left college?

Curriculum Managers

How effectively is careers education and guidance integrated with other aspects of the curriculum so that all students receive their entitlement as part of their learning programme?

How is this aspect of the curriculum managed to ensure that students receive timely information and advice which is appropriate to each stage of their learning programme?

How do members of the specialist team and careers advisers contribute to curriculum design in order to ensure that careers programmes are up to date and fit with best practice?

Do pre-foundation and foundation level courses use real work settings effectively to help students to develop skills for employability, such as punctuality and knowing who, when and how to ask for help?

How do curriculum managers use links with employers, higher education, voluntary organisations, and other training providers to review how well they prepare students for employment or other progression?

How effectively are link courses, vocational 'tasters', and part-time community-based provision used to help students make decisions about further education?

How are part-time adult students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, helped to record their achievements in ways that enable them to progress to higher level courses?

How are the specialist team and the careers services kept informed of changes in curriculum, accreditation and entry requirements so that they are able to provide up-to-date guidance and information?

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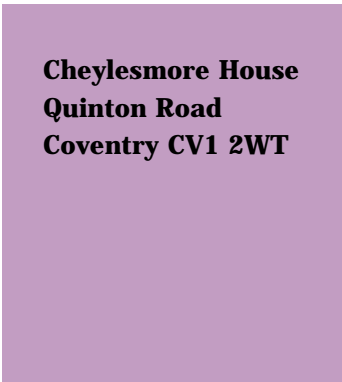
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