

**Hackney Community College
Reinspection of Engineering: 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.

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Hackney Community College Greater London Region

Reinspection of engineering: December 2000

Background

Hackney Community College was inspected in November 1999 and the findings were published in inspection report 25/00. Engineering was awarded a grade 4.

The main strengths were: good range of courses from entry to advanced level; consistently good retention on the GNVQ foundation course; and good specialist resources. The main weaknesses were: poor course management in some areas; some unsatisfactory teaching; low student achievement and retention rates on some courses; and low student attendance in many lessons.

The reinspection of engineering took place over four days in December 2000. Eleven lessons were observed, including several practical sessions. Inspectors examined college documentation, data on students' retention and achievement, and a selection of students' work. Inspectors held meetings with senior managers, teachers and students.

Assessment

There is a good range of courses in engineering, and good specialist resources. Recent changes in course structures have introduced shorter modules, which better meet the needs of motor vehicle students. Motor vehicle facilities match the best industrial practice. General engineering and motor vehicle engineering staff share equipment where appropriate, and technicians work across the two areas.

Joint team meetings of general engineering and motor vehicle staff have been introduced. In motor vehicle engineering, staff pay careful attention to tracking individual students' progress. However, curriculum teams do not continuously monitor student retention and achievement at course level throughout the year.

Student retention and achievement rates have improved on a few courses but have declined on others. Retention is below national figures for most courses and is deteriorating. Student achievement rates are consistently below national averages on almost all courses, and have declined overall since the last inspection. The first students taking the new entry level vocational skills programme have completed their studies since the inspection. Retention and achievement on this programme are close to national averages. Attendance in the lessons observed was 65%, which is below the national average.

Most teaching is satisfactory and some is good. The proportion of lessons graded as good or outstanding by inspectors was 45% compared with a national average for engineering of 61% in 1999-2000. Some teaching was well-planned and maintained the interest of students by using exercises which simulated conditions in a commercial garage. In successful numeracy lessons, teachers used realistic examples based on engineering scenarios to help students to see the practical application of the subject. In the poorer lessons, teachers failed to take account of the different learning needs and abilities of students. In some lessons teachers lectured for too long, sometimes using language that was too complex, and did not encourage students to participate. Although teachers set assignments and tests for students, there is no common format for assignment briefs in engineering. Teachers in general engineering do not

always share grading criteria and marking schemes with the students, and students do not always understand what they must do to achieve a good grade.

The college should: improve student attendance, retention and achievement; continuously monitor the quality of provision; share good practice in teaching and learning; and make assessment criteria for assignments clear to general engineering students.

Revised grade: engineering 4.