



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Gloucestershire College of Arts and Technology

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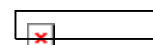
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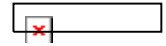
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Basic information about the college

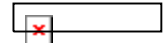


Name of college:	Gloucestershire College of Arts and Technology
Type of college:	General Further Education College
Principal:	Greg Smith
Address of college:	Cheltenham Campus Princess Elizabeth Way Cheltenham GL51 7SJ
Telephone number:	01242 532 000
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Chair of governors:	Peter Ironmonger
Unique reference number:	130683
Name of reporting inspector:	David Eden HMI
Dates of inspection:	10-20 May 2004

Part A: Summary



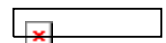
Information about the college



The present Gloucestershire College of Arts and Technology was formed in 1990, following the re-organisation of further education (FE) and higher education (HE) by the local education authority (LEA), and the transfer of the majority of HE work to Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, now the University of Gloucestershire. The college is the largest of five FE colleges in Gloucestershire. It has two main campuses in Gloucester and Cheltenham, an engineering centre in Gloucester, three high street information technology (IT) drop-in centres in Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury and it also makes use of community-based venues across the county. The college's core catchment area for most of its courses is North and East Gloucestershire, although some specialist courses recruit from a much larger area, including overseas. Gloucestershire had a population of 564,800 in 2000 and Gloucester 109,888. Cheltenham has a high number of independent and selective schools and Gloucestershire has a selective policy at aged 11 and some high-achieving foundation schools. In 2002, 75% of students aged 16 and 17 were in full-time education; 29% in FE colleges and 46% in schools. In 2003, the proportion of students aged 16 in Gloucestershire achieving 5 or more A* to C grades in general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) was 61.2%, compared with 52.9% in England as a whole. The college offers programmes in all 14 areas of learning. In most areas, courses range from entry level to advanced level. The provision in land-based and retailing, customer services and transportation is small. The college also offers HE courses, mainly in engineering, construction, and art and design, with approximately 700 students. Over 6,500 students enrol each year on the adult education programme, funded by the LEA. In 2002/03, there were over 31,000 enrolments. Numbers of male and female students are approximately equal. Some 86% of the 16,163 students were adults who studied part time. There were 2,531 full-time students, of whom 73% were aged 16 to 18. Nearly 50% of enrolments were on level 1 courses. Minority ethnic groups form 8% of college enrolments, compared with 7.5% of Gloucester residents and 1.8% of the county's residents.

Unemployment in Gloucestershire is low. In Gloucester, however, 2 of the 15 wards are within the 10% of most deprived wards in England. Most of the county's largest employers are concentrated in the college's catchment area. These include multinational aerospace manufacturers and the national headquarters of companies involved in telecommunications, banking and insurance, energy and food processing. Tourism is also an important industry for both Gloucester and the county generally. Over 90% of the college's work-based learning provision is in engineering, construction and hairdressing. The college became a centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) for IT services in 2004. Its mission is 'to raise skills levels in Gloucestershire by providing high-quality learning opportunities and by promoting lifelong learning'.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged teaching and students' achievements to be good in one curriculum area, satisfactory in nine, and unsatisfactory in one. The quality of work-based learning is satisfactory in one area inspected and unsatisfactory in two. The college's main strengths and areas that need to be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

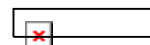
- effective strategies to improve teaching, learning and retention rates
- good use of information and learning technology (ILT) in lessons
- good financial management
- the quality of support for students
- good specialist resources
- effective governance.

What should be improved

- the achievements of students aged 16 to 18 and those on modern apprenticeships
- aspects of curriculum management
- the delivery of key skills
- some poor internal verification practices
- unsatisfactory provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- some teaching accommodation.

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

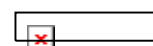


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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. Teaching in the majority of lessons is good. Pass rates are low on some advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) and GCSE courses and student progression from AS-level to general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses is low. There are effective strategies to encourage adults to study science and mathematics. Some accommodation is unsuitable.
Construction	Satisfactory. Most teaching is satisfactory, but only a small proportion is good or better. Pass rates are high, but retention rates are low on many courses. Pass rates on foundation modern apprenticeships are low. Internal verification is poor. Provision for work-based learners is unsatisfactory.
Engineering	Satisfactory. The majority of teaching is at least satisfactory. Pass and retention rates are high on many courses. Foundation students develop good practical skills. Internal verification on college-based courses is poor. Provision for work-based learners is satisfactory.
Business	Satisfactory. The majority of teaching is good, but a small proportion is unsatisfactory. Teachers use ILT well, but do not sufficiently check that students are learning. Pass and retention rates are low on full-time business courses. Few full-time teachers have recent relevant industrial experience.
Information and communications technology	Satisfactory. The majority of teaching is good. Pass and retention rates are satisfactory on the majority of courses. There have been successful initiatives to widen participation. The assessment and monitoring of student progress is inadequate.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Satisfactory. Most teaching is satisfactory, but only a small proportion is good. Pass rates are high on many beauty courses, but pass rates on foundation modern apprenticeships are very low. There is good use of ILT for teaching and learning. Assessment practice at college is poor. Provision for work-based learners is unsatisfactory.
Health, social care and public services	Satisfactory. Most teaching is good. Pass and retention rates are satisfactory on the majority of courses. There is a wide range of enrichment activities. Key skills provision is poor. The provision for childcare is good.
Visual, performing arts and media	Satisfactory. The majority of teaching is good and some is very good. Pass rates are high on the majority of courses, but there are some low retention rates. There is effective use of ILT to stimulate learning. Key skills are inconsistently implemented. The provision for media and music technology is good.
Psychology, sociology and law	Satisfactory. The majority of teaching is good. Most pass and retention rates are satisfactory. Students get good support from their subject teachers. The quality improvement arrangements are

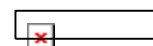
	inconsistently applied.
Literacy and numeracy and English for speakers of other languages	Good. Most teaching is good and some is very good. Assessment is effective and there is excellent use of individual learning plans to inform student progress. Students develop their literacy, numeracy and language skills well. There is poor take up of additional learning support. The provision for literacy and numeracy is outstanding.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	Unsatisfactory. A significant minority of teaching is unsatisfactory. Although students learn well in practical lessons, their progress is limited in many lessons by a lack of differentiated teaching. There is poor use of initial assessment. Students can take part in a good range of enrichment activities.

How well is the college led and managed?



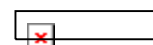
Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the college's financial position has significantly improved. Strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning have been effective and there is now more teaching that is good or better than that seen nationally. However, the percentage of students of all ages who complete their course and achieve their qualifications is low at level 2. The percentage is also low for students aged 16 to 18 at level 3. Retention rates are improving. Governors are well informed about the college's performance and many have strong links with teaching teams. Curriculum management is satisfactory in most areas. The college's strategic plan is comprehensive, although the targets for success rates are not sufficiently ambitious. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report. Financial management is good. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



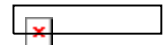
The college's response to education and social inclusion is good. The college offers a wide range of courses in various locations across the county. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is high compared to the local community. Links between the college and local schools are good through the provision of courses at Key Stage 4 for school pupils. Literacy and numeracy provision is outstanding. The college complies with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). Access for people with restricted mobility is good at most centres. To meet the requirements of the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000, the college has a race equality policy and plan. However, the progress made by students from different backgrounds is not sufficiently analysed. There is little action to address the significant gender imbalances on courses in some curriculum areas. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is unsatisfactory.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



nursery are well used. Information for prospective students is clear and well designed. The college organises a wide range of promotional activities to raise awareness and interest in its courses. Students receive good initial advice and guidance. Induction is good for most students. The additional learning support needs of individual students are assessed effectively. The support provided is valued by students, although the take up of the support is low. Pastoral support, including group and individual tutorials, is good. The procedures for monitoring students' attendance and identifying students 'at risk' are beginning to have a positive impact on retention rates. There are effective links with the Connexions service and local schools.

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

- supportive and friendly staff

- good facilities at Cheltenham

- the wide range of vocational courses

- being treated as an adult

- personal support

- sports and social events.

What they feel could be improved

- noise from adjoining teaching areas

- costs in canteen

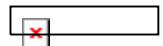
- poor library at Cheltenham

- the relevance of key skills

- late starting classes

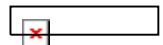
- the late return of assignments.

Other information

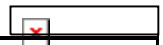


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the LSC. The LSC should send to Ofsted only action plans from colleges that have been judged inadequate or have been awarded a grade 4 or 5 for curriculum provision, work-based learning and/or leadership and management.

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

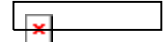


Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	69	26	5
19+ and WBL*	62	29	9
Learning 16-18	65	29	6
19+ and WBL*	61	29	10

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. Data on students' achievements drawn from the individualised student records for 2001 and 2002 were provided by the LSC. Data provided by the college were used for 2003. Inspectors also used additional data held by the college to help them form their judgements, particularly in relation to work-based learning. The separate reports on areas of learning in part C provide more detail about achievements and standards reached on particular courses.
2. Summary data for the period 2001 to 2003 show that pass rates for students are variable. At level 1, they are improving and are now above national averages, at level 2 they are above national averages for students aged 16 to 18, whereas for adult students they are improving, but are still below the national averages. At level 3, the situation is reversed, with the pass rate for adult students above the national average, but for students aged 16 to 18 it is significantly below the national average and with little improvement over the last three years. Retention rates are also variable and fluctuate at, or around, the national averages with the exception of levels 2 and 3 for students aged 16 to 18 where the rates are continually significantly below the national averages. In-year data provided by the college indicate that recent actions are having a positive impact on these figures.
3. Using data from 2001 to 2003, which show the percentages of students who successfully achieve their qualification aim compared with those who start, that is the success rate, the college performs consistently below the national average at levels 2 and 3 for students aged 16 to 18. Success rates have improved at level 1 for both ages, and for adult students at level 3, and they are now above national averages.
4. The overall attendance in the lessons observed was 78% compared with 72% at the last inspection. The figure is similar to the national average. The average number of students in observed lessons was 9.4, compared to 9.5 at the last inspection and the national average of 9.8.
5. The standard of most students' work is satisfactory or better. Many students develop good study skills and make effective use of the wide range of learning resources, including those available on the intranet. Most students gain in competence and confidence. Childcare students develop their caring skills well when working with young children. Students on literacy and numeracy courses develop their study skills, work well with others and make good progress. Students in most vocational areas are well prepared for progression to employment. In construction and engineering, students develop a wide variety of practical occupational skills and related computer skills. Students in information and communications technology (ICT) studying systems support benefit from being taught in a CoVE. The standard of practical work in performing arts is high and students display strong acting, dance and music technology skills.
6. Achievements in work-based learning are unacceptably low. Between 1999/2000 and 2002/03, in hairdressing, no learners enrolled on the advanced modern apprenticeship successfully gained the full framework and only 10% of those on the foundation modern apprenticeship were successful. Achievement of the foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship in construction are very poor at 2% and 7%, respectively. In engineering, achievements over the same period are also low, but improving at 15% for advanced and 7% for foundation modern apprenticeships.
7. Overall, pass rates on the three key skills of application of number, ICT and communication are very poor. The college policy is that all full-time students who have not already done so should attain key skills to at least level 2. Many modern apprentices who successfully complete their national vocational qualification (NVQ) often fail to obtain qualifications in key skills and this hampers the achievement of the full modern apprenticeship.

16 to 18 year olds

8. Some 3,586 students, approximately 77% of full-time and 6% of part-time students, are aged 16 to 18. The majority of enrolments are on level 3 courses. Retention rates are well below national averages at levels 2 and 3, but similar to the national average at level 1. In-year data not yet audited for 2003/04, provided by the college at the time of the inspection, indicate improved retention rates. Pass rates at levels 1 and 2 are above national averages. However, at level 3, they are well below the national average and do not indicate improvements over time.

9. The college has 471 work-based learners. Of these, 182 are advanced modern apprentices and 289 are foundation modern apprentices. The largest proportion of work-based learners is in construction with 217 work-based learners, some 47% of the total. Other areas of training are engineering, business administration, hospitality and catering, hairdressing and beauty therapy and health, social and childcare. The achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks is poor across all the curriculum areas inspected. In many cases, this is because of the poor levels of achievement of key skills. However, recent changes in the delivery of key skills are leading to improvements. College data at the time of inspection indicate improvement in key skill achievement, particularly in engineering. There are also instances, for example, in construction, where the achievement of the NVQ has also been poor. Some 30 learners from 2000 or earlier years have still to complete all elements of their apprenticeship framework.

10. The college's data on value added show that in many AS-level and GCE A-level subjects, students do not achieve their expected target grade based on those predicted from their prior achievement at GCSE. The proportion of AS-level and GCE A-level students gaining high grades of A and B varies across the different subjects.

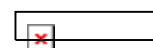
Adult learners

11. Approximately 78% of the college's students are adults. The majority of enrolments are on level 1 courses. Almost 94% of students are on part-time courses. About 30% of the college's full-time equivalent students are on courses in ICT either in the community or at the college.

12. Retention rates at levels 1 and 3 have been generally close to the national averages. However, at level 2, they have steadily declined from 76% in 2000/01 to 61% in 2002/03, well below the national average. Pass rates have improved from 2000/01 to 2002/03 and at levels 1 and 3 are above the national rates. However, although improving, they are still just below national averages at level 2.

13. The retention and pass rates of adults on level 3 courses are above those of students aged 16 to 18. For example, in 2002/03, the pass rate for adults was 79% compared to 67% for students aged 16 to 18. At levels 1 and 2, retention rates for adults are similar to those for students aged 16 to 18. Pass rates for adults have improved for the period 2000/01 to 2002/03 and are now similar to those for students aged 16 to 18.

Quality of education and training



14. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 214 sessions. Teaching is good or better in 66% of these, satisfactory in 28% and less than satisfactory in 6%. The proportion of teaching that is excellent or very good is similar to the average for the sector for colleges of the same type. The highest proportion of teaching that is good or better is in literacy and numeracy and health, social care and public services. The quality of teaching varies considerably across the curriculum areas. In two areas, teaching is less than satisfactory in over 10% of lessons. The

and beauty therapy and construction courses. Learning is good or better in 63% of lessons, satisfactory in 29% and less than satisfactory in 8%. The highest proportion of good or very good learning is on literacy and numeracy, and health and social care and public services courses.

15. Students aged 16 to 18 are better taught than adults and they learn more effectively. The teaching in 69% of lessons for students aged 16 to 18 is good or better, compared with 64% in lessons for adults. Compared with adults, students aged 16 to 18 are better taught on ICT, humanities and literacy and numeracy courses. In most curriculum areas, however, classes contain a mix of students aged 16 to 18 and adults. The best teaching and learning are on courses at levels 3 and 4 courses and the largest proportions of unsatisfactory teaching and ineffective learning are on entry level and level 2 courses.

16. Many lessons are well planned, particularly those in health and social care and literacy and numeracy. At the start, teachers carefully explain the intended learning outcomes to their students and at the end check that these have been achieved. Teachers in literacy and numeracy accurately assess the needs and learning styles of their students and set specific, challenging, learning goals. There is imaginative use of videos and demonstrations in science, and hairdressing and beauty therapy to maintain the interest of students and show them how to complete their practical tasks. In several curriculum areas, including engineering, business and ICT, teachers use ILT effectively in their lessons. The widespread use of interactive whiteboards stimulates discussion and reinforces learning. Students in construction, business, and health and social care are motivated by the opportunities to use specialist computer software and are frequently encouraged to seek information from the Internet. In psychology, students make good use of an extensive intranet site designed by teachers. Teachers in science and engineering clearly relate the work undertaken by students in practical lessons to theory to help them understand difficult topics. Most students gain confidence and many achieve high standards in their practical work. Students are helped to learn in construction by frequent references to current work practices and examples from the teachers' or the students' own experiences. There are well-thought-out programmes of visiting speakers and visits to organisations involved in the early years, care and public services sectors. Teachers in ICT and psychology, sociology and law check students' understanding regularly through careful questioning. The quality of learning materials is good in most curriculum areas.

17. Some teachers talk too long or spend too much time on one activity so that students become bored, lose motivation or are under occupied. In the poorer lessons, teachers do not ask enough probing questions to check that all the students understand the topic. As a result, questions to the more able students are sometimes too simple. Some teachers do not make enough use of the results of initial assessment when preparing individual learning plans. Frequently, the plans do not identify timescales for achievement of individual topics. Instead, some teachers confuse the written record of the lesson with planning the learning of individual students. In some lessons, teachers do not relate the topic to the workplace. For example, some rarely refer to current commercial practices in lessons for full-time students while others concentrate on ensuring students can use practical IT applications, without explaining their use in the workplace. Teachers in hairdressing and beauty therapy do not pay enough attention to developing their students' professional practice skills. Learning in small groups is not always managed well.

18. There is variation in the quality of the teaching of key skills. In construction, key skills are effectively integrated with the students' main course of study, delivered in a vocational context and assessed through vocational assignments. Students enjoy these lessons and appreciate the value and relevance of key skills. In many curriculum areas, however, lesson plans do not routinely identify how students would develop their key skills through their main subject work and teachers miss opportunities to include them in learning materials provided for the students' main course of study. Students then make little progress. The teaching of key skills has improved in work-based learning in engineering and construction, but in hairdressing and beauty therapy few modern apprentices can see the relevance of key skills to their studies.

19. Accommodation on the two main campuses and at the community-based venues is well maintained and of a good standard. Most parts of the college are accessible for those with restricted mobility. The Cheltenham campus, which opened in 2002, has good IT facilities, several eating outlets which cater for a range of tastes and budgets, a very good nursery and a gym. The

Gloucester campus is older, but automatic doors, lifts and ramps have been added to meet the needs of those with disabilities. Most of its buildings are in good repair, although some beauty salons and the performing arts facilities need refurbishment. The facilities for media and music technology are excellent. The reception and student service areas on both campuses are welcoming and conveniently located. At the engineering centre, there is no access to classrooms on the first floor for those with physical disabilities and no catering facilities. Utilisation of teaching accommodation is above average.

20. The college has a very effective ILT strategy. Advisors are linked to individual curriculum areas to help teachers produce subject-specific materials for use on interactive whiteboards linked with audio visual aids in the classroom, and to use virtual learning environments with their students. This has worked well in many curriculum areas. Library facilities are available to students on all centres, although some are small.

21. ICT facilities are very good. There is a high ratio of workstations to students. The network is well managed and reliable. Staff can easily access data on individual students, as well as curriculum and course-specific information. The college intranet has a wide range of teaching materials. Teachers and students can easily communicate with each other through the e-mail system. Laptop computers are available for staff to use away from the college. The college has invested heavily in training staff to use the IT facilities and support for individual teachers is readily available from technical staff.

22. Most teachers are appropriately qualified. Almost 90% of permanent teachers have a recognised teaching qualification or are working towards one. Nearly 80% of part-time teachers are appropriately qualified or have undertaken training as part of their contractual obligations. Many teachers have up-to-date subject knowledge, but some, for example, in business, lack recent industrial or commercial experience and in the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities not all teachers have the specialist skills necessary to work with students who have particular disabilities. Teacher absences in engineering disadvantaged some students during 2003/04.

23. Assessment is well organised and planned effectively in most curriculum areas. Assignments are set at the appropriate level for the course. There is good use of work-based assessment in engineering, but not in construction despite good opportunities to do so. In hairdressing, poor planning of assessments leads to too many assessments taking place at the same time.

24. Internal verification is satisfactory in most areas. Course leaders generally implement the college internal verification procedures effectively. The college monitors the quality of assessment through the quality verifiers' group which meets to identify good practice and support teachers. However, in construction and engineering, there is poor NVQ assessment practice for work-based learners. For example, in 2003/04, weaknesses in internal verification in construction and engineering resulted in the awarding body temporarily withholding certification in bricklaying and removing centre approval in welding. The principal receives copies of all external verifiers' reports and any actions necessary to address identified weaknesses are taken promptly.

25. Most teachers give students clear feedback on the quality of their written work and how they can improve their performance. Homework is marked and returned promptly. Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar are not always corrected, however, and in some instances the teachers' comments are not detailed enough to indicate what students should have done instead. On some courses, teachers do not set clear deadlines for when work is to be submitted. In some lessons, teachers do not check student progress enough.

26. The systems for monitoring and tracking the progress of full-time students are effective. Learning support tutors, student link workers and attendance officers all keep tutors regularly informed about the progress of individual students. Twice each term, course teams meet formally to discuss student retention and pass rates. In many curriculum areas, students are set individual attainment targets for each subject. Some targets are too vague, however, or insufficiently challenging especially for students aiming for high grades. Reports on student progress are sent to the parents or guardians of students aged under 18 each term. Employers receive similar reports for part-time students.

27. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses in all areas of learning. It has increased and widened participation effectively through operating in community-based venues across the north of the county. Students at these venues account for over 30% of the college's full-time equivalent students. Many initially enrol on ICT courses, but then frequently engage in further learning, for example, on basic skills courses. Some 8% of students who studied at the community-based venues in 2002/03 subsequently enrolled on courses at the college's main campuses. The college has successfully introduced courses for school pupils aged 14 to 16 at Cheltenham and Gloucester in co-operation with 9 schools, including a special school and a pupil referral unit. It is anticipated that nearly half of the first 100 students who completed their courses and gained accreditation at level 1 will progress to FE or training. The college also intends to offer some courses at level 2 from September 2004. Over 100 students aged 14 to 16 also attend the college full time, funded by the LEA.

28. Some of the full-time courses for students aged 16 to 18 are provided in sixth form centres at Cheltenham and Gloucester. Most of the students are enrolled on level 3 courses, with the majority studying vocational qualifications including national diplomas and advanced vocational certificates of education (AVCEs), although a third are on AS-level and GCE A-level courses. Many students choose to study a mixture of vocational and academic subjects, particularly in their second year. Most full-time students are able to study additional qualifications or take part in enrichment activities. All full-time students can follow courses in key skills. These are not always integrated with their main courses of study and few students seek accreditation at level 3. The wider key skills can be studied as part of the tutorial programme, but few students gain accreditation.

29. The college's HE provision includes courses in media, computing, engineering, construction, early years, health and social care, hospitality and network installation. Agreements with local universities exist to widen the participation of under-represented groups. The college has recently become a CoVE for ICT. It is improving its links with employers and a new training partnership team now offers bespoke training and recruits employees to college courses. The number of employers who participate in work-based learning or offer work experience opportunities to students is low. The college does not sufficiently monitor student progression to employment or FE or HE.

30. Potential students get good pre-entry information and guidance. The prospectus and website are well designed. Frequent open days, taster events and work experience activities for Year 11 school leavers provide excellent opportunities for prospective students to visit the college and find out more about the courses available. Students who apply to join full-time courses are invited to take part in various activities, including barbeques and camping trips, before their courses commence. The college has good links with its local schools and personal advisors from the Connexions service are based in the college. Admissions are managed centrally, but all prospective full-time students are invited to interviews with both subject tutors and specialist support staff. Students confirm that induction to the college and their chosen course is well planned and that they are made well aware of the range of facilities that the college offers.

31. All full-time and substantive part-time students undertake an initial assessment of their literacy or numeracy skills at enrolment to identify whether they need additional learning support. The results are shared with students during tutorial sessions and good support is provided both in class and through workshops in the learning centres. The support is highly valued by those students who take it up. For example, computing students were helped effectively to improve their numeracy skills so that they could achieve the computational element of their course, a success which encouraged them to complete the rest of the diploma. Similarly, a student with dyslexia achieved a distinction grade for a course module rather than the anticipated low pass. Students with disabilities and those living independently receive good support in lessons from tutors, support workers and teaching assistants.

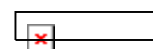
32. Students can conveniently access a wide range of support services, including additional learning support, counselling, careers and HE advice. The college provides a significant number of supported childcare places at nurseries and baby care units on both the Cheltenham and Gloucester campuses.

33. Tutorial provision is good for full-time students. They have both a course tutor and personal tutor

and receive individual and group tutorials twice a term. Most tutorials have clear aims and are well structured. Students' progress is monitored effectively and their performance compared to target grades in many curriculum areas. Group tutorials are well delivered using college-devised guidelines. Tutorials for part-time adult students are less formal and are usually with their course manager. They focus primarily on individual student performance. Tutorials are at least satisfactory.

34. The college acknowledges that retention rates on many courses at levels 2 and 3 for students aged 16 to 18 are low. It has introduced several initiatives to improve them. The attendance of all students is monitored carefully by attendance officers who 'walk the floor' 15 minutes after the start of lessons. Absences are quickly followed up through telephone calls to the homes of absent students. Student link workers work closely with 'at risk' full-time students. There are clear indications that these initiatives are improving the attendance and retention rates on many courses.

Leadership and management



35. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the college's financial position has improved significantly. Resources for teaching and learning have improved and a new campus has been built in Cheltenham. Accurate management information is now available for planning at all levels in the college. However, there are some poor success rates.

36. Governors are well informed about the college's strengths and weaknesses. They make good use of their wide range of experience. The board and its committees meet frequently and are well supported by an effective clerk. All governors have regular contact with the curriculum and functional areas of the college. They all contributed to the board's self-assessment report and development plan.

37. The principal provides strong leadership. There is good communication across the college. Frequent meetings between the principal and staff and a fortnightly newsletter ensure that all staff are well informed about the key issues facing the college. The senior management team meets with curriculum managers weekly. The minutes of curriculum area team meetings are copied to the principal. There are regular surveys of the views of students and staff.

38. Curriculum management is generally satisfactory. Team working and communication are good and some curriculum areas share good practice. Strategies to address poor retention rates and improve the quality of teaching and learning are being successfully implemented in many curriculum areas. However, the comprehensive quality assurance arrangements are not implemented consistently and action planning is not always effective. The management of work-based learning has significantly improved in the last year and is now satisfactory.

39. The planning and quality assurance frameworks are comprehensive. All staff are actively involved in self-assessment and the production of development plans. The college strategic plan includes the headline improvement targets required by the LSC. The targets for improvements in success rates are not sufficiently ambitious. The quality assurance framework is extensive, with a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning through internal inspection and lesson observation. The performance of each curriculum area is regularly monitored. However, success rates remain low in some areas.

40. The college has successfully introduced strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The proportion of good or better teaching has improved by 8% since the last inspection and, at 66%, is now slightly higher than the national average. Teachers have received good training to develop their use of ILT. Detailed and constructive feedback is given after a lesson observation. Prompt action is taken to address poor attendance or punctuality. At the time of the inspection, attendance was about the national average.

41. The proportions of students aged 16 to 18 who complete their course and successfully gain their qualifications at levels 2 and 3 are lower than the national averages. For example, only 45% of students who started level 2 programmes and 47% of students who started level 3 programmes successfully completed their qualifications in 2003, compared with 51% and 61%, respectively, nationally. Retention rates in 2003 improved at level 2 and at level 3, but are still significantly below national averages. For example, in 2003, only 44% of adults completed their course and successfully gained their qualification at level 2. For both ages at level 1, success rates are above national averages. At the time of inspection, college-produced data indicated further improvement in retention rates to about the national average.

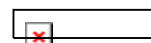
42. There are productive partnerships with several external organisations. In an arrangement with the BBC, the college has opened a learning centre in Gloucester, with a strong media bias, as part of its strategy to widen participation. At Gloucester rugby club, the college involves the players and specialists in courses promoting health and fitness. The college is one of the six members of the federation of Gloucestershire colleges that meet together regularly to share good practice and make joint bids for funding.

43. Arrangements for staff development and staff appraisal are good. The annual appraisal of teachers takes into account the grades awarded during lesson observation as well as progress made against targets set at the previous review. Training and professional development plans, including new targets appropriately linked to college objectives, are set for the following year. Staff development is closely linked to the college's strategic objectives. The college holds three training days each year and extra training is provided at weekends or during the evenings for part-time teachers. Recent topics have included SENDA, race equality and challenging behaviours. Staff also attend many external training events.

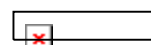
44. The college is widening participation effectively in FE and training. A larger proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds are recruited than are in the local community. Two link workers raise awareness of post-16 education in minority ethnic communities and work with students at risk of dropping out from their courses. Thought-provoking case studies on different aspects of equality of opportunity have been developed for teachers to use with students. All staff have taken part in equality and diversity training and equality of opportunity is covered during student induction. As required by the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000, the college has a race equality policy and plan. However, data relating to examination results and retention rates are not sufficiently analysed by gender and racial origin. The college fully complies with SENDA. Complaints are monitored effectively and responded to promptly. There is little action to address the significant gender imbalances in some curriculum areas.

45. The college provides satisfactory value for money. Financial management is good. The range of courses is reviewed annually against the strategic plan. The quality of most of the curriculum areas is satisfactory. The average class size observed during the inspection is below the national average in many curriculum areas. Retention rates are low in many areas, although they have improved over the last two years.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- good teaching
- effective strategies to widen participation by adults
- good learning by highly motivated students on many courses.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on AS-level human biology and mathematics and GCSE courses
- low rates of student progression from AS-level to GCE A-level courses
- some inappropriate accommodation.

Scope of provision

46. Students can study AS-level and GCE A-level biology, human biology, chemistry, physics, and mathematics, and GCSE human physiology and health, science and mathematics full time. GCSEs and AS-level and GCE A-level mathematics and human biology are also offered in the evening. The national certificate in forensic science commenced in 2003. Courses are available at both Cheltenham and Gloucester. At the time of the inspection, 67% of the 880 students enrolled on courses in science and mathematics were aged 16 to 18. Some 53% of students were on full-time courses.

Achievement and standards

47. Pass rates on GCE A-level courses have improved over the last three years, but most are still below national averages. AS-level pass rates have varied over the last three years. In 2003, they were low in mathematics and human biology, but high in chemistry. Pass rates on GCSE courses are below national averages. Retention rates on GCE A-level courses have improved over the last three years and, in 2003, they were all above the national averages. Retention rates on the majority of AS-level and GCSE courses have remained at about the national average for the last three years. Students achieve less well in the majority of AS-level and GCE A-level subjects than predicted from their GCSE results.

48. Most science students develop appropriate practical skills. They work safely and use laboratory equipment competently. Many students use IT effectively to gather and interpret information and data. In theory lessons, students work well together to research and present reports. In mathematics, the more able students display good critical evaluation skills. Adults contribute well to classroom discussions. Students do not always use the correct scientific language in lessons when discussing ideas and facts. Less than 50% of students who start AS-level courses progress to GCE

A-level courses.

A sample of retention and pass rates in science and mathematics, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE human physiology and health	2	No. of starts	*	76	101
		% retention	*	66	72
		% pass rate	*	56	30
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	320	293	310
		% retention	69	66	66
		% pass rate	37	42	34
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	75	72	66
		% retention	72	78	70
		% pass rate	31	57	33
AS-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	28	46	36
		% retention	68	61	81
		% pass rate	21	79	79
AS-level physics	3	No. of starts	33	35	31
		% retention	82	77	81
		% pass rate	81	81	64
AS-level human biology	3	No. of starts	88	75	76
		% retention	77	56	57
		% pass rate	38	74	47
GCE A-level chemistry**	3	No. of starts	32	38	16
		% retention	53	82	100
		% pass rate	47	96	81

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

*course not running

**Retention rates for GCE A level 2002 and 2003 are in-year, not two-year rates

Quality of education and training

49. The majority of teaching is good; there are no unsatisfactory lessons. Most lessons are well planned, motivate students and encourage them to learn. Teachers use an appropriate variety of teaching methods in their lessons, including interactive whiteboards, discussions and videos. Science teachers use practical work well to help students understand complex topics. In a lesson on organic chemistry, students mixed different substances with alcohol and observed the results. This helped them to understand the structure and classification of alcohol molecules. In a physics revision lesson, students worked in pairs to complete a card quiz that checked their understanding of the electromagnetic spectrum and the applications of different forms of radiation. The more able students helped other students by giving prompts. Practical examples are used effectively in mathematics to illustrate mathematical concepts. In a GCSE lesson, the class discussed probability and the lottery. By the end of the lesson, all the students could calculate straightforward problems involving dice-throwing predictions.

50. In a minority of theory lessons, teachers talk for too long without a change of activity. Students then lose concentration and motivation. In the less successful lessons, teachers concentrate too much on the students in the middle range of ability. The more able students find the questions asked by the teacher undemanding and so make little progress and soon become bored. The less able do not increase their understanding and make little progress.

51. Teachers are suitably qualified and up to date in their subjects. The learning resources centre and library each have a broad range of textbooks and journals. ICT resources for students to use on their own are good. Teaching accommodation at Cheltenham is modern and spacious, but noise from adjoining classrooms is sometimes disruptive. Laboratories at Cheltenham are well equipped and some include computers for student use. However, at Gloucester there is not enough storage space for science equipment.

52. Homework is marked promptly and returned. Marking is thorough and errors are corrected, but sometimes the teacher's comments do not identify what students need to do to improve. Each student is set an attainment target for each subject. Progress against these targets is regularly monitored by a pastoral tutor. Some action plans that are subsequently produced, however, are too vague and imprecise.

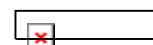
53. The range of courses is satisfactory. Adults are encouraged to join day-time classes as part-time students and use the nursery facilities if necessary. Alternatively, evening classes are run on both campuses. Students can progress from level 2 to level 3 in a number of subjects. Teachers make good use of enrichment activities, to motivate students. For example, GCSE science students visit the Science Museum. There is very little provision at level 1, only one vocational course and no courses in the earth sciences.

54. Students receive effective personal and pastoral support. Before and during enrolment, students are advised as to which subjects they should study, but they do not all follow the guidance. Students who intend to progress to HE or employment benefit from the weekly group tutorials. All students are assessed to identify their additional learning support needs at the start of their course, but some do not take up the offer of help.

Leadership and management

55. Leadership and management of the area are satisfactory. Retention rates have improved in the last year and attendance is carefully monitored. Students' achievements are analysed for performance by ethnicity and gender. Teachers in science are keen to share good practice, but many subject teams only meet informally. Lesson planning is good, but schemes of work are too brief. They do not include details of homework, tests, background reading, useful websites, resources or other information to help students learn. There is little promotion of equality of opportunity. There are few links with local schools or local employers. The average class size is low.

Construction



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on many courses

- good integration of theory and practice in lessons
- good standard of students' practical work
- strong promotion of health and safety in the workplace.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on many courses
- very poor achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- poor internal verification.

Scope of provision

56. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses from foundation to advanced levels at Gloucester. These include NVQs in bricklaying, carpentry, bench joinery, painting and decorating, plumbing, domestic heating and electrical installation. Specialist provision is provided in cabinet making. Technician and professional courses include national and higher national certificates (HNCs) and diplomas. At the time of inspection, there were 156 full-time students of whom 63% were aged 16 to 18. Some 83% of the 600 part-time students were aged 19 or over. There were also 130 foundation and advanced modern apprentices.

Achievement and standards

57. Pass rates on many courses are high and improving. For example, in 2003, they were over 90% on level 1 wood occupations, level 2 heating and ventilating and the progression award in furniture, and the AVCE. However, on level 2 bricklaying, no students achieved the qualification. Retention rates on the majority of courses are low. There is poor achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks. Of the 84 advanced modern apprentices who started in 1999, only 2 have so far completed the framework. A further 15 apprentices achieved the NVQ requirements. Of the 104 foundation modern apprentices who started in 2000, only 12 have completed the framework and a further 21 trainees obtained NVQs.

58. Students work well, particularly in practical lessons. They develop their skills to industrial standards. For example, furniture students carried out background research on the design of side tables which were then constructed in a variety of decorative hardwoods. The quality of the drawings produced was high and the finished articles were aesthetically very pleasing. Students' portfolios of evidence vary in quality. The better portfolios contain thorough and detailed assessment plans, well-written and word-processed tasks accurately referenced to the performance criteria. They include a good range of diverse evidence such as assessor observations and narrative explaining

photographic evidence.

A sample of retention and pass rates in construction, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
City and Guilds 2360-05 electrical installation part 1 theory	1	No. of starts	50	27	73
		% retention	52	48	51
		% pass rate	88	100	76
NVQ wood occupations	1	No. of starts	17	23	19
		% retention	88	83	95
		% pass rate	93	79	94
NVQ bricklaying	2	No. of starts	33	19	**
		% retention	52	47	**
		% pass rate	82	100	**
City and Guilds 2360-08 electrical installation part 2 theory and practice	2	No. of starts	54	29	29
		% retention	93	93	93
		% pass rate	52	56	37
City and Guilds 6955 progression award in furniture	2	No. of starts	*	32	30
		% retention	*	97	93
		% pass rate	*	87	100
General national vocational qualification (GNVQ) advanced, GNVQ precursors and AVCE construction	3	No. of starts	36	42	22
		% retention	72	79	55
		% pass rate	69	73	100

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

* course not running

** fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

59. Most teaching is satisfactory, but a small proportion is good or better. Most lessons are well planned and the learning outcomes shared and discussed with students. In the better lessons, teachers use an appropriate variety of teaching methods. They make good use of the Internet and specialist surveying and structural mechanics computer software. Teachers try to integrate theory and practice in many lessons by referring to current building legislation and codes of practice and drawing on their students' own industrial experiences to promote discussion and illustrate key points. Key skills are identified in lesson plans and taught in a vocational context.

60. The learning plans for modern apprentices do not reflect their individual progress. They relate to the college academic year and are not influenced by the outcomes of initial assessment. There is no culture of unit accreditation and learning plans do not identify timescales for achievement of individual units or other short-term achievement targets.

61. Teaching resources are satisfactory. Teachers have relevant vocational qualifications and possess, or are working towards, assessor and verifier awards. Library resources and the dedicated

construction resource room are good. However, some books are dated and refer to codes of practice that have been superseded. Good health and safety practices are strongly promoted in the workplace. Employers are monitored, health and safety is part of every review, and a 'mini risk assessment' of each site visited is carried out. Students work in a safe and healthy environment. The workshops for bricklaying and plumbing are too small for the number of students that use them.

62. Internal verification is poor. Inconsistent internal verification practices have resulted in one awarding body imposing sanctions on the college and temporarily withholding certification in bricklaying. Assessment arrangements are generally satisfactory. Students' progress is carefully monitored. Assessment on technician courses is well planned. However, the quality of assessors' written feedback is inconsistent across courses. Some feedback is detailed and helps students to improve their work, but some is too brief. Some NVQ assessment practices for work-based learners are poor. There is not enough use of on-site assessments, despite learners often working in situations where there are good assessment opportunities.

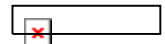
63. Courses meet the needs and interests of students and employers well. There is a good range of short courses, including the inspection of portable electrical appliances, hot water storage systems and gas installation for the local industry. Links with schools are effective.

64. Support for students is satisfactory. All full-time students take an initial assessment to identify their additional learning support needs. Induction programmes incorporate health and safety issues. One-to-one and group tutorials are offered to full-time technician students and termly one-to-one reviews take place with construction craft students. Part-time students do not benefit from additional support nor are they able to attend extra study sessions.

Leadership and management

65. Leadership and management of the area are satisfactory. Recently introduced strategies are beginning to improve retention and pass rates. Course files are comprehensive, well organised and standardised across all courses. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgments in the self-assessment report. The development plan is adequate, but in several instances, the person responsible for implementing an action is also responsible for monitoring its progress. Equality and diversity are well promoted in the workplace and equality issues are discussed during on-site reviews. The college has successfully bid with the Construction Industry Training Board for funding from the European social fund to target recruitment from female applicants. There is good access for students with disabilities.

Engineering, technology and manufacturing



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

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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on many courses

- good rates of student progression into employment and HE

- good practical skills development by foundation students
- well-resourced and spacious workshops
- well-organised additional learning support.

Weaknesses

- poor achievement of apprenticeship frameworks
- weak internal verification on college-based provision
- some inappropriate accommodation for theory lessons
- student progress adversely affected by staff shortages in 2003/04.

Scope of provision

66. The college offers full-time and part-time engineering craft courses from foundation to advanced levels in motor vehicle studies, engineering operations, production, design, fabrication and welding, maintenance and technical services. It also provides national certificates and diplomas in mechanical engineering, manufacturing and electronics and HNC and diploma courses. Most courses are taught at the Engineering Technology Centre in Gloucester. At the time of the inspection, there were 230 students, 60% of whom studied part time. The majority of students were aged 19 or over. There were also 31 engineering and 40 motor vehicle modern apprentices.

Achievement and standards

67. Pass and retention rates are high on the majority of courses. On the national certificate in engineering and progression awards in motor vehicle, they are consistently well above national averages. The retention rate for the national diploma in engineering in 2003 is significantly above the national average. Pass and retention rates are poor on fabrication and welding courses.

68 The standard of students' work is generally high. Many demonstrate high levels of skill when performing complex tasks. Over 50% of students who were due to complete the full-time foundation award in motor vehicle in 2003 had obtained employment in local garages and were due to progress on to the college's foundation modern apprenticeship programme. Some 58% of students progress from national courses to HE. Attendance on the national diploma in electronics is very low. At the time of the inspection, the achievement of apprenticeship frameworks, although still low, had

significantly improved from previous years.

A sample of retention and pass rates in engineering, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Progression award in automotive vehicle servicing and repair	1	No. of starts	23	23	24
		% retention	83	100	58
		% pass rate	74	61	86
National diploma in engineering	2	No. of starts	26	34	**
		% retention	58	79	**
		% pass rate	73	85	**
City and Guilds 2290-2 fabrication and welding competencies	3	No. of starts	34	24	**
		% retention	41	42	**
		% pass rate	29	40	**
National certificate in engineering	3	No. of starts	58	47	42
		% retention	72	70	67
		% pass rate	86	91	93

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

** fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

68. Teaching is satisfactory or better in the majority of lessons. Lessons are well prepared. Teachers set clear learning objectives and manage practical lessons effectively to help students develop their practical skills. In one lesson, students competently dismantled and refitted engine blocks after carrying out a range of maintenance procedures. In another, mechanical engineering students learnt how to use a co-ordinate measuring machine to inspect a component they had previously produced. Teachers use ILT effectively to develop students' understanding. Motor vehicle students are given a computer-based presentation showing the construction of different types of wheel rim, as part of a lesson on the legal requirements regarding tyres. Teachers also provide good support in tutorials. For example, students were asked to respond to an advertisement for a job at a local garage by preparing letters of application and personal Curriculum Vitae. The students then took part in short individual interviews to help them develop their interview techniques.

69. A small number of lessons, however, are poorly planned: the lesson plans lack detail and fail to indicate how learning will be monitored. In some lessons, teachers do not regularly check that individual students fully understand the tasks. This often leads to confusion. In one lesson, students arrived late and were not appropriately challenged by the teacher. In a work-based assessment, feedback to the learner was poor and unhelpful.

70. Teaching accommodation is satisfactory. Classrooms alongside the motor vehicle workshop are well equipped with interactive whiteboards and ceiling mounted projectors. There is a good range of vehicles for students to work on and the motor vehicle workshop is a registered MOT centre. The engineering workshop is well laid out. There is an engineering library within the engineering technology centre as well as good IT resources including computer-aided design (CAD) and e-CAD facilities. Classrooms used for teaching engineering theory are in poor condition and noise from adjoining rooms is distracting. There is no access for wheelchairs to the electronics classrooms.

71. Internal verification is poor. There are neither sampling plans nor formal meetings to discuss the

standardisation of students' work. Centre approval has been withdrawn for welding courses. Assignments, however, are challenging and well planned. Student progress is effectively monitored. All assessment is completed regularly in the workplace. There is good and effective communication between the work-based learning unit and the vocational tutors.

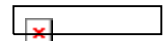
72. Students have good opportunities to progress from entry to higher level courses. External consultants have interviewed local employers to inform future curriculum planning. National diploma students also take the NVQ in performing engineering operations as part of their enrichment activity. The needs of students are met whenever possible. For example, an individual programme of study was devised for a full-time motor vehicle student who had gained employment in a local garage so that he could complete his course.

73. Well-organised additional learning support is improving student achievement. All full-time students, work-based learners and substantive part-time students are assessed to identify their support needs. The support provided for numeracy is closely integrated with the vocational curriculum. For example, after an initial assessment, one student received one-to-one support with IT-based packages on calculating time intervals. This was reinforced with examples based on car tyre sales, servicing intervals and the frequency of car breakdowns.

Leadership and management

74. Leadership and management of the area are satisfactory. Managers are addressing issues raised in the realistic self-assessment report. However, staff shortages adversely affected students' progress in 2003/04. There were considerable periods of time when teachers were not available to teach mathematics or science on national certificate and diploma courses. The recently established college unit manages the work-based learning provision, recruits companies, negotiates training plans and administers the modern apprenticeships, while work-based and vocationally qualified assessors manage the engineering content of courses. The new arrangements work well. The appointment of new staff is leading to improvements in the achievements of frameworks, NVQs and key skills.

Business



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

Strengths

- good use of ILT in lessons

- well-managed, self-directed learning in administration workshop

- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- low pass and retention rates on full-time business courses
- insufficient references to business practices in lessons for full-time students
- inadequate checking of students' learning in lessons.

Scope of provision

75. The college offers a broad range of business courses at both Cheltenham and Gloucester. Full-time courses include GNVQ foundation and intermediate business, AVCE business and GCSE, AS-level and GCE A-level business studies. The range of full-time administration courses is small and declining. Part-time courses include administration, accounting, professional, management and trade union studies. At the time of the inspection, the majority of the 246 full-time students were aged 16 to 18. There were 1,630 part-time students, most aged 19 and over. There were 26 work-based learners.

Achievement and standards

76. Pass rates are low on many business courses. The pass rate for AS-level business is consistently below the national average and pass rates on GCSE business and the AVCE are low and declining. Pass rates have improved on GCE A-level business, but remain low. Pass rates are good on the majority of word processing courses and satisfactory on most accounting, administration, management and professional courses. Pass rates on the personnel practice certificate have been consistently above the national average over the last four years and are high on the management certificate. Retention rates are high on accounting and administration courses, but low on business courses where significant numbers of students fail to complete their studies. At the time of the inspection, in-year retention rates had improved on some business courses.

77. The standard of students' work is generally satisfactory. Students on management, professional and trades union courses participate well in lessons and relate their learning to their workplaces, and theory to practice. They display high levels of oral and critical analysis skills. In one lesson, students near the end of their business course demonstrated a detailed grasp of the case study for the examination. Others planning a marketing questionnaire displayed good analytical skills and were able to anticipate problems and evaluate possible solutions. Many full-time business students, however, do not understand business practices. Student progression to other courses is low. About 30% of students progress from AS level to GCE A level; few GNVQ students progress to AVCE. During the inspection, students' attendance at lessons was low, at 72%.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ business	2	No. of starts	33	18	21
		% retention	70	61	43
		% pass rate	61	100	89
NVQ administration	2	No. of starts	23	17	**
		% retention	96	29	**
		% pass rate	23	60	**

AVCE business (double award)	3	No. of starts	*	56	41
		% retention	*	41	39
		% pass rate	*	65	56
AS-level business	3	No. of starts	55	78	68
		% retention	76	67	78
		% pass rate	60	67	62
NVQ accounting	3	No. of starts	91	111	54
		% retention	96	68	91
		% pass rate	43	78	59
Certificate in personnel practice	3	No. of starts	29	32	18
		% retention	100	97	94
		% pass rate	90	87	100

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

*course not offered

**fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

78. The majority of teaching is good, but a small proportion is unsatisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons carefully to suit the way their students learn best. Schemes of work and lesson plans show what they expect of their students. In the better lessons, teachers devise activities that engage students, develop their understanding and actively involve them in learning. Some good revision lessons include questioning, discussions, quizzes and games. Teachers use ILT effectively to attract students' attention and help them learn. They make notes of discussions for absent students. Students also make good use of ILT. For example, in one lesson, students presented their well-researched business plans confidently using well-designed visual images. In another lesson, students used the Internet access in their classroom to gather information on economic performance before holding a lively discussion. Practical administration lessons are well organised. High-quality work manuals, which are based on examination materials, allow students to work towards different subjects, levels and qualifications.

79. Teaching on many full-time courses does not relate to current business practices. Opportunities to use real business documents or set work in a realistic business context are missed. Some teachers spend too long on repetitive or undemanding activities that do not help students learn and several fail to check that those students who do not participate in discussions understand the topic. In a few lessons, students who complete their work have nothing to do while they wait for the rest of the class to finish. Group discussions are constrained because of small class sizes.

80. Full-time teachers are appropriately qualified, but few have recent relevant commercial experience. Students on professional courses, however, benefit from the up-to-date business experiences of their part-time teachers. During 2003/04, the learning of some students was disrupted by teacher absences. Most classrooms are fit for purpose and many have interactive whiteboards. However, at Cheltenham, the noise from adjoining areas affects learning and, at Gloucester, some classrooms do not have enough computers for the whole class to use at once. Many of the books at both libraries are out of date.

81. Teachers regularly give helpful feedback to students about their progress and how they can improve their written work. Targets are set for individual students in administration and text processing lessons.

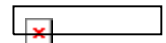
82. The college offers a good range of part-time professional courses. Full-time students can study a mixture of vocational and academic subjects. Over half of the students on the AVCE business also study AS level or GCE A levels or an AVCE in another vocational area. Links with employers are improving, but full-time students have few opportunities to work in commercial organisations.

83. Teachers provide good support to their students through regular one-to-one meetings. Individual tutorials are arranged to suit the needs of part-time students who have personal and work commitments. All full-time students are assessed on entry to identify their learning support needs. Few, however, who are identified as needing support, take it up.

Leadership and management

84. Leadership and management of the area are good. There is a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Course teams from both campuses work together to develop schemes of work. They apply the quality assurance procedures rigorously and closely monitor students' progress. Learning materials are reviewed to ensure that they comply with the college's requirements for equality of opportunity. The self-assessment report is largely accurate. The average class size is low, however.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- good use of ILT to support teaching and learning

- good academic support for students

- successful initiatives to widen participation.

Weaknesses

- inadequate assessment and monitoring of student progress

- low pass and retention rates on the national diploma in IT

- unsatisfactory curriculum management.

Scope of provision

85. The college offers an extensive range of courses in ICT. Full-time courses in ICT are provided at Gloucester and Cheltenham. AS-level and GCE A-level courses are run within the two sixth form centres. Part-time courses are offered at both Cheltenham and Gloucester, at three drop-in IT centres in Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury, and at a wide range of community-based venues, including church halls, local libraries and schools. At the time of the inspection, there were 5,500 part-time students, most of whom were studying in a community-based venue, and 350 full-time students. In total, these represented approximately 30% of the college's enrolments. Some 93% of students were adults. Most full-time students were aged 16 to 18. Some 63% of students were female and 16% were from minority ethnic groups.

86. The college has recently been awarded funding to develop a CoVE in IT services. It is making good progress towards its targets in the first year of its business plan and has started recruitment on to courses. The CoVE focuses on IT training for support technicians, programmers and those seeking to work in the networking side of the industry.

Achievement and standards

87. Retention rates on part-time courses are generally at or above national averages. Pass rates for most part-time courses are at national averages. Retention rates are poor on most full-time courses, although the retention rate for AS-level computing is above the national average. Most pass rates on full-time courses are at, or around, national averages. In 2002 and 2003, however, the numbers of students who completed their courses and achieved their qualification were low on level 3 full-time courses. For example, in 2003, only one student in five achieved the AVCE in ICT.

88. Most students are well motivated and work well on their own. Adult students are enthusiastic about their studies. Those who would not normally use IT enjoy their lessons and quickly see the benefits of packages such as desk-top publishing for developing posters, greetings cards and newsletters and e-mail. The standard of work produced by students is good. They quickly gain confidence and competence at using the equipment and software and demonstrate good practical skills.

A sample of retention and pass rates in information and communications technology, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) 1 year	1	No. of starts	533	301	196
		% retention	82	74	75
		% pass rate	63	73	29
City and Guilds 7261 certificate in computer applications 1 year	1	No. of starts	1,079	286	735
		% retention	71	55	61
		% pass rate	60	62	68
City and Guilds 7262 certificate in computer applications short	1	No. of starts	1,070	286	114
		% retention	71	55	68
		% pass rate	60	62	62
City and Guilds diploma in computer applications	2	No. of starts	105	104	73
		% retention	69	54	56
		% pass rate	57	59	88
European computer	2	No. of starts	29	501	124

driving licence (ECDL) short		% retention	90	31	86
		% pass rate	85	43	43
AVCE ICT double award	3	No. of starts	*	77	45
		% retention	*	13	24
		% pass rate	*	80	91
National diploma IT practitioners	3	No. of starts	50	39	37
		% retention	52	36	43
		% pass rate	85	71	56
AS-level computing	3	No. of starts	37	41	25
		% retention	78	63	92
		% pass rate	31	31	65

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

* course not running

Quality of education and training

89. The majority of teaching is good. Most lessons are well planned. Teachers are responsive to the needs of individual students. Adults have widely different levels of technical skill and knowledge, but teachers offer good support at all levels. Most teachers use good question and answer techniques to ensure that students understand the topic being covered. They use ILT well to engage students. The students show interest and enthusiasm for their work. In the best lessons, teachers share the lesson objectives with students and use a variety of activities well matched to students' prior attainment to deliver them; good exposition, probing questions and practical activities are used effectively.

90. Although teaching is at least satisfactory, there are weaknesses. In some lessons, there is insufficient differentiation and the more able students who complete their work quickly are left with nothing to do. In others, there is insufficient pace because teachers allow activities to continue for too long.

91. Learning resources are generally satisfactory. Community-based venues are often well equipped. A mobile, satellite-equipped van with laptop computers regularly visits some of them. There are good ILT resources to support teaching. Teaching in open plan areas is sometimes disturbed because of the high noise levels that arise from the large numbers of students who walk through them.

92. Although many teachers check and record students' progress well, reviews of their work are often unsatisfactory. The recorded evidence is often too brief and the matching of student progress to course duration too haphazard. Target setting is poor and students are not challenged to complete work to the deadlines set. Assignments are returned to students late on the national diploma course. There is limited assessment and monitoring of student progress within some lessons. On some part-time courses, prior attainment is used to create independent learning plans, but this is not consistently applied.

93. There is a wide range of provision both in the number of community-based venues and in the number of courses. However, the multiplicity of level 3 full-time courses is confusing for prospective students and results in some enrolling on inappropriate courses.

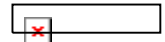
94. Advice and guidance for most prospective students are satisfactory. Students receive good personal support. There are effective support arrangements to meet the needs of individual students. For example, adults have access to alternative equipment if using a mouse is difficult.

Tutorials are not consistently used to support students. Some students' action plans do not have suitable timescales or are not followed-up. Tutors fail to use added value measures effectively to set targets for full-time students.

Leadership and management

95. Some aspects of the leadership and management of the area are unsatisfactory. There is no clear coherent structure for the full-time provision at level 3 to ensure a cross-college curriculum and effective resource planning for ICT courses. Communication between different managers, teams and teachers is sometimes poor. Good practices are not consistently shared. There are successful initiatives to widen participation. Recent strategies to improve attendance, retention and pass rates are showing early signs of success.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on many beauty courses

- good use of ILT for teaching and learning

- good use of enrichment activities to enhance learning.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on modern apprenticeships

- poor assessment practice at college

- some unsuitable beauty accommodation

- slow development of students' professional skills.

Scope of provision

96. The college offers full-time and part-time courses from foundation to advanced levels in hairdressing, beauty therapy and holistic therapies as well as foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship programmes at both Cheltenham and Gloucester. Full-time courses include NVQs, a make-up artists diploma, national diploma in beauty therapy and the preparation for employment certificate at level 1. At the time of the inspection, there were 346 full-time students, of whom 60% were aged 16 to 18. Most of the 284 part-time students, were adults. There were 66 foundation modern apprentices.

Achievement and standards

97. Pass rates on many beauty courses, the diploma in reflexology and the body massage certificate are high. For example, in 2003, the pass rate for the beauty therapy level 2 was 13% above the national average. However, retention rates are low in hairdressing, NVQ level 3 beauty therapy, make-up artists diploma and the fashion/photographic make-up diploma. At the time of the inspection, the in-year retention rates were significantly higher than in the previous year. Framework achievement by modern apprentices is very low. Some 58% of foundation modern apprentices who started in 2001 were retained and just 7% of them achieved the full framework. Of the 42 apprentices who started in 2002, 23 are still in learning and none of those who left achieved their framework qualifications.

98. The standard of students' practical and written work is generally satisfactory. Theatrical make-up students demonstrate good skills and produce imaginative work. Character make-ups and special effects are well planned and realistically created. Students can adapt their work for a range of different media such as television or photography. Most modern apprentices demonstrate satisfactory practical work. Many students, however, do not sufficiently develop their practical skills, client care skills or commercial practice. Few foundation modern apprentices progress to advanced modern apprenticeship programmes. Few full-time students who completed level 2 qualifications in 2003 progressed on to full-time level 3 courses.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
NVQ hairdressing 2 year	2	No. of starts	155	127	80
		% retention	40	33	32
		% pass rate	95	71	79
NVQ beauty therapy 2 year	2	No. of starts	19	30	73
		% retention	5	50	54
		% pass rate	100	87	95
Beauty specialists diploma	2	No. of starts	34	34	39
		% retention	79	82	85
		% pass rate	81	96	97
NVQ hairdressing 3 year	3	No. of starts	29	22	*
		% retention	55	59	*
		% pass rate	95	100	*
Diploma in reflexology	3	No. of starts	26	34	36
		% retention	77	82	86

		% pass rate	100	100	100
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Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

**fewer than 15 students enrolled*

Quality of education and training

99. Most teaching is satisfactory, but a small proportion is good. Teachers use ILT effectively. At the start of practical lessons, they use the interactive white boards to clearly state the lesson objectives and to record details of assessments and tasks assigned to students. Computer-generated presentations and videos of, for example, cutting techniques are used skilfully by teachers in theory classes. Schemes of work, lesson plans and course notes are of good quality. In the best lessons, lively teaching, well-planned group work and good use of targeted question and answer sessions effectively meet the different needs of all students. Students make good use of the Internet during key skills lessons and for research during private study.

100. Modern apprenticeship students do not always recognise the relevance of key skills to hairdressing practice. Students use a computerized till at reception, but there is insufficient linking of evidence to meet key skills requirements. In weaker lessons, many students make unproductive use of their time by working on each other or on their portfolios instead of clients. Their skills are not sufficiently well monitored and improved. Teachers do not always check that their students are developing good professional practice, or are ensuring their clients are correctly positioned and comfortable during treatments.

101. The hairdressing salons are attractive and well equipped. A few of the beauty salons, however, do not realistically prepare students for the beauty industry. They present a poor image. Those in Gloucester are poorly maintained and some are cluttered and lack storage space.

102. There is poor assessment practice at the college. Insufficient attention is paid to health and safety. Too many assessments and other activities are undertaken at the same time because of poor assessment planning. Students are frequently assessed on friends and family and often cover as many areas as possible rather than normal treatment packages. Modern apprentices who join their courses late undertake practical assessment of their basic hairdressing skills, but cannot complete their theory assessments until the second year. Teachers do not provide enough comments on students' assignments to help them improve their work.

103. Enrichment activities help students to understand the industry. All full-time students undertake work experience. During an annual industry week, speakers and demonstrators provide training sessions for students. Students regularly participate in college and national competitions, visit exhibitions and shows. They routinely provide remedial camouflage services at a local hospital and take part in fundraising events for local charities. The range of programmes is satisfactory. Work-based learners do not have opportunities to take additional qualifications.

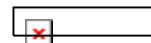
104. Support for students is good. Initial advice and guidance ensures students enrol on the right course. Students who are identified as needing additional learning support receive it. During tutorials, students get useful advice on how to improve their performance, but the targets they are set are not detailed enough. Students' attendance is carefully monitored and poor attendance quickly addressed.

Leadership and management

105. Leadership and management of the area are satisfactory. Teachers are observed teaching and receive detailed feedback on their performance. Unsatisfactory performance is monitored closely. Student retention rates have improved. Regular course teams meetings involve students, but action is not always taken to address issues that arise. Poor assessment practices and the low numbers of clients for students to work on are still problems. The self-assessment report identified more

strengths and fewer weaknesses than found during inspection. The performance of different groups of students is not sufficiently analysed.

Health, social care and public services



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

Contributory grade for childcare is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates for the national diploma in early years
- good teaching and learning
- wide range of enrichment activities to enhance learning.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on intermediate and advanced health and social care courses
- missed opportunities by teachers to develop their students' key skills
- low rate of student progression to HE from access courses.

Scope of provision

106. The college provides a wide range of full-time and part-time courses from foundation to advanced levels in health and social care, and early years care and education. At the time of the inspection, there were 319 full-time students, mostly aged 16 to 18. Some 84 adults were on access to HE courses. Most of the 1,800 part-time students were adults. These included 1,200 students attending short courses in first aid and 90 students on NVQ programmes in care and childcare. There were also 85 full-time students on public services courses.

Achievement and standards

107. Pass rates on the majority of courses are around the national averages, but a significant number are below. However, in 2003, the pass rate on the national diploma in early years was 31%

above the national average. Retention rates have improved on the majority of courses over the last three years and most are now at the national average. In 2003, however, the retention rate on the AVCE health and social care was 33% below the national average. It was very low on the access course, at 54%. At the time of the inspection, in-year retention rates were higher than in the previous year. Pass rates for key skills are very low. On some courses, no students are successful.

108. Students present their work well and to an appropriate standard. They demonstrate effective research skills using a variety of sources, including the Internet. Students at all levels competently present their findings using overhead transparencies, flipcharts and computer-based presentations. In 2003, only 21% of students on level 3 courses progressed to HE. A further 40% continued in FE or entered full-time employment. Students' attendance at key skills lessons is low.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health, social care and public services, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ foundation health and social care	1	No. of starts	25	**	18
		% retention	84	**	78
		% pass rate	48	**	79
First diploma in public services	2	No. of starts	16	22	25
		% retention	63	73	76
		% pass rate	70	88	68
Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) certificate	2	No. of starts	17	26	19
		% retention	100	65	84
		% pass rate	71	82	75
National diploma public services	3	No. of starts	21	20	27
		% retention	52	50	56
		% pass rate	64	80	93
National diploma early years	3	No. of starts	37	15	15
		% retention	59	40	87
		% pass rate	77	83	100
AVCE (double award) in health and social care	3	No. of starts	*	69	34
		% retention	*	35	26
		% pass rate	*	83	100
Access to HE: health studies 1 year	3	No. of starts	79	79	87
		% retention	72	62	54
		% pass rate	91	100	100

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

* course not running

** fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

109. Most teaching is good. Lessons are well planned. Teachers organize activities that maintain student interest by using their students' own life and work experiences. In the most effective lessons,

teachers use experiential activities to motivate students and help them understand theoretical concepts. For example, in a revision lesson students explored physical care by undertaking a role-play of a carer preparing a snack for a person with a stroke. Through discussion they were able to identify a range of potential physical aids for people with disabilities. Teachers make good use of ICT in lessons and to prepare their teaching materials. In one lesson, a digital projector was used to display images of body parts using the Internet and the college intranet. In another lesson, the teacher devised a quiz to test knowledge learned throughout the year. Having completed the quiz, students completed a personal revision timetable based on their identified weak areas. Visits by speakers and visits to early years, care and public services providers are a regular feature on many courses.

110. Key skills are not routinely identified in lesson plans or schemes of work and teachers miss opportunities to develop their students' key skills. In the less effective lessons, teachers do not explain clearly enough to students what they want them to do. Some students then produce work of a lower standard than they are capable of achieving.

111. Teachers are well qualified and have good subject knowledge. There are good learning resources. Most classrooms have interactive boards linked to computers and access to the internet. Some lessons taught in open plan areas are disrupted by noise from other groups. Students then have difficulty hearing the teacher and concentrating. In childcare, access to food preparation or water is limited. Students cannot always safely leave their work in classrooms.

112. The assessment of students' work is satisfactory. Internal verification is regularly carried out and assessors are given clear guidance on how they can improve their own practice and that of the student. Most teachers provide detailed written comments on students' assignments, but errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar are often not corrected. Initial assessments are used to produce individual learning plans for students. Teachers regularly review the plans with their students and update them. Student progress is carefully monitored.

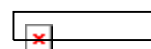
113. Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities. Early years students visit a college in Holland and students on public services courses undertake practical activities with the army cadet force. The college has developed a foundation degree pathway in early years in partnership with other local FE colleges and the University of Gloucestershire.

114. Support for students is effective. Prospective students are invited to a selection interview to help them understand the content and requirements of the course and to assess their suitability. Classroom support assistants help students who have learning difficulties to fully participate in lessons. Teachers compile a profile for each student which highlights the individual's strengths, weaknesses and any issues that may affect their ability to study.

Leadership and management

115. Leadership and management of the area are satisfactory. The self-assessment report identifies most of the key strengths and weaknesses, but judges pass rates as good and improving when the majority are satisfactory. Strategies to improve retention and pass rates are making an impact. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Course teams carefully consider the views of students. Staff development is strongly focused on teaching and learning, equal opportunities and health and safety. Appropriate action is taken to address student lateness and non-attendance. In 2003/04, high teacher absence and turnover disrupted the studies of some students.

Visual, performing arts and media



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

Contributory grade for media and music technology is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- some high pass rates

- very good media and music resources

- very effective use of ILT to stimulate learning.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on some national diploma and AS-level and GCE A-level courses

- missed opportunities by teachers to develop their students' key skills

- students insufficiently challenged to reach their full potential.

Scope of provision

116. The college offers a broad range of courses in visual, performing arts and media. Courses at levels 1 and 2 range from the first diploma in design to embroidery, patchwork quilting and ceramics. Level 3 courses include national diplomas in graphics, design crafts, media production and music technology. There is also a foundation diploma in art and design and several AS-level and GCE A-level courses including media, art, photography and film studies. Courses are offered at Gloucester and Cheltenham and in community-based venues. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,109 students. Just over half were aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

117. Pass rates are high on the majority of courses, at national averages on national diplomas in music technology and design, but consistently below the national average on AS-level fine arts. Retention rates are low on the national diplomas in media production and music technology, but at the time of the inspection, the in-year retention rates showed an improvement from the previous year. There are also poor retention rates on AS-level and GCE A-level courses. Relative to their GCSE scores on enrolment, students on GCE A-level courses underachieve. Pass rates for key skills are low.

118. The standards of students' work are high on the first diploma in design and the national diploma in media production. Media production students use new technologies competently. Students' work on the national diploma in performing arts is good. In one lesson, students used improvisation to develop a performance to tour primary schools. The students worked well as an ensemble and their

performances featured some exciting characterisations and physical interpretations. Most students participate well in discussions. However, on some courses, students do not include sufficient design development in their sketchbooks and their analysis of ideas is too superficial.

A sample of retention and pass rates in visual, performing arts and media, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
First diploma in design	2	No. of starts	33	24	**
		% retention	73	75	**
		% pass rate	92	100	**
National diploma in music technology	3	No. of starts	*	21	56
		% retention	*	43	41
		% pass rate	*	89	83
National diploma in design	3	No. of starts	45	40	34
		% retention	82	78	65
		% pass rate	86	90	91
National diploma in performing arts	3	No. of starts	35	16	22
		% retention	66	88	91
		% pass rate	91	100	95
AS-level art studies/fine arts	3	No. of starts	18	50	38
		% retention	94	68	71
		% pass rate	35	71	52
National diploma in media production	3	No. of starts	22	21	21
		% retention	64	52	38
		% pass rate	71	91	100
Diploma in foundation art and design	3	No. of starts	23	18	**
		% retention	74	100	**
		% pass rate	100	100	**

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

* course not running

** fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

119. The majority of teaching is good and some is very good. Lessons are well planned and schemes of work imaginative. Teachers make very good use of ILT to help students to learn. In a first diploma lesson, students used the interactive whiteboard during a discussion with their teacher to plan how to undertake their final major projects. Students on the national diploma in media production created a presentation that identified how technical conventions in media influence films such as the *Sixth Sense*. By using multimedia, they were able to critically evaluate the use of narrative, lighting and colour. In the same lesson, the students developed their key skills by compiling a list of media definitions. Practising professionals help students to learn by using their knowledge of industrial contexts to explain and illustrate difficult concepts. Revision sessions are often well prepared, with effective questioning to check students' understanding.

120. Poor classroom management in the performing arts inhibits learning. Students are allowed to make too much noise and disrupt each other. In some visual arts lessons, teachers give information without sufficiently checking that students understand. Few teachers use visual aids or demonstrations or provide handouts for students to refer to. During peer group assessments, teachers do not ensure that all students are fully engaged. On some courses, teachers do not identify key skills in lesson plans or schemes of work and miss opportunities to develop their students' key skills.

121. Most teachers are well qualified and many have recent industrial experience. At the centre for vocational arts, the media and music technology facilities are of industry standard and include extensive computer hardware and accompanying software. The library facilities within the centre include a wide range of books and specialist magazines for all areas of visual, performing arts and media. The temporary performing arts rehearsal rooms are inappropriate for the purpose.

122. Assessment practice is good. Students' attendance is closely monitored and those who are frequently absent are referred to specialist support staff. Teachers give regular and constructive feedback to students on their work to help them learn. The progress of each student is carefully monitored. Internal verification is thorough and the college's procedures are carefully followed.

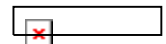
123. The college offers a wide range of vocational and general education courses from foundation to advanced levels. These meet the needs of adults and students aged 16 to 18. Students can progress from level 3 courses to HE courses in art, design, media and performing arts. Students in media have very good opportunities to work on live projects. For example, in media production, students have filmed matches at Gloucester rugby club and produced a documentary. Students can take part in a wide enrichment programme of visits to galleries and television studios. Recruitment to some courses is low and the range of FE courses has been reduced, particularly within the visual arts. Some full-time students do not have the opportunity to acquire key skills qualifications.

124. Student guidance and support are satisfactory. Until recently, prospective students have not received appropriate information about the choice of specialised pathways within national diploma courses. Pre-entry guidance is now given by course tutors. Students feel well supported by their teachers. However, teachers do not set students sufficiently demanding targets to encourage them to achieve their potential. A low proportion of the students who are identified as needing additional learning support take it up.

Leadership and management

125. Leadership and management of the area are satisfactory. Regular curriculum and course meetings are held, and actions minuted. The three curriculum managers work well as a team. The self-assessment report correctly identified many of the area's strengths and weaknesses, although the action plan lacks rigour. There is little promotion or monitoring of equality of opportunity issues.

Psychology, sociology and law



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

Strengths

- high pass rates in GCE A-level law

- much good teaching and learning

- good subject support for full-time students.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates in AS-level and GCSE psychology in 2003
- missed opportunities by teachers to develop their students' key skills
- inconsistent application of the quality improvement arrangements.

Scope of provision

126. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in psychology, sociology and law. Psychology, sociology and law are offered at AS level and GCE A level. GCSE psychology and an institute of legal executives' course are offered in the evening. GCE provision is offered at both Gloucester and Cheltenham, but all evening classes take place at Cheltenham. At the time of the inspection, there were 700 students, of whom approximately half were studying full time. Over 80% of full-time students were aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

127. Pass rates and the proportion of high grades are high for GCE A-level law, but are at national averages for GCE A-level sociology and psychology. However, pass rates for GCSE and AS-level psychology were well below national averages in 2002/03. Retention rates in all three subjects are at or below national averages. At the time of the inspection, in-year retention rates had generally improved, although the rate for the GCE A-level sociology course was low. Few students who enrol on key skills courses complete them successfully.

128. Students are generally punctual and settle quickly to the tasks set by the teacher. During the inspection, on full-time courses, most were working on revision exercises and attainment was good. The attendance rate, at lessons inspected, was lower than the national average, at 75%. In-year retention rates are poor in AS-level psychology.

A sample of retention and pass rates in psychology, sociology and law, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	53	46	61
		% retention	75	54	56
		% pass rate	55	80	65
AS-level law	3	No. of starts	17	50	69
		% retention	59	66	77
		% pass rate	80	73	77

AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	60	87	82
		% retention	70	60	73
		% pass rate	81	77	80
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	113	151	206
		% retention	69	58	74
		% pass rate	69	70	57
GCE A-level sociology**	3	No. of starts	*	49	43
		% retention	*	78	81
		% pass rate	*	87	91
GCE A-level psychology**	3	No. of starts	*	44	69
		% retention	*	91	86
		% pass rate	*	85	85

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

*course not running

**Retention rates for GCE A level 2002 and 2003 are one-year, not two-year rates

Quality of education and training

129. The majority of teaching is good and none is unsatisfactory. The use of video and computer-generated presentations helps teachers to maintain student interest. Most teachers use student-centred teaching techniques effectively. Typically, students are divided into small groups to work on different revision tasks and then to feedback to the whole group. For example, in a law lesson, students used laminated flash cards to revise key points of case law. In a psychology lesson, each student selected their own tasks from an extensive intranet site. They were able to attempt sample examination questions and send their answers by e-mail to the teacher, who marked and returned their work within minutes. Teachers prepare their students well for their examinations. They carefully explain how to interpret questions and plan answers to gain maximum marks. In GCSE psychology lessons, teachers effectively develop their students' confidence and skills.

130. In the less successful lessons, teachers do not use student-centred teaching methods effectively. For example, some students did not complete their set task by the beginning of the feedback session or did not prepare their work in large enough print for the whole group to read. Not all students could hear the feedback or complete their note-taking in the time available. Schemes of work and lesson plans do not identify the opportunities for teachers to develop their students' key skills.

131. Resources are generally good. Classrooms are well equipped. Most have interactive boards which teachers use to summarise topics covered at earlier stages of the lesson and to print off notes for students with learning difficulties. In all subject areas, students can use sets of resource and revision packs. Many teachers are new and do not yet have teaching qualifications. However, recently appointed part-time psychology and law teachers receive good support to help them improve their teaching techniques.

132. Assessment practice is generally good. Teachers regularly set students homework and return it promptly. Some full-time sociology students receive very constructive comments to help them improve their work, but in other subjects the feedback is sometimes less useful. The targets set for full-time students at their termly subject reviews are often too vague, particularly for those aiming for high grades. Teachers do not always effectively assess and monitor the progress of students who study on evening classes.

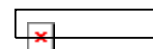
133. There is little promotion of key skills. All students on GCE A-level courses are expected to gain key skill, or equivalent qualifications, at level 2 in number, communications and IT. In many cases, if they do not already have the qualifications on enrolment, they resit GCSE qualifications in mathematics and English language. Students can choose whether to take a key skills subject at level 3, but few do so. There is an appropriate range of enrichment activities. For example, sociology students who attend regularly and meet deadlines and targets can decide on the venue for day trips.

134. Students who attend day-time classes receive good subject support. They can meet their teachers outside of their lessons and attend additional revision sessions. In psychology, some students can access the intranet and a chat room from home and contact their teacher by e-mail for help. However, there is low take-up of additional learning support. Students who attend evening classes get little guidance at enrolment and do not take an initial assessment to identify if they need additional learning support.

Leadership and management

135. Leadership and management of the area are satisfactory. The subjects are part of the sixth form centre and share common policies and procedures. However, strategies to improve retention and pass rates are inconsistently applied. There is not enough use of management information. For example, data on the take-up and effectiveness of additional learning support are not available by subject. Staff are well managed. Despite a high turn-over of teachers in psychology and law there has been little disruption to learning. Teaching has improved where teachers share good practice and support each other.

Literacy and numeracy and English for speakers of other languages



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

Contributory grade for literacy and numeracy is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- strong curriculum management in literacy and numeracy

- effective assessment processes

- very good teaching

- excellent use of individual learning plans to inform student progress

- learning that challenges and motivates students

- good progress by students in developing their literacy, numeracy and language skills.

Weaknesses

- poor take up of additional learning support.

Scope of provision

136. The college offers literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses at Gloucester and Cheltenham, in the workplace and at community-based venues. The community-based provision is contracted by the LEA and was not inspected. The college's learning links centres provide additional learning support for students on vocational courses in literacy, language and numeracy. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,460 students studying on literacy and numeracy courses and 324 students on ESOL courses. Most were aged 19 or over. Nearly 800 full-time and 640 part-time students on general education and vocational courses were receiving learning support to help them achieve their primary learning goal, either during lessons, in directed study sessions or through one-to-one support.

Achievement and standards

137. The complexity of the achievement data and recent changes in external accreditation mean that it is not possible to publish a table of retention and pass rates for this area. Achievement and progression is, however, good. Students' learning is recorded in their individual learning plans matched to the national standards for basic skills and ESOL. For most students, the achievement of their personal and learning skills is good, relative to their prior attainment and potential. The majority of students who receive help with literacy and numeracy are not working towards a literacy or numeracy qualification. Instead, their aim is to improve their literacy and/or numeracy skills so that they can succeed on their main course of study. Many of these students make good progress. However, the take up of the support is low and the college does not measure the impact of literacy and numeracy support on pass and retention rates.

138. Many students improve their accuracy and expand both their vocabulary and understanding of grammar. They learn to work well in teams and across cultures, age and gender. The standard of students' work in lessons and in portfolios is good. In most lessons, students respond well to questioning. They are eager to answer questions and do not fear making mistakes. They show interest and take pride in their work, and are eager to do homework.

Quality of education and training

139. Most teaching is good and some is very good. Teachers use the goals clearly identified in individual learning plans, to plan learning and monitor student progress and achievement. Often, they try to include both individual and group work. In a well-planned numeracy lesson, the teacher had prepared number patterns on the board. The students first worked individually to find the next three numbers in the sequence. The teacher checked that each student could complete the process and then asked all the class to identify odd and even numbers within the patterns. By the end of the lesson, all the students participated confidently. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods to motivate and stimulate students and develop their skills. In an IT lesson, literacy, numeracy and ESOL students all worked well together. This helped the ESOL students to develop their aural skills and to confidently answer technical questions. In another lesson, an explanation of the Dewey decimal system was followed by a visit to the library where students were asked to find books of their choice. Teachers cope well when students have different learning needs and they support

independent learning effectively. In a numeracy lesson on percentages, the teacher had prepared handouts with examples from entry level to level 3. Some aspects were taught to the whole group, before the students attempted questions which matched their ability.

140. There is over-reliance on worksheets for ESOL students. Some activities are not sufficiently demanding for all students, who soon become bored. In a few lessons, the use of group activities is not appropriate as students are reluctant to participate and instead remain passive.

141. Most teachers are appropriately qualified and have attended training for the new literacy and numeracy core curriculum. There are good paper-based learning materials. IT equipment is readily available for most students, but there is insufficient specialist IT resources for students with learning difficulties. The accommodation at Gloucester is poor.

142. All students complete personal interviews and initial assessments as part of the development of their individual learning plans. They are set realistic, but challenging targets. Progress against the plans is regularly reviewed and recorded. The quality of the individual learning plans is monitored carefully. Students' work is carefully marked with constructive comments on how it can be improved.

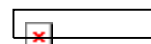
143. There is a wide range of literacy and numeracy courses, but a narrow range of ESOL courses. Students have the opportunity to join classes at six times during the year. Training is provided for clients of the national probation service and in the workplace for employees of the local councils.

144. Support for students is good. Prospective students receive good initial advice and guidance. The college takes care to ensure students are placed on appropriate courses. The initial assessment of individual learning needs is effective. Support for students with dyslexia is good. Additional learning support is readily available, but take up of the support is poor across the college.

Leadership and management

145. Leadership and management of the area are good. There is a well-considered strategy and action plan to develop the provision. Key skills, basic skills, ESOL and learning support are now managed within one centre. Teachers and managers are committed to the sharing of good practice and this is leading to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Staff development is well managed. Course teams meet regularly and communications between staff are good.

Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities



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

Strengths

- good learning in practical subjects

- effective external links

- good range of enrichment activities.

Weaknesses

- poor use of initial assessment

- limited range of teaching techniques in many lessons

- student progress limited by lack of differentiation in teaching

- unsatisfactory curriculum management.

Scope of provision

146. The college's provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities includes life skills, basic literacy and numeracy skills and pre-vocational courses. The college also provides community-based adult education courses funded by the LEA. These courses were not inspected. Courses are run in Gloucester and Cheltenham, at a centre in the Forest of Dean in collaboration with a local charity and at a local craft and garden centre. At the time of the inspection, there were 289 full-time and 34 part-time students. The majority of full-time students and most part-time students were aged 19 or over.

Achievement and standards

147. It is not possible to publish a table of pass and retention rates for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities because most qualification aims were changed in 2001. However, the proportion of students who achieved the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) 'Towards Independence' award was lower than national averages in 2002 and 2003.

148. Students demonstrate good skills and achieve well in practical lessons. They enjoy making practical items. Students' art work shows individuality and imagination. In theory lessons, however, many students make little progress. Students gain in confidence through work experience, but progression to courses outside the area is low.

Quality of education and training

149. Much teaching is poorly planned with insufficient reference to the intended learning outcomes for individual students. Instead, many lesson plans concentrate on the activity which will take place. Teachers do not make enough use of individual learning plans to identify precise and measurable learning targets for students or how a student will learn. Teachers often fail to plan the work of learning support staff effectively. Some lesson activities are inappropriate. For example, in a number of lessons, students are passive and watch the teacher or spend time copying out words, sometimes misspelling them and in some instances without being able to read them. Some teachers miss opportunities to vary activities in the lesson for small group, pair or individual work and plan work only for the whole group. They then fail to engage the interest of students and leave them unchallenged. In these lessons, some students find the whole group task too easy, whilst others are given too much help to complete the task by learning support staff. Too often, students then wait for others to finish, with nothing to do.

150. Teaching is often good in practical lessons. These lessons are well planned and successfully extend students' learning by helping them to develop new skills. For example, in cookery lessons, students use kitchen equipment confidently and are able to evaluate the quality of their work. In a horticulture lesson, they successfully transplanted and arranged a hanging basket and could name and identify plants. Students run a successful catering outlet at Cheltenham.

151. Resources are satisfactory, but not always effectively deployed. Accommodation at Cheltenham is modern and well decorated. However, students are easily distracted by noise in the open plan teaching areas when they are being taught in groups. At Gloucester, the accommodation is satisfactory. Some practical subjects are taught in workshops provided especially for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities rather than in workshops used by other students. These workshops are not always of industry standard. There are not enough specialist IT resources in some areas. Teachers are appropriately qualified, but some have difficulty supporting students with particular needs such as those with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

152. Initial assessment is not used effectively to plan learning. Students are assessed to identify their literacy and numeracy support needs. However, little use is made of the skills for life (literacy and numeracy) core curriculum to identify individual students' levels of performance and to plan their learning. For example, a literacy lesson included students whose skills, identified through screening, varied from below entry 1 to entry level 3. The work of the class was not differentiated and each student completed the same worksheet each week. Some individual learning plans include targets which help students know how to make progress, but in many cases, the targets are too general.

153. The college has good links with external partners, work experience providers and local schools. A wide range of enrichment activities including residential study, both in England and overseas, helps students to increase their self-confidence and develop their team working skills. Students can progress to foundation level courses in some curriculum areas within the college.

154. Student support is satisfactory. Additional learning support is readily available for those students who need it. The personal care and pastoral support provided by all staff are of a high standard.

Leadership and management

155. Leadership and management of the area are unsatisfactory. The self-assessment report acknowledged the underdeveloped use of individual learning plans, but underestimated its impact on learning. The report did not identify weaknesses in teaching. Course teams meet regularly, but spend too much time discussing operational issues rather than how to improve the quality of teaching and learning. There is little contact or sharing of good practice between staff in the area and those teaching literacy and numeracy elsewhere in the college. Learning support staff are not used effectively. Teachers do not share enough information about what students do in individual lessons. Links with other areas of the college are underdeveloped.

Part D: College data

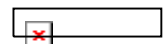
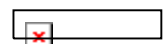


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2002/03

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	23	55



2	33	17
3	29	10
4/5	0	0
Other	15	18
Total	100	100

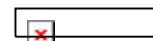
Source: provided by the college in 2004

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2002/03

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	844	1,010	6
Land-based provision	0	1	0
Construction	301	261	2
Engineering, technology and manufacture	150	98	1
Business administration, management and professional	273	2,070	8
Information and communication technology	933	5,382	20
Retailing, customer service and transportation	1	71	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	411	2,070	8
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	174	349	2
Health, social care and public services	377	2,240	8
Visual and performing arts and media	593	3,034	12
Humanities	1,331	629	6
English, languages and communication	888	3,053	13
Foundation programmes	1,298	3,241	14
Total	7,574	23,509	100

Source: provided by the college in 2004

Table 3: Retention and achievement



Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
1	Starters excluding transfers	1,023	872	885	2,652	3,019	3,333
	Retention rate %	77	77	75	67	63	73
	National average %	75	76	*	69	70	*
	Pass rate %	65	76	79	58	74	78
	National average %	69	71	*	68	71	*
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,539	1,380	1,273	2,715	2,761	2,107
	Retention rate %	67	60	63	76	62	61
	National average %	70	72	*	68	68	*
	Pass rate %	71	83	72	62	68	72
	National average %	69	71	*	68	72	*
3	Starters excluding transfers	2,431	2,077	1,934	2,038	2,033	1,760
	Retention rate %	66	59	70	70	67	72
	National average %	71	77	*	68	70	*
	Pass rate %	65	76	67	63	79	79
	National average %	77	79	*	69	72	*
4	Starters excluding transfers	**	**	**	150	124	111
	Retention rate %	**	**	**	86	62	93
	National average %	73	71	*	67	67	*
	Pass rate %	**	**	**	43	47	56
	National average %	54	53	*	55	56	*

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).

Sources of information:

1. National averages: Benchmarking Data 2000 to 2002: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2003.

2. College rates for 1999/2000 to 2001/02: College ISR.

** data unavailable*

*** fewer than 15 students enrolled*

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)	75	21	4	84
Level 2 (intermediate)	60	33	7	58
Level 1 (foundation)	68	24	8	25
Other sessions	55	34	11	47
Totals	66	28	6	214

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