

Coventry Technical College
Reinspection of Art and Design: November 2000
Report from the Inspectorate
The Further Education Funding Council

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

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

REINSPECTION

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

Satisfactory provision may also be reinspected if actions have been taken to improve quality and the college's existing inspection grade is the only factor which prevents it from meeting the criteria for FEFC accreditation.

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

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

Assessments use grades on a five-point scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses. The descriptors for the grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses*
- *grade 2 - good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses*
- *grade 4 - less than satisfactory provision in which weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- *grade 5 - poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses.*

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

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Coventry Technical College West Midlands Region

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Background

Coventry Technical College was inspected in December 1999 and findings published in the inspection report 42/00. Provision in art and design was awarded a grade 4.

The key strengths were: the use of study visits and live projects to enrich learning programmes; well-planned courses supported by clear schemes of work; and a good range of specialist facilities. The weaknesses were: poor retention and achievement on most courses; poor levels of attendance; slow progress of some students in achieving the full award for national diploma courses; insufficient variety of teaching and learning methods in some lessons; and insufficient focus on experimentation and creativity. The college recruits students from areas with high deprivation.

The reinspection took place between 30 October and 2 November 2000. Inspectors observed 16 lessons and held meetings with staff and students. They examined students' work, reviewed resources and scrutinised documentation, including student achievement and retention data.

Assessment

The provision has improved in the 10 months since the inspection. Improvements are shown in teaching and learning and in students' retention and achievement. Teachers make thorough preparation for their teaching. Most lessons observed were good and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers check studio arrangements and the provision of teaching and learning material and equipment before the start of a lesson. Detailed schemes of work are included in assignment briefs. Lesson plans are clear and written assignments include assessment information. Informative handouts and supporting material, including Internet sources, are used to support teaching and learning. There are significantly improved patterns of attendance but several classes were disrupted by students' poor punctuality. Some teachers do not give sufficient emphasis to the introduction of the lesson and some opportunities for group work and for the reinforcement of key skills were missed. In a minority of lessons teachers set assignments with too narrow a focus to allow students to experiment. A new schedule for common assessment has been introduced to improve curriculum management. Combining mixed groups of specialist full-time level 3 courses to undertake common assignments has enriched students' learning experience. Inspectors confirmed the college's strengths in the use of study visits, live projects and range of specialist facilities that enhance course programmes. There has been a significant decline in further education student enrolments over a four-year period. There is low recruitment to some part-time day and evening courses. A lack of a coherent planning strategy has led to the underuse of resources. The average class size has increased by over 50% since the last inspection to 13.3, which is above the national average. There is an improvement in retention on both full-time and part-time courses to sector averages. The overall achievement rates for the full-time GCE A level courses and for the national certificate courses remain below national benchmarks. Nevertheless, students' achievement in the level 2 and level 3 full-time courses show improvement to sector averages.

Revised grade: art and design 3.