

Careers Education and Guidance

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1999-00**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL*

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

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

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Careers Education and Guidance

Making a Difference

A Report from the
Inspectorate

February 2000

Introduction

In 1998-99, 30 colleges participated in a joint Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) assessment of careers education and guidance. The joint assessment was guided by the FEFC inspection framework, with careers education assessors contributing to judgements made by inspectors.

Since incorporation in 1993, colleges in the further education sector have increasingly recognised the importance of providing high-quality careers education and guidance. The need to address careers education and guidance has become more focused since the *Education Act 1997* (the Act) placed new legal duties on colleges to work with the careers service. In particular, the Act requires further education colleges to give the careers services access to the college and its students, and to work with them in ensuring that students receive relevant information. The DfEE publication, *The Requirements and Guidance for Careers Services 1998*, sets out requirements for careers service providers. It asks each local careers service to establish a partnership agreement with the educational establishments with which it works.

The FEFC inspectorate report on good practice, *Careers Education and Guidance*, published in September 1997, highlighted the areas in which colleges had made progress in developing careers education and guidance. It noted that it was rare to find a college incorporating all aspects of the good practice which had been identified. This joint inspection survey represents a further contribution to strengthening careers education and guidance in the sector. It also reflects the increasing success of collaborative working at national level. The DfEE published a separate report of the findings, *Careers Education and Guidance in the Further Education Sector: A report on the joint DfEE/FEFC inspection survey of careers education and guidance*, in November 1999. (Available from DfEE Publications, PO Box 5050, Sherwood Park, Annesley, Nottingham, NG15 0DJ.)

Careers education and guidance, advice and information are a central theme of the recent white paper, *Learning to Succeed*. The white paper emphasises the need to engage the disengaged and socially excluded and sees careers education and guidance as key aspects of lifelong learning. *Connexions: The best start in life for every young person*, published in February 2000, sets out the Connexions strategy and service. Through an interagency approach, the intention is to provide every young person with access to a personal adviser to help on learning and employment choices and on problems with friends and family.

Key aspects of *Learning to Succeed* are:

- new arrangements are to be created for providing support to young people, through a comprehensive structure for advice and support for 13 to 19 year olds which focuses on keeping track of the most disadvantaged
- the responsibility for planning and funding adult information, advice and guidance services will transfer to the Learning and Skills Council from April 2001
- the government intends to simplify current arrangements by transferring responsibility for work-based learning for adults from training and enterprise councils to the Employment Service.



Jim Donaldson
Chief inspector, FEFC

Summary

Findings of the Joint Survey

The FEFC/DfEE joint assessment of careers education and guidance found that a few colleges are providing an excellent service to all students; these colleges are often the ones that have developed an inclusive learning strategy. The majority of colleges continue to have a mixture of practice, where some students are receiving a good service, and others are getting inadequate careers education and guidance. Management and quality assurance procedures in a number of colleges are not sufficiently robust to address this issue.

Drawing on the findings of the survey, the following sections are designed to help college managers assess the effectiveness of careers education and guidance in each college. They include questions to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the college partnership with the careers service. The prompts should allow colleges to carry out more rigorous self-assessment of their careers education and guidance, leading to an action plan to address issues identified.

Partnership with Careers Services

Questions to be asked:

- are working relationships with local careers services effective?
- are effective partnership agreements in place for the college and careers advisers to work together to plan and deliver careers education and guidance?
- do careers services play a valuable part in enrolment and induction activities, ensuring that impartial advice is available?
- are individual guidance interviews offered to all students, especially part-time students?
- are careers education sessions offered as part of the tutorial programme; and are careers advisers involved in delivering part of the programme?
- are individual interviews held directly after group sessions, to encourage attendance?
- is there a seamlessness between college and careers service work?
- is there strong managerial commitment to student support; a focus on consistent, well-understood processes; and a range of initiatives to respond to the needs of different clients?
- is the college clear what it wants from the careers service?
- are policies up-to-date; and are structures and procedures clear?
- is there agreement on the use of resources?
- are colleges clear about changes to careers service priorities?
- is work taking place to focus resources on high-priority students, such as those in danger of leaving courses early?
- is continuity of careers adviser an issue?
- is there sufficient sharing of information on students between colleges and careers services?
- does this include documentary information on those transferring from school for 16 year olds; and information available to careers advisers interviewing young people and mature students in college?
- are issues of confidentiality used to mask the problem of sharing information in some cases?
- is there a need for better co-ordination of data 'owned' by the careers service or the college?
- is there adequate staff development for college tutors delivering careers education?
- is there joint training with the careers service?

Entitlement to Careers Education and Guidance

Questions to be asked:

- is there a formal careers education and guidance entitlement policy, which is well publicised?
- are there clear objectives for careers education and guidance?
- are standards set for achievement of these objectives?
- is there 'friendly vigilance' to ensure students get onto the right course?
- do all students have a careers action plan, not just those on general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs)?
- is lack of student interest a problem?
- is lack of student interest compounded by careers education and guidance which is not well integrated with the course?
- where appropriate, has accreditation been considered for some aspects of the careers education programme?
- are assignments on careers choices linked effectively to course work, where appropriate?
- is the advice given to students wishing to enter employment as good as the advice for those entering higher education?
- is work experience well integrated with the careers education and guidance programme?
- could the careers services help with job bulletins and jobsearch workshops?
- are resources skewed towards higher education applicants?
- do students not intending to enter higher education consider that they are treated as second class citizens?
- is equal opportunities central to careers education and guidance programmes?

Questions to be Asked

Management and Quality Assurance

- what steps have been taken to adopt an inclusive learning approach in careers education programmes?
- is careers education well co-ordinated and are policies applied consistently?
- do all students get a fair entitlement to careers education and guidance support?
- is there sufficient liaison at strategic level and co-ordination between central services and tutors?
- is take-up by some students low? What is being done about it?
- can careers advisers access tutors in colleges?
- does the service depend too often on the relationship with particular departments?
- have intranets been developed as a positive tool in improving communication internally and with the careers service?
- are the links between careers advice and retention and achievement made overt in colleges?
- do college careers staff and the careers service play a central role in analysis of retention and achievement data, or of destination data?
- is there college-wide co-ordination of the monitoring of careers provision at course level and of the promotion of good practice?
- is there a systematic approach to evaluating the effectiveness of the careers education and guidance programme?

- are partnership agreements reviewed in colleges, and is the review sufficiently rigorous?
- is the use of the careers library evaluated?
- should more emphasis be placed on the progress of students towards meeting their careers objectives?
- what are the performance indicators for careers work?
- has the college developed standards for this work?
- are there audits to verify the standards of careers work in the college?

Resources

- are central college guidance staff well qualified?
- do they work with the careers service staff to make the best use of each other's knowledge and experience?
- does the college recognise the need to train more staff in careers education and guidance skills?
- is sufficient thought given to the display of careers materials?
- is there sufficient monitoring of the use of careers libraries to inform future planning? Are opening times accessible to all?
- do all students have the opportunity to use the libraries?
- are the careers libraries given a high profile, especially at satellite centres?
- is there accommodation for confidential interviews?

Ways Forward

Colleges have made progress in developing careers education and guidance since the 1997 inspection report. A few colleges, mainly those where inclusive learning has been given a high priority, now provide an excellent service in all aspects of the work. In almost all colleges in the survey, there were some examples of good work in careers education and guidance. Centrally developed programmes are often good. The main weakness is the lack of co-ordination and inconsistency in delivering careers programmes and guidance interviews, which means some students are receiving better quality careers education and guidance than others. In order to make further progress, colleges should:

- continue to develop the partnership agreements with the careers services, in particular to identify high-priority groups; and be clear on the contribution of each partner
- develop a range of strategies to deliver a high-quality service to all clients
- clarify the entitlement of part-time students to careers education
- audit the careers education and guidance developed through tutorials and course programmes
- ensure that students wishing to progress to employment are given as good a service as applicants to higher education
- share data more effectively between colleges and careers services
- develop sharper and more coherent monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of careers education and guidance, including targets and standards
- ensure this work is included in self-assessment procedures, and that it is regularly reported on to senior managers and governors
- ensure that careers education and guidance is part of the college inclusive learning agenda
- carry out joint staff development between college tutors and careers service staff
- develop the equal opportunities dimension of careers education
- improve the attractiveness of paper-based resources
- ensure interview facilities are fit for purpose and close to careers libraries and other resources.