

**King George V College**  
**Reinspection of quality assurance: September 1999**  
**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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## **King George V College North West Region**

### **Reinspection of quality assurance: September 1999**

#### **Background**

The college was inspected in January 1998, and the inspection findings were recorded in the FEFC's college inspection report 44/98, published in May 1998. Quality assurance in the college was graded 3. To assist in its application for accreditation, the college requested that quality assurance be reinspected.

The strengths of the provision were: a comprehensive quality assurance system; use of performance data; an effective system of classroom observation; good staff development and training arrangements. The weaknesses of the provision were: lack of commitment to the relatively new quality system by some staff; ineffective action-planning; a lack of rigour in operational target-setting; no monitoring of some charter commitments; underdeveloped arrangements for acquiring feedback from students and others. Inspectors found that the college's assessment of its quality assurance arrangements overstated some strengths and failed to identify some weaknesses.

The reinspection was carried out by one inspector over three days in September 1999. The inspector met with senior managers and other college staff, and scrutinised a wide range of documentation.

#### **Assessment**

Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weakness identified in the college's revised self-assessment report. The college has made progress in addressing the weaknesses which were identified in the original inspection whilst at the same time building on the strengths. Changes to procedures related to quality assurance include formalising review and reporting processes and simplifying paperwork. All key areas of the college produce self-assessment reports. They are validated by a panel which includes members of the senior management team, heads of support areas and a governor. Across the college, staff now have a better understanding of quality assurance arrangements, and demonstrate commitment to continuous improvement.

A particular strength mentioned in the self-assessment report is the thoroughness with which the college monitors students' performance. Accurate data relating to retention and achievement enable managers to set targets for individual subjects at each level. A detailed analysis of students' achievements, retention and value-added measures by senior managers forms the basis of discussions with managers to decide points for action. For the last three years, pass rates in GCE A level courses have been at least 90% and rose to 93% in 1999. Retention rates for courses which ended in 1999 show improvements of at least 4% on the previous year.

Since the last inspection, the college has continued to implement an effective system of lesson observations, and made further improvements to it. For example, staff from other sixth form colleges carry out some lesson observations. Arrangements for staff within departments to observe each other promotes good practice. To date, the college has not extended its programme of observations to include tutorials.

Arrangements to monitor the extent to which the college is fulfilling its charter commitments have been strengthened since the last inspection. Analysis of cross-college questionnaires, formal meetings with students and reports from faculties enable managers to judge the effectiveness of the charter against a range of quantifiable targets. The college now has a charter specifically for adult students to complement that for 16 to 19 year olds.

Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the extent to which departments seek students' opinions of courses varies. In some areas, staff meet groups of students or use questionnaires to identify strengths and weaknesses of provision. Where questionnaires are used only at the end of a course, existing students derive no benefit. Some departments have no effective mechanism for receiving students' feedback on the quality of provision.

Despite improvements to the quality assurance arrangements since the last inspection, inspectors identified a few weaknesses not recorded in the self-assessment report. Action plans fail to include measurable targets. The extent to which support areas meet their standards of service is not rigorously monitored. There is no college policy for internal verification of courses.

Staff development and training continues to be a high priority for the college. For example, the current plan includes training on using the new manual on quality assurance and in target-setting. Many staff take part in training activities. Support staff were not included in recent training activities focusing on quality assurance in schemes of work, coursework and sharing good practice in classroom activity. A recent audit resulted in the college maintaining its status as an Investor in People.

**Revised grade:** quality assurance 2.