

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

The Council, which was established in July 1992, is responsible for allocating the funds put at its disposal by Parliament to those colleges in England which comprise the further education sector and to local education authorities and others for those further education courses which are prescribed in schedule 2 to the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

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IN EDUCATION



OFSTED

The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) is a non-ministerial government department established under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 to take responsibility for the inspection of all schools in England. Its professional arm is formed by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI)

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INTRODUCTION

1 This is the first report produced jointly by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). It reports the findings of a national survey of guidance practices and procedures for 16 to 19 year olds in schools with sixth forms and colleges in the further education sector.

2 The aims of the report are to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of guidance for 16 to 19 year olds in a national sample of schools and further education colleges, and to provide evidence which can be used to improve the quality of guidance in schools and colleges.

The report deals with guidance in three stages:

- guidance on entry, which is concerned with how students learn about, apply for, gain selection and enrol on programmes of study
- guidance during courses, which is about how students are enabled to fulfil their potential personally, educationally and socially
- guidance on the next stage, which refers to the processes which support students in making choices about employment or further study

3 The survey was conducted between September 1993 and April 1994. Visits were made to 96 schools, representing 5 per cent of all schools with sixth forms, and 78 colleges, representing 17 per cent of colleges in the further education sector. The colleges visited included sixth form colleges, tertiary colleges and general further education colleges that were being formally inspected.

4 Of the schools visited, some had small sixth forms with less than 100 students; over one third had sixth forms with more than 200 students. The number of students in sixth forms ranged from about 60 to over 500.

5 There were on average about 1,000 full-time students aged 16 to 19 years in the general further education and tertiary colleges visited, and about 700 in the sixth form colleges. The number of students in colleges varied between about 500 and 2,500.

6 Inspectors from the FEFC visited colleges whilst Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) from OFSTED visited schools. Some visits were

made jointly to schools and colleges. Discussions were held with senior managers, those with specific responsibility for guidance in schools and colleges, and some careers officers. There were also discussions with students including, in further education colleges, members of the student union/association. Tutorial and other guidance activities were inspected. In addition, as part of the formal inspection of colleges, meetings were held with parents, employers and training and enterprise council (TEC) representatives.

7 This survey was undertaken following two significant developments in education. The first of these was the incorporation of colleges in the further education sector, in April 1993, which receive funds from the FEFC. The second was the introduction of the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) as part of a government initiative to improve the quality and esteem of vocational courses in educational institutions. A range of courses leading to this qualification were widely available for the first time in September 1993.

8 Various factors made this survey timely: the need to follow up issues raised in the Audit Commission/OFSTED report *Unfinished Business* (1993); the emphasis given to guidance in FEFC documentation; and the increasing numbers of students staying on in schools and colleges post-16. The diversity of providers of post-compulsory education and training and the increasing variety of courses, will require that students receive effective guidance if they are to make informed decisions about their futures.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Guidance procedures were well established in most schools and colleges, although few had policy documents which articulated the aims and objectives of guidance and how their effectiveness would be evaluated.
- Standards were generally good where the various stages of guidance were effectively integrated.
- Guidance arrangements were normally well managed on a day-to-day basis, but too little attention was paid to strategic planning and quality assurance.
- Students had a better knowledge of the full range of courses in their locality where there were partnership or consortium arrangements between schools and colleges, or where the careers service provided material outlining the local provision.
- In nearly all the schools and colleges, application and enrolment procedures were generally thorough and well organised. In some instances, students were recruited on to General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE A level) courses without adequate qualifications which might contribute to their achieving success. In addition, too little reference was made to students' prior learning and records of achievement.
- General induction programmes were usually appropriate and well planned, but some course-based programmes failed to take sufficient account of the learning gap between General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses and related GCE A level courses. Those for students on GNVQ courses were often more successful in meeting their objectives.
- Most schools and many colleges monitored students' progress effectively, although the quality of support for the development of students' literacy, numeracy and independent study skills was variable.
- It was very unusual for all students in an institution to be involved in activities which developed their understanding of

the world of work, and relatively few took on roles in the institutions or local community which involved adult responsibilities.

- Students wishing to progress to further and higher education received good guidance and support, up to and including the time when their public examination results were published. Students wishing to enter employment received less extensive guidance and support.

KEY ISSUES FOR ATTENTION

- Schools and colleges need to articulate the aims and objectives of their guidance policies.
- Further work should be done to develop internal performance indicators which evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of guidance provision.
- Managers with responsibility for guidance need to pay more attention to developing strategies for the improvement of guidance provision.
- Schools, colleges and the careers services should ensure that all year 11 students have a sound knowledge of the progression routes available locally. There needs to be closer collaboration between institutions over the provision of guidance to support this.
- Records of achievement need to be used more effectively at enrolment and developed more consistently during courses. Greater account should be taken of students' prior learning, to ensure that all students are enrolled on to appropriate courses.
- More attention should be paid to developing students' action planning, target setting and independent learning skills.
- A higher priority should be given to developing work-related activities, and providing opportunities for students to take on adult responsibilities.
- Schools and colleges need to provide a continuing programme of in-service training to keep teachers up to date with changes in provision in further education, higher education and the work place.

MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION OF GUIDANCE

9 Most schools and colleges had well-established procedures for the recruitment, guidance and support of students. Colleges were much more likely than schools to have documented procedures for guidance, but few schools or colleges had policy documents which set out clearly the philosophy underlying guidance procedures, their objectives or how the effectiveness of guidance would be evaluated.

10 Policies which established common criteria for the presentation of information about individual courses were rare in both schools and colleges. However, in response to the *Charter for Further Education*, some colleges were developing interesting initiatives which outlined basic student entitlements. Standards of guidance were high where the various stages of the guidance process were closely integrated through the sharing of information and the effective collaboration of staff. The lack of clear policies and quality assurance procedures often led to inconsistencies in practice and variations in the quality of students' experiences.

11 In most schools, the provision of guidance and pastoral support was managed by the head of sixth form, supported by a team of tutors and sometimes by the head of careers. Increasingly, the management of guidance for vocational students, particularly those doing GNVQ courses, was a part of the role of the vocational course co-ordinator.

12 Most heads of sixth form were well experienced in sixth form work, had a strong commitment to their role and managed the day-to-day running of the sixth form effectively. They played a key role in providing guidance and were generally able to offer appropriate advice about topics such as applications for further and higher education. However, they were often heavily involved in day-to-day matters and did not devote enough time to their management role.

13 In sixth form and smaller tertiary colleges senior tutors were responsible for the organisation of the guidance and pastoral systems. They played a key role in the selection and enrolment processes, the establishment of a tutorial programme and the provision of guidance to students about their next steps, especially in relation to entry into higher education. Senior tutors often gave insufficient attention to management and to the planning of

strategies for improvement. In the larger tertiary colleges and general further education colleges, the most effective practice occurred where there was a central services unit, often known as student services, which co-ordinated and managed the whole process from admissions through to students leaving the college. Tutorial work, for example, was more productive when the central services unit provided a well-structured programme, supported by a wide range of good quality materials. This contributed to greater consistency in the content of the tutorial programmes across the different courses.

14 In schools and colleges students were divided into groups for guidance and tutorial purposes. Each group was the responsibility of a member of staff, normally referred to as a personal tutor. Personal tutors in some schools needed training to improve their counselling skills. Where tutors in schools and colleges were not directly involved in the teaching of GNVQ courses, they often lacked a clear understanding of them. Many were not fully aware of the rapidly changing nature of provision in higher education and needed in-service training to update their knowledge.

15 Relatively few schools and colleges formally monitored the non-completion and failure rates of their students. Where monitoring was being conducted, it was being combined increasingly with the analysis of students' examination results in order to assess and improve guidance procedures. Many schools and colleges could not readily make available monitoring information on non-completion and failure rates. However, informal monitoring was often conducted and this had led, in some cases, to the establishment of more stringent entry qualifications for GCE A level courses. Following the incorporation of colleges and, in response to FEFC funding arrangements which are based on student enrolments and completion rates, colleges have established more formal systems for the collection of such information.

16 Nearly all schools had records of students' destinations, in particular where they went on to further and higher education. Other students' destination records were often incomplete. Colleges collected student destination information, but this was seldom complete. Information about destinations, such as how many students had chosen vocational courses in higher education, was rarely formally analysed by schools or colleges to

identify strengths and weaknesses in their guidance arrangements, or to provide examples of progression routes for current students.

17 More consistent and formal monitoring of students' destinations, failure and non-completion rates would provide a basis for schools and colleges to develop some performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of their guidance procedures.

GUIDANCE ON PRE-ENTRY AND ADMISSIONS

18 All schools had published some information about their sixth forms, including information about courses and their entry qualifications. This was helpful to students and parents, although often more so in relation to GCE A level provision than to vocational courses. Much of the material about sixth form provision was written and presented in a lively style, reflecting the recognition by many schools of the need to market their sixth forms. Information provided about guidance arrangements and assessment procedures was usually less helpful.

19 In general, colleges produced good quality publicity materials which gave clear and concise information about the courses available and their entry qualifications. They often provided more information about guidance and assessment arrangements than schools. In many colleges' publicity material, the opportunities available for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were not given sufficient prominence.

20 The quality of guidance and support arrangements offered by schools to students in year 11 was satisfactory. Typically, pupils were interviewed by a careers officer and head of sixth form or college representative. Pupils and their parents were also able to attend a meeting about entry to the sixth form. Local colleges provided an extensive programme of events such as open days and parents' evenings. In some instances there were also careers conventions, usually organised by the careers service, where local educational institutions and employers were represented. An increasing number of schools and colleges offered short introductory courses in a variety of subjects or vocational areas. Students found these helpful in clarifying their thoughts about what they wished to do. Further interviews took place in schools and colleges early in September of year 12 to discuss and confirm the students' choices of courses. At the same time those students making late applications were offered guidance. Areas of weakness included

a general failure to make use of records of achievement as evidence of prior learning during admissions procedures. In some colleges, a lack of detailed information about courses and a lack of uniform guidance procedures contributed to some students being enrolled on unsuitable courses.

21 The accreditation of students' prior learning achievements was at a very early stage of development in most schools and colleges. Many colleges had been involved in joint projects with their local TECs to investigate systems for doing this, but these were not yet in general use. Colleges were encouraged to pay more attention to the accreditation of students' prior learning achievements.

22 Students had a good understanding of the range of provision available in their own sixth forms. In most schools students also had an adequate knowledge of similar courses available locally in other institutions. However, further education colleges reported that opportunities for them to speak directly to year 11 students about their courses had decreased. Students in school sixth forms reported that they encountered little difficulty in finding out about similar courses available in other institutions locally, but frequently had to explore the details of these options on their own initiative.

23 The survey took place before the statutory requirements came into force requiring secondary schools to distribute to pupils in year 11 information published and provided by local further education colleges about their students' achievements and career routes. Schools will need to ensure that they comply with these requirements in the future.

24 Students had a better knowledge of the full range of provision available for 16 to 19 year olds in local institutions in areas where partnerships or consortia, involving local schools and further education colleges, had been established; where co-operative arrangements existed between the different providers; or where local careers services provided material describing the provision. Funding through the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) had been important in encouraging collaboration between institutions.

25 Very few students on GCE A level courses knew about alternative vocational courses such as the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national or GNVQ advanced level courses, or had

considered them. Student and parental pressure to study for GCE A levels was strong. As the new GNVQ courses become more widely available, schools and colleges will need to ensure that students and parents are fully aware of the opportunities.

26 Minimum entry qualification requirements for GCE A level courses in schools varied between four and five GCSE grades A to C. A few schools would only allow students to do three GCE A level subjects if they had at least five GCSE grades A to C; if they had four then they were allowed to take only two GCE A levels. A very small number of schools negotiated entry qualifications individually with students. Only about half of the schools applied their entry requirements for GCE A level courses rigorously, although, in some instances, a growing concern about pass rates was making schools more cautious in accepting students without minimum entry qualifications.

27 As well as general minimum entry qualifications for students on GCE A level courses, some schools had an additional requirement that students should obtain at least a GCSE grade B in the subject they wished to study at GCE A level. This was most commonly asked for in mathematics and science subjects. Students who had not already obtained grade C passes in GCSE English and mathematics were required to re-sit these subjects. Those taking only two GCE A levels were often expected to take some extra GCSE subjects in year 12 or, occasionally, a vocational course such as the Diploma of Vocational Education (DVE) intermediate level or a GNVQ intermediate level course.

28 In further education colleges there was a similar pattern of minimum entry qualification requirements for GCE A level courses. Sixth form colleges were more likely to require five GCSE grades A to C, while tertiary colleges and general further education colleges were more likely to require four GCSE grades A to C. It was more unusual for students to be required to obtain a GCSE grade B in the subjects they wished to study at GCE A level in colleges, but students who had not obtained C grades in GCSE English and mathematics were frequently expected to re-sit these subjects. It was unusual to find students combining GCE A levels with vocational courses.

29 Schools and colleges should monitor particularly closely the GCE A level pass rates of

students because *Unfinished Business* reported that GCE A level pass rates decline significantly where students have inadequate entry qualifications, for example, less than five GCSE grades A to C.

30 Some schools and colleges were involved in schemes to measure the value added to students' achievements during their course of study, through a comparison of their GCSE grades on entry with their GCE A level grades at the end of the course. The use of such value-added analyses can be helpful in guiding students on to courses and in establishing realistic goals for them.

31 About 80 per cent of the schools and all the colleges in the survey offered a range of vocational courses as well as GCE A levels. Minimum entry qualification requirements for GNVQ advanced level or BTEC national courses were normally four GCSE grades A to C or equivalent vocational course qualifications. For DVE or GNVQ intermediate level courses, there were generally no formal entry qualifications. In some instances students with low level GCSE qualifications encountered difficulties in coping with the demands of GNVQ intermediate level courses. At the time of the survey there were no alternative Foundation level courses for these students. Many schools and colleges in the survey were beginning to review the need for some formal entry requirements for GNVQ intermediate level courses in the light of their experience with current students.

INDUCTION

32 All schools and colleges provided induction programmes for post-16 students. Many schools offered programmes after GCSE examinations in year 11 which provided introductory sessions for particular subjects or courses, often combined with team building and social activities. The students found these helpful in clarifying their thoughts about what they wished to do in the sixth form. These programmes, however, were less successful in introducing students to the work habits and study skills which they needed for the increased academic demands of sixth form courses, particularly GCE A levels. Sixth form and tertiary colleges provided a more limited induction programme for year 11 students. Typically they were one-day courses which enabled students to meet staff and other students, acquire basic information about the college and receive further guidance.

33 All colleges provided an induction programme for new full-time students at the beginning of the autumn term. In many colleges this programme covered a wide range of activities, which included team building, health and safety awareness, an explanation of students' rights and responsibilities, and an introduction to the range of resources available to support students and courses. In a few colleges this process also involved the setting of individual learning targets. Most students found that these programmes helped them to settle quickly into their study programmes and their new surroundings. Opportunities were provided for students to negotiate a change of course where they found themselves on courses which were unsuited to their needs. Most colleges included sessions on study skills as part of their induction programmes. These were seldom followed up systematically in individual courses, and therefore had little impact. In the great majority of colleges there was an induction programme of three to six weeks for students enrolled on GNVQ courses. Students intending to do intermediate or advanced level GNVQs in a vocational area were often placed together for this programme. Towards the end of the induction period students were counselled to join the level most appropriate to their needs and abilities.

34 Many colleges had developed helpful information packs to support the induction programme. These frequently contained a student agreement and an entitlement statement which guaranteed access to personal tutorials, counselling and guidance. These materials provided a useful starting-point for the implementation of the *Charter for Further Education*. Students were more aware of their responsibilities than of their rights.

35 Many colleges were beginning to use tests to diagnose the basic literacy or numeracy needs of students. Most included this as part of their induction programme in year 12, but the results were not always used effectively to support students on courses. In schools, teachers generally used their knowledge of the prior achievements of students to identify those likely to need support with basic literacy and numeracy skills.

36 School induction programmes in year 12 were different from those of the colleges, partly because most students were not entering a new institution. Programmes for GCE A level students varied from a short one-day course, dealing mainly with

administrative issues, to programmes lasting several days. The latter provided opportunities for individual guidance sessions and introduced students to generic skills such as effective styles of working, reading for different purposes and note-making. It was highly unusual for aspects of work on generic skills to be developed systematically in particular subject areas. Students commented in some cases that teachers had failed to plan induction programmes which took sufficient account of the variation between skills and knowledge acquired during GCSE courses and those needed for related GCE A level courses. In some instances, work habits and study skills were developed over a long period of time, through tutorial and personal and social education programmes. Students observed that introducing them in this manner dissipated their impact. Students doing vocational courses normally had a much longer and more detailed induction programme, sometimes lasting half a term, which they appreciated and found helpful.

37 All schools and colleges provided opportunities for students on GCE A Level courses to transfer from one subject to another during the first half term, normally in consultation with their tutors, the relevant subject staff and member of staff responsible for guidance. Thereafter it was much more difficult to transfer from one subject to another, but generally this was easier to accomplish in colleges than in schools. This flexibility in colleges, while valued by students and parents, resulted in some students finding it difficult to catch up with the work they had missed. This difficulty emphasises the importance of ensuring that students receive effective guidance during enrolment procedures and induction programmes. Schools and colleges generally had clear procedures to facilitate such transfers and these procedures were well known to students. Some students studying three GCE A level subjects at the end of their first year were allowed to drop one subject, but this was not encouraged. It was very unusual for students to transfer between a GCE A level programme and a vocational course, even when broadly equivalent vocational courses such as GNVQ advanced level or BTEC national courses were available. There were opportunities to transfer between vocational courses during the first few weeks, but in schools such opportunities were limited by the small range of provision on offer.

GUIDANCE DURING COURSES

38 Guidance and pastoral provision in schools and colleges centred on tutorial systems where tutors met groups of students regularly. There were seldom well-developed tutorial programmes which made effective use of all the tutorial time available. Some of this time could be used more productively for guidance purposes. This needs to be seen in the context of tutors using non-teaching time for some guidance. Most students expressed appreciation of the effort made by tutors to devote time to meet and discuss guidance issues, and of their provision of care and support.

39 In most schools and colleges the monitoring of students' progress was directly linked to procedures for reporting to parents. Reviews of students' progress were shared with parents, but more often an informal review process was combined with less frequent and more formal reports to parents through parents' evenings and/or written reports. Some students found it disconcerting when informal reviews included discussion with staff, but they had no involvement in written reports for parents, which were treated as completely separate from the informal review process.

40 In about 30 per cent of the schools, all sixth form students spent some time on work placements. Very few colleges had a similar requirement, except for students on vocational courses. The time spent on placements by GCE A level students varied between two days and three weeks, the most common period being one week. Where the placements were related to possible future careers, students valued the experience highly and it helped them to clarify their thinking. Where placements were much more general in nature, similar to those experienced previously in years 10 or 11, they were much less appreciated. Many schools offered to arrange work placements for interested GCE A level students and, sometimes, it was part of the student's entitlements in colleges, but student participation was variable. A few GCE A level courses, including some business studies, chemistry and physics courses, had examination requirements that students work in industry and carry out work-related assignments. Some schools and colleges offered other work/industry-related activities such as 'Understanding Industry' courses, which included problem-solving, working with industrialists and visits to local firms. Students on vocational courses were involved in work placements as a normal part

of their course and they greatly valued this.

41 Schools and colleges made relatively little use of students' work-related experiences in other than vocational courses. Even in those schools where all students were involved in work-related activities, less than half of them had a de-briefing where experiences were shared with other students. These activities were often recorded by students in their records of achievement, but were seldom used as learning resources by staff, except on vocational courses.

42 Schools and colleges offered opportunities for students to undertake adult responsibilities in a variety of social contexts. These included community activities such as helping in local schools, play groups, charity shops and community projects. In some schools students were involved in supporting younger pupils, for example, by helping them develop their reading skills. In both schools and colleges only a small number of students were involved in these activities.

43 Work and community-related experiences can help students to mature, develop their self-confidence and prepare them for the responsibilities of adulthood. Such experiences can also provide valuable opportunities for students to improve their knowledge about possible future career routes and develop their decision-making skills. Many schools and colleges are continuing to develop these valuable opportunities for their students.

44 Most colleges offered a personal counselling service to students whose personal circumstances were adversely affecting their learning. In larger colleges this was often located in a central students' services unit, which also included an admissions tutor, careers officer, a careers co-ordinator and a welfare officer. The counselling service was generally well regarded and much used by students and staff. Where counsellors were full-time, they could also contribute to staff development programmes for tutors. Many colleges had recognised the problem of the increasing numbers of students who were experiencing financial difficulties and had appointed student welfare officers to address this problem.

45 While many colleges had a designated counsellor or welfare officer, schools did not. Heads of sixth forms and personal tutors normally carried out the function of designated counsellor or welfare officer, building on the detailed knowledge which

schools had usually accumulated about students and their personal circumstances from earlier years.

GUIDANCE ON THE NEXT STAGE

41 Relationships between schools and colleges were satisfactory or good in about half of the institutions. In many schools there were well developed progression routes to local colleges for students on vocational courses, and a number of schools and colleges had collaborated over the introduction of GNVQ courses. Quite often, however, links between schools and colleges were limited or virtually non-existent. Sometimes, increasing competition had damaged relationships and created tensions between schools and colleges, and between neighbouring schools and between neighbouring colleges. In this situation guidance was less effective in identifying the full range of progression routes available to students.

42 Many schools and colleges had links with one or more local universities. In a few instances these had been formalised through 'Compact' arrangements negotiated by the local TEC or local education authority. This, sometimes, led to offers of places on designated courses for students with reduced entry requirements in terms of GCE A level grades, where they had achieved certain targets such as good attendance levels and the satisfactory completion of coursework. In many schools and colleges informal links had been made with particular universities.

43 Most schools and colleges had satisfactory arrangements to inform and guide students intending to go on to higher education. Staff generally provided appropriate advice about applying for higher education, and the completion of University Central Admissions System (UCAS) application forms was efficiently monitored. Subject staff, personal tutors, staff in relevant management positions, and sometimes careers officers and careers co-ordinators, contributed to this process, and most students commented that they were well supported. Nevertheless, staff were not as knowledgeable about the most recent developments in course design in higher education as they might have been. In schools, heads of sixth forms were key figures in informing and guiding students intending to go on to higher education, while in colleges key figures, with a variety of titles, performed similar functions. Careers officers, who were often based in the college full time, were more

closely involved in this process than were their counterparts in schools.

44 Provision for students on academic courses wishing to enter employment directly was much less extensive than that for students wishing to continue in education. Guidance in terms of particular employment opportunities was dealt with by careers officers and staff on an individual basis. However, there was seldom a programme which prepared students for direct entry into the labour market. The lack of such a programme was significant because students on academic courses, unlike those on vocational courses, did not have direct access through their courses to areas in which they might be seeking employment. This was more of an issue for colleges where there were larger numbers of students who wished to move directly into employment.

45 In general, schools and colleges had a range of further and higher education prospectuses and most had appropriate information technology software. These were easily accessible to students and most could use the software with confidence. There were fewer books and materials which provided information about graduate and other employment opportunities. Students also attended further education, higher education and other careers conventions. On some occasions ex-students in institutions of higher education were invited to talk about their experiences.

46 In nearly all schools and colleges students had regular access to careers officers for advice and guidance, but it was unusual for all students to be routinely interviewed by careers officers. In some schools and many colleges, careers officers also made other contributions, such as developing material to guide students through the process of applying for places in higher education, providing material for tutors about careers guidance and occasionally contributing to careers education programmes. Most students found the advice of careers officers helpful, although, in a few instances, a careers officer's lack of specific knowledge about higher education was a limiting factor in schools. In some colleges the amount of time committed by the careers service was being significantly reduced. Schools and colleges need to ensure that the contributions of careers officers/specialists are more effectively integrated with other aspects of their guidance provision.

47 The quality of practical guidance which students received to encourage the development of independent work habits and learning skills appropriate for higher or further education was variable. It was very unusual for this to be dealt with effectively as a whole school or college issue. In a few schools and colleges action-planning and target-setting were helpful in developing appropriate learning skills and work habits. For GCE A level students the extent to which these were developed depended very much upon the teaching and learning strategies adopted by individual subject staff, although the inclusion of coursework often provided opportunities to develop relevant skills. Students on vocational courses, particularly GNVQ courses, were developing these skills and work habits in response to specific course requirements.

48 Many schools and colleges had provision which dealt with particular issues that students would face during the next stage of their career, such as money management, student grants and loans, living alone, coping on a limited budget, social security arrangements, insurance, and the world of work. However, this provision seldom provided comprehensive and consistent coverage of these topics for all students. Students often expressed considerable interest in these matters and regretted the lack of opportunity to discuss and learn about them.

49 In both schools and colleges students on vocational courses, who wished to go on to further education or employment, could obtain guidance from course co-ordinators, careers teachers, and careers officers. Vocational courses provided a number of opportunities for students to learn about local employers in the vocational areas which they were studying, through work placements and assignments. Work placements sometimes resulted in offers of employment.

50 Guidance and support arrangements for students after the publication of examination results were generally good. Key staff were available for consultation and they made strenuous efforts to help place students on alternative higher education courses if they did not achieve the grades required for their original choice of course. Students on vocational courses in schools were well supported if they were seeking places at local further education colleges. Careers officers were available to offer advice, particularly about seeking a job, but also as an alternative source of information about further and higher education.