

Dunstable College
Reinspection of Basic Education and Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties
and/or Disabilities: December 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.

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 02476 863000
Fax 02476 862100
website: <http://www.fefc.ac.uk>*

© FEFC 2001

You may photocopy this report and use extracts in promotional or other material provided quotes are accurate, and the findings are not misrepresented.

Dunstable College Eastern Region

Reinspection of basic education and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities: December 2000

Background

Dunstable College in Bedfordshire was inspected in September 1999 and the findings were published in the inspection report 02/00. Basic education and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was graded 5.

The key strength at the previous inspection was the well-managed work placements supporting progression to employment for some students. The college had effective collaboration with external agencies and strong links with work experience placements through a community project and a local church. Work experience had clear documentation and was thoroughly monitored. Some students had progressed to open employment or work in the voluntary sector. The main weaknesses identified at the previous inspection were: lack of identification of students' specific learning goals; failure to plan learning activities to take account of students' abilities; poor management of classroom activity; insufficient attention to checking students' learning; poor recording of progress and achievement; and inadequate assessment of the effectiveness of teaching. Most teaching was poorly planned and unimaginative.

The provision for basic education and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was reinspected over 2.5 days in December 2000. Eleven lessons were observed, of which six were judged to be less than satisfactory. Discussions were held with managers, staff and students. Students' work and college documentation were examined.

Assessment

The work placements supporting progression to employment continue to be well managed. The college has begun to address some of the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. The curriculum provision has been revised and new staff have been recruited. Previously, external accreditation was inappropriately used as a syllabus. Students' current learning programmes are not externally accredited. Individual learning goals have been established for all students. This initiative is at an early stage of development. Students in the second year of programmes speak with enthusiasm about the changes in teaching and learning activities. Schemes of work have been improved to include teaching methods but do not contain aims and objectives. Learning activities are not planned to meet the individual goals of students. Many classroom activities are now based on the completion of practical tasks rather than paper-based activities. However, there is over-emphasis on the completion of the stated tasks. Insufficient attention is given to identifying and prioritising the skills and competencies students need to learn. Students are not involved in identifying their preferred learning styles. Many of the objectives identified for individual student goals are not specific enough to help plan lessons and monitor student goals effectively. The recording of student progress is not sufficiently detailed. The quality of teaching in the majority of the lessons observed was less than satisfactory. Some teachers do not demonstrate an understanding of the educational implications of working with students with complex impairments. Some teaching fails to challenge students. Inappropriate activities such as playing board games do not provide learning opportunities relevant to the future lives of students. Managers are aware that some

students are bored by their studies. In a few instances learning support assistants direct students rather than encourage the development of students' independent learning skills.

Revised grade: basic education and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities 4.