**Ealing Tertiary College**
**Reinspection of Governance: September 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*

**Ealing Tertiary College**
**Greater London Region**

## Reinspection of governance: September 2000

## Background

Ealing Tertiary College was inspected in February 1999 and the findings published in the inspection report 49/99. Governance was awarded a grade 4.

The key strengths of governance were the timely distribution of agendas and minutes, and the procedures for the operation of the corporation. The major weaknesses identified in the inspection were: the lack of involvement by governors in strategic target-setting; governors' limited monitoring of the college's educational targets; inadequate financial monitoring; inadequate oversight by the corporation of its committees; and inadequate induction and training for governors. The FEFC's audit service concluded that within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college was adequate.

Governance was reinspected in September 2000. The inspection team held meetings with governors, the clerk to the corporation and college managers and scrutinised a range of minutes and documents, including the updated self-assessment report.

## Assessment

Inspectors and auditors judged that the college had made progress in addressing some of the key weaknesses in governance identified in the inspection report. The search and review committee has recruited governors whose experience and expertise has strengthened the overall skills of the corporation. Governors are enthusiastic and committed to helping the college to improve its performance. The corporation is now actively involved in the process of strategic planning. It is too soon to assess their involvement in monitoring progress towards the achievement of strategic objectives. The conduct of corporation business remains good. Papers are produced in timely fashion for meetings. The clerk to the corporation is independent. The audit committee operates effectively and is increasingly holding management to account for weaknesses in the college's systems and the prompt delivery of remedial action. The corporation continues to have a good set of standing orders and codes of conduct. The 'whistleblowing' code of practice has not yet been finalised. The register of governors' interests does not include adequate declarations by some members.

The attention paid to curriculum matters and to monitoring the college's academic performance has improved. The corporation has established a committee for quality, curriculum and performance which has undertaken useful scrutiny of the college's performance. It has been less effective in its scrutiny of college retention and achievement rates. Despite requests from the corporation, managers have not yet provided the necessary data.

There has been some progress in addressing the issue of induction and training for governors. A useful induction handbook for governors has been produced and an analysis of governors' training needs has recently been undertaken. There is a draft policy on governors' training. A training programme for governors is now being prepared. Systems and indicators for evaluating the corporation's performance are being developed. Individual governors have links with the four college centres, with the dual aim of becoming better known to staff and students and being better informed about the college.  These activities have had some beneficial effect in their early stages.

The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the governance of the college is weak.  The corporation does not conduct its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government.  It also does not fulfil its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC.  The corporation has not ensured that the college's total income is sufficient, taking one year with another, to meet its total expenditure, as required by the financial memorandum.  There have been deficits in the last four years, and there is a planned deficit for 2000-01.  The corporation has not been sufficiently rigorous in its consideration of financial forecasts.  In particular, the corporation has not ensured that the college has appropriate contingency plans to deal with shortfalls in income.

Governors have monitored the college's financial position during the year.  When a significant shortfall in the college's income for 1999-2000 was identified, the corporation agreed that immediate action was needed to safeguard the future of the college.  During the subsequent restructuring exercise, the corporation did not adequately consider the financial implications of the choices open to them.  Governors were not provided with comprehensive information by managers.  As part of the budget-setting exercise for 2000-01, governors did not provide adequate guidance to management on financial targets.

The corporation should ensure the financial solvency of the college and improve its oversight of financial planning.  The corporation should also: establish a schedule for receiving regular reports on progress against the objectives in the strategic plan; and establish a systematic and effective training programme for governors.

**Revised grade:** governance 3.