

The College of West Anglia

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- ***March 2002 inspection report***
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ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION

Inspection report

The College of West Anglia

Dates of inspection: 4–8 March 2002

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	The College of West Anglia
Type of college:	Further Education College
Principal:	Peter Stewart
Address of college:	Tennyson Avenue King's Lynn Norfolk PE30 2QW
Telephone number:	01553 761144
Fax number:	01533 764902
Chair of governors:	Peter Dixon
Unique reference number:	130763
Name of reporting inspector:	Lindsay Hebditch HMI
Dates of inspection:	4–8 March 2002

Part A: Summary

Information about the college

The College of West Anglia is a large, general further education (FE) college which services much of Norfolk and parts of Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire. It was formed in August 1998 from the merger of Norfolk College of Arts and Technology and Cambridgeshire College of Agriculture and Horticulture. The college's largest campus is in King's Lynn. Land-based provision is located in Milton and Wisbech in Cambridgeshire. Centres in Downham Market and Fakenham in Norfolk each have more than 2,000 students, most of whom are largely on courses in information and communications technology (ICT). The college also operates from centres in Hunstanton, Great Yarmouth, Norwich, Sheringham and Thetford, all in Norfolk, plus a number of smaller community and training centres throughout the region.

The college serves a predominantly rural region. Unemployment in Norfolk at 2.8% is below the national average of 3.3%. Average earnings are 9% below the average for England. There are pockets of deprivation throughout the region, but particularly in the college's core catchment area in King's Lynn. Norfolk pupils transfer to post-16 education in a smaller proportion than the regional or national average, with 69.3% moving to full-time post-16 education, compared with the national average of 71.3%.

The college offers a broad range of provision covering all 14 of the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) areas of learning. In 2000/01, the college enrolled 15,080 students of which 15.5% were on full-time courses. Some 79% of students were aged 19 or over. The largest area of provision was ICT at 25%. The college currently provides work-based training for 428 trainees; some 50% of these are on foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in construction and engineering.

How effective is the college?

The quality of education and training is outstanding in equine studies and animal care and good in sport, leisure and uniformed services, hairdressing and beauty therapy, visual and performing arts, basic skills and in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It is satisfactory in 10 of the 18 curriculum areas inspected, and unsatisfactory in engineering and humanities. Governors set clear strategic objectives for the college and monitor progress towards achieving them carefully. Senior managers provide strong leadership. The college provides an extensive range of courses and has successfully widened the participation of groups who are under-represented in FE. However, retention and pass rates in some curriculum areas are unsatisfactory.

Key strengths

- strong and consultative senior management team
- success in widening participation
- effective commitment to inclusive learning
- well-managed work-based training
- outstanding provision in equine studies and animal care.

What should be improved

- curriculum management
- implementation of quality assurance procedures in some curriculum areas
- students' retention and pass rates in some curriculum areas
- support for and teaching of key skills.

Further aspects of provision requiring improvement are identified in the sections on individual subjects and courses in the full report.

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum areas and on the effectiveness of leadership and management in the range: Outstanding (grade 1), Good (2), Satisfactory (3), Unsatisfactory (4), Very Poor (5)

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	Satisfactory. There are high pass rates on access courses and for General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) science subjects. Pass and retention rates for General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A-level) subjects are low. Written resource materials are good. Some teaching does not cater for the needs of all students. Quality assurance is ineffective.
Agriculture and horticulture	Satisfactory. Retention rates are high. Pass rates are low on national diploma courses. The proportion of work-based learners who complete their modern apprenticeship framework is small. Practical lessons are good. There is a lack of variety in teaching strategies for theory lessons. Informal advice and guidance are good. Students' action plans are inadequate.
Equine studies and animal care	Outstanding. Pass rates are very high. Retention rates are high. Students achieve a wide range of additional qualifications. Teachers make the lessons interesting for students and give them demanding tasks. Personal and learning support are effective.
Construction	Satisfactory. Pass and retention rates are high on most courses. Pass rates for modern apprenticeship frameworks are low. Teaching is good. Technician support is insufficient. Support for students is effective. Insufficient attention is given to ensuring working practices are safe.
Engineering	Unsatisfactory. Pass rates, retention rates and attendance are poor on full-time courses. Students produce good practical work. Much of the teaching is unsatisfactory. Engineering resources are good. Training for modern apprentices is good. The implementation of quality assurance procedures is ineffective.
Business administration and management	Satisfactory. The retention rate is low on full-time business programmes. There are effective links with employers. Work-based learning is well organised. Arrangements for reviewing students' progress are good. Some accommodation and resources are poor.
Computing	Satisfactory. There is a wide range of courses. Retention rates on most full-time courses are low. Courses are well planned. Some teaching is good. Assessment and feedback to students on assessment are good. There are unsatisfactory working conditions in most computing areas.

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Information and communications technology (ICT)	Satisfactory. Pass and retention rates are high on single subject ICT applications courses. Pass rates are low on 'flexible' ICT courses. Most students progress to higher level courses. Teaching is good on some courses. There are insufficient learning activities for students in the computer workshops. The open-access areas are noisy and hot.
Retail and customer service	Satisfactory. Pass rates are low. There is good support for individual trainees. Reviews of students progress are inadequate. Work-based learning is well managed. There are good links with employers. Staff are well qualified and suitably experienced.
Hospitality	Satisfactory. There are high pass rates on the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 2 courses in food preparation and cooking and hotel reception. Pass rates are low on the NVQ level 1 food preparation course. Teaching in practical lessons is good. Teachers give insufficient attention to the learning needs of individual students in some theory lessons. Assessment and internal verification are insufficiently rigorous. There are well-equipped specialist facilities.
Sport, leisure and uniformed services	Good. There is a broad range of specialist courses. Pass rates are high. There are low retention rates on level 3 courses. Practical activities are taught well. Specialist resources are good. The implementation of college quality assurance procedures is ineffective.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Good. There is a wide range of courses. Pass and retention rates are high. Much of the teaching is good. Teaching of key skills is ineffective. There are insufficient links between the teaching of theory and its practical application. There are good specialist facilities and equipment. The curriculum area is well managed.
Health and social care	Satisfactory. Pass and retention rates are excellent on the community care management course. The pass rate on NVQ level 2 care is low. Lessons are effectively planned. There are good links between theory and practical work. Some teaching does not make enough demands of the students. Students' key skills are insufficiently developed. Assessment arrangements are effective.
Childcare	Satisfactory. Pass rates on NVQs are low. Retention rates are low. There is much good teaching and personal support for students. The wide range of resources is used effectively.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good. Pass rates are high on full-time courses. Retention rates are low on some courses at levels 1 and 2. Teaching is good. Guidance and support for students are effective. Specialist resources are good. Insufficient attention is given to health and safety.
Humanities	Unsatisfactory. Most GCE AS and A-level courses have low pass or retention rates. Many access students progress to higher education (HE). The monitoring of students' progress is effective on the access course. Teaching on GCE courses is unsatisfactory. GCE AS and A-level students have low levels of attainment.

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Basic skills	Good. There is good basic skills support for students on vocational courses. Individual learning plans are used effectively. Curriculum management is good. There is insufficient monitoring of the effectiveness of basic skills support.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	Good. Many students achieve their individual targets. Individual learning plans are used effectively. There is much good teaching and learning. There are insufficient support staff to meet all students' needs. Some accommodation is poor. The provision is well planned and well managed.

How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior managers have effectively managed growth, merger and extended access to the local community. Equal opportunities are strongly promoted. Teachers and support staff are clear about the direction of the college. Governors play a key role in setting strategy and monitoring standards. Curriculum management is weak in some areas and the college has not been successful in raising overall retention and pass rates, especially in relation to full-time courses.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college operates an open-access policy and provides good opportunities for people with a wide range of experience and vocational backgrounds. The college gives priority to meeting all local needs and making its provision socially and educationally inclusive. There are effective arrangements for widening participation. Learning centres have been opened in several market towns in the rural hinterland to provide access for adults who would not otherwise participate in education and training. Many students whose prior achievements are modest are recruited to full-time and part-time courses. There has been an expansion in the number of foundation level courses available. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. The college organises its courses successfully to meet the needs of its students. For example, the extensive provision in ICT is available at times and in locations to suit adult students who are employed, or who find it difficult to travel to the college. There is a good range of learning opportunities in the community for students who prefer not to attend the main college centres. The college attaches a high priority to upholding equal opportunities and monitors the promotion of equality of opportunity rigorously throughout the organisation. The values of respect for individuals, good teamwork and effective partnership underpin the strategic plan and are reflected in all the college's work.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Pre-course advice and guidance for prospective students are effective. The induction programmes are comprehensive and valued by students. All full-time students undertake an initial assessment to determine whether they need additional learning support. Additional support is provided in a range of appropriate ways, but not all students who are identified as needing additional support choose to receive it. Full-time students receive good tutorial support and on most courses, the process for reviewing students' progress is rigorous. Arrangements, however, for reviewing the progress of part-time students are insufficiently systematic. Work-based and Employment Service learners receive good support from both the college and their employers.

Students' views of the college

Students' views about the college were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below:

What students like about the college

- friendly and supportive staff
- caring and safe environment
- good tutorial support
- wide range of courses
- helpful feedback on assessed work
- work experience.

What they feel could be improved

- noisy learning resource centres
- key skills support
- some boring theory lessons
- long gaps in timetables.

Other information

The college has two months to prepare an action plan in response to the report. It must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors must agree the plan and send copies of it to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

Part B: The college as a whole

Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16–18	58	31	11
19+ and WBL*	65	29	6
Learning 16–18	57	33	10
19+ and WBL*	64	30	6

Key: The range of grades includes: Excellent (Grade 1), Very Good (Grade 2), Good (Grade 3), Satisfactory (Grade 4), Unsatisfactory (Grade 5), Poor (Grade 6) and Very Poor (Grade 7).

* *work-based learning*

Achievement and standards

1. The overall college retention rates at levels 1 to 3 are broadly in line with the national average for FE colleges. Similarly, pass rates for 16 to 18 year olds and for adult learners on level 3 courses are broadly in line with the national average. Pass rates for adult learners on courses at level 1 and 2 improved in 2001, but were still low. Most pass rates are higher on vocational programmes. There has been no marked overall rise in retention and pass rates in the last three years.

16-18 year olds

2. Most level 3 students follow courses leading to national diploma qualifications. Pass rates on these courses are well above the national average and students obtain particularly good results in science (sports studies), sports therapy, performing arts and in design. Many students accepted for GCE AS and A-level programmes have low GCSE points scores. The GCE A-level pass rate at grades A to E has been below the national average in each of the last three years. The proportion of students who obtain grade C or above has been small. The average points score for students taking two or more GCE A-level subjects in 2001 declined to 9.0, well below the national average of 17.4 and the Norfolk average of 16.2. Pass rates vary significantly between subjects. They are high in psychology and sociology, but unsatisfactory in mathematics, sciences, history and geography. In 2001, the retention and pass rates on GCE AS courses were poor at 68% and 65% respectively. Pass rates on General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) advanced courses were also unsatisfactory.

3. Most level 2 students follow courses leading to NVQs. The pass rates for NVQ level 2 courses are very high. The college's data show that in 2001, the pass rate was 93%. Most students on GNVQ intermediate courses do well and in 2001, their pass rate was 77%. However, the retention rate on these courses was low, at 59%. Pass rates in GCSE subjects are slightly above the national average for FE colleges. In science subjects, retention and pass rates are high.
4. Overall, retention and pass rates on courses leading to a NVQ at level 1 are very high. In 2001, 83% of those who completed the course obtained a NVQ. Some 30% of these students had not obtained grade C or above in any GCSE subjects when they joined the college. Most of them progressed to a higher level course.
5. Many full-time students undertake study for short additional qualifications which complement their main course. Pass rates for these additional qualifications are good.
6. Most of the students in work-based learning are aged 16 to 18. The overall retention rate of 75% is satisfactory. In 2001, on agriculture and accounting programmes, the retention rate was excellent, at 100%.
7. Pass rates on NVQ courses are mostly satisfactory and high in engineering. Many students on modern apprenticeship programmes obtain their NVQ in the allocated time, but few carry out their key skills assessments and are therefore unable to complete the modern apprenticeship framework. Students on the modern apprenticeship programmes, demonstrate good practical skills and many progress to full-time employment.

Adult learners

8. Overall, pass rates at level 3 are in line with the national average. Retention rates rose significantly in 2000/01 and are now high. The number of adults on GCE A-level courses is a very small proportion of the college's overall enrolment of adult learners. Pass rates are below the national average. Pass rates on other level 3 programmes, however, notably NVQ level 3, are significantly above the national average.
 9. Pass rates on level 1 and level 2 courses are low. Some 30% of the college's enrolments at these levels are for courses in ICT. Many of the students who take the courses do not complete the qualification. The pass rates on most courses leading to a NVQ level 2 qualification are high, but those for NVQ level 1 are poor. Retention rates for level 1 and level 2 courses have remained at the national average.
 10. Many adults take courses that do not lead to accredited qualifications. Most are successful in improving their confidence and basic skills. For those students who are entered for external qualifications, the pass rates are high.
 11. The college currently has 12 New Deal clients. New Deal clients reach satisfactory levels of achievement. Many progress into employment or FE courses.
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12. Standards of work in lessons were mostly good. Attainment was judged to be good or better in 58% of the lessons. Attendance during the inspection was 78%, which is slightly above the sector average, as reported in the Further Education Funding Council Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1999/2000. The standard of students' specialist subject work is commented on in detail in Part C of this report.

Quality of education and training

13. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 258 sessions. Teaching was good or better in 61%, satisfactory in 30% and less than satisfactory in 9%. There was, however, wide variation in the quality of teaching across the college. The best teaching was in lessons for adult students. In this group, 5% of lessons were unsatisfactory. Teaching was particularly effective in visual and performing arts and media and in information technology (IT) it was good or very good in 90% and 81% of lessons, respectively. Lessons in which teaching was unsatisfactory were spread over a number of curriculum areas. However, in engineering and humanities, over 25% of the teaching was unsatisfactory. The grades awarded for learning were broadly similar to those for teaching. There was no significant difference in the quality of teaching and learning on different levels of course or at the various college centres where teaching was observed.

14. Relationships between teachers and students are good in all curriculum areas. Students appreciate the help they get from their teachers. Most of the students enrolled at the college are adults. Many of them are returning to learning after a long period away from formal education. The teaching of adults is carefully planned. Teachers aim to help adults increase their confidence as students and they encourage them to progress to more advanced courses.

15. A feature of the lessons which were good or better was the careful planning to ensure that students' interest would be maintained and be engaged in challenging activities, regardless of their ability. Students responded well to questions that tested their previous knowledge and these helped them to plan their learning effectively. In the unsatisfactory lessons, teachers often failed to provide learning activities that were suitable for the whole class. In humanities and hospitality, the more able students were not given sufficiently demanding tasks. In some poorer lessons, students spent a disproportionate amount of time on worksheets, or on taking down notes dictated by the teacher. These lessons were dull and failed to motivate the students.

16. Much of the practical teaching is good. Most practical lessons are well planned. Students are encouraged to adopt professional practices and draw on their own work experience. Students develop their practical skills effectively and achieve high standards on equine studies and animal care, hospitality, hairdressing and beauty therapy and in sport, leisure and uniformed services courses.

17. The college has recently improved its arrangements for key skills. The teaching and assessment of key skills are now taught as an integral part of courses in most areas of the curriculum. Many of the materials used for the teaching of key skills, however, do not reflect

the context of the students' main course, and are inappropriate. In lessons, teachers do not give sufficient priority to helping students develop key skills. Students do not regard the key skills component of their courses as important.

18. Arrangements for work-based training are effective. There is clear co-ordination between work-based training and off-the-job training. Students have good work placements where they can develop an appropriate range of skills. Employers understand the NVQ process. They ensure that students are given activities in the workplace which enable them to acquire all the competences they need in order to obtain their NVQ. Students' progress is monitored effectively.

19. Procedures for ensuring the accuracy and fairness of assessment are satisfactory on most courses. There are appropriate assessment schedules and these are usually shared with students. Assignments are designed carefully to help students develop their knowledge and skills. Assessment criteria are clear and understood by students. Assessment is carried out carefully and accurately in accordance with the requirements of examining bodies. On some NVQ courses, such as those in construction, students in the workplace are able to gather a wide range of evidence of their competences. On other courses, however, such as early years, the evidence students provide for assessment purposes is insufficiently diverse.

20. On most courses, the marking and annotation of students' work are carried out well. Most teachers provide good written commentary for students, with advice on where improvements can be made. In some instances, however, written comments are superficial or too general to be helpful. Students appreciate the oral feedback provided by teachers. There are effective arrangements for the internal verification of assessment.

21. Teachers are appropriately qualified for the subjects they teach. Of the full-time teachers, 89% have a teaching qualification. Teachers on NVQ courses have appropriate assessor and verifier qualifications. In-service training is readily available to staff and many participate in staff development activities. Technical support staff and learning assistants provide good support to students and staff.

22. Teaching accommodation has been significantly improved. Much of the accommodation at the main site at King's Lynn has been refurbished. Classrooms have been grouped by curriculum area and have been given subject identity through attractive displays of posters and students' work. Most classrooms are pleasantly furnished. A new purpose-built facility for hairdressing and beauty therapy and hospitality courses provides an excellent learning environment for students. However, some teaching rooms and workshops that have not been upgraded are drab and some have not been well maintained. Much of the accommodation is easily accessible to students with restricted mobility. There are good sports and recreational facilities for students, especially at King's Lynn where students have free use of a leisure centre. There is an excellent 52-place nursery for children of students and staff in which childcare students work as part of their course.

23. Students have good access to high specification computers in the library, learning centres and curriculum areas. Overall, the ratio of computers to students is good at 1 to 5.

All students are given an e-mail address and have ready access to the Internet. ICT is used effectively by students when they work on their own, but it is not used sufficiently within lessons. Many computer rooms have inadequate ventilation and are uncomfortably hot. The four learning centres at Fakenham, Hunstanton, Sheringham and Downham Market provide students with good learning facilities, particularly for community-based ICT courses. The video conferencing link for the three main campuses has been used effectively by some curriculum teams. The spacious library at King's Lynn is well resourced with a good range of books, CD-ROMs, videos and subject-specific learning packs. At King's Lynn, the general careers library is well stocked.

24. The college offers a wide range of courses for full-time and part-time students of all ages. The curriculum extends from pre-entry and level 1 to level 5, and covers all areas of learning. The majority of students study courses at levels 2 and 3.

25. The college has successfully widened participation. The college works in close partnership with employers, local authorities, other colleges and the voluntary sector to help it fulfil its key role in raising the level of skill of the local workforce. There are strong links with local community organisations. The community learning centres at Fakenham, Sheringham, Hunstanton and Downham Market have been successful in attracting nearly 5,000 students who are either unable to attend the main campus at King's Lynn, or who are from groups under-represented on college courses. The college also offers a wide range of courses at some 25 community venues across northwest Norfolk.

26. The college is developing a number of projects for pre-16 pupils from local schools and for children and adults from travelling families. However, targets for full-time recruitment have not been met and in some curriculum areas, average class sizes are small. Almost 5,000 students are enrolled through 13 franchise partners, providing approximately 8% of enrolments. The work of the franchise partners mirrors that of the college. For example, the franchise work with the Construction Industry Training Board complements the college's own specialisation in this area.

27. The college provides students with good advice and guidance before they join. There are vocational 'taster' courses, open days and comprehensive interview arrangements. Prospectuses and course guides are available from the guidance and advice centre. They are attractive and informative. There are effective arrangements for the initial assessment of students. For full-time students, these include an assessment of their skills in communication, application of number and IT. Induction courses are comprehensive and valued by students. During induction, all students take part in introductory coursework during which their skills and knowledge are assessed. The results of initial assessment are taken into account when drawing up students' individual learning plans. Initial assessment also serves as a means of identifying those students who need additional learning support. Although the provision of learning support is good, not all students identified as needing it choose to receive it. Employers take part in the initial assessment of work-based learners.

28. There are satisfactory arrangements for reviewing students' progress and helping them to plan for improvements. All full-time students have personal tutors who help them to

review their progress regularly. The students are encouraged to measure their performance against criteria for attendance, punctuality and attitude to study. They also identify the extent to which their work is of the standard required for their predicted examination grade. Students welcome this process of progress review and self-assessment. Tutors help them to devise action plans for improving their work. On some courses, for instance in agriculture and horticulture, action plans are too general and the timescale for their implementation is inappropriate or unclear. Students with learning difficulties and on basic skills courses have detailed and well-structured individual learning plans. Recently, student mentors have been appointed to monitor students' attendance and follow-up absence from classes. Written reports are sent to the parents or guardians of students aged under 18, and to employers where relevant. Progress reviews are less effective for some work-based learners. Part-time students receive advice on the extent of their progress. On some part-time courses, however, this advice is not provided systematically and is sometimes insufficiently detailed to be effective. Employers of part-time students on hospitality courses are not informed of their employees' progress.

Leadership and management

29. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The senior management team has successfully managed the merger of the former Norfolk College of Arts and Technology and the Cambridge College of Agriculture and Horticulture. Significant progress has been made in achieving the strategic aim of providing learning programmes in the community, which are flexibly arranged and accessible. Standardised procedures for curriculum management, quality assurance and resource control have been established and there has been a significant rationalisation of staffing. Accommodation and equipment have been greatly improved through a carefully planned programme of investment. Senior managers have given clear direction during a period of rapid change. Teachers and support staff are clear about the aims of the college and regard senior management as open and consultative. Retention and pass rates, however, have not increased steadily or significantly. In some instances, they are low, and many are close to the national average for FE colleges.

30. Procedures for strategic planning are good. Governors, senior managers and staff work closely together to agree a vision for the college and to formulate strategic aims. The current strategic plan for the period 1999 to 2002 is a comprehensive and coherent document. Staff are reviewing progress in implementing it and they are drawing up a new plan for the next three years. Other planning and review processes within the institution, such as those for staff appraisal and self-assessment, are closely integrated with those for strategic planning. There are detailed and well-considered policies for human resources management and equal opportunities. The college has responded effectively to current national policies. For example, it has established priorities for managing the 'Teachers Pay Initiative' which reflect its wider strategic aims.

31. The self-assessment and quality assurance procedures are carried out rigorously. For governors and senior managers, they have proved an effective means of identifying the college's strengths and weaknesses. The head of organisational improvement and quality reports directly to the principal and works closely with the curriculum standards committee of

the academic board. Lesson observations are carried out regularly and findings from these, and also surveys of students' views, keep management informed about the quality of provision. Governors and managers acknowledge that the quality assurance procedures have not yet led to higher pass rates, and to discernible improvement in the quality of teaching and the standards of students' work. In some curriculum areas, such as humanities and engineering, levels of students' attainment are low. Inspectors judged a significant proportion of teaching in these areas to be unsatisfactory.

32. The effectiveness of curriculum management varies significantly across the institution. There was good management practice in some subject and occupational areas. Pass rates and levels of students' attainment are high on courses in equine and animal care, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These courses are planned carefully, students have their progress monitored carefully and are assessed rigorously. In some other curriculum areas, there is poor management and quality assurance procedures are not applied rigorously. For example, some course teams fail to set clear targets for retention rates, pass rates, and the standards of students' work, and they give insufficient priority to action planning.

33. Senior managers are aware of weaknesses across the college. In 2001, middle management was strengthened by the introduction of a tier of section leaders in each faculty with responsibility for a group of related courses. Each year, the curriculum and standards committee make use of a range of statistical information to review the self-assessment reports of each curriculum area and, where necessary, moderate the grading in them. In 2001, this process led to eight of the grades awarded by curriculum teams being moved down by one grade. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, the inaccuracy of much of the management information has not enabled faculty managers to monitor students' performance effectively. The college is taking action to identify and address poor performance, and raise retention rates. For example, since September 2001, managers have identified and disseminated good practice in meeting the needs of students on courses. Action has also been taken to improve the guidance and support for prospective students, to ensure they choose a course which is suitable for them. In addition, the training and support needs of curriculum managers are being identified. At the time of the inspection, retention and attendance rates on some courses were showing some signs of improvement.

34. Procedures for monitoring the quality of franchised courses and work-based learning programmes are good. Quality assurance monitors from the college visit franchised provision regularly. Work-based learning is well managed. Links between the college, employers and work-based assessors are strong. Since the implementation of new procedures for monitoring the quality of work-based learning, assessment and internal verification have been more thorough and retention rates have risen.

35. Governance is good. Members of the corporation bring a wide range of valuable expertise to the college. They are aware of the issues facing the college and have played a major role in shaping its strategic direction. Governors have supported the senior management team during the process of merger and a period of growth. As prominent members of the local community, they recognise the challenges in raising levels of skill in the

local workforce and are well informed about the national agenda for lifelong learning. The performance review and quality committee plays an active role in evaluating the performance of the college. It has played a key role in monitoring the effectiveness of the self-assessment process, approving the self-assessment report and scrutinising data on students' performance, such as retention and pass rates.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas

Science and mathematics

Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on the access to medicine and access to science courses
- high retention and pass rates on GCSE science courses
- good written learning materials for students.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on most GCE A-level courses
- failure of some teachers to meet the needs of all students
- ineffective management of quality assurance.

Scope of provision

36. GCE AS courses are offered in chemistry, environmental science, human biology, mathematics, physics and statistics. There are currently 29 students studying GCE AS human biology and 30 studying GCE AS mathematics. Numbers are low on all other GCE AS and A-level courses. In 2001/02, the only GCE A-level courses are human biology, mathematics and physics. Numbers are low on the GCE A-level mathematics course and in order to provide all the options students want, it has been necessary to form some groups made up of students working towards different qualifications. GCSE courses are available in science subjects and mathematics. In September 2001, there were 133 enrolments on GCSE mathematics and 23 on GCSE science courses. Staff in the mathematics section are responsible for teaching numeracy at level 2 and application of number across the whole college. In alternate years, the college runs a course leading to national certificate in food science. The access to medicine course is the only one of its kind in the country. There are currently 42 students on this course and many applicants for it.

Achievement and standards

37. Adult students perform well. Pass rates on the access to medicine course have been 100% in each of the last three years. Retention rates are also high. Students are well motivated and work enthusiastically in lessons and on their own. Written projects are professionally presented and contain sophisticated data analysis. Many students progress to medical school. Students do well in the science modules of the access to HE course and food

science. Pass rates for adults on the GCSE mathematics course are higher than those for students aged 16 to 18.

38. Pass rates on GCSE science courses have been high over the last three years. On the GCSE mathematics course, the retention rate was low in 2001, but the overall pass rate rose to above the national average. Retention and pass rates on the level 2 numeracy course have also risen. Prospective students who wish to enrol on a GCSE mathematics course to improve their grade, but who failed to achieve a grade D previously, are now directed to the level 2 numeracy course.

39. Retention and pass rates on many GCE AS and A-levels are unsatisfactory. Retention rates on GCE A-level courses have declined over a three-year period and some are significantly below the national average. The pass rate for GCE A-level mathematics has also declined, and is below the national average. On the majority of GCE AS and A-level courses, the proportion of students achieving high grades is small. Pass rates on GCE AS courses vary widely. In chemistry, no student achieved a pass in 2001, but the pass rate in environmental science was 100%.

A sample of retention and pass rates in science and mathematics, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE sciences	2	No. of starts	66	67	28
		% retention	80	84	82
		% pass rate	56	25	48
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	181	190	139
		% retention	70	76	65
		% pass rate	18	30	43
Access medicine	3	No. of starts	15	16	23
		% retention	80	100	91
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level mathematics (2 year)	3	No. of starts	18	44	25
		% retention	100	45	56
		% pass rate	44	43	30

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level human biology	3	No. of starts	29	42	41
		% retention	79	57	39
		% pass rate	52	24	57

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

Quality of education and training

40. Teaching was good or very good in 58% of the lessons observed. In many lessons, teachers enthused the students, established a productive rapport with them and made them want to learn. Most teachers plan lessons with clear objectives, although these are not always shared with students. Schemes of work are insufficiently detailed and some merely list the topics to be covered.

41. In the best lessons, the learning activities were varied to take account of the different and preferred learning styles of students. In a GCSE mathematics lesson on symmetry, the teacher skilfully led the students through a series of activities where they were able to contribute orally, learn from an effective demonstration and carry out practical work successfully with a range of shapes of increasing complexity. In science, students are given appropriate tasks to help them develop practical skills. In human biology, students worked on their own projects confidently using a range of equipment well, such as instrumentation for measuring the absorption of potassium in vegetables.

42. In some lessons, the needs of students with differing abilities are not met. In some GCE A-level science classes, able students were not challenged by the activities they were given and some were left for significant periods with nothing to do. In some lessons on GCE AS and A-level courses, there were no clear intended learning outcomes for students who were working towards different qualifications, and some students were left to work on their own for too long. Students were sometimes distracted by the activities of other groups or had to wait too long to gain the teacher's attention.

43. In many lessons, written learning materials help students to work on their own and develop skills. In mathematics, students receive well-presented booklets that cover essential theory, graded exercises and worked examples. In physics lessons, students are presented with helpful handouts that are used effectively to help them develop analytical and practical skills.

44. The range of equipment available for practical work is good and support by technicians is excellent. Students use a well-equipped sports science laboratory for project work. Science laboratories are spacious but the arrangement of furniture in them is such that students cannot carry out group work effectively. Some benches are a long way from the

teacher and students working at these can not always receive the same amount of attention, or feel as involved as others in the room. Mathematics rooms contain good displays of learning materials. There are not enough computers for students on science courses.

45. Teachers mark work regularly in sciences and give students helpful feedback. In the best practice, in human biology courses for example, teachers enter details of how the students can improve their performance on a cover sheet for the work, and students find this most helpful. Students on GCE A-level mathematics courses are not required to give work in often enough to enable them, and also their teachers, to form a clear view of the extent of their progress.

46. Students find teachers approachable and receive the help they request. There are no systematic arrangements to help students on GCE A-level mathematics courses who enrol on them with only a GCSE at intermediate level. These students have less well-developed skills and need a great deal of support. Some students who need additional help with numeracy do not receive it.

Leadership and management

47. Different faculties manage the provision in science and mathematics. Recent management changes have been made. There are weaknesses in the management of quality assurance. Analysis of data on achievements is not rigorous enough. Some action plans do not contain specific and demanding targets. The plans do not specify who has responsibility for the action and the timescale within which action must be completed. Reviews of courses for individual GCE A-level subjects are not carried out and students on these courses are not required to answer questionnaires about the quality of provision. There is insufficient sharing of good practice.

Agriculture and horticulture

Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- effective teaching and learning in practical lessons
- high and increasing retention rates on most courses
- effective informal advice and guidance for students
- successful enrichment programme.

Weaknesses

- lack of variety in the teaching of theory
- low pass rates on national diploma courses
- inadequate action planning for improving tutorials
- failure of many students to complete their apprenticeship framework.

Scope of provision

48. There is a wide range of full-time courses from level 1 to level 3 in agriculture, countryside management and horticulture. These include courses leading to a NVQ at level 1, first diplomas in agriculture and horticulture, and national diplomas in agriculture, horticulture, and countryside management. Part-time courses lead to a NVQ floristry at level 2, the Royal Horticultural Society general examination in horticulture, and level 2 programmes in garden design. There is an extensive programme of short, part-time courses in Fenland, mainly for people working in industry. A high proportion of students on all courses are over 19 years of age. There are also work-based learning programmes for 20 modern apprentices.

Achievement and standards

49. Retention rates on most courses are high and many have risen over the past three years. Pass rates vary considerably. They are low on national diploma courses in agriculture and countryside management. Although many students make slow progress towards achieving their NVQ, pass rates for NVQ level 2 courses are high. In 2001, the pass rate on the NVQ level 2 course in floristry was particularly high. Many modern apprentices achieve a NVQ. However, in 2001, few completed the full apprenticeship framework, as they did not achieve key skills certification.

50. Students achieve good practical skills. They extend their skills through work experience and participation in local shows and projects. For example, horticulture students have designed and planted flower borders at local schools, and in association with local nurseries, a garden to commemorate the first ascent of Mount Everest. Floristry students have been successful in local and national competitions.

51. Adult students make good progress. Most adult students on part-time courses complete their course, but many of them do not choose to have their achievements accredited. Work-based learners develop a good understanding of agricultural and horticultural principles and become competent in a range of practical operations.

52. Full-time students benefit from and value the opportunities they have to broaden their studies through enrichment courses. They visit shows and industry sites. Many work towards, and achieve, additional vocational qualifications.

53. Many students make useful and detailed notes in lessons. Their assessed work shows that they put a great deal of effort into their studies, can apply their knowledge and skills appropriately, and make demonstrable progress. However, the files of some first diploma students are incomplete and their work is poor. In most lessons, the standard of students' work is appropriate for the level of the students' course. A high proportion of students progress to employment, FE or training courses.

A sample of retention and pass rates in agriculture and horticulture, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
General examination in horticulture	2	No. of starts	92	30	17
		% retention	85	90	88
		% pass rate	42	41	60
NVQ floristry	2	No. of starts	16	14	8
		% retention	69	50	88
		% pass rate	18	43	86
NVQ horticulture	2	No. of starts	35	23	22
		% retention	60	65	77
		% pass rate	81	75	71

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
National diploma in agriculture	3	No. of starts	10	8	20
		% retention	100	100	80
		% pass rate	100	75	63
National diploma in countryside management	3	No. of starts	4	10	12
		% retention	100	100	92
		% pass rate	50	60	73

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

Quality of education and training

54. Teaching and learning in practical lessons are effective. Teachers explain topics carefully and they relate theory to practice clearly. In effective lessons, students worked in pairs to discuss and operate safe lifting techniques for various items. They also kept a record of the effectiveness of these techniques. All students were absorbed in what they were doing. The teacher visited each pair of students in turn to give encouragement and assess progress. The students then strengthened their understanding of lifting techniques by taking part in a simple, but effective quiz.

55. Teaching in theory lessons is less satisfactory. These lessons are sometimes poorly planned and the different learning tasks are poorly co-ordinated. In these lessons, the teachers made too few demands of the students. Their teaching is dull. They talk too much and the students become bored. Teachers make little use of ICT to stimulate students' curiosity and make their studies exciting. In some instances, groups of students from the first and second years of a full-time course were combined, but lesson planning took little account of the range of ability in the class. In many lessons, all students are given the same work, regardless of their experience and ability. Some teachers fail to encourage students who are reticent in class to express their ideas, ask questions and contribute to discussion and they do not check their understanding of the lesson.

56. On part-time courses for adults, most teaching is well organised and relevant to industry. Teachers question the students skilfully to test their understanding. Students demonstrate their ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practical situations.

57. There are effective systems for monitoring students' progress. Teachers give students effective informal support and guidance. Students have regular tutorials during which they agree action for improving their performance. The tutors or training advisers, however, do not always record this action. Progress in implementing it is not always checked at the next tutorial. Assignments are set regularly. Teachers use grading criteria effectively

when assessing students' work. Teachers mark students' work accurately but they do not always provide them with detailed and constructive written feedback on how students may improve their performance. Internal verification is rigorous. There is good provision of additional learning support in lessons. Students can also attend individual or group sessions to improve their basic skills. Most teachers are appropriately qualified and suitably experienced. Machinery and equipment resources, library and other learning resources are adequate. Good use is made of estate resources for the teaching of practical skills. The college has established sufficient plant stocks for identification and growing.

Leadership and management

58. Curriculum management is satisfactory. Regular meetings of staff teams take place, but they do not focus sufficiently on improving the quality of teaching and learning. There is insufficient sharing of best practice between teachers at the two land-based centres. Course review is effective and targets for enrolment, retention and achievement are set. Progress towards reaching these targets is reviewed regularly. There are good arrangements for providing full-time students and students on work-based programmes with work experience placements, where they are able to develop skills and extend their knowledge. In some instances, however, teachers, students, employers and training advisers do not liaise with one another to ensure that appropriate training is provided in the workplace and that it is co-ordinated effectively with the theory work that is taught in the college.

Equine studies and animal care

Overall provision in this area is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- very good pass rates
- good retention rates
- good teaching
- wide range of additional qualifications
- effective personal and learning support.

Weaknesses

- insufficient access to learning resources

Scope of provision

59. There is a good range of courses in animal care and equine studies. Full-time courses are offered at two centres. These include national diploma in animal care, first diploma in animal care, national diploma in horse studies, and first diploma in horse care courses. Some 52 students are on NVQ courses in animal care at levels 1 and 2 and 29 students are on courses leading to veterinary nursing qualifications. There are nine modern apprentices. Part-time courses for adults include those in dog grooming, riding for disabled assistants and British Horse Society courses.

Achievement and standards

60. There are very high pass rates on all courses. Pass rates on most horse care courses are outstanding. Passes on animal care courses are very high and there are excellent pass rates on veterinary nursing courses. Many students achieve additional qualifications. Retention rates are high on all courses. The retention rate on the veterinary nursing course is 100%. Some 95% of students who began their course in September were still attending at the time of the inspection. Attendance is excellent on most courses and there is immediate follow up of any absences. Courses are intensive and aim to help students fulfil their potential. The standard of students' work is high. Project work relates to students' work experience. Students take part in enrichment activities, such as visits to animal care and equine establishments. These visits are well planned and further students' knowledge and understanding of the industry. Most students progress to higher level courses or to employment. In 2000, 46% of students progressed to employment and 50% went on to further courses.

A sample of retention and pass rates in equine studies and animal care, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ caring for animals	2	No. of starts	49	39	75
		% retention	82	94	81
		% pass rate	88	88	95
First diploma in horse care	2	No. of starts	14	*	16
		% retention	77	*	88
		% pass rate	100	*	100
First diploma in animal care	2	No. of starts	52	51	48
		% retention	80	90	79
		% pass rate	93	98	92
National diploma in animal care I	3	No. of starts	31	39	61
		% retention	97	77	80
		% pass rate	93	87	89
NVQ veterinary nursing	3	No. of starts	13	16	7
		% retention	92	81	100
		% pass rate	100	85	*

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

* data not available at the time of the inspection

Quality of education and training

61. Most teaching is good or very good. Lessons are well planned to take account of the learning styles and ability of individual students. In riding lessons, the less proficient students are given encouragement to help them to achieve the same level of performance as the others. Teaching is varied to stimulate and hold students' interest. Practical teaching is excellent. It is carefully organised and teachers link theory to practice. In lessons, students are given demanding activities through which they test and explore their understanding of aspects of animal care. In a riding lesson on 'ride and lead', students who were not riding

completed an assessment of those students who were, which they then presented to them. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for organising their own work. Students on the second year of the national diploma courses develop their own skills by supervising inexperienced students in the stable yard and animal care unit. Students are encouraged to organise weekend and evening shows. They are given extra time to do the additional practical work required. The additional practical work is especially valuable to some adult students who lack any previous experience of animal care. In practical lessons, teachers stress the importance of observing health and safety regulations.

62. There are comprehensive procedures for assessment on all courses. Internal verification on animal care courses is rigorous and is satisfactory on horse care courses. Students receive good feedback on their learning, including detailed comments on their written work. Students receive good initial guidance. Personal support includes help from a mentor who follows up reasons for poor performance or absence. Students receive very good support to help them with assignments and valuable guidance on how to organise their time. Individual tutorials take place at least twice each term and clear targets for students are agreed and recorded.

63. Teaching staff have appropriate teaching and professional qualifications. Many have had recent industrial experience. Students make good use of the excellent facilities of the animal care units and equine yards. The range of horses is suitable for students from level 1 to level 3. The indoor schools are excellent but there is no outdoor school at one centre. One centre lacks a demonstration area for stable management. The animal care units are well managed and have a wide range of species. One centre lacks an outdoor small animal area. Neither centre has secure dog handling areas but both have a dog grooming facility.

64. Students only have access to learning materials during the college day. Insufficient use is made of ICT in teaching. There are sufficient computers for students but these can only be used during the day. Current issues of popular periodicals are made available to students at one or other of the two sites. These are passed from one site to the other.

Leadership and management

65. Course management is good. Course teams work closely together to share good practice. Teachers share innovative and effective teaching strategies and help each other by observing and commenting on each other's teaching. Courses are well planned. Timetables are organised meticulously to make the best use of the availability of horses and small animals, and to provide a proper balance of theory and practical sessions. Course reviews are thorough and course teams set clear targets for pass rates and retention rates. Course teams review progress towards reaching targets at half term. Swift remedial action is taken if it appears these targets are not going to be met.

Construction

Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on many courses
- good teaching on many courses
- good placements for work-based learners
- effective personal and academic support for students.

Weaknesses

- failure of many modern apprentices to complete their apprenticeship framework
- insufficient technician support
- insufficient attention to safe working practices.

Scope of provision

66. There is a wide range of courses in construction at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. These include craft and technician courses and foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship programmes. The faculty has good links with local contractors and with the Construction Industry Training Board, which sends students from its direct training centre to the college. In 2001, the college enrolled 559 students on construction courses, of whom 97 attend full time. There are 298 adults on part-time programmes. There are 182 work-based trainees on modern apprenticeship programmes in plumbing, brickwork, carpentry and electrical installation. Some 102 of the modern apprentices are following programmes in electrical installation.

Achievement and standards

67. There are high retention rates on most courses. On the NVQ level 3 wood occupations course, the retention rate has been 100% for the past three years. On the NVQ level 2 plumbing course, the retention rate has risen over the last three years and is now well above the national average. Pass rates are very high on NVQ courses in wood occupations and on electrical installation courses. On national certificate courses the pass rates are declining. The pass rate on the NVQ level 2 plumbing course has been low for each of the last three years, and in 2001 was only 30%. Many modern apprentices achieve their NVQs. Few complete the modern apprenticeship framework because they fail to achieve key skills certification.

68. Attainment is good on most courses. Students produce practical work of a good standard. For example, students working on the NVQ level 3 wood occupations course produce artefacts and joints to an industrial standard. They are able to fix door linings and hang doors with confidence. Two students were observed setting out and making a set of winding stairs. This involved the use of advanced geometry for the setting out and a level of high skill in the cutting of the stairs. In electrical installations, students are able to use industry standard testing equipment to test the continuity and resistance of lighting and power circuits.

A sample of retention and pass rates in construction, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ bricklaying	2	No. of starts	12	26	24
		% retention	83	23	66
		% pass rate	70	75	93
NVQ plumbing	2	No. of starts	9	17	23
		% retention	55	47	70
		% pass rate	20	40	30
NVQ electrical installation	2	No. of starts	37	31	35
		% retention	40	86	77
		% pass rate	56	100	93
National certificate in building	3	No. of starts	36	46	32
		% retention	88	74	84
		% pass rate	96	90	68
NVQ wood occupations	3	No. of starts	10	13	13
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	80	69	100

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

Quality of education and training

69. In 66% of the lessons observed, teaching was good or very good. Teachers produce good schemes of work which meet course requirements and comprehensive lesson plans. In many lessons, good use is made of students' industrial experience to illustrate key points and to promote discussion. In the best lessons, individual students receive appropriate guidance and encouragement. In less successful lessons, teachers do not give the students sufficient explanation of what they want them to do through circulating among them in the workshop. For example, in a practical brickwork class, students did not know the technical terms to describe the components of the arches and chimneys that they were building. In some lessons, teachers give insufficient attention to safe working practices. Some students engaged in practical activities in the workshop have insufficient protective clothing. Students on an electrical installation course received insufficient guidance on the isolation of circuits and lone working on live circuits. Work-based learners receive good practical training when they attend college. Modern apprentices are visited regularly in the workplace. Reviews of their progress are comprehensive. Targets are set during the reviews and apprentices' attendance at college is closely monitored.

70. There are thorough arrangements for the assessment of students' work. Assessment methods are good. Staff use assessment worksheets which give clear instructions on how assessment is to be carried out and specify assessment criteria. When teachers mark work and assignments, they provide students with written comments to encourage them and show them how they can improve their performance. In many cases, teachers correct spelling and grammar in the work as well as its technical content. Marked work is returned promptly.

71. Most students receive regular tutorial support. Tutors keep appropriate records of students' progress. Additional learning support is effective for those students who are identified as needing it.

72. Teachers are well qualified and they have relevant industrial experience. However, few of them have updated their knowledge of industry through extended visits to employers. Technicians provide effective and valuable support. There is, however, insufficient technician support in some practical lessons and students are sometimes unable to complete their work. Workshops are well equipped. They contain an ample number of industry standard testing instruments which students use to validate their work. The up-to-date specialist equipment available includes total stations for surveying and a thickener, which uses numeric control for setting the depth of cut for students on wood trades courses.

Leadership and management

73. Curriculum management is satisfactory. However, some aspects of the college's quality assurance procedures have not been fully implemented. Not all staff were involved in self-assessment and arrangements for target setting at course level are inadequate. Observation of teaching takes place but few part-time teachers have been observed.

74. Responsibilities for the management of the work-based training programmes are clear. On these programmes, promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace is monitored effectively and the application of quality assurance procedures is improving. The college has strong links with the construction industry. The construction advisory board meets regularly to identify where changes to the provision are necessary. Faculty expenditure against budget is monitored carefully.

Engineering

Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- good standard of students' practical work
- good range of engineering resources
- effective arrangements for training modern apprentices.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on full-time courses
- poor attendance on full-time courses
- much unsatisfactory teaching
- ineffective implementation of quality assurance procedures.

Scope of provision

75. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time engineering courses at levels 1 to 4. These include courses in motor vehicle, welding, general engineering, maintenance and computer-aided design. The college also provides a range of short commercial courses for industry. The majority of the college's 383 engineering students are aged 16 to 18. There are 46 work-based trainees who are on foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship programmes. Modern apprentices attend the college one day each week for practical skills training and vocational courses.

Achievement and standards

76. Retention and pass rates are low for many full-time courses. The pass rate for full-time NVQ level 2 courses has been significantly below the national average for three years. The retention rate on the part-time national certificate course has also been significantly below the national average for three years. Both the retention and pass rates on the basic engineering competences course have been below the national average for three years. Pass rates for short courses are consistently high. Many modern apprentices complete their apprenticeship framework in good time. The standard of most students' practical work is good. At an early stage in their training programme, some modern apprentices are able to demonstrate they have acquired extensive knowledge of engineering processes and good engineering skills.

A sample of retention and pass rates in engineering, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
City and Guilds basic engineering competences	1	No. of starts	15	18	14
		% retention	77	76	64
		% pass rate	30	69	44
NVQ engineering manufacture (foundation)	2	No. of starts	27	24	15
		% retention	85	78	67
		% pass rate	18	17	40
City and Guilds electrical and electronic servicing (short course)	3	No. of starts	20	16	13
		% retention	100	100	92
		% pass rate	85	100	100
National diploma in engineering	3	No. of starts	13	25	22
		% retention	69	76	61
		% pass rate	67	74	50

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

Quality of education and training

77. The teaching was unsatisfactory in 30% of the lessons observed. In these lessons, teaching did not extend the students' understanding sufficiently and teachers did not check students' learning. Their questioning technique was poor and they did not direct questions at particular students in the group, in order to find out which members of the class were having difficulty understanding the lesson. In a poor mathematics lesson, some disruptive students were allowed to engage other students in conversation and by so doing, prevented many members of the class from learning properly. Some lessons were boring and failed to capture the interest of the students. In one lesson, students were given the unimaginative task of copying notes from the whiteboard. Many students wasted time while waiting for others to finish. During one engineering materials lesson, two students who had previously completed the materials unit sat to one side of the classroom attempting an assignment on computers. These students received little support from the teacher and made very little progress.

78. In the better theory lessons, teachers set clear objectives and make good use of visual aids and models. In a lesson on torque converters, the teacher made good use of cut-away models and diagrams. In many lessons, teachers drew on their industrial knowledge to relate theory to workplace practice. In a lesson on hydraulics, students asked searching questions about the application of the principles being taught and the teacher effectively used their answers to expand on and consolidate learning. Students were attentive and maintained their motivation. Attendance on full-time courses is poor. At the time of the inspection, the average attendance at one practical engineering workshop had been 57% over the previous three weeks. Attendance at a mathematics lesson on the national diploma course had been less than 60% over a period of five weeks.

79. Much of the practical work produced by students is good. Some weld test pieces and some machined components are of a high standard. Students are provided with some good learning support materials. Marking sheets for practical tasks clearly show the criteria applied and results achieved. Modern apprentices learn effectively in the workplace. They demonstrate a high level of skills, acquire extensive knowledge and make good progress. Workplace supervisors arrange for modern apprentices to gain experience in a wide range of employment contexts. They ensure that apprentices are given workplace tasks which are relevant to, and complement, their work at college.

80. Students are assessed regularly throughout the year and constantly reminded of the deadlines for completion of work. However, feedback to students on their work does not always inform them of how to improve. Assessment of key skills for students on part-time motor vehicle courses is particularly well integrated with the assessment of vocational skills and knowledge.

81. Teachers have appropriate vocational and teaching qualifications. Many staff have extensive industrial experience. There is a good range of specialist equipment which meets the requirements of courses. The workshops include comprehensive machining, welding and fitting areas and a well-equipped motor vehicle workshop. The college has excellent resources for training in advanced manufacturing.

Leadership and management

82. Course leaders are well supported by their immediate managers. Staff are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the courses on which they teach. Self-assessment of course performance is conducted annually but is not always rigorous. Judgements on retention and achievement are not always substantiated by centrally-held data. Managers do not verify the judgements made. Where weaknesses in provision have been identified through course reviews, action has been agreed to rectify them. Implementation of such action has not been closely monitored by managers and its effectiveness has not been reviewed systematically. The section has failed to raise retention and pass rates on certain courses over the last three years. However, a number of initiatives have been introduced this year with the aim of improving students' performance. These include an extended induction period to prepare students more effectively for their course and the appointment of a student mentor to monitor attendance.

Business administration and management

Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on the introductory award in supervision course
- effective arrangements for reviewing students' progress
- effective links with employers
- well-organised work-based learning.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on full-time business courses
- failure of many work-based learners to achieve key skills certification
- inadequate action planning by modern apprentices to improve their performance
- poor accommodation and resources.

Scope of provision

83. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses at foundation, intermediate, advanced and higher levels. Full-time provision for students aged 16 to 18 includes GCE AS and A-level, Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) and GNVQ intermediate in business courses. The college has recently introduced a practical business skills courses for foundation students. There are 35 modern apprentices on work-based training programmes in administration and accounting. The majority of enrolments are on part-time courses. All students on management and accounting courses are part time. Enrolments on part-time courses in management have declined over the last three years.

Achievement and standards

84. There are high pass rates on a number of business and management courses. Pass rates on GCE A-level business, GNVQ advanced business and the introductory award in supervision courses compare favourably with the national average. In 2001, the pass rate on each of these courses was 100%. The retention rate for the introductory award in supervision course was also 100%. Pass rates on most other courses are at or near the national average. However, the pass rate on the GNVQ intermediate course was low in 2000 and 2001. Many learners on modern apprenticeship programmes fail to gain key skills certification and are unable to complete their modern apprenticeship framework. Retention rates on full-time courses and some work-based programmes are low. The retention rate for GCE A-level

business was 45% in 2001. The retention rate on part-time courses in management is high. Retention rates on other part-time courses are broadly satisfactory.

85. Students produce satisfactory work. On most courses students' written work is carefully organised and well presented. Full-time students apply their skills confidently and cope well with the work-related aspects of their courses. Students on management courses display high levels of oral and critical skills. Modern apprentices produce detailed portfolios of work.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business administration and management, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Office procedures (1 year)	1	No. of starts	10	11	16
		% retention	100	100	75
		% pass rate	60	55	67
Introductory award in supervision	2	No. of starts	110	46	45
		% retention	98	100	100
		% pass rate	81	91	100
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	21	10	16
		% retention	71	50	50
		% pass rate	73	40	50
GNVQ advanced business studies	3	No. of starts	21	41	25
		% retention	86	54	55
		% pass rate	83	100	100
GCE A-level business/management/office studies	3	No. of starts	10	12	11
		% retention	100	58	45
		% pass rate	70	29	100

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ accounting	4	No. of starts	25	14	6
		% retention	92	100	100
		% pass rate	91	57	67

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

Quality of education and training

86. Most teaching is satisfactory or good. There is a high proportion of good teaching on part-time courses. The best lessons are well planned. Teachers use a variety of teaching techniques to maintain the interest of the students. Many teachers are skilful in encouraging students to respond to questions and they help them gain a good understanding of the business sector. Teachers have high expectations of students on management courses. They encourage students to draw on their own work experience to illustrate the topic being studied. Less successful lessons are poorly planned. In a lesson on the AVCE business course, the teacher did not explain the purpose of the lesson adequately. Students then spent a large part of the lesson merely copying notes. They were unsure of the teacher's expectations and wasted time copying information that they did not need. The students became frustrated and inattentive.

87. Students receive useful feedback on their work from teachers and assessors. Assessment is fair and accurate. Assessment on management courses is particularly thorough. On these courses, teachers e-mail students at their place of work to provide them with immediate feedback on the quality of their assignments. Most modern apprentices receive appropriate feedback on their work. Employers give learners good support in the workplace when they are preparing work for assessment. However, some learners have had frequent changes of assessor and are unsure of the assessment arrangements. Following assessment, modern apprentices do not produce action plans for improving their work.

88. Students are complimentary about the support they receive from their tutors. Induction and tutorial programmes are well structured. They include careers advice and support for progression to other courses and to HE. The recording and following up of students' absence is improving. Full-time students who are at risk of failure are set clear targets for improvement and provided with additional support if they need it. Modern apprentices receive good support from the college's training adviser.

89. Staff are well qualified and have good access to further training. Some staff have recently updated their skills and knowledge by going on industrial placements. The accommodation and resources for business studies are unsatisfactory. Classrooms need refurbishment. There are insufficient rooms for tutorials. There is a satisfactory range of

learning materials. Computers are readily available to students. There is inadequate provision of books in the learning resource centre. Many of the books are out of date.

Leadership and management

90. The area is satisfactorily managed. Staff meetings are held regularly and appropriate action is usually taken to address issues as they arise. Managers have implemented a number of strategies to improve it. The management section has developed management courses which are provided on employers' premises and these have led to stronger business links. Links with employers are good and have been used to find a wide range of appropriate work placements for students. The management of work-based training is good.

Computing

Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- wide range of courses
- some good teaching
- well-planned courses
- detailed assessment of project work.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on most full-time courses
- unsatisfactory working conditions in most computing areas
- ineffective leadership.

Scope of provision

91. The college provides a wide range of courses from foundation to higher levels in computing. Some 141 full-time students follow courses leading to GNVQs at foundation and intermediate levels, the national diploma in computing and GCE AS ICT and GCE A-level computing. The number of adult students on part-time courses is growing. The courses include part-time City and Guilds courses for system support technicians and Visual Basic, Cisco networking academy programme training, and a higher national certificate in computing. The inspection did not cover courses leading to higher level qualifications.

Achievement and standards

92. Retention rates have declined on full-time courses. There are low retention rates on GCE A-level computing and the national diploma in computing course. However, retention rates are high on the GNVQ course at foundation level. Pass rates are broadly in line with the national average. Pass rates on part-time courses are mostly high.

93. Students develop good personal and learning skills. On the GNVQ intermediate course, students discuss computer specifications with employers and analyse their requirements carefully. They then meet these requirements through individual projects and the standard of their work is high. In one lesson on a national diploma course, students were required to make notes using a word processor. In addition, they had to access a large website, find information about signal modulation and data transmission, and summarise their findings for inclusion in their notes. The students learnt a great deal through this exercise and it furthered their investigative skills and ability to work on their own. Most students work

hard and responsibly, and are punctual. Some students, however, do not attend all of the sessions that are timetabled on a given day.

A sample of retention and pass rates in computing, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Business Technology and Education Council (BTEC) GNVQ ICT foundation	1	No. of starts	*	*	14
		% retention	*	*	93
		% pass rate	*	*	85
BTEC GNVQ ICT intermediate	2	No. of starts	15	32	29
		% retention	47	75	52
		% pass rate	40	92	67
BTEC national diploma computing	3	No. of starts	*	20	73
		% retention	*	100	45
		% pass rate	*	90	70
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	13	7	22
		% retention	31	100	33
		% pass rate	100	57	75

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

*course not running

Quality of education and training

94. Most teaching is satisfactory or good. Lessons are well organised and effective. In the best lessons, teachers use a variety of appropriate methods to ensure that students understand the topics covered and that their interest is sustained. For example, in one lesson on project design on a GNVQ intermediate course, the teacher prepared good resource material for students to use in a presentation. The teacher directed the lesson skilfully and the students participated with enthusiasm. Later in the same lesson, students used Gantt charting software to schedule their project work and it helped them to plan their work more effectively.

95. The teaching on part-time computing courses is good. Teachers establish good relationships with students, set appropriate tasks, assess work accurately and carefully monitor the progress that students are making. The weakest teaching and least effective learning occur when lessons are not planned properly. For example, in a Visual Basic programming session involving one-dimensional arrays and the 'bubble sort', students were given insufficient opportunity to develop a mental picture of the concepts involved and were introduced to the algorithm too quickly. The set of data chosen to illustrate the topic was inappropriate.

96. Most assessment is carried out well. Teachers assess students' project work carefully and seek to help students build on their previous knowledge. Students have a clear idea of the standard of their work and how they can improve it. For example, in several lessons, the teachers' discussions with individual students focussed on the assessment criteria for the course. The students agree their current levels of attainment with the teacher and a record was kept of how they intended to improve it.

97. Teachers have good relationships with students. They provide students with effective support in the classroom. Teachers do not have any clear system for identifying students who are at risk of not completing their course. In some lessons, where the male students are more vociferous and forthcoming than the female students, the teacher sometimes fails to ensure that the latter receive sufficient attention and help.

98. There is a good provision of computing equipment. The working conditions in the computing rooms, however, are unsatisfactory. Computers are arranged in such a way that when sunlight fills the room, it falls on the screens and blinds have to be drawn in order that students may see the screens clearly. The height adjustment mechanism on many of the chairs does not work. The computing rooms are also hot and humid. Reference materials in the computing section of the library are limited to a small selection of computer magazines. Students engaged in project work have to rely almost entirely on the Internet as a source of reference material.

Leadership and management

99. Over the last year, there have been a number of staff changes. A new section leader was appointed in September. College policies are now implemented fully. Lessons are observed regularly. Targets are set for individual courses. Staff in the section, however, do not share good practice effectively. Action by management has not yet led to any significant increase in retention and pass rates.

Information and communications technology

Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on single-subject courses
- success of many students in progressing to advanced courses
- effective teaching on single-subject courses
- thorough assessment and helpful feedback to students on their work.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on ICT courses
- insufficient range of activities for workshop students
- failure of teachers to check students' understanding in some lessons
- noisy and often unpleasantly hot open-access centres.

Scope of provision

100. There are more than 6,000 part-time students studying IT at 14 locations throughout the county. There is a wide range of courses available from entry level through to level 4. These include computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), integrated business technology (IBT) stages 2 and 3, City and Guilds levels 1 and 2, Internet technologies, and introduction to IT courses. There are also single-subject courses leading to certification, such as those on word processing, text processing and spreadsheets. Most courses are organised flexibly in order that students may attend them at times which fit in with their other commitments. Many students progress to courses at a higher level. There is a significant number of students progressing through courses at two or more levels.

Achievement and standards

101. The pass rates on the City and Guilds courses and the teachers' certificate in teaching IT course are high. The pass rate on the teachers' certificate in teaching IT course has risen steadily and now exceeds the national average. The retention rates on the range of single-subject word processing, text processing and spreadsheet certificate courses are consistently high and the pass rates on these are mostly at, or above, the national averages. Pass rates for the very large number of students taking the CLAIT or IBT2 courses are low and well below the national average. A large number of the adult learners, however, are content to work towards part of, rather than the whole, qualification. Many others fail to

achieve the qualification in the allotted time. Students apply themselves well in lessons but many are not fully aware of the rate at which they are expected to progress. On many occasions, time is wasted in lessons when students do not fully understand how to use the software package and are unable to locate particular files on the computer.

A sample of retention and pass rates in information and communications technology, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
City and Guilds IT	1	No. of starts	*	20	638
		% retention	*	100	79
		% pass rate	*	80	51
CLAIT	1	No. of starts	1537	1300	988
		% retention	82	68	80
		% pass rate	57	36	38
City and Guilds IT	2	No. of starts	*	20	52
		% retention	*	100	69
		% pass rate	*	55	78
Joint Examining Board certificate in teaching	2	No. of starts	40	31	36
		% retention	85	74	86
		% pass rate	65	87	**
IBT 2	2	No. of starts	347	446	370
		% retention	82	74	84
		% pass rate	37	26	30
Oxford, Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts (OCR) single subjects	2	No. of starts	207	353	319
		% retention	94	90	87
		% pass rate	63	72	74

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
IBT 3	3	No. of starts	35	58	39
		% retention	83	95	97
		% pass rate	**	**	**
Joint Examining Board certificate in teaching	3	No. of starts	9	37	17
		% retention	89	86	100
		% pass rate	63	75	88

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

* data unavailable at the time of the inspection

** data unreliable

Quality of education and training

102. Some 94% of teaching is satisfactory or good. Teaching is best on single-subject programmes where a variety of teaching and learning styles are used. In workshops on courses which are organised flexibly, however, students spend a great deal of time learning from texts and using on-line resources. They are not given a sufficiently wide range of learning activities and some of the workshop lessons are uninspiring. Teachers give a lot of support to students when they ask for it, but otherwise do not check their understanding sufficiently. Some teachers fail to help students consolidate their learning or do not show them how they can learn more effectively. For example, in a lesson on spreadsheets, the teacher watched a student use an accurate, but very slow method of entering data, but made no attempt to show the student a more effective way of carrying out the task.

103. Assignment briefs are clear. Students are aware of the standards required to achieve a pass. The portfolios of students on level 2 and 3 courses are comprehensive and contain some good work. The portfolios of students on entry and level 1 courses, however, contain a disproportionate amount of work involving gapped handouts. All students have been required to carry out the same basic assignments, and these have not been adapted or modified to suit individual interests and abilities. Little work in portfolios shows that students have drawn upon their own occupational experience. Assignment work is carefully corrected and the feedback to students on their performance is both detailed and helpful. Students' attendance and progress are monitored and non-attendance is quickly followed up. Teachers, however, do not always make students fully aware of the extent of their progress and many are unsure of how well they are doing.

104. Some initial assessment is not carried out well. Some students attend induction programmes and 'taster' courses at which their skills can be assessed. Others start directly on

the programme of their choice, but staff have not checked that they have the necessary skills to succeed on it. There is no established system for identifying the additional learning support needs of this large group of part-time adult students. Those with physical disabilities are given appropriate support, but many students need help with basic skills which they are not given. Additional learning support for full-time students is effective.

105. Staff are well qualified and demonstrate a good level of technical competence. Many of the teachers on the community courses are former ICT students from the college. There is an excellent, new purpose-built IT centre at the main site. Accommodation on the other sites is mostly satisfactory. However, one centre is in a converted house where only the ICT room is accessible to people in wheelchairs. Many of the centres are too hot. Noise levels in the open-access centres are high and often disturb students who are working there.

Leadership and management

106. The management and co-ordination of the provision across the different centres in the region are effective. There is a clear management structure. The deputy head of faculty and the section leaders meet weekly to monitor the management of the centres. Resources are efficiently and effectively deployed between the centres. There is insufficient communication between staff in the curriculum area and the central college registry. There are discrepancies between the data on retention and pass rates held in the curriculum area, and the data recorded centrally.

Retail and customer service

Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- good support for individual students
- good management of work-based learning
- well-qualified and suitably experienced staff
- productive links with employers.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates
- inadequate arrangements for gathering learners' views.

Scope of provision

107. The provision consists entirely of work-based learning. The college offers advanced modern apprenticeship and foundation modern apprenticeship programmes in retail operations and customer service. Training is also offered leading to NVQ at levels 1, 2 and 3 in retail operations, distribution and warehousing and customer service. Four large employers in East Anglia employ the majority of the learners. The remainder are employed in local retail outlets. There are currently 350 learners on work-based learning, 246 of whom are following programmes in retail operations.

Achievement and standards

108. Retention rates are satisfactory. However, pass rates have been low on all programmes for each of the last three years, and for NVQ retail operations, the pass rate has declined to 37%. Modern apprentices attend key skills lessons at the college every three weeks. Only a small number, however, complete the key skills component of their programmes. Learners demonstrate a good understanding of their specialist area and produce portfolios of evidence that contain a wide range of evidence of their acquisition of competence.

A sample of retention and pass rates in retail and customer service, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ customer service	2	No. of starts	6	473	184
		% retention	100	81	89
		% pass rate	0	13	34
NVQ retail operations	2	No. of starts	73	112	48
		% retention	36	44	72
		% pass rate	68	54	37

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

Quality of education and training

109. Training takes place in the workplace and most is carried out by the employer. This is supplemented by well-planned on-the-job training carried out by a college tutor. Most of this training is satisfactory and some of it is good. The best sessions build successfully on links between theory and practice. For example, in a session on health and safety, a foundation modern apprentice in a distribution outlet walked around the shop floor with the college tutor to see how many potential hazards they could identify. The tutor checked that the learners knew what action should be taken for each hazard identified, and to whom the hazards should be reported. At the end of the session, the tutor asked the modern apprentice questions from a comprehensive assessment book to find out what they had learnt from the exercise.

110. The college has effective links with employers. The programmes offered by the college meet the needs of employers in the local retail market. The combination of units and NVQs offered fully meets the requirements of the large national contracts. Employers are kept informed of the progress of their employees. In most work placements, employers give learners a variety of jobs in different areas to enable them to acquire all the competences they need in order to achieve their NVQ.

111. Individual learners receive a great deal of support. Arrangements for the initial assessment of learners are good and are effective in identifying which students require additional learning support. Prompt action is taken to provide the support. Regular and frequent visits are made to the workplace by college staff to assess and review learners' progress. Records of progress reviews, however, are inadequate. They do not specify in detail how learners are performing in relation to the targets they have been set, and do not indicate what learners need to do to improve their work.

112. Assessors are well qualified. They have appropriate vocational qualifications. All assessors hold the mandatory assessor qualifications and over half have, or are working towards achieving, the internal verifier qualification.

113. The range and quality of learning materials available to students are satisfactory. The four largest employers have produced excellent workbooks to help students to learn theory. Learning materials for key skills vary considerably in quality. The best materials place key skills in a clear and relevant vocational context.

Leadership and management

114. Work-based learning is managed well. The management of work-based learning in retail and customer service underwent major reorganisation approximately 12 months ago. A programme manager post was created. There were a number of staff changes and new staff were appointed. Following the identification through self-assessment of weaknesses in learners' performance, action was taken to improve assessment procedures. It is too early to know whether this action is proving effective.

Hospitality

Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on NVQ level 2 programmes
- good teaching in practical lessons
- productive links with employers
- good teamwork by students in production and service areas
- well-equipped specialist facilities.

Weaknesses

- low pass rate on GNVQ hospitality and catering course
- failure of teachers to meet individual learning needs in some theory classes
- lack of rigour in assessment and internal verification
- failure of many students to achieve key skills certification.

Scope of provision

115. The college offers a range of hospitality and catering courses for full-time and part-time students at levels 1 to 3, leading to NVQs in hotel reception, food service, food preparation and AVCE qualifications. There are 69 full-time students, 55 of whom are aged 16 to 18. There are 22 part-time students. Part-time courses include those leading to professional cooks qualifications, the National Licensees' Certificate, and short courses in food hygiene. On hospitality and catering programmes, there are several students with learning difficulties.

Achievement and standards

116. Pass rates on NVQ level 2 food preparation and cooking and hotel reception courses are above the national average. The pass rate on the GNVQ hospitality and catering courses at advanced level is low. Retention rates on most courses are satisfactory, but on the AVCE hospitality and catering course, only one third of the students who started have continued onto the second year of the course. The majority of full-time students gain qualifications in addition to their main qualification. All students achieve a basic food hygiene certificate.

117. Students' attainment is satisfactory. Practical work is of a high standard. Students demonstrate good technical skills and support each other effectively in the kitchens, reception areas and the restaurant. Much of the students' written work, however, is insufficiently detailed. Many level 3 students have poor analytical skills. There are many opportunities for

students to develop their key skills through their practical work. However, many of the tasks designed to help them to develop their key skills are not related to the vocational component of their course and students find them dull. Few students achieve key skills certification. Attendance is good. Most students progress to further training or relevant employment

A sample of retention and pass rates in hospitality, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ catering and hospitality food preparation and cooking (1 year)	1	No. of starts	*	21	27
		% retention	*	80	66
		% pass rate	*	71	72
NVQ catering and hospitality	2	No. of starts	8	7	13
		% retention	88	86	92
		% pass rate	86	83	100
NVQ food and drink service	2	No. of starts	7	*	24
		% retention	100	*	88
		% pass rate	86	*	71
NVQ food preparation and cooking (1 year)	2	No. of starts	32	18	17
		% retention	94	89	94
		% pass rate	87	88	100
GNVQ advanced hospitality and catering	3	No. of starts	20	14	14
		% retention	95	71	43
		% pass rate	84	80	67
NVQ food preparation and cooking	3	No. of starts	10	9	4
		% retention	80	89	75
		% pass rate	**	75	100

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

* course not running

** data unavailable at the time of the inspection

Quality of education and training

118. Most teaching is satisfactory or good. In practical classes the teaching is good. Lessons are well planned. Students have clear roles and responsibilities in production kitchens and other service areas. In some of these lessons, students with learning difficulties join the class and gain useful skills for future employment. In the best theory lessons, teachers relate theory to industrial practice and the students skilfully extend and consolidate their learning. In a lesson on a hotel reception course, the teacher used role-play effectively and excited the students' interest with some well-chosen examples of hotel documentation. Some theory lessons, however, are dull and ineffective. In these lessons, teachers do not provide the more able students with sufficiently demanding tasks. Computers are used insufficiently in lessons.

119. There are wide variations in assessment practices. On some courses, assessment is well planned and enables students to make good progress towards achieving their qualification. On other courses, for example the NVQ level 1 food preparation course, assessment is insufficiently rigorous and does not enable students to gauge the extent of their progress. Feedback from assessors to students is insufficiently detailed and does not indicate what the students should do to improve their work. Internal verification has failed to eliminate the wide variation in assessment practices.

120. There are regular tutorials for all full-time students. Tutorials are used as a means of monitoring students' progress. Individual students are set targets but they are often too general to stimulate students to improve their performance significantly. Poor attendance is followed up effectively. There are no formal tutorial arrangements for part-time students. There are productive links with employers who host visits for students and offer work experience opportunities. Staff from a luxury hotel have recently provided students with information on careers within their organisation, and have worked with students to help them develop their interview skills.

121. Most teachers have appropriate professional qualifications and also training and assessor qualifications. Some have updated their industrial knowledge and skills. Specialist accommodation and resources for hospitality are good. There is a large training kitchen which is equipped to industry standards and a pastry production kitchen. There is a bright and spacious training restaurant and a coffee shop area which serves lunchtime snacks. Hotel reception students staff a well-equipped reception desk and their work at this helps them to develop their customer service and cash handling skills. The library book stock is adequate but there are few copies of up-to-date texts. Resources are deployed effectively.

Leadership and management

122. There are regular team meetings at which staff deal effectively with day-to-day operations. Until very recently, however, these meetings did not focus on students' performance. Self-assessment has helped to identify weaknesses in students' performance, but the resulting action plans do not identify what needs to be done to bring improvement.

Sport, leisure and uniformed services

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- broad range of specialist courses
- high pass rates
- high standards of practical work
- good teaching in practical sessions
- wide range of specialist resources
- effective links with employers and the community.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on level 3 courses
- inadequate planning of some theory lessons
- ineffective implementation of quality assurance procedures by course managers.

Scope of provision

123. There is a wide range of provision in sport, leisure and uniformed services for students aged 16 to 18. Full-time courses include those leading to NVQs in sport and recreation at levels 1 and 2, first diploma and national diploma in science (sports studies). In addition, the college offers GNVQ intermediate and AVCE in travel and tourism, a one-year preparatory course, a first and national diploma course in public services and a uniformed services diploma course which can be taken in conjunction with GCE AS courses. Full-time students work towards a range of additional qualifications including first aid and food safety. Specialist courses in outdoor activities include the certificate course in multi-activity instruction for younger students and the diploma course in outdoor activity for adults. The college provides a range of short courses, including a preparation course for army recruits. Circuit-training sessions are provided for the local community. There are 310 students enrolled on courses in this curriculum area.

Achievement and standards

124. Pass rates on most courses are at or above the national average. In 2001, the pass rate on the first diploma in science (sports studies) course was well above the national average, at 95%. Retention rates for level 1 and level 2 courses are high, but the retention rate at level 3 is low. In 2001, the retention rate on the national diploma in science (sports studies) course was 45%, well below the national average of 72%. Students reach a high standard in their practical work. They have a good understanding of the relationship between

theory and practice. On the national diploma in science (sports studies) course, students demonstrate a high level of skill and can interpret data from fitness and motor skills tests with confidence. Sports students have been successful in a number of sports competitions and tournaments.

A sample of retention and pass rates in sports, leisure and travel, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ sport and recreation	1	No. of starts	21	16	13
		% retention	62	100	77
		% pass rate	100	94	100
NVQ sport and recreation	2	No. of starts	41	55	74
		% retention	88	85	82
		% pass rate	81	72	75
First diploma in science (sports studies)	2	No. of starts	*	18	23
		% retention	*	83	83
		% pass rate	*	67	95
NVQ leisure and tourism	3	No. of starts	12	20	30
		% retention	100	50	70
		% pass rate	92	60	83
National diploma in science (sports studies)	3	No. of starts	7	10	11
		% retention	100	44	45
		% pass rate	100	100	100
National diploma in public services	3	No. of starts	11	18	18
		% retention	91	33	72
		% pass rate	90	67	92

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

* course not running

Quality of education and training

125. Most teaching is good or very good. Schemes of work and lesson plans are detailed. Lessons are well organised. The teaching in practical lessons is particularly effective. Teachers constantly emphasise the importance of health and safety factors related to exercise and the necessity for students to ensure their technique is good. One teacher involved students in dexterity tests to help them understand bi-lateral transfer in a sporting context. The students' evaluation of the activity demonstrated good understanding of a complicated theory. A uniformed services group showed good understanding of correct procedures in a simulated emergency rescue exercise in a local wood. Some theory lessons were less effective and had not been planned well. Teachers did not ensure the learning activities suited the abilities of students in the group they were teaching. For example, in a lesson on human behaviour for second-year students on the national diploma in public services course, students were provided with notes from the teacher and were not given the opportunity to explore their ideas and draw on their own extensive knowledge of the topic under consideration.

126. Assessment schedules are well planned. Students find assessment demanding but are not overwhelmed by the amount of assessment on their courses. Teachers' feedback on students' work is detailed and provides adequate information to students about how they can improve the quality of their work. Students receive adequate support from their tutors. On some courses, however, students are not set individual learning targets. Leisure and tourism students have planned study tours to New York, Majorca, Hamburg, London and Manchester. Through these tours, students are able to gather evidence of their acquisition of particular competences for assessment purposes.

127. There are effective links with employers through the faculty advisory panel. Staff have good links with schools and the community. An elective studies programme is run in conjunction with a local school. Sports students work with pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in exercise and sporting activities. Students also coach in a local soccer school for under-14 year olds.

128. There is a wide range of excellent specialist accommodation for sport and uniformed services courses. This includes an on-site sports hall and the additional use of a large up-to-date sports facility close to the college, a well-equipped sports laboratory that enables students to analyse physical performance, and newly refurbished specialist base rooms. The college also makes effective use of a local water sports centre and owns its own fleets of dinghies, kayaks and canoes. There is a good range of equipment but some items are worn out.

Leadership and management

129. Courses are carefully organised and well managed. Timetables are carefully constructed to achieve an appropriate mix of teaching, private study and opportunities for students to develop additional practical skills. Teachers are well supported by their managers. Communications in the faculty are good. There are regular faculty and course

meetings which focus on students' performance. Some aspects of quality assurance have not been given enough priority by course managers. Self-assessment at course level is insufficiently rigorous. Some action plans do not give enough information on intended improvements, or the timescales in which they must be carried out. Measures for raising course retention rates are inadequate. Target setting at course level is ineffective.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- wide range of courses and progression opportunities
- high retention and pass rates
- much good teaching
- good monitoring of students' progress
- good specialist facilities and equipment
- productive links with industry and employers
- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- ineffective teaching of key skills
- failure of teachers to relate theory to practice effectively
- failure of many learners to complete their apprenticeship framework.

Scope of provision

130. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses leading to NVQs in hairdressing and beauty therapy at levels 1, 2 and 3. There are 134 full-time students and 174 part-time students on hairdressing, beauty therapy/care, and complementary therapy courses, or courses which are combinations of these. Complementary therapy courses include those in Indian head massage, aromatherapy, reflexology and massage. The majority of full-time students are aged 16 to 18. Many students progress between courses. All the current students on the NVQ level 3 beauty therapy course successfully completed a NVQ level 2 course at the college, and all of the current NVQ level 2 hairdressing students progressed from a NVQ level 1 course. Many students also progress to appropriate employment. There are 80 work-based learners, most of whom are on foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship programmes.

Achievement and standards

131. Pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy are high. In 2001, pass rates on NVQ level 2 hairdressing, NVQ level 2 beauty therapy, sports therapy and part-time

complementary therapy courses were well above the national average. Retention rates on most courses are at or above the national average. In 2001, however, the retention rate on the NVQ level 1 course was low. In the lessons observed during the inspection, the average attendance rate was 78%. Attendance is regularly monitored and absences are quickly followed up. Students' practical skills are good. Students work safely and hygienically.

132. In work-based training, the number of modern apprentices who complete the full national framework in hairdressing is low. In 2001, all learners achieved the NVQ level 2 in hairdressing but few achieved the key skills certificate as they are required to do in order to complete the apprenticeship framework.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ hairdressing	1	No. of starts	12	13	35
		% retention	58	92	66
		% pass rate	71	100	83
NVQ beauty therapy	2	No. of starts	50	30	44
		% retention	80	80	75
		% pass rate	85	75	91
NVQ hairdressing	2	No. of starts	48	60	87
		% retention	81	67	77
		% pass rate	97	71	89
NVQ beauty therapy	3	No. of starts	17	33	16
		% retention	100	91	100
		% pass rate	59	87	88
Diploma in reflexology	3	No. of starts	33	53	50
		% retention	67	89	82
		% pass rate	95	94	95

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
National diploma sports therapy	3	No. of starts	14	13	10
		% retention	64	69	90
		% pass rate	33	100	100

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

Quality of education and training

133. There is much good teaching. Some 75% of the lessons observed were good or very good. There are detailed schemes of work and lesson plans that take account of the differing needs of students. Students experience a good range of methods of working and are provided with excellent learning resources. In practical lessons, students are able to develop a range of skills by working on clients who have diverse needs. Many clients use the salons and all students are able to work on clients for assessment purposes. Teachers test students' knowledge of client care and health and safety, and assess their practical skills. The students are given immediate feedback on their performance. Some theory lessons, in which teachers failed to relate theory to practice effectively, made little impact on the students. For example, in a lesson on the NVQ level 2 hairdressing and beauty therapy course on the biological structure of nails and bones, the teacher did not emphasise the significance of the scientific principles which underpin safe and effective practical techniques. Teachers give insufficient priority to helping students develop the key skills of application of number, communications and IT. Although computers are readily available to students, they make little use of them beyond improving the presentation of their work. Many of the key skills exercises that students are required to do are not related to work in the salons. The work in students' key skills portfolios is poor. Students do not perform well in key skills tests.

134. Students receive good guidance before they join the college. In the first week of term, students receive initial assessment, their needs for additional learning support needs are identified, and plans for providing them with additional support are implemented. Students receive a great deal of support in lessons. There is an effective tutorial system. Students identify the practical tasks they have completed by referring to charts on the walls of the salons. Tutors check to ensure that students are receiving sufficient practical experience. In tutorials, they set the students individual learning targets and help them carry out action planning for improving their work. Teachers liaise effectively with employers to ensure that training and assessment in the college and the employers' salon are co-ordinated and carried out with consistent thoroughness. Internal verification of work-based learning is rigorous on all programmes.

135. Teachers are well qualified and suitably experienced. Many have updated their professional knowledge and skills recently. The hairdressing and beauty salons are excellent and up to the highest industrial standards. Teachers modify the teaching spaces to make them

suitable for the learning activities planned to take place in them. There are good links with industry.

Leadership and management

136. The two section leaders provide strong leadership. The curriculum is well managed. The self-assessment process is thorough. Course reviews are carried out regularly. Some pass and retention rates have risen. A mentoring scheme for students has been introduced with the aim of improving students' attendance. The retention rate for students in the current year has increased.

Health and social care

Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- excellent retention and pass rates on the community care management course
- good links between theory and practical work
- effective assessment arrangements.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on the NVQ level 2 care course
- failure of some teachers to make enough demands of the students
- insufficient development of students' key skills.

Scope of provision

137. In 2001, there were 656 enrolments from students aged 16 to 18 and 3,342 enrolments from students aged 19 and over. These enrolments account for 15% of all college enrolments. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses in health and social care. There are full-time courses at pre-entry level, level 1 and level 3. There are progression routes for students from level 1 courses to advanced level courses, but the department has been unsuccessful in recruiting students to level 2 courses in the current academic year. Much of the college-based part-time provision is at level 3 in caring services, community care practice and counselling. There has been a significant increase in the number of students on the NVQ care course at level 2. There are 13 foundation and advanced modern apprentices. The college offers provision for more than 2,000 students on first aid courses through its franchise partners. This provision was not inspected.

Achievement and standards

138. There are excellent retention and pass rates for adult students on the community care advanced management course. In 2001, both retention and pass rates were 100%. The pass rate on OCR counselling skills course has also been good in each of the last three years. There has, however, been a decline in the retention rate on this course to significantly below the national average. The pass rate on the NVQ level 2 course is very low. In 2001, only 13% of the large number of students who began the course achieved the qualification.

139. Retention and pass rates on full-time courses vary significantly from year to year, but most have risen in 2001. Younger students are successful in achieving the additional qualifications in first aid and food hygiene that they work towards as part of their main

courses. Most modern apprentices fail to achieve their qualifications within the allotted timescale.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health and social care, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Introduction to care (Open College Network)	1	No. of starts	10	11	9
		% retention	90	91	100
		% pass rate	100	80	89
NVQ care	2	No. of starts	17	19	85
		% retention	88	63	91
		% pass rate	100	*	13
National certificate in caring services	3	No. of starts	8	20	19
		% retention	86	53	79
		% pass rate	83	44	75
Counselling skills (OCR)	3	No. of starts	19	38	35
		% retention	84	87	69
		% pass rate	100	97	100
City and Guilds advanced management in community care	3	No. of starts	11	11	23
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	82	91	100

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

* data unreliable

Quality of education and training

140. Most lessons are well planned. In lessons, teachers provide students with an appropriated range of learning activities. Teachers make sure that students are aware of what is expected of them during the lesson. In many lessons, students learn theory through assignment work. For example, in a successful lesson on the City and Guilds practical catering skills course on identification of health needs, students made good use of a range of

learning resources to help them with their assignments. They listed a range of basic health needs and gave examples of how each need is met at different life stages. They then applied their findings to health care practices. The students were able to make effective links between theory and practice. Students develop practical caring skills. On counselling courses, an appropriate amount of time in each lesson is set aside for students to practice skills. In health care, professional practices and care values are considered in the context of work experience. In some lessons, students are not given work which is sufficiently demanding and they learn little. For example, some students complete tasks quickly and too easily. They are then not given anything worthwhile to do while waiting for other students to finish their work. In some key skills lessons for students aged 16 to 18, the teacher failed to relate key skills sufficiently to the context of care. Students do not see the relevance of these sessions, their attendance at them is poor and they do not perform well in the key skills tests.

141. Assessment is carried out well. Assignment briefs are carefully planned and incorporated into lesson plans and schemes of work. Students are clear about the criteria for assessment. Feedback to students from teachers on their performance is detailed and helpful. Students' progress is recorded and monitored through their tutorials. Arrangements for assessing work-based learners on NVQ programmes, and for monitoring their progress, have been unsatisfactory. The college has recently appointed a section leader to improve these arrangements.

142. All students receive appropriate induction to their courses. Before they begin their course, full-time and some part-time students have their needs for additional learning support diagnosed. An additional learning support tutor is assigned to the introduction to care course. However, on the first-year course of the national diploma in care, not all of the students who have been identified as requiring additional support are receiving it. There is a well-established tutorial and personal support system. A recently appointed student mentor offers guidance and support to health care students experiencing difficulties in making progress or attending regularly.

143. Teaching staff are well qualified. They possess a good mix of academic and vocationally relevant qualifications in health and caring services. There are five advanced practitioners with a brief to promote good practice on health care courses. Accommodation is satisfactory. Base rooms are large enough to facilitate group activities. There are good displays of students' work in most rooms. Specialist resources are also satisfactory. Students have good access to IT facilities. There is, however, little use of computers in lessons.

Leadership and management

144. There are clear lines of communication and responsibilities within the curriculum area of health and care. All staff have worked hard to widen participation and ensure they are responsive to learners' needs. The department has formed partnerships with a number of external agencies to implement specific projects, such as collaborative work with the probation service and the adapting of NVQ courses to make them more suitable for employers and trainees. Managers are supportive of all staff. Managers aim to work with staff in a friendly but purposeful way and in the spirit of partnership and collaboration.

Teachers work well together and there is a good team ethos. Regular course team meetings are held and these have standing agenda items of attendance, students' progress and retention rates. Action plans to address weaknesses are too general. They do not specify precise targets and timescales within which improvements must be carried out.

Childcare

Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- good teaching in many lessons
- effective use of a wide range of resources
- good personal support for students.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on most courses
- low and falling pass rates on NVQ courses
- slow progress in raising retention and pass rates.

Scope of provision

145. The college offers a range of courses in early years care and education. There are 157 full-time students on courses leading to Council for Awards in Children's care and Education (CACHE) qualifications at foundation, intermediate and diploma level, and the national diploma in childhood studies. There is also a pre-teacher training course. Some 92 part-time students are on NVQ courses at levels 2 and 3. A classroom assistants course is offered to adults in the evening. A childminding practice course is provided at weekends, both within the college and at venues in the local community close to some students' homes. There are few part-time short courses for adults.

Achievement and standards

146. Retention rates are low on many courses and have fallen on level 3 courses to well below the national average. Retention on the CACHE qualification and the foundation certificate in caring for children courses are also well below the national average. Currently, however, retention rates are rising. Pass rates vary significantly from course to course and between years on the same course. In 2000/01, the pass rate was high on the diploma in childcare and education course. The pass rate on the NVQ level 2 course has fallen over the past three years. In 2000/01, the pass rate on the NVQ level 3 course was low. NVQ students do not achieve their qualification in the time agreed when they start their course. Most students produce good work. It demonstrates an understanding of anti-discriminatory practice, particularly in relation to cultural diversity. However, students do not demonstrate sufficient understanding of working with children with disabilities and difficulties.

A sample of retention and pass rates in childcare, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Caring for young children	1	No. of starts	11	11	15
		% retention	36	45	64
		% pass rate	100	40	100
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	15	14	40
		% retention	93	79	*
		% pass rate	71	82	86
NVQ early years care and education	2	No. of starts	31	62	30
		% retention	87	66	*
		% pass rate	*	*	*
NVQ early years care and education	3	No. of starts	14	40	35
		% retention	79	70	*
		% pass rate	*	*	*
Diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	35	40	29
		% retention	100	65	66
		% pass rate	88	73	94
National diploma in childhood studies	3	No. of starts	19	37	36
		% retention	100	78	75
		% pass rate	100	86	89

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

* unreliable data

Quality of education and training

147. There is good teaching in many lessons. Lessons are well planned and they excite and hold the students' interest. In one lesson, classroom assistants enjoyed playing various children's games as they explored the extent to which these helped to further child development. The best lessons draw on students' experience in work placements. In some lessons for full-time students, however, the teacher did not encourage members of the class to find out if theories of child development they had learnt were borne out by their experience in work placements. The concept of cultural diversity is dealt with appropriately in lessons. Students are able to develop their key skills in most lessons. Teachers and students identify the specific key skills that can be developed. On the pre-teacher training course, students were quick to identify that IT, communication and improving own learning could be developed in the lesson. They used computers to design and produce a questionnaire within a time limit set by the teacher.

148. Teachers give priority to meeting the needs of individual students and they endeavour to ensure that all students make progress. In a lesson on the diploma in childcare and education course, on applying for employment, students had very different levels of understanding of the topic. The teacher made sure the lesson was demanding for everyone, and all students made good progress.

149. Staff are well qualified and suitably experienced. Teachers and students make effective use of a good range of resources. Cultural diversity is appropriately reflected in the resources. There is a large, well-equipped craft room that is used for a wide range of practical activities. Work placements are organised effectively. There are good links with employers. The Early Years Partnership funds many NVQ students. Teaching on the childminding practice course is shared with staff from the Childminding Association.

150. Initial assessment accurately identifies students' needs for additional learning support. Tutors receive written feedback on students' progress regularly. However, the feedback is not used effectively when reviewing students' progress. The feedback most full-time students receive on their written work is detailed and shows them how to improve it. Internal verification is systematic. The assessment records of NVQ students are well maintained. The progress of students towards reaching targets for the completion of NVQ units, however, is not monitored. Records of assessment carried out by direct observation of students' performance are thorough, but do not reflect the range of competences the students have demonstrated. Where students have been assessed in the workplace, no record is made of how they have related theory to practice. The department has recently introduced a scheme whereby students are set a wide range of targets relating to both their work and their attitude to work.

151. There is good personal support for students. Tutorials are effective. There is a comprehensive scheme of work for tutorials. This aims to ensure that the activities students undertake in order to obtain information about careers and further studies, also help them to develop personal and interpersonal skills. Students value the newly introduced student

mentoring system. Referrals to the counselling service are dealt with quickly and sympathetically.

Leadership and management

152. There has been a slow response to poor retention and pass rates. Self-assessment has only recently been used to identify where improvement is needed. Measures which aim to raise retention rates, such as more rigorous recruitment and selection procedures and the introduction of specific learning targets for students, have now been implemented. Retention and pass rates for some courses have not been regularly reviewed. Staff do not understand some of the data on performance that are available for them to use. There are no reliable data on the retention and pass rates of NVQ students. In-service training is available to staff to help them develop their teaching skills.

Visual and performing arts and media

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on many full-time courses
- good teaching
- success of many students in progressing to further studies and HE
- good progression rates
- good specialist resources.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on some courses at levels 1 and 2
- adverse impact of small class sizes on teaching and learning
- insufficient attention to health and safety issues.

Scope of provision

153. The college offers a broad range of full-time and part-time provision in visual and performing arts and media. Courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels are available. There are 368 students aged 16 to 18 on full-time courses. Full-time courses include GCE AS and A levels, AVCE, GNVQ intermediate and those leading to first and national diplomas in art and design, media, dance and drama. Provision for adults includes a full-time access to art and design course and a range of part-time courses during the day and in some cases, in the evening.

Achievement and standards

154. Pass rates on most courses are high. Most full-time students are enrolled on a range of national diplomas. The pass rate on this course has been well above the national average in each of the last three years, and in 2001, it was 93%. In 2001, the pass rate on the GNVQ intermediate course was 100%. However, retention rates on many courses at levels 1 and 2 have declined and are low. In 2001, the retention rate on the City and Guilds photography course was at 45% and the pass rate was very low, at 19%. The overall attendance rate in the lessons observed during the inspection was 79%.

155. Levels of attainment observed in lessons and in students' work are high. Work is technically secure. In the best work, students show evidence of exploration, expression and

enquiry. Most full-time students who successfully complete a level 2 course, progress to level 3. A large number of students progress from level 3 to HE.

A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts and media, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
City and Guilds photography	1	No. of starts	26	30	40
		% retention	69	73	53
		% pass rate	44	18	19
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	23	22	19
		% retention	82	77	68
		% pass rate	94	82	100
National diplomas in art and design	3	No. of starts	49	60	81
		% retention	88	68	69
		% pass rate	93	95	93
GCE A-level art (fine art)	3	No. of starts	24	35	21
		% retention	75	66	75
		% pass rate	39	61	73
National diploma in performing arts	3	No. of starts	15	37	28
		% retention	93	65	86
		% pass rate	100	87	96
GNVQ advanced media	3	No. of starts	10	28	20
		% retention	70	61	85
		% pass rate	86	94	75

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

Quality of education and training

156. Teaching is good. Teaching in 85% of lessons was good or very good. Lesson plans and schemes of work are well prepared and meet course requirements. Practical lessons include a suitable range of learning activities. Tasks often enable students to develop their own ideas and techniques. Teachers provide individual students with effective guidance as they go about their practical work. Teachers take account of the different abilities of the students in the group and show sensitivity in giving encouragement to, and building the confidence of, those who find the work hard. A high priority is given to the development of design skills, exploratory drawing and sketchbook work in visual arts. Teachers use group discussions to test, challenge and extend the understanding of students. In a successful lesson on the national diploma in media course, the teacher organised a lively and effective debate on the ethical aspects of television scheduling. All the students participated in the debate and the teacher skilfully used the session to develop and extend students' awareness of equal opportunities issues. In the least successful lessons, the low numbers of students present make it difficult for teachers to organise activities that require the students to interact creatively. Teachers do not pay sufficient attention to health and safety issues in practical classes. For example, a practical lesson in dance took place on a floor that had recently been washed and was still wet.

157. Assessment is effective. There are thorough procedures for internal verification. Teachers provide appropriate feedback to students on the quality of their work and check their progress regularly. Support and guidance for students are good. Open days, interviews and induction are designed to ensure students have realistic expectations of their course and the opportunities that there are for future progression. There is a well-established tutorial system. Students' progress is reviewed during weekly tutorials. Additional subject tutorials are given if a student needs extra help in some practical aspects. A post of student mentor has been created recently and the member of staff appointed to it has addressed attendance problems on some courses most effectively.

158. Staff are well qualified and suitably experienced. Technician support is good. Students benefit from good accommodation and specialist resources across the whole of visual and performing arts and media. All full-time courses have their own designated base studios and classrooms. There are well-lit studios for art and design courses. Students have good access to facilities for textiles, printmaking, photography, ceramics and to a well-equipped computer suite. However, there is no craft workshop for three-dimensional work. The dance studio is fit for its purpose and there are good performance spaces for drama. The media suite is well equipped for television and sound production. It includes a bank of computers coupled to keyboards with music notation software packages.

Leadership and management

159. Courses are well managed. Resources are deployed effectively. Staff meet regularly to plan their courses and discuss how to improve their teaching. Meetings are carefully recorded. Progress towards reaching the targets identified in action plans is monitored

effectively. Staff are fully involved in self-assessment. Staff acknowledge that retention rates are low on some courses, but they have not yet identified effective action for raising them.

Humanities

Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- high pass rates in GCE AS psychology and GCE A-level sociology
- success of access students in progressing to HE
- effective monitoring of students' progress on the access course.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates or retention rates on most GCE AS and A-level courses
- some poor teaching in GCE AS and A-level subjects
- insufficient demanding work in lessons on advanced courses
- low attainment of many GCE AS and A-level students.

Scope of provision

160. GCE AS and A-level courses are offered in geography, history, law, psychology and sociology. GCSE psychology is offered as an evening course for adults. There is no full-time level 2 provision. An access to HE course is available during the day and in the evening. It provides options in social science and humanities. There is a wide variety of enrichment activities available to full-time students.

Achievement and standards

161. There are low pass rates or retention rates for most GCE AS and A-level courses. Pass rates in GCE A-level history and geography are well below the national average and the retention rate in geography is also low. In 2000/01, both retention and pass rates on the GCE A-level law course were very low. There were high pass rates on the GCE AS psychology course and GCE A-level sociology courses. The retention rate on the access to HE course is high and the pass rate is close to the national average. Many students on the access course progress to HE. Students' attainment is unsatisfactory in many GCE subjects. Through their poor responses to questions and their superficial coverage of key themes in their assignments, many students show that their knowledge of their subjects is often insecure.

A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	20	39	44
		% retention	90	69	52
		% pass rate	78	83	95
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	*	15	34
		% retention	*	60	59
		% pass rate	*	71	88
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	*	9	27
		% retention	*	56	85
		% pass rate	*	80	50
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	10	13	13
		% retention	100	36	45
		% pass rate	50	100	60
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	11	13	23
		% retention	82	69	39
		% pass rate	78	75	43
Access to HE	3	No. of starts	64	42	66
		% retention	66	79	80
		% pass rate	74	70	78

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001)

* course not running

Quality of education and training

162. Teaching was unsatisfactory in 27% of the lessons observed. There were no lessons in which the teaching was very good or outstanding. The highest proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was in lessons for full-time GCE students. These lessons were poorly planned and learning activities were insufficiently varied. The choice of learning activities in many lessons for students aged 16 to 18 is inappropriate. Teachers fail to meet the needs of individual students and have insufficient information to help them identify those needs. Teachers talk too much and provide few opportunities for the students to ask questions, contribute ideas and engage in discussion. Questions designed to check learning are often poorly framed and students receive insufficient encouragement to develop their oral skills. In a GCE AS psychology lesson, students sat quietly while the teacher talked to them about biological psychology. In their responses to the few questions the teacher asked, the students demonstrated that they did not understand the work. The majority of the class did little in the lesson other than copy notes from an overhead projector screen. They became bored and inattentive. Many of the tasks that teachers set are insufficiently demanding for advanced level students. The attendance rate of 71% is low.

163. In the best lessons, teachers used a wide range of appropriate teaching methods to help the students learn effectively. For example, in a lesson on an access course on aspects of abnormal psychology, the teacher questioned the students skilfully and encouraged them all to contribute to a lively discussion about the value of classifying mental illness into different categories. Good use was made of well-prepared handouts and readings from an appropriate textbook supported the lesson.

164. Students receive appropriate guidance both before joining the college and during the well-managed and effective induction programme. Tutorial arrangements are satisfactory and those for access students are good. Teachers give large amounts of informal support to students outside timetabled tutorials. Assessment of students' work is fair and accurate. Written feedback to students on their work is constructive, although it does not always tell students precisely what they need to do to improve their performance.

165. Staff in humanities are well qualified and suitably experienced. Classroom accommodation is satisfactory. Many of the classrooms display students' work and the base rooms in psychology and sociology are well stocked with appropriate learning resources. Students have good access to computers and the library is well stocked with relevant and appropriate learning resources for students in this curriculum area.

Leadership and management

166. The effectiveness of curriculum management is extremely variable. Humanities courses are taught by staff from three of the college's faculties and leadership is provided by the managers of each. The section leaders within the faculties attend monthly Curriculum 2000 meetings. Meetings of GCE AS and A-level subject tutors are held three times a year. Subject teams hold informal meetings but good practice is not shared at these. Subject teams complete annual course reviews. The thoroughness of these varies considerably. Some

course reviews are insufficiently self-critical. Action planning and monitoring of achievement and retention targets are ineffective. The access course is well managed. External moderators' reports on access provision comment favourably on many aspects of course management and commend the attention paid by the team to meeting the needs of individual students.

Basic skills

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- good basic skills support for students on vocational courses
- effective use of individual learning plans
- effective management of basic skills provision
- good support to meet the identified learning needs of individual students.

Weaknesses

- insufficient basic skills support for some students
- insufficient monitoring of the effectiveness of basic skills support.

Scope of provision

167. Much of the college's basic skills support is provided within full-time programmes. In 2001/02, some 1,000 students were assessed to determine their level of key skills when they joined the college. Of these, 294 students were identified as needing help with basic skills. The college offers a few basic skills courses at community venues, but has a long-standing agreement with the local education authority (LEA) not to expand this provision. There is, however, recognition that there are some unmet needs in the community and the college is responding to these by offering basic skills courses for travellers and other minority groups. The college also plans to offer basic skills courses in the workplace.

Achievement and standards

168. Students who have received help with basic skills, and particularly those on vocational courses at level 1, have been successful in raising their levels of attainment. Students who receive help with basic skills support reach standards that are in line with those specified by their individual learning targets. There are insufficient reliable data to produce a performance table of students' achievements. In 2000/01, 77 students achieved a qualification. Pass rates on basic skills courses are mostly good. Retention and pass rates on the English for business course are excellent.

Quality of education and training

169. Most teaching is good. In the majority of lessons, aims and learning outcomes are clearly identified. These aims are shared with students. Teachers provide well-structured and appropriate activities to ensure that students are able to develop their understanding, progress at a good pace and consolidate their learning. Teaching methods take account of

students' preferred learning styles. In a literacy lesson for students on a course in health and social care, students enjoyed a range of activities that helped them to learn how to complete an application form. By the end of the lesson, students were using their new skills confidently. In the few less successful lessons, learning objectives were too general and the planned activities were not always appropriate for the learning needs identified in students' individual learning plans. For example, in a literacy lesson at entry level, the reading material used was too difficult for the students to understand.

170. Students who take up the offer of additional support receive it in a way that is discreet and unobtrusive. Support tutors help students in some lessons. They work effectively in teams with subject teachers. In 2001/02, some 20% of students who were identified as requiring additional support chose not to take it up. There is currently no system for following-up the progress, or re-assessing the needs of these students. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive additional support as required. Individual students who are dyslexic receive specialist help.

171. The core team of qualified basic skills teachers have all completed training on the basic skills core curriculum. The team has recently been expanded to include the person appointed to the new post of community project leader to develop basic skills with different community partners. The college is encountering difficulties, however, in recruiting qualified and experienced teachers of basic skills. The college is developing a strategy for enabling more members of staff to obtain qualifications in the teaching of basic skills.

172. Full-time students receive an appropriate initial assessment of their key skills through which their needs for additional learning support are identified. Further assessment identifies the specific skills students need to acquire and details of these are in individual learning plans. These detailed plans relate to the basic skills core curriculum and are used effectively within lessons. There are specific learning targets for students receiving additional support. Teachers regularly review students' progress towards achieving their targets. Teachers' marking of students' work is accurate and detailed. Teachers provide students with feedback on their work and they find this helpful. Teachers use a good range of resources to stimulate the interest of students and improve their skills in literacy and numeracy. However, IT is not used creatively in many lessons.

Leadership and management

173. College managers have produced a comprehensive strategy for providing basic skills courses in the college and the community. Restructuring in 2000 brought together basic skills and key skills teachers to form a core studies team. Management of the team is good. Responsibilities are clearly understood. Team meetings are held regularly. The use of video conferencing enables staff who do not work on the main site to participate in the meetings. However, the effectiveness of basic skills provision is not monitored systematically. Targets are set, but the retention and pass rates of students who are receiving support are not analysed in sufficient detail. The college has, as yet, not carried out any comprehensive review of the effectiveness of basic skills courses and arrangements for helping students across the college

improve their basic skills. The lesson observation scheme has not been extensive enough to enable managers to assess the quality of teaching of basic skills.

Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- much good teaching and effective learning
- effective individual learning plans
- success of students in achieving their individual targets
- relevance of well-planned and ably managed curriculum to students' needs
- residential facility which enhances students' experience.

Weaknesses

- some poor accommodation
- insufficient support staff to meet students' needs in some lessons
- lack of progression routes from entry level courses.

Scope of provision

174. The college provides courses for 128 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 185 part-time adult students, all of whom have learning difficulties and disabilities and a wide range of personal needs. Students are offered a core programme which includes personal and social development and basic skills and a variety of more practical sessions. The bulk of provision is based at the main campus. The college has a residential facility for 39 full-time students close to the main site which is used creatively to provide opportunities for students to benefit from residential experience and further their personal and social development. About 40 full-time students attend centres in Norwich, Great Yarmouth and Thetford.

175. The curriculum is well designed to meet the needs of students at entry level. Before prospective students move from their school to college, a thorough review of their learning needs is carried out and long-term goals are identified for them. There is also close liaison with other agencies such as social services, to plan programmes for individuals. Most students remain at the college for at least two years. Targets for individual students relate to external accreditation and cover the new entry curriculum levels 1, 2 and 3. Targets are demanding for the students and they spur them on to make progress and succeed. In second-year programmes, more priority is given to helping students acquire both vocational skills and the skills of living independently. There is a well-structured enterprise programme where students plan, make and sell items such as key rings and hanging baskets. Some sessions, such as brickwork, take place in the colleges' main vocational areas. Many students are able to progress to introductory courses in vocational areas, such as catering and caring.

However, there is a lack of structured progression routes from entry level into level 1 courses in a number of areas.

Achievement and standards

176. Students are set individual targets to help them progress to higher level programmes based in the college, prepare successfully for supported employment and increase their independence. The individual targets set for students are challenging but achievable. Targets relate to the achievement of an Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) or OCR qualification at entry level. The pass rate for these qualifications has been 100% for the last two years. Retention and attendance rates are also very high.

Quality of education and training

177. Most teaching is good or very good. Lessons are carefully planned. A wide variety of teaching approaches is used to meet the diverse needs of the students. Teachers have some very creative ideas. For example, they develop students' social skills through activities related to the five senses. In a successful lesson on enterprise, students were making objects from Perspex and metal to be sold to help raise money for a residential course. Students were encouraged to design, perform practical tasks, and evaluate their performance in carrying them out. They recorded their planning and practical activities carefully. The lesson helped the students to develop their practical and cognitive skills and meet the requirements of the OCR manufacturing module. In less successful lessons, the content was too difficult for students and they spent a disproportionate amount of time attempting paper-based tasks they could not do or understand. The teacher failed to match the learning activities to the students' abilities. There is insufficient use of ICT in lessons.

178. There is an effective initial assessment and curriculum planning process for students on entry level programmes. Each student is fully assessed at the beginning of the programme and during the six-week induction period. The results of initial assessment are taken into account when drawing up students' learning plans. Individual learning plans are good. They specify learning goals which relate clearly to students' individual learning needs. There are clear procedures for assessment. Students receive regular reviews of their progress during which their performance in assessments is discussed. They are given helpful feedback on their work and this helps them to become more confident in their studies. There are comprehensive records of students' assessment and progress.

179. Tutors provide good pastoral support to students. Short tutorials at the beginning or the end of the day are used productively to plan and evaluate learning activities and deal with any personal issues which arise. Support staff provide effective help to students working on their own or in groups. There are not enough support staff, however, to meet all students' needs. In some lessons, support staff are not available to help students. More support is available to students at some centres than others.

180. Tutors and support staff are well qualified and have a wide range of relevant experience. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has recently

been moved to a ground floor suite of rooms which is accessible to students, where there are good resources. There is an IT base room with 11 computers and a colour printer. There is some poor accommodation in centres away from the main site. Rooms in these centres are small and unsuitable for activities requiring space, such as role-play exercises and certain practical activities. The rooms in the Norwich centre are drab and not big enough for the groups using them. The college has recently opened a residential centre for students attending programmes at the college. There are currently 39 students who live at the centre during the week and return to their homes at weekends. This residential facility is excellent and provides a valuable learning resource for students who need help to develop their skills of independent living.

Leadership and management

181. Leadership is strong and effective. Programmes are well managed. Priority is given to the promotion of equal opportunities and ensuring that learning is accessible to all. Communication is good. Part-time teachers are kept up to date with developments in the curriculum and the college. Staff teams meet regularly. The self-assessment process is thorough and rigorous. Staff draw up an appropriate action plan for rectifying weaknesses identified through self-assessment. The section is responsive to changes in the needs of students and the local community.

Part D: College data
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

Level	16–18 %	19+ %
1	21	22
2	37	20
3	17	16
4/5	1	1
Other	24	41
Total	100	100

Source: Provided by the college in January 2002

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2000/01

Curriculum area	16–18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments %
Science	3,698	4,140	28
Agriculture	570	497	4
Construction	303	2,324	9
Engineering	269	457	3
Business	723	2,725	12
Hotel and catering	486	507	4
Health and community care	905	3,342	15
Art and design	445	366	3
Humanities	3,107	1,696	17
Basic education	271	1,090	5
Total	10,777	17,144	100

Source: Provided by the college in January 2002

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16–18			19+		
		1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01
1	Starters excluding transfers	1,167	1,626	1,225	1,516	2,777	2,240
	Retention rate (%)	80	77	79	78	66	77
	National average (%)	80	80	*	78	79	*
	Pass rate (%)	73	51	62	51	41	51
	National average (%)	62	66	*	63	69	*
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,657	2,341	1,733	1,112	2,401	1,649
	Retention rate (%)	82	78	76	78	68	77
	National average (%)	76	77	*	78	78	*
	Pass rate (%)	74	60	70	56	48	59
	National average (%)	67	68	*	65	68	*
3	Starters excluding transfers	915	1,967	1,724	1,027	1,711	1,576
	Retention rate (%)	86	70	72	79	76	83
	National average (%)	77	77	*	79	79	*
	Pass rate (%)	71	68	71	66	65	67
	National average (%)	72	73	*	65	69	*
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	12	25	32	127	146	210
	Retention rate (%)	83	80	91	91	85	88
	National average (%)	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Pass rate (%)	80	68	80	78	66	67
	National average (%)	*	*	*	*	*	*

Note: Summary of retention and achievement for the last three years by age and level of course, compared against national averages for colleges of the same type (that is general FE/tertiary colleges or sixth form colleges).

** data not available.*

Sources of information:

- 1. National averages: Benchmarking Data 1998/99 to 1999/2000: Retention and Achievement Rates in FE Colleges in England, The FE Funding Council, September 2000.*
- 2. College rates for 1998/99 – 1999/2000: Benchmarking Data 1997/98 to 1999/2000: Retention and Achievement Rates, produced by the FE Funding Council, September 2000.*
- 3. College rates for 2000/01 provided by the college in January 2002.*

Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	61	29	10	116
Level 2 (intermediate)	57	33	10	78
Level 1 (foundation)	67	19	14	21
Other sessions	65	33	2	43
Totals	61	30	9	258

MONITORING INSPECTION OF THE COLLEGE OF WEST ANGLIA

Published April 2003

Outcome of monitoring inspection

The provision of work-based-learning in the curriculum areas of **engineering** and **humanities** are now satisfactory.

Background

The College of West Anglia was inspected in March 2002. Inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) carried out the inspection under Section 62 of the Learning and Skills Act. The quality of provision was found to be at least satisfactory in all curriculum areas inspected, except engineering and humanities, where it was found to be unsatisfactory.

Ofsted and the ALI have particular duties in relation to colleges where their inspection report indicates that individual curriculum areas are unsatisfactory or very weak or that leadership and management is unsatisfactory or very weak. Where a college has been judged to have less than satisfactory provision in any curriculum area, or less than satisfactory leadership and management, Ofsted or the ALI will visit the college to carry out monitoring inspections of any unsatisfactory curriculum areas and of leadership and management, where applicable.

As a result of monitoring inspections, inspectors may judge that the curriculum area or areas, or leadership and management, are satisfactory and that no further visits are required. Such a judgement is likely to be made between 12 and 24 months after the initial inspection. A short report outlining the improvements made will be published on the Ofsted website alongside the original report. If, after approximately 24 months, the college has not made sufficient progress to justify a judgement that the curriculum area(s) or leadership and management are satisfactory, the original grades for the areas that continue to be unsatisfactory will remain on the college's record until the next full inspection. Ofsted will inform the local LSC that provision remains unsatisfactory and why.

Monitoring inspections

In accordance with the above procedures, monitoring inspections of engineering and humanities took place in September 2002 and March 2003. Following the monitoring inspections, inspectors judged that *good* progress has been made in addressing the weaknesses in engineering and in humanities and judge that the overall provision in both curriculum areas is now *satisfactory*.

Engineering

In the March 2002 inspection, the quality of overall provision in this area was judged to be **unsatisfactory**. The following strengths and weaknesses were identified in the inspection report:

Strengths

- good standard of students' practical work
- good range of engineering resources
- effective arrangements for training modern apprentices.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on full-time courses
- poor attendance on full-time courses
- much unsatisfactory teaching
- ineffective implementation of quality assurance procedures.

Pass rates and retention rates in most courses have improved during the 2001/2002 academic year with many now being above national averages. The curriculum area has introduced a number of strategies to improve pass rates and retention including a stricter adherence to course entry level qualifications, an enhanced induction and tutorial system and better planned teaching. These strategies have also contributed to much improved course attendance. Inspectors observed a 50% to 60% attendance level during the original inspection which had increased to 87% for the sample of courses observed during the first monitoring visit and 97% during the second. The curriculum area has conducted a review of attendance on all courses during the first term of the 2002/2003 session and found attendance on most courses to be between 80% and 100%.

At the original inspection 30 % of teaching and learning was judged to be unsatisfactory. Observation during the first monitoring visit showed a reduction in the unsatisfactory grades to 11%. At the point of the second monitoring visit the sample of lesson observation revealed no teaching and learning as unsatisfactory. The curriculum area has implemented a staff development programme for all tutors on various aspects of teaching and learning and a programme of lesson observations. Engineering has also rigorously implemented a system of course review and annual summative evaluation complemented by regular monthly formative analysis of course progress by Course Directors and the Head of Faculty. Such reviews include target setting for course performance against retention and pass rates and also consider lesson observation profiles. Individual tutors are fully aware of course targets and monitor progress against these. Previous anomalies in the MIS system have been resolved and the centrally held MIS data and curriculum area data are now in agreement. Management information data is readily accessible to staff and regularly updated.

Humanities

In the March 2002 inspection, the quality of overall provision in this area was judged to be **unsatisfactory**. The following strengths and weaknesses were identified in the inspection report:

Strengths

- high pass rates in GCE AS psychology and GCE A-level sociology
- success of access students in progressing to HE
- effective monitoring of students' progress on the access course.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates or retention rates on most GCSE AS and A-level
- some poor teaching in GCSE AS and A-level subjects
- insufficient demanding work in lessons on advanced courses
- low attainment of many GCSE AS and A-level students.

Following the two monitoring visits inspectors judged that good progress has been made in addressing the above weaknesses and that the overall provision for humanities is now satisfactory. Pass rates in all AS and A2 humanities subjects inspected have improved and are at or above averages for FE colleges nationally. AS retention in 2002 has improved and is near the national average. A2 retention in 2002 was good. In-year retention 2002-2003 also indicates improvement. Teaching assessed during the two monitoring visits identified no unsatisfactory teaching with 63% good or better. Effective staff development designed to improve teaching has resulted in a wider range of teaching methods being employed. Group and pair work were identified as particularly effective features of the teaching observed. Teachers are making more demands of students in class and in terms of course and homework. Levels of student attainment have risen. Students' written work in all humanities subjects inspected indicated effective research methods, the ability in many cases to make sound judgements, and improved command of spelling, punctuation and grammar. In class, the majority of students participated readily and effectively in discussion and debate. A number of lively presentations by students were observed. Senior managers have sustained improvement through the introduction of effective quality procedures which include rigorous analysis of data, clear target setting and the development of systematic monitoring of student progress.