

Ealing Tertiary College
Reinspection of Business Studies: 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.

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**Ealing Tertiary College
Greater London Region**

Reinspection of business studies: September 2000

Background

Ealing Tertiary College was inspected in February 1999. The findings were published in the inspection report 49/99. Business studies was awarded a grade 4.

One strength was identified during the inspection: the good retention and achievement rates on administration courses. There were significant weaknesses which included: poor and declining retention and achievement rates on GNVQ programmes; poor attendance; inadequate curriculum management and organisation; a lack of attention to individual students' learning needs; insufficient integration of key skills with other aspects of work on vocational courses; and a lack of appropriate resources in classrooms and model offices.

The provision was reinspected in September 2000. Inspectors observed 20 lessons and held meetings with members of curriculum boards of study, centre heads, course team leaders, teachers and students. Students' work was examined, together with documentation prepared for the reinspection.

Assessment

The college has made significant progress in addressing the weaknesses identified in the inspection report. The quality of teaching has improved and the majority of lessons observed were good. Course and lesson planning is effective. There is good attention in lessons to students' individual learning needs. Lessons provide an appropriate range of learning activities and teachers regularly check students' understanding. In a minority of lessons there is not enough direct questioning of students; some work is conducted at too slow a pace; and teachers do not make enough use of teaching aids. Attendance was good during the inspection. Students arrived late in half the lessons observed, despite the efforts of teachers to improve punctuality. On GNVQ courses, pass rates have improved and are now above average. Retention has also improved, but is not yet satisfactory on GNVQ courses.

The business provision is managed separately at three centres. Work is in progress to improve the consistency of provision across the centres. Examples include the introduction of common schemes of work and assessment procedures. Course teams meet less frequently at one centre. The implementation and monitoring of the key skills policy varies between sites. The NVQ business administration courses are the responsibility of a different team. These courses are well managed. Business administration students have a wide range of work experience placements; GNVQ students, by contrast, do not have the opportunity to undertake work experience. Since the inspection, staff development has concentrated successfully on improving teachers' language awareness, and on the achievement of assessor and verifier qualifications. Not all teachers have up-to-date commercial experience. Since the inspection, there have been significant improvements to specialist resources for business and administration courses. The model offices at Acton and Southall both contain resources which create realistic working environments.

The college needs to improve: the quality of some teaching and learning; the consistency of course management between the three sites; the consistency of opportunities for students;

student punctuality and retention on some courses; and the commercial experience of some staff.

Revised grade: business studies 3.