



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Cambridge Regional College

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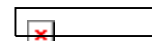
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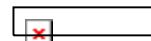
Basic information about the college



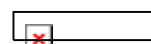
Name of college:	Cambridge Regional College
Type of college:	General Further Education College
Principal:	Richard Dearing
Address of college:	Science Park Campus Kings Hedges Road Cambridge CB4 2QT
Telephone number:	01223 418200
Fax number:	01233 426425
Chair of governors:	Jafar Mirza

Unique reference number: 130610
Name of reporting inspector: Colin Evans HMI
Dates of inspection: 20-24 January 2003

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



Cambridge Regional College is a large general further education (FE) college serving the town of Cambridge and the surrounding sub region. It operates from two main campuses: Kings Hedges, which caters for 80% of the learners and is adjacent to the Cambridge science park, on the northern outskirts of Cambridge; and the Cambridge city campus, close to the town centre and the river. Courses are also provided at 25 village centres and community colleges, on employers' premises and through open and distance learning. The college enrolled 2,771 full-time and 18,662 part-time learners in 2001/02. In that year, 490 modern apprentices were enrolled. Some 30% of the part-time learners are taught by partners of the college through collaborative arrangements. About 80% of the full-time learners and 6% of the part-time learners are aged 16 to 18. Most learners aged 16 to 18 study at levels 2 and 3. About one quarter of adults study at level 1. About 8% of the learners are from minority ethnic groups; this compares with a figure of 3.4% for the minority ethnic population in the area as a whole. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funding allocation for 2002/03 is £13,394,000. The college is rated by the Cambridgeshire LSC as being strong financially.

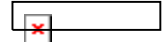
A wide range of courses is provided. There is provision in all 14 of the LSC's areas of learning. Courses are available from entry level to degree level. Health and early years provision and, in conjunction with two other colleges, construction, are centres of vocational excellence. The college is a Learndirect centre and the recipient college of the University for industry (Ufi) hub for Cambridgeshire. It provides an increasing amount of higher education (HE). In addition to the college, there are two sixth form colleges, an agriculture and horticulture campus of another college, three state schools with sixth forms, and five independent schools in the immediate Cambridge area, all catering for pupils aged 16 to 18. Fifteen 11 to 16 schools are situated in the immediate area.

The Cambridge economy is prosperous and high performing. The city is a world leader in HE, research and the knowledge-based industries. Less accessible rural areas are hampered by the decline of the land-based industries and by barriers posed by relative isolation and poor transport. Unemployment, overall, is low, at approximately 2%. At age 16, educational achievement is above the England average, with 53% achieving five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSEs) at grades A* to C in 2001. Participation in learning by 16 and 17 year olds, at 77%, is close to the national average. There are wide differences in achievement and participation between local areas in the region. A quarter of people of working age do not have qualifications at level 1 and one in seven has no qualifications at all.

The college's mission is to increase and widen participation and promote workforce development. It has three strategic aims: to improve the quality of the learning experience and achievements, to increase and widen learner participation and skills development, and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of programmes and services. There are three directorates: for learning and achievement, progression and development, and finance and resources, and five centres of learning: for the arts, foundation and community education, learning quality and information and communications technology (ICT), science, technology and work-related learning, and for leisure,

business and care. Within each centre, academies are responsible for each curriculum area.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged teaching and learning and learners' achievements to be good in eight curriculum areas and satisfactory in six. The college's key strengths and weaknesses and the areas that should be improved are listed below:

Key strengths

- responsiveness to the needs of the community
- the inclusive nature of the college
- teaching and learning in arts, humanities and literacy and numeracy
- the quality of the accommodation and learning resources
- good support for learners
- strong financial position
- good governance
- robust quality assurance.

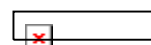
What should be improved

- work-based learning provision

- assessment arrangements on many National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) courses
- teaching and learning in some areas of provision
- teaching and the achievement of key skills
- retention rates on some courses
- accuracy and recording of retention rates and pass rates on some courses
- use of individual learning plans in some areas
- analysis and use of value added information.

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 learners 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. Pass rates are high on many courses. Retention rates are low on General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) subjects. Science teaching is good. Weaker learners receive insufficient support. There is a wide range of courses at levels 2 and 3. Accommodation and resources are good. Insufficient use is made of value added data.
Construction	Satisfactory. Work-based learning is unsatisfactory. Retention and

	pass rates are high on some courses, but low on some NVQ courses. Practical work in heating and ventilation is of a good standard. Much of the teaching of theory is uninspiring. Learners receive good support. There is unsatisfactory assessment practice on NVQ programmes, completion rates for the full apprenticeship framework are low.
Engineering	Satisfactory. Work-based learning is unsatisfactory. Retention rates are high on City and Guilds motor vehicle courses. Pass and retention rates are low on foundation modern apprenticeships. In most lessons, there is a good balance of activity. Learners' understanding is not always checked. Practical areas are well equipped.
Business, administration, management and professional	Satisfactory. Retention rates were high in 2002. Pass rates are generally close to sector averages. Full-time learners receive effective initial assessment and good tutorial support. The attendance rate of learners aged 16 to 18 is low. Key skills teaching is unsatisfactory. Insufficient use is made of work-based assessment on NVQ courses.
Information and communications technology	Good. Pass and retention rates have improved and were high in 2002. Community-based provision is strong. Full-time learners benefit from good enrichment opportunities. Teaching is responsive to individual need. The use of the computer suite for group teaching is inappropriate. Individual learning plans are not fully utilised.
Hospitality and catering	Satisfactory. Pass rates are high on many courses. They were low on reception and Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) courses in 2002. Some of the learners' practical skills are underdeveloped. Teaching strategies lack variety. Resources are good for food preparation and service. There is a wide range of provision. Key skills are poorly taught. Assessment on NVQ courses is well organised.
Sport, leisure and tourism	Good. Retention and pass rates are high. Attendance and pass rates on key skills programmes are low. Teaching effectively relates theory to practice. Some learners are not challenged sufficiently in some lessons. Tutorial support is strong. Resources are good.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Satisfactory. Work-based learning is unsatisfactory. Retention and pass rates are high on part-time courses. They are low on some NVQ courses. Practical teaching is good on some courses. Too much teaching is uninspiring. Industry links are wide ranging. The client base is too small. Completion rates for the apprenticeship framework are low. Learners receive good support.
Health, social and child care	Good. Work-based learning is satisfactory. Pass rates were very high in 2002. Practical teaching is good and effective use is made of information technology (IT) in the teaching. Punctuality is unsatisfactory. The completion rate for apprenticeship frameworks is low. Work placement opportunities are good. Teachers provide good support for learners.
Visual and performing arts	Good. Pass rates have improved and were high in 2002. Retention rates are low on some courses. Much of the teaching is good. Attendance is low on some courses. Resources are good in art and music. There is a good enrichment programme. Some accommodation is unsatisfactory.
Humanities	Good. Pass rates are high on many courses. Retention rates are low on most of the GCE AS courses. Much of the teaching is good. Teachers' subject expertise and web-based learning materials enhance the teaching. The management of learners' progress is under-developed. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are not marked rigorously enough.

English, and modern foreign languages	Good. Pass rates are high on most English courses. They are low on some modern foreign language courses. Attendance in GCSE English classes is low. Much of the teaching is good. There are innovative assignments in English. On modern foreign languages courses, learners use the target language confidently. Assessment procedures are strong.
Literacy and numeracy	Good. The provision is well managed. There is a wide range of provision. Much of the teaching and learning is good. Individual target setting is unsatisfactory in study support lessons. Teaching materials and accommodation are unsatisfactory in some off-site provision.
English for speakers of other languages	Good. There are high pass and retention rates. Teaching is well matched to individual need. The provision is well managed and responsive to local need. Recording of learners' progress is inconsistent and there is a narrow range of learning resources.

How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are good. The college is well governed and has an effective senior management team. The mission is well understood by staff and well matched to community needs. Equality of opportunity is promoted and the implementation of policies evaluated. Overall retention and pass rates are above national averages and improving. The broad range of inclusive provision is responsive to local and other needs. The college has produced a candid and largely accurate self-assessment report and has robust quality assurance procedures. The management of work-based learning and of key skills is unsatisfactory. There are a few areas where quality assurance procedures have been applied without sufficient rigour and some retention and pass rate data are unreliable. Lesson observations are used to inform the appraisal process, but not all staff were appraised in 2001/02. Staff development is well focused. Financial management is good and the college provides good value for money.

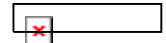
To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college's response to education and social inclusion is good. Equality of opportunity is promoted and policies evaluated. The college has been proactive in providing timely staff development activities to inform staff of the implications of new legislation. The provision is responsive to local community and business needs and offers a broad and responsive range of programmes. There are good partnerships and strong links with the minority ethnic forum, which are used to inform the planning of provision. The college is responsive to individual learner's needs and provides a wide range of support services to enable learners to complete their study.

How well are learners and trainees guided and supported?

progress of full-time learners is reviewed regularly. In a few cases, and particularly in work-based learning, learning plans are not regularly updated and reviews lack sufficient rigour. No use is made of value added analysis. Pastoral support is provided through group tutorials. Teachers need further training to be able to deliver the new pastoral programme effectively. Learners receive good careers advice and guidance. Staff provide good informal support and learners also benefit from a wide range of support services. Learning, personal and financial support is provided both in lessons and in the study skills centre.

Learners' views of the college



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

What learners like about the college

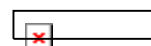
- good facilities, including computing and the library
- supportive, accessible and friendly staff and the friendly atmosphere
- good subject support
- being treated as adults: responsibility and freedom to choose
- being treated fairly and equally
- the variety of courses.

What they feel could be improved

- the food, and litter in canteen
- common room facilities

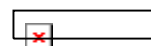
- parking and safety in the grounds
- transport to and from the college and bus drivers using mobiles
- key skills tuition.

Other information

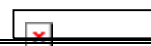


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The 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 local LSC. The local LSC is responsible for ensuring that, where inspectors have judged there to be unsatisfactory or poor provision in a curriculum area or in leadership and management, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) receives the college's post-inspection action plan within the stipulated two months.

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

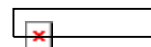


Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	62	29	9
19+ and WBL*	68	29	3
Learning 16-18	56	38	6
19+ and WBL*	68	30	2

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

**work-based learning*

Achievement and standards



1. The college's performance has been compared, in this section, in Table 3 at the end of the report, and in the individual curriculum sections in Part C, with that of other colleges of a similar type; that is general FE colleges and tertiary colleges.

2. The attendance rate in lessons during the inspection was 73%, compared with an average of 76% in similar colleges inspected in 2001/02. Attendance was highest in engineering at 87% and hospitality at 85%, and lowest in English for speakers of other languages at 54% and in sports, leisure and tourism at 64%. The separate reports on areas of learning in Part C provide more detail about achievements and standards for particular courses.

3. Learners of all ages and at all levels of course are working at an appropriate level and making satisfactory progress. Attainment is good in lessons where practical activity and the development of theory are combined; learners are highly motivated and produce written and practical work of a high standard. Adult learners often attain good standards of work in lessons. This is especially so on courses in literacy and numeracy and on ESOL courses, where learners achieve levels of knowledge and skill that are often above their target levels. Learners work in an environment where there is a satisfactory concern for health and safety.

4. Data provided by the college show that, for 2001/02, retention rates on the three key skills of application of number, communication and IT were high. They were in the top quartile at all levels for each key skill. Pass rates, however, for each of the key skills and at levels 1 to 3 were very low; all equal to or below 20%.

16 to 18 year olds

5. Retention rates on courses at levels 1 and 2 were above the median for similar colleges in both 2000 and 2001. At level 3, they deteriorated between 2000 and 2001, from above the median to the 25th percentile. College data for 2002 show that retention rates have improved at all three levels. In that year, retention rates were high; at or above the 75th percentile, based on similar college data for 2001.

6. College retention and pass rate data are unreliable on many courses leading to NVQs. On courses leading to the nine main qualifications, where data are reliable, and where enrolments were over 100, the retention rates in 2002 were at or above the national average for similar colleges on courses leading to all qualifications except GCE AS. On GCE A2 courses, and on courses leading to other long qualifications at level 3 they were high; at or above 90%.

7. Pass rates at levels 1 and 3 improved between 2000 and 2001 and were above the median in 2001 at both levels. At level 2, they were in the bottom quartile in both 2000 and 2001. College data for 2002 indicate that pass rates at levels 1 and 3 remained above the median and at level 2 they improved markedly to the top quartile, based on data for similar colleges for 2001.

8. Pass rates on courses leading to the major qualifications in 2002 were generally at or above national averages. The pass rate in 2002 on GCE A2 courses was high at 97%. On courses leading to other long qualifications at levels 1 and 3, pass rates have been consistently high over the four-year period to 2002. In 2002, only on one set of courses, those leading to AVCE qualifications, was the pass rate low, at 58%. The percentage of learners originally enrolled who achieve the qualification is high on GCE A2 courses (91%), on courses leading to other long qualifications at level 3 (71%) and level 1 (65%), and on General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) precursor qualifications at level 2 (61%). Higher grade (A* to C) pass rates in GCSE mathematics have been low in two of the last three years. In GCSE English, this pass rate had been low in the three years to

2001, but it improved to well above the national average in 2002.

9. Key skills pass and retention rates are low. In 2001, retention rates were below the median, and pass rates were in the bottom quartile. College data for 2002 indicate that retention rates have improved markedly to above 90%, but pass rates remain low.

10. The completion rate for the full modern apprenticeship framework at foundation and advanced levels is low. For the four curriculum areas where work-based learning was inspected, the proportion of trainees who started their training in 1998 and 1999 who have completed an advanced modern apprenticeship framework is 35% and 24 %, respectively. For foundation modern apprenticeships, for the same two years, it was 41% and 7%. The pass rate of NVQs through work-based learning is higher, typically around 50%.

Adult learners

11. Retention rates at level 1 were above the median in both 2000 and 2001. At levels 2 and 3, retention rates deteriorated from above the median to below it. College data for 2002 show that there has been improvement at all three levels; retention rates were at the 75th percentile at level 1 and above the median at levels 2 and 3, based on similar college data for 2001.

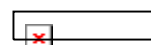
12. Retention rates on courses leading to the nine major qualifications where enrolments were above 100 have remained steady in the three years to 2002 and are at the national averages for similar colleges. Only on courses leading to other long level 1 courses, are they significantly above national averages, and on one, GCE AS, they are significantly below.

13. Pass rates at level 1 have improved in the three years to 2001, and in 2001 were in the top quartile. At level 2, pass rates have been at or above the median in the three years to 2001. At level 3, pass rates have fluctuated: at the 75th percentile in 1999, below the median in 2000, and above the median in 2001. College data for 2002 indicate that there has been significant improvement at all three levels, with pass rates high in that year, and in the top quartile of similar colleges in 2001.

14. In 2002, pass rates were mostly high and had improved significantly on those in 2001. For all these qualifications except one, pass rates were well above the average for similar colleges. Pass rates on GCE AS courses, GCE A2 courses (91%), and other long qualifications at levels 1 and 3 were all above 80%. Only on access to HE courses was the pass rate well below the average for similar colleges. The higher grade pass rates (A* to C) in GCE AS and A2 courses at 63% and 70%, respectively, were especially high. The GCSE A* to C pass rate is also consistently high. Adult learners do well on GCSE mathematics and English language courses and consistently achieve A* to C pass rates that are well above the average for similar colleges.

15. Key skills retention rates were above the median in 2001, pass rates were below the median. College data for 2002 indicate that retention rates have fallen and pass rates continue to be low. Attendance is often low in key skills lessons.

Quality of education and training



16. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 294 lessons. The grade profiles for both teaching and learning in the college were very like those for comparable colleges that were inspected in 2001/02. Similar proportions of teaching (63%) and learning (61%) were judged to be good or better. A slightly lower proportion of teaching, (7% compared with 9%) and learning (8% compared with 11%) in the college was judged to be less than satisfactory than was the case in similar colleges in 2001/02. However, less teaching (22%) and learning (26%) were judged to be very good or excellent than was the case in similar colleges in 2001/02 (28% and 31%), respectively.

17. The quality of the teaching was slightly better at entry level and where learners from different levels of course were taught together than at levels 1, 2 or 3. At entry level, and for the mixed level, there was no unsatisfactory teaching and 74% of the lessons were judged good or better. Teaching and, more so, learning were better for adults than for learners aged 16 to 18. Teaching and learning were at their best when lessons combined a mixture of practical activity and theory development. For example, in one lesson in basic literacy, role play, discussion, and individual work were combined well to enable learners to develop written arguments. The teacher managed the different activities skilfully, the session was lively, and all learners produced work of a high standard. In another lesson in electronics, learners combined practical work on full-wave rectification with the development of related theory. They worked enthusiastically and their understanding of the theory was enhanced by the practical work.

18. The quality of the teaching varies significantly between the individual curriculum areas. Teaching is best in basic literacy and numeracy, humanities and art, where the proportion of good or better teaching is above 70% and where there is very little unsatisfactory teaching. In construction, and hairdressing and beauty therapy, by contrast, the proportion of teaching which is good or better was below 50%.

19. The planning of individual lessons is often good. Teachers use an appropriate range of learning materials, including prepared notes, and overhead projector (OHP) slides. In some cases, the schemes of work that are used to sequence and plan the delivery of each course unit fail to consider sufficiently the teaching methods and learning activities. Most teaching employs a suitable variety of activities. These include, for example, teacher exposition, practical work, questioning of learners, use of ICT, individual and group work. The best lessons in English and modern foreign languages are notable particularly for the wide range of activity and media employed. In some curriculum areas, for example, science and ICT, teachers make good use of IT in their teaching. In other areas, for example, ESOL and hospitality and catering, insufficient use is made of IT.

20. Teachers in some curriculum areas cater for the needs of individual learners well. In ICT in the community, for example, careful planning helps to ensure that learners in the same lesson, working at different levels and towards different qualifications are all engaged appropriately in learning. Individual learning plans are used in literacy and numeracy lessons to ensure that each learner is working at the right level. Some teachers, for example in humanities, ESOL and business, make good use of learners' own experiences to make the learning more relevant to each individual.

21. Less successful lessons are often characterised by teachers who give learners too few opportunities to contribute to lessons, and by few checks made by teachers to ensure the learners are following.

22. The curriculum and quality manager for key skills and a team of three co-ordinators are based in the academy for key and study skills and support the teaching of key skills across the college. College policy stresses the importance of key skills, a handbook gives guidance on key skills teaching, and appropriate staff development is available. Key skills centres on both main sites are equipped with learning materials and computers and provide drop-in opportunities and facilities for whole-group teaching. Full-time learners are assessed for their levels of attainment in each key skill when they enrol. Where appropriate, learners are provided with individual programmes to address weaknesses identified by this assessment. The teaching of key skills across the college is of variable quality. Some curriculum areas, for example, engineering and construction, childcare and some of the arts provision, try to integrate key skills development with the main programme of study. In other areas, there is separate development. Several lessons planned for the inspection week did not take place and attendance at those that did was often low. Many learners, even when they have completed a course of study, do not submit portfolios or sit the end tests. The management of the teaching of key skills is unsatisfactory. Key skills are given insufficient attention in the implementation of quality assurance procedures.

23. The college employs 593 full-time and part-time teachers. They are well qualified. They hold appropriate professional or technical qualifications, 80% hold a teaching qualification and an appropriate number are qualified assessors. Many have had recent industrial or commercial experience. The staff profiles for gender and ethnicity closely match those of the learners. Staff

turnover is low. A good range of staff development opportunities is provided, though in some cases, for example, for key skills development, many staff do not attend the events provided.

24. Most of the accommodation is of good quality. Classrooms are spacious and well-equipped, recreational areas are well maintained and many purpose-built specialist rooms, for example the art studio, engineering block, and media and film editing suites conform to the best industry standards. Learners' work is often prominently displayed in classrooms and recreational areas. The learning resource centre at the Kings Hedges site is spacious and attractive and provides a range of well-designed rooms for private study and group work. Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in access for learners with restricted mobility. Access, for these learners, is good at the Kings Hedges site. A few rooms at the city centre site are not easily accessible. Health and safety are given a high priority, and the college has gained the gold standard award for occupational health and safety for the three years to 2001.

25. There is efficient use of rooms and an effective annual maintenance schedule. The college car park and canteen facilities have been improved. A few classes operate in unsuitable conditions that adversely affect learning.

26. There are good learning resources. There are sufficient, high-quality IT work stations with a ratio of 1 station to every 6.5 full-time equivalent learners. A wide range of high quality resources is available for learners' use, including IT and video facilities, CD-ROMs, up-to-date journals and a comprehensive book stock. Learners have good access to self-study materials on the college intranet and can use the college's secure web site from their home or offsite computers as well. More staff training is required to improve the use of IT in lessons.

27. Before they commence their learning, full-time learners are interviewed and their previous qualifications, aspirations and interests considered at enrolment. They also take a diagnostic test to establish their competence in literacy and numeracy and complete a questionnaire that identifies each learner's preferred learning style. A profile of each class group identifies learners who may require additional support. The results of these activities are recorded on each learner's individual learning plan. Many learning plans, however, are incomplete or contain only brief comments. Specific and measurable short-term targets are rarely set.

28. For most learners, assessment is well planned and carried out regularly. Internal verification processes are operated satisfactorily and assessments meet awarding body requirements. Learners' work is accurately and consistently marked and progress is reported each term to personal tutors. There is insufficient feedback on progress in the key skills. Detailed and constructive feedback is usually provided by subject tutors and assessors informing learners how to improve their performance. For some learners, feedback on their work is too brief and does not advise them clearly on how to improve their work. Grammatical and spelling mistakes are sometimes left uncorrected. Little use is made of value added data to compare how well learners are progressing in relation to their prior GCSE scores.

29. For most work-based learners assessment practice is unsatisfactory. Too much of their assessment is carried out in the college. There is too little use of evidence from the workplace. There are infrequent assessment visits to learners' workplaces in some curriculum areas. This has led to slow progress being made by many learners. Employers are insufficiently involved in the planning of assessments.

30. The college offers an extensive range of courses that meet the needs and requirements of learners, employers and the community. Provision is available in all 14 of the LSC's areas of learning. Courses are available by part-time and full-time modes of attendance. It is possible to enrol on some courses at any time of the year. Partnership arrangements are in place to deliver a wide range of courses, for example in ICT and basic skills, in community, school and other locations throughout the region. Community-based provision is also directly provided by the college. The college is a Learndirect centre and the recipient college of the Cambridgeshire Ufi hub. It also provides for over 1,000 learners through distance learning programmes operated by the college outside Ufi arrangements.

31. The college is a centre of vocational excellence in health and early years provision and in construction. Substantial funding is generated by work, for example basic skills tuition, with local industry and commerce. The college manages a number of European-funded projects, including some to upgrade employees' basic skills and to help develop women's business skills. There are partnerships and links with local employers. For example, there is a contractual arrangement between the college and a local hospital whereby pre-nursing learners are sponsored and guaranteed employment. The college provides staff training for some of the support staff at Cambridge University, for example in catering and hospitality. HE provision, largely franchised from Anglia Polytechnic University, is growing. In 2001/02, about 300 full-time and part-time learners were enrolled at the college.

32. A Collegiate Board comprising the two Cambridge sixth form colleges, the secondary schools and the college provides a unified admissions process for pupils aged 16. There are strong links with neighbouring 11 to 16 schools. The college is approved to provide the 14 to 16 increasing flexibility programme, whereby the college and eight local schools collaborate on the teaching of vocational courses to pupils at key stage 4. Link courses, for example for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are also provided with local schools.

33. Enrichment opportunities are broad. These include sports competitions, music and overseas visits. Some courses include additional qualifications or units of qualifications to broaden learners' skills and enhance employment prospects. For example, learners in health and social care are provided with first aid and food hygiene courses and hairdressing learners undertake manicure training.

34. The college effectively promotes courses in a variety of ways including through a range of colourful and informative prospectuses, course leaflets, an interactive web site and regular mail-shots. There is some information in large print for the visually impaired. Material is not translated into community languages.

35. Learner support is well planned and managed. Learners receive good advice and guidance prior to enrolment and most are placed on courses appropriate to their level of ability and interest. A common application system operated by the collegiate board simplifies the application process. Induction programmes help learners to settle into college and learn more about the course they are commencing. The quality of induction varies between courses. In some, it is comprehensive and interesting and includes a variety of activities. In a few, it is overly concerned with simply providing information. Part-time learners do not always receive an induction.

36. The progress of full-time learners is reviewed regularly through individual tutorials. The quality of these is inconsistent. In some cases, for example in hospitality and catering, and business, tutors update individual learning plans, and set clear, specific short term targets designed to improve performance. Progress made against previously set targets is reviewed carefully. In other cases, for example in much of the work-based training, individual learning plans are not completed fully, and are not updated. In some areas, for example parts of health, social and childcare and in humanities, the short-term targets for improvement are not specific enough to be useful. Value added data, even for GCE Advanced-level (A-level) learners, is not used to help ensure learners are working at a level appropriate to their attainment in GCSE subjects.

37. Full-time learners receive a programme of group tutorials. These tutorials include an appropriate range of pastoral issues such as careers guidance and health education. The quality of group tutorials is inconsistent. There is a need for training and support for tutors to help them deliver this newly introduced tutorial programme. Many tutors need updating on personal and health issues, and specific training to improve their ability to identify accurately learners' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Personal tutors do not have an opportunity to meet to share good practice.

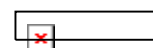
38. The learner services centre is located centrally and contains excellent resources and computer software for career development, including a structured career education pack, which can be used by all tutors. Learners are also able to access dedicated careers tutors and specialist Connexions advisers who provide good one-to-one support with job and HE applications.

39. Learner support services work with a number of partnerships and agencies to offer additional support for learners. Specialist advisers are also available to help learners with welfare, funding, health and counselling issues. Learners receive a high level of support from their teachers and personal tutors. Staff are friendly, helpful and sensitive to their learners' needs: they encourage learners to develop independence, confidence and help them succeed.

40. Parents are welcomed into the college and are encouraged to work in partnership with staff to address any problems experienced. Additional administrative support has been allocated in order to help teachers monitor attendance more closely.

41. A good level of additional support is provided by the study skills section. Highly trained staff are experienced in supporting learners with a range of learning difficulties, for example, dyslexia, visual or hearing impairment and physical disability. Currently, learning support assistants work with learners in all level 1 programmes and 70% of level 2 programmes. The study skills centre provides a welcome environment for small group or one-to-one support. Learners frequently take assignments to the centre where they receive effective help and guidance from learning support assistants. Tutors also take groups there to work on projects. Learning support assistants provide comprehensive termly reports to teachers on learners' progress.

Leadership and management



42. Leadership and management are good. The college is well governed and has an effective senior management team. Governors and senior managers work together effectively. They demonstrate high levels of commitment to the success of the college and its effective contribution to education and training in the locality and further afield. The college mission is well understood by staff, and perceived by governors, who have a wide range of links within the community, to be well matched to local needs.

43. The corporation sets, reviews and closely monitors challenging targets. Governors set clear and appropriate strategic objectives and communicate well with managers and staff. The strategic planning process is consultative and pays careful regard to local and national priorities. The corporation and its committees carefully monitor both the academic performance of the college and its financial position. The well-informed governors use their expertise to support the college and its mission. There are appropriate induction, mentoring and training opportunities for governors. Corporation committees agree work plans and evaluate their effectiveness annually against them. The corporation makes an informal evaluation of the effectiveness of each of its meetings, but there is no formal appraisal procedure to evaluate fully the performance of individual governors.

44. The management of key skills provision is underdeveloped. The management of work-based learning is also unsatisfactory. The pass rate for full apprenticeship frameworks is low. Management information is improving in its accuracy and managers are beginning to trust and rely upon centrally provided data to inform their quality assurance procedures. Inspectors encountered some difficulties in reconciling some pass rates from the MIS with other college records, particularly for NVQ programmes.

45. There is a strong commitment to the community and staff recognise fully the importance of the college being an inclusive institution. The broad range of provision is responsive to local and other needs. Management teams are committed to the values of social inclusion and effectively promote courses to groups of learners who are traditionally under-represented in FE. The college provides extensive outward collaborative and direct provision in the community. Governors and staff have given considerable attention to the promotion of equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusiveness. The college has a strong commitment to equal opportunities, and reviews the impact of its policies. In this context, the college has been proactive in providing timely staff development activities to inform staff of the implications of new legislation. There are many productive external links with

outside bodies both locally and regionally. These include those with partner schools, with HE and with business.

46. The college has produced a candid and largely accurate self-assessment report. Inspectors judged that provision in 10 of the 14 curriculum areas inspected accurately matched the grade descriptors in the self-assessment report. In a few areas, too much reliance is placed on learners' views and not enough on other sources of evidence to support judgements. Quality assurance procedures are well established, and involve staff and representatives of the learner body. The processes are effective in securing improvements in many areas of college, both at course level and across the college. The college's system of 'course health checks' is valued by managers, as is the quality review process that provides internal evaluation of the effectiveness of service areas of college as well as of the curriculum provision. Internal verification processes are effective in most areas and external verifiers reports are scrutinised by managers at senior level and appropriate responses sought. Review reports at academy level, and on most reports at course level, are robust. In a few areas, the rigour of course reviews is insufficiently rigorous and evaluative.

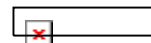
47. The management of the college has been extensively re-organised and the new structures were implemented in September 2002. Communications between managers and staff are often open and effective, but some staff felt overburdened by an excess of information, whilst others indicated that they had missed important communications during the period of change. Managers perceive that the recently reorganised college management structure has led to clearer accountability, improved fairness of workloads and management through performance. It is too early to judge the full impact of the changes on learners.

48. Performance management arrangements were not fully implemented in 2001/02. Not all staff had received appraisal interviews. Managers acknowledge this and describe it as a consequence of the management restructuring. Lesson observation is extensive. Each teacher is observed three times: once by a peer; once by the line manager; and once by another manager or an external consultant. The latter two observations are graded and can be used in the teacher's appraisal. The profile of internal lesson observation grades was considered by senior managers to be too generous and the profile provided by observations by external consultants has been used to moderate the outcomes. The moderated profile is slightly more generous than that obtained during this inspection.

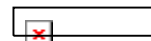
49. The staff appraisal system contributes to the identification of staff development needs and priorities. Activities are provided by the college to support its mission and strategic plan and by external bodies to meet the development needs of individual staff. Funding is readily available and the majority of requests are met. Although college events are evaluated, some evaluation forms are inadequately completed and give insufficient information to inform improvements. There have been relatively few opportunities for industrial updating for teachers.

50. Financial management is good. The college actively seeks to secure value for money. Managers have made considerable efforts to promote and monitor procedures to ensure effectiveness and efficiency. The model for costing courses is used to inform teams of the financial viability of their programmes. Efficiencies have been achieved. The college is aware of some small learner groups, which it runs where that provision is perceived to further the mission of the college. The financial position of the college is strong.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on many courses
- the wide range of academic courses
- good teaching in most science lessons
- good accommodation and equipment.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on GCE AS subjects
- low pass rate on GCSE double award science
- insufficient attention given to weaker learners in lessons
- insufficient use made of value added data in monitoring learner progress.

Scope of provision

51. There is a wide range of provision. Academic provision includes GCE A-level subjects in biology, human biology, chemistry, physics, geology and mathematics. GCSE subjects are available in sciences and mathematics. There are approximately 60 adults on access to HE courses. A degree in sports science is also provided. A broad range of vocational provision is also available. For example, at advanced level, courses lead to national certificates or diplomas in science, sports science and forensic science and to a vocational GCE A level in science. Some courses are offered in community venues. Some learners travel considerable distances to attend the sport science courses. There are nearly 1,500 enrolments, two thirds of whom are aged 19 or over.

Achievement and standards

52. GCE AS retention rates fell between 2001 and 2002 and were low in 2002 in several subjects. For example, in 2002, the retention rates on GCE AS chemistry, and physics courses were below 60%. Retention rates have been low in two out of the last three years on the national diploma in science. GCE A2 retention rates in 2002 were high, 100%, in GCE A2 physics and chemistry.

53. Pass rates on many courses are high and well above the average for similar colleges. For example, national diploma in science pass rates have been above 90% in each of the three years to 2002. GCE A2 pass rates in 2002 in biology, physics and chemistry were all above 95%. The A* to C pass rate in GCSE biology was high in 2002. The pass rate in GCE AS mathematics in 2002 was high, at 86%, but, owing to a low retention rate, only 25 out of the original 80 learners achieved the qualification. The pass rate in the GCSE double award in science was low in 2002 and, at 25%, well below the national average. In many GCE AS and A2 science subjects, the proportion of A and B grades is also high. A high proportion, about 80% of advanced level learners and nearly all the access to education learners, progress to HE.

54. In practical science lessons, learners work safely, take care in recording data and make accurate observations. They make good use of computers for processing results, for simulations and for data logging. Several physics learners have received national awards for excellent coursework. Science learners produce informative notebooks which enhance their learning. Learners make effective links between practical and theory. GCSE mathematics learners show a commitment to their studies and demonstrate good algebraic skills. However, many of these learners do not show clear working when presenting mathematical solutions to problems. Attendance in the lessons observed was 78%, close to the national average.

A sample of retention and pass rates in science and mathematics, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE science	2	No. of starts	37	28	58
		% retention	62	57	77
		% pass rate	22	38	25
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	408	324	363
		% retention	76	76	75
		% pass rate	41	48	41
GCE A-level biology/human biology	3	No. of starts	31	20	25
		% retention	77	95	96
		% pass rate	48	68	97
GCE A-level chemistry*	3	No. of starts	29	27	17
		% retention	90	63	100
		% pass rate	73	88	100
GCE A-level mathematics*	3	No. of starts	49	33	18
		% retention	73	30	89
		% pass rate	39	90	88
GCE AS mathematics	3	No. of starts	***	43	61
		% retention	***	74	**
		% pass rate	***	69	**
GCE AS chemistry	3	No. of starts	***	15	30
		% retention	***	80	53
		% pass rate	***	83	83

National diploma in science	3	No. of starts	22	20	19
		% retention	55	75	65
		% pass rate	91	100	92

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* GCE A-level subjects changed to GCE A2 in 2002

** unreliable data

*** course did not run

Quality of education and training

55. Teaching is good in most science lessons. Overall, the proportion of good teaching is similar to the national average for general FE colleges. Teachers demonstrate a good grasp of their subject. Lessons are well planned. In many science lessons, there is a good variety of teaching and learning activities, including the use of IT, practical work, presentations and effective group work. In these lessons, teachers encourage learners to discover relationships between different sets of data and to discuss possible causes. In one practical biology lesson, learners examined fruit flies as part of a series of lessons on genetics. They took great care with their examination and discussed productively what they saw. In a physics lesson, learners used CD-ROM information to help deduce the gas laws, present their findings to each other and engage in productive discussion. In GCSE mathematics, interesting problems and useful group work help to reinforce algebraic concepts. Useful support for all subjects is available in a learning centre on a drop-in basis. Learners speak highly of the help available from teachers.

56. In the less successful lessons, teachers talk too much. Learners have little opportunity to think for themselves or to use computers and other learning aids. Teachers are aware of the different attainment levels of their learners, but too often fail to adjust their teaching to suit the needs of learners of high or low attainment. The better schemes of work include details of work for different types of learners, the way key skills can be included in lessons and details of assessments. The poorer are merely a list of topics and textbook references.

57. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. They have relevant first degrees, most have teaching qualifications and many have a higher degree. Some teachers are working with awarding bodies to prepare new vocational programmes of study. Technicians are well qualified and occupationally competent and provide good support to both teachers and learners.

58. Accommodation is very good. It is spacious and well equipped. There is good access to classrooms and laboratories for learners in wheelchairs. One laboratory has been adapted for use by learners with physical disabilities. Too few portable computers are available within laboratories and classrooms. The well-stocked library has appropriate textbooks, journals and CD-ROMs. Some assignments have been designed to require learners to develop skills in using all of these resources.

59. Learners undertake a wide variety of activities outside lessons, including field trips and visits to universities to use specialist equipment. Visiting speakers, for example from the local health trust, frequently talk to the forensic science learners. At induction, learners' knowledge and skills and learning styles are determined. Their progress is reviewed regularly. However, the review process is underdeveloped and makes insufficient use of value added data when monitoring the progress of individual learners.

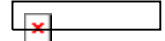
Leadership and management

60. The academy is satisfactorily managed. The managers are recent appointments and changes are still being implemented. Teams of science teachers meet weekly to discuss teaching and learning. Mathematics teachers do not meet in the same formal way. The academy is responsive to the needs of learners with mathematical weaknesses. For example, the GCE AS course has been

restructured, enabling some learners to delay taking one module until the following autumn, helping to achieve a high pass rate.

61. Not all course teams in their annual reviews critically assess their provision and produce relevant action plans. The self-assessment report is factually correct, but is not sufficiently self-critical. It does not have clear quantifiable targets and underestimates the effect on weaker learners of the limited teaching strategies. Use of value added data is not used during course evaluation.

Construction



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

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

Strengths

- improved and now high retention and pass rates in national certificate in building studies
- good practical work in heating and ventilating
- high retention rates on electrical installation programmes
- good support for learners.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates in NVQ trowel and bricklaying provision
- poor completion of the full framework by modern apprentices
- much uninspiring theory teaching
- unsatisfactory assessment practice on NVQ programmes

- unsatisfactory management of work-based learning.

Scope of provision

62. There is a wide range of provision. Craft courses in bricklaying, carpentry and joinery, electrical installation, and mechanical services, including gas fitting, plumbing and heating and ventilation are available. Most courses lead to NVQs at levels 1 and 2 and a few to level 3. Various modes of attendance are available. Full-time and part-time technician courses include national diploma and certificate in construction. About 425 learners are on full-time and part-time courses, with equal numbers aged 16 to 18 and 19 or over. There are 179 modern apprentices, 50 following the advanced framework. They are employed in a wide range of companies from small to large national companies. Short updating courses in electrical installation and domestic gas safety are provided. The provision as a whole is a centre of vocational excellence in conjunction with two other colleges in the region.

Achievement and standards

63. Much of the college data provided in advance of the inspection, particularly for NVQs in 2002, were unreliable. Retention and pass rates on many courses varied considerably in the three years to 2002. Retention rates on the electrical installation courses have been high over the period. Pass rates have fluctuated. On the national certificate course, pass and retention rates have improved in this period and are now well above the national averages, with a high proportion of those who enrol achieving the qualification. Pass rates on the NVQ 2 bricklaying and NVQ 1 trowel occupations courses are low. Practical work is of a high standard on the NVQ heating and ventilating programme; a high proportion of learners who enrolled on this course in 2001/02 achieved the qualification.

64. A small proportion of modern apprentices achieve the full modern apprenticeship framework. During the period 1998 to 2000, 133 learners started foundation modern apprenticeships. Of these, only 3% achieved the full framework. Only 37% achieved the related NVQ. Achievement on advanced modern apprenticeships is better. During the same period, of the 139 who started, 31% achieved the full framework and 52% achieved an NVQ.

A sample of retention and pass rates in construction, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ in trowel occupations	1	No. of starts	12	19	16
		% retention	75	84	63
		% pass rate	11	*	*
City and Guilds 2360-01 electrical installation part 1	1	No. of starts	31	29	40
		% retention	87	79	85
		% pass rate	81	36	*
NVQ bricklaying	2	No. of starts	34	38	58
		% retention	73	61	*
		% pass rate	*	*	*
NVQ carpentry and joinery	2	No. of starts	46	69	85
		% retention	74	61	*
		% pass rate	23	76	*
NVQ in mechanical	2	No. of starts	38	44	66

services (plumbing)		% retention	72	67	79
		% pass rate	*	*	*
City and Guilds 2360-07 electrical installation part 2	2	No. of starts	11	21	21
		% retention	91	100	86
		% pass rate	50	33	*
National certificate in building studies	3	No. of starts	*	12	19
		% retention	67	58	89
		% pass rate	67	71	87

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* unreliable data

Quality of education and training

65. No teaching was judged unsatisfactory, but there was a lower proportion of good teaching than is usually seen in similar colleges. Much of the teaching of theory is uninspiring. Practical work is characterised by the learners working on their own on allotted tasks and with the teacher giving individual advice where required. The learners work diligently, producing work of at least a satisfactory standard. Learners have a good understanding of what they are doing and the underpinning theory. For example in a practical class on the NVQ 2 heating and ventilation course, the learners were able to explain each step in the process of jointing copper and steel pipes and could read the associated drawings. In the better theory lessons, teaching is well planned and proceeds at a good pace. For example, in an electrical installation lesson on industrial studies, the lesson was well structured, good use was made of examples drawn from industry and of a video, and learners' understanding was checked using questions directed at individuals. Learners responded well, demonstrating a good understanding of the topic. In many theory lessons, however, teaching lacks variety and fails to stimulate and motivate the learners. For example, learners are often required to work individually through learning packs. Many learners progress too slowly. Some craft learners find the language in these packs difficult to understand.

66. The workshops provide satisfactory practical training resources. Good specialist facilities are available in a large woodworking machine workshop. There is poor housekeeping in some areas and insufficient storage space in most, particularly in the electrical installations workshop. The level of the technician support is generally satisfactory in most workshops

67. Apprentices use the latest equipment in their workplaces and complete a wide range of tasks relating to their apprenticeships. There are only a limited number of books in the college learning centre. For example, there are insufficient texts for the new national certificate/diploma in construction. Learners have good access to computing facilities including the Internet and the college intranet. Staff are appropriately qualified, and most have relevant industrial experience. Most hold assessor qualifications.

68. There is poor assessment practice on NVQ programmes. Insufficient assessment takes place in the workplace by direct observation. As a result too much reliance is placed on witness testimony and photographic evidence. Many apprentices do not understand how to collect evidence from the workplace and compile it into a portfolio. Most learners start the collection of evidence too late in their programmes, and then frequently have to undertake simulated assessments when, with earlier planning they could have collected evidence from the workplace. Internal verification procedures are implemented satisfactorily. Recommendations from external verifiers are not always acted upon appropriately.

69. The progress of full-time learners is monitored closely and action plans established to address areas for improvement. There is little co-ordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training. Some

employers have little knowledge of what goes on in the college, some do not participate fully in the establishment of the workplace training programme. Apprentices' individual learning plans are often incomplete and are not updated and used to plan future work. Some employers are not kept sufficiently informed of their apprentices' attendance and progress.

70. Courses match learners' aspirations and potential well. There are good opportunities for progression from level 1 to level 3 and opportunities to progress through craft and technician training in preparation for degree level studies. Learners are able to build on their attainment and experience through the assessment and accreditation of their prior learning and experience. The range of courses meets the needs of the local construction industry and the community well. In work-based learning, the range of provision is adequate to meet the needs of apprentices. Where there are gaps in the provision, for example plastering, the college sub-contracts to other colleges to meet the demand.

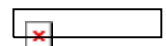
71. Most learners undertake assessment of their levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy during their induction. Many are receiving additional support, which is often delivered within the curriculum area. Vocational aptitude tests, which could help identify the appropriate starting level for learners, are not used. A large number of apprentices have progressed from the foundation programme rather than being placed initially on the advanced programme. The overall level of support provided for the learner by teachers, training officers and employers is good.

Leadership and management

72. Management of the provision is satisfactory. The curriculum area development plan promotes the college's overall objectives, but is insufficiently detailed in its operational detail. Two self-assessment reports were produced. One for the main construction provision and one for work-based learning. They were not sufficiently critical, failing, for example, to identify some of the weaknesses of the provision. Teachers are effectively deployed to provide value for money. The recent introduction of a weekly programme of academy meetings has helped to improve communication. The appraisal programme for full-time teachers has not been fully implemented. Teachers often use retention and pass rate data that are different from those held centrally.

73. There is a good cross-college central system for the contract management of work-based learning and growth targets for construction modern apprenticeships have been achieved. However, the management of work-based learning in construction is poor. There are no service level agreements between central management and the academy. There are insufficient staff available for workplace assessment. Quality control of sub-contractors is not effective. For example, they are not required to provide important evidence, such as that arising from lesson observation. Agreements with employers do not outline their responsibilities for training. Employers and apprentices have a poor awareness of equal opportunity issues. Progress reviews do not reinforce equal opportunity issues.

Engineering



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

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

Strengths

- high retention rates on City and Guilds motor vehicle courses

- good balance of learner activities in most lessons
- well-resourced practical areas
- courses meeting the needs of learners and employers.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on foundation modern apprenticeships
- learner understanding not always checked in lessons
- poor management of work-based learning
- unsatisfactory management of some courses.

Scope of provision

74. Engineering provides courses in electronic, welding/fabrication, aeronautical, motor vehicle and mechanical engineering. There are 476 learners; about 149 study full time and about 420 part time. Courses range from level 1 to 4 in most areas. School-link courses are run for pupils aged 14 to 16. Sixty apprentices, mainly foundation modern apprentices, are on work-based training programmes in motor vehicle, mechanical and electrical engineering. The contract for work-based learning is managed separately within the college. Specialist engineering staff conduct workplace assessments.

Achievement and standards

75. The retention rates are high on the City and Guilds motor vehicle courses. For example, in 2001/02, the retention rate was 92% at level 1 and 100% at level 3. The NVQ level 2 motor vehicle course had retention rates close to the national average in 1999/2000 and 2000/01 but declined below the national average in 2001/02. The retention rates on other courses are generally close to the national average.

76. The pass rate on the level 2 City and Guilds 2280 mechanical production competences course, in 2001/02, was 100%. The pass rate on the NVQ 2 course in engineering manufacture has been consistently above the national average, whilst the pass rate on the NVQ 2 course in vehicle mechanical and electronic systems has been consistently below the national average. Other pass rates are generally close to the national averages.

77. There are poor retention and pass rates on foundation modern apprentice programmes. Only 5% of the apprentices who started foundation modern apprenticeships in 1998 and 1999 achieved the full framework qualification. In these years, the retention rates were 40% and 55%, respectively. Most apprentices make slow progress.

78. The standard of learners' written work is generally good. Portfolios are well structured and presented. Learners show interest and commitment to the practical work. Learners with industrial experience are confident and competent in using the machines in the mechanical workshop. Learners in motor vehicle workshops are developing a satisfactory range of hand skills.

79. The average attendance in the lessons observed was 87%.

A sample of retention and pass rates in engineering, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
City and Guilds 3830-01 repair and servicing of road vehicles 1 year	1	No. of starts	22	10	37
		% retention	82	60	92
		% pass rate	67	67	59
City and Guilds 2280-02 mechanical production competences	2	No. of starts	11	14	11
		% retention	82	93	*
		% pass rate	67	69	*
City and Guilds 2290-02 fabrication and welding competences	2	No. of starts	19	16	16
		% retention	95	56	75
		% pass rate	44	78	75
GNVQ in intermediate engineering	2	No. of starts	26	15	17
		% retention	73	67	82
		% pass rate	47	80	64
National diploma in engineering	3	No. of starts	38	62	32
		% retention	71	77	69
		% pass rate	67	77	86
City and Guilds 383-03 repair and servicing of road vehicles 1 year	3	No. of starts	28	27	20
		% retention	100	96	100
		% pass rate	32	62	55

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* unreliable data

Quality of education and training

80. Most lessons contain a variety of activities that motivate learners. In many lessons, good use is made of practical resources to provide activities that reinforce engineering principles. For example, in one aero-engineering lesson, the teacher asked the learners to calculate the lift co-efficient of an aircraft wing. Learners measured the dimensions of a real aircraft wing and used aircraft data manuals to establish the weight of the aircraft. They then determined the lift co-efficient by re-arranging a standard formula. Teachers sometimes grouped learners of differing abilities together to help support the weaker learners. In some lessons, the teacher spends too much time talking and learners are passive. Questions are not directed at specific learners and the understanding of

learners are not checked systematically.

81. Teachers have detailed lesson plans. Schemes of work are less detailed and are often no more than a list of topics that use similar resources. In most lessons, learners are provided with notes in either the form of a booklet covering a series of topics or specific notes on individual topics. Some of these notes, especially in motor vehicle work, are available on the college intranet.

82. There are well-resourced practical areas for developing a broad range of mechanical, aircraft, motor vehicle welding/fabrication and electronics engineering skills. Most have areas within them, or close by, which can be used for developing theory or writing up notes relating to the practical work. Some of the equipment is dated, but is still suitable for teaching basic engineering skills. Classrooms are well equipped with projectors, screens, board, and monitor and video playing facility. Rooms are generally clean and tidy. Staff accommodation is cramped.

83. All staff are suitably qualified and experienced. Some workshop supervisors are also assessors for the apprenticeship programmes. Six new staff have been appointed in the last few months. Until recently, there have been insufficient staff to undertake workplace assessments on apprenticeship programmes.

84. The marking of learners' work is satisfactory. Assessments cover the required range of activities and include both written and practical assessments. Internal verification is satisfactory. On apprenticeship programmes, individual learning plans are incomplete and do not always show the specific units to be followed. They are not always updated with unit or subject achievement.

85. A broad range of courses is offered in all specialisms, meeting the needs of most learners and local employers. Courses range from level 1 to level 4 including some higher national courses. There is a good mix of craft and technician courses and courses to support modern apprenticeships in engineering and motor vehicle work. Employers and the college collaborate on the choice of NVQ units to be followed on apprenticeship programmes to match specific needs. New and existing courses have been introduced to meet changing requirements. Most engineering employers offer a wide range of additional specialist courses to support the development of their apprentices. In a few cases, where opportunities to gather all the required NVQ evidence is limited, the college has worked with employers to create partnerships which allow apprentices wider scope to collect evidence. This is particularly true in motor vehicle.

86. Guidance and support for learners are generally satisfactory. Work-based learners receive good pastoral care. The quarterly reviews ensure that learners have access to support for personal issues. Full-time and most part-time learners receive satisfactory tutor support. There has been a significant increase in the amount of learning support provided for learners during lessons, especially in motor vehicle and mechanical engineering. Some apprentices are placed on lower level programmes than their entry qualifications warrant.

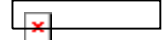
Leadership and management

87. The management of engineering is satisfactory. Good use is made of the college computer network to aid communications and to provide access to teaching materials and relevant operational documents. The termly programme quality review meetings have standard agenda items and conclude by updating the relevant development action plan. A course-costing model is used to check on the financial viability of courses. Problems with the management of some courses have been identified through staff and learner feedback. Changes in teachers on some courses have meant that learners have had to cope with changes in teaching style. In some cases, teachers have not been available to cover classes. On one course, learners did not complete their units in the intended time and ended the year with unfinished work. One course was closed and the learners transferred on to another course, which they subsequently failed. Actions have been taken to overcome these problems.

88. The management of work-based learning is poor. Overall responsibility for the training is not clear. Equal opportunities issues are not reinforced. Individual learning plans are not complete or up

to date. The quarterly review process is unsatisfactory. It does not always involve the employer. A shortage of assessors results in delays in assessment and slow apprentice progress.

Business, administration, management and professional



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

Strengths

- high retention rates in 2002
- effective initial assessment for full-time learners
- good tutorial support for full-time learners
- successful action to address weaknesses.

Weaknesses

- low attendance rates for learners aged 16 to 18
- unsatisfactory key skills teaching
- insufficient use of work-based assessments on NVQ courses.

Scope of provision

89. Courses include full-time intermediate GNVQ and AVCE in business, NVQs in administration and a number of GCE AS and A-level subjects. Part-time courses include a range of management and professional courses, and teacher training courses. A number of courses are delivered at community venues through collaborative provision. There are about 4000 enrolments in business. Approximately a quarter of the full-time equivalent learners are aged 16 to 18. Most adult enrolments are at level 1 or 2. Enrolments of learners aged 16 to 18 are equally distributed between levels 1, 2 and 3.

Achievement and standards

90. Much of the data for 2001/02, presented by the college prior to the inspection, were unreliable. Data provided during the inspection week, show that retention rates are above national averages on many courses. For example, in 2001/02, the retention rate on the intermediate GNVQ in business studies was 100% and 92% on the NVQ 2 in administration. Pass rates on many courses are satisfactory and close to the national averages. Pass rates are high on some courses, particularly professional courses such as the City and Guilds 7307 teachers course. The pass rate on the single award AVCE in business studies has been well above the sector average for similar colleges in each of the last two years. On some courses, pass rates are significantly below the sector average. For example, the pass rate on the intermediate GNVQ in business studies has been about 10% below the sector average for the three years to 2001/02.

91. Learners' work demonstrates standards broadly similar to those expected of learners on similar courses nationally. Business studies learners work to deadlines, apply business theory to practice and are knowledgeable about topical business issues. Attainment on key skills is low. The attendance rate of 64%, for learners aged 16 to 18, is unsatisfactory.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business, administration, management and professional, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ administration	2	No. of starts	39	36	47
		% retention	72	83	*
		% pass rate	76	80	*
GNVQ business	2	No. of starts	45	50	21
		% retention	62	83	*
		% pass rate	54	55	*
Association of Accounting Technicians intermediate	2	No. of starts	47	69	62
		% retention	81	*	77
		% pass rate	42	*	52
Certificate in personnel practice	3	No. of starts	28	31	38
		% retention	89	100	92
		% pass rate	92	87	*
GCE A-level economics	3	No. of starts	28	29	7
		% retention	66	58	*
		% pass rate	47	80	*
AVCE business single award	3	No. of starts	**	72	57
		% retention	**	75	*
		% pass rate	**	61	*
City and Guilds 7307-03	3	No. of starts	136	55	159
		% retention	90	100	94
		% pass rate	63	89	95

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* unreliable data

*** course did not run*

Quality of education and training

92. About 60% of the lessons observed were of good quality, a similar proportion to that seen in similar colleges. There was a slightly higher proportion of unsatisfactory teaching than is the case nationally. In the better lessons, teachers draw on their own and learners' experience and use current business examples. They use appropriate methods to suit individual learners and provide supportive feedback. In one lesson, part-time learners were encouraged to analyse their experiences of their own organisation to develop business theory. In a significant number of lessons, teaching is insufficiently challenging and learners are not encouraged to develop their study and analytical skills. Teachers sometimes fail to give clear instructions about tasks and do not adequately check that learners understand what is expected of them.

93. The teaching of key skills is unsatisfactory. Although assignments include references to relevant key skills, learners are not encouraged to track key skills independently. Work for application of number is often duplicated. Attendance at key skills classes is low. Learners are not made fully aware of the importance of this aspect of their course. Some key skills lessons are timetabled in inappropriate rooms, for example the computer suite, where other activity intrudes on whole class teaching.

94. The induction and initial assessment of full-time learners are good. The results of an initial diagnostic test are analysed and detailed feedback given to tutors. This informs the allocation and role of learning support staff. Arrangements for supporting the additional needs of individual learners are effective. The very good partnerships between vocational and support teachers ensure that learners are given maximum opportunity to benefit from their course of study. For example, some GNVQ intermediate and NVQ administration learners receive effective additional support in literacy and numeracy during their lessons.

95. Teachers are helpful and approachable and readily provide advice and guidance to learners with concerns and difficulties. Learner progress is monitored through the tutorial system and is discussed at programme meetings on business administration courses. Individual learning plans are reviewed and updated termly and specific targets are set to improve learner performance. For example, one learner's learning goal was upgraded from level 1 to level 2 after her first review.

96. Learning resources are satisfactory. Computer rooms are suitably equipped with up-to-date computers, printers and relevant software. Learners have good access to computing facilities and make full use of the Internet. Administration learners use a training office to generate evidence for their portfolios. The learning resource centre has suitable books, videos and journals, although some are dated. Centre staff keep a filing cabinet of cuttings with current business material. Classrooms are well furnished, in good decorative order and good use is made of the notice boards. All rooms are equipped with video, OHP, whiteboards and, in most cases, a computer for class use.

97. Teachers' feedback to learners on assignments is constructive. Marked work is returned promptly. On some professional courses, there is insufficient feedback to help learners to improve. On AVCE and some professional courses mistakes are left uncorrected. Learner portfolios on GNVQ courses are poorly organised and little discrimination is used when selecting material. There is insufficient use of direct observation in the workplace, or use of professional discussion when assessing the work of NVQ learners.

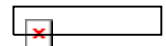
98. A wide range of courses meets the needs of employers, the community and individual learners. There are declining enrolments in many areas, including GCE A level and some professional courses. There are particularly good progression opportunities in some areas, for example from GNVQ to AVCE, and from NVQ levels 1 to 3 in administration and from levels 2 to 4 in accountancy, and in teacher training courses. Arrangements for including learners with non-standard qualifications are good. Many of these learners make significant gains in personal and learning skills. The needs of isolated rural communities are addressed through the effective delivery of courses in a number of villages.

Leadership and management

99. Course files contain detailed schemes of work as well as self-assessment and development planning information and learner records. Course 'health checks' are used to validate and update the self-assessment report. Managers take effective action to raise standards. Examples include a particularly thorough system of internal verification and relevant staff development to help in its implementation, the introduction of a system to address weakness in learner attendance, and thorough and prompt responses to issues raised by outside bodies. The same commitment to continuous improvement and high standards extends to the management of the off-site provision. Effective actions are taken to promote equal opportunities, inclusive learning and to widen participation.

100. There has been insufficient attention to ensuring that staff receive relevant professional and commercial updating. The management information system does not produce reliable, up-to-date information, particularly in NVQ programmes. Specifically, a very large number of learners' achievements have not been entered on to the database. Inspectors largely agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report, although some strengths and some weaknesses had been over-stated.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- improving and now high retention and pass rates
- strong community provision in the city and in rural areas
- good enrichment opportunities for full-time learners
- effective sharing of resources and good practice
- teaching which is responsive to individual needs.

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory results on several full-time advanced level courses in the recent past

- inappropriate use of the computer suite for group teaching
- individual learning plans and target setting not fully utilised.

Scope of provision

101. Courses are available from entry level to HE. There were nearly 5,000 enrolments in the area of learning in 2001/02. Approximately one third of the full-time equivalent learners are aged 16 to 18. Just under 200 learners are full time. Full-time courses include GCE AS and A levels, advanced, intermediate and foundation level qualifications in IT. Part-time and community provision is located on the college's main sites and on 25 satellite centres across the county. In 2002/03, over 3,000 learners have been enrolled so far on these courses. IT courses are available up to level 3. The most popular include computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) and the European computer driving licence (ECDL). Programming courses, for example in C++, and courses in web and Internet technologies and an introduction to e-commerce are also available.

Achievement and standards

102. Retention rates have improved on several courses and on most are now high. Pass rates show a similar picture. GNVQ intermediate pass rates, for example, have been well above the average for similar colleges in the two years to 2002, combined with improving retention rates, which are now similar to national averages. In 2002, there were high pass and retention rates on CLAIT, Integrated Business Technology (IBT) level 2 and level 3 courses. Retention and pass rates on the GNVQ advanced level course in IT and the GCE A-level computing course have declined in recent years. They have both been replaced with ICT courses; pass rates were high in 2002 on these new courses.

103. Learners work at an appropriate level. One AVCE learner, for example, as part of his coursework, produced a user guide to Cambridge hostels that gave clear and easily understood instructions. Deadlines for coursework are met consistently. Written work and assignments are of good quality. Learners on the AVCE courses are able to use validation techniques in their spreadsheet work to trace errors. Learners working on database technology understand the application of field properties, key fields and cross-tabular relations as well as being able to define and run queries.

104. The community-based courses equip adults well with the skills needed to return to employment, and enjoy a good record of success. Adults on these courses work productively. On a one-day course in powerpoint, for example, learners learned how to use animation techniques to illustrate and enliven their presentations.

A sample of retention and pass rates in information and communications technology, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
CLAIT	1	No. of starts	549	452	472
		% retention	85	84	*
		% pass rate	66	75	*
City and Guilds 7261	1	No. of starts	58	32	27

applications		% pass rate	95	93	95
IBT	2	No. of starts	200	244	191
		% retention	89	87	88
		% pass rate	67	68	61
GNVQ intermediate in IT	2	No. of starts	41	52	36
		% retention	74	81	81
		% pass rate	61	76	79
ECDL	2	No. of starts	30	103	305
		% retention	87	86	*
		% pass rate	36	75	*
IBT	3	No. of starts	43	82	32
		% retention	83	72	93
		% pass rate	30	50	77
GNVQ advanced in IT	3	No. of starts	67	69	22
		% retention	73	65	45
		% pass rate	70	70	40

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* unreliable data

Quality of education and training

105. Most teaching is good or better and responsive to the needs of individual students. Teachers work as a team to produce learning materials and are well prepared. Useful lesson plans are linked to coherent schemes of work. There is good classroom management. Learners are well supported and encouraged. Challenging behaviour is met with firmness and good humour, ensuring that learners remain productively engaged. Teachers use their knowledge well and maintain a good balance between theory and practical. Teachers make good use of various teaching styles, using individual, pairs and small groups, or whole class work as appropriate. In one lesson, for example, the interest of learners was engaged by the teacher's ability to relate animation and graphics to uses in the real world. There was good use of a data projector, an appropriately brisk pace, and obvious pleasure felt by the learners as they applied newly learned skills. In the minority of lessons where teaching is less than satisfactory, it is uninteresting, poorly planned, undemanding and lacking in variety. A few lessons started late.

106. On community-based courses, teachers deal simultaneously with adults on different courses or at different levels of attainment. Good levels of organisation and preparation, including the availability of learning materials and task sheets for each course and level help them in this task. They respond quickly to learners' needs whilst other learners are productively occupied.

107. Computing resources in the college have been upgraded recently. Good levels of hardware and software meet current industry standards. Some teaching takes place in the well-equipped computer suite where noise and distractions make teaching difficult. Learners have easy access to computers on both main sites, and also at the community drop-in and other centres. Assignments and other learning materials are available on the college intranet. Their use is not fully exploited by either teachers or learners. The intranet has a useful section reserved for teachers. It holds course specifications, links to examination boards and other resources. Learner online resources include hyperlinks to useful learning materials and appropriate online resources. Teachers are appropriately qualified. Many have relevant commercial or industrial experience.

108. Assignment briefs for full-time learners are internally moderated by teaching teams to ensure they are relevant and at the right level. Assignments allow learners to develop a range of skills and to extend their knowledge. On some courses, an assignment calendar helps learners to manage their time. All work is marked accurately. Feedback is constructive and identifies areas for development. There is sound careers guidance, personal support and advice in completing universities and colleges admissions services (UCAS) forms.

109. The range of programmes is responsive to local demand and provides a wide range of courses. There are good opportunities for learners with low attainment to enrol, for example, through the provision of units of qualifications and open college accreditation, at entry level. The extensive use of community venues provides easily accessible courses for the rural communities. Full-time learners on some courses work towards additional qualifications such as City and Guilds 7262, the ECDL and computer programming in C++, enhancing the breadth of their experience and their chances of finding employment. Full-time learners develop their knowledge through ICT residential visits to New York and Disneyland in Paris and through work experience.

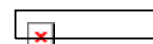
110. During the induction programme learners, are invited to identify their own learning styles. The responses are kept in tutorial files, but are not used to inform teaching.

111. Full-time learners have a group tutorial each week, where careers guidance and other matters are covered. They also have scheduled individual tutorials. In these, progress towards target grades is discussed. These tutorial sessions are valued by learners. Individual learning plans are completed by the learners, but target setting and monitoring are poor. There is no effective mechanism for sharing this information with the rest of the teaching team.

Leadership and management

112. The academy development plan addresses key issues of quality and achievement at both course and academy level. Responsibilities are clearly identified. Staff observation and appraisal are focused on quality and improvement. Mechanisms have been developed to share good practice and resources. These include termly forums for part-time and rural staff as well as quality control visits to lessons in the community centres. Clear quality processes have been developed, but are not fully embedded in practice. At the college and a number of community centres, some courses run with very low numbers.

Hospitality and catering



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on many courses
- good resources for food preparation and service
- well-organised assessment on NVQ courses

- a wide range of provision
- strong and effective support for learners.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates in 2002 for reception and AVCE courses
- under developed practical skills in food preparation
- lack of variety in teaching strategies
- poor management, teaching and assessment of key skills
- ineffective implementation of quality assurance procedures.

Scope of provision

113. A wide range of courses is provided in hospitality and catering. Full-time courses include NVQs in food preparation at levels 1 to 3, food service and reception NVQs at level 2, and a range of supervisory NVQs in hospitality and catering at level 3. The national diploma in hospitality supervision was introduced in 2002 to replace the AVCE in hospitality and catering. Part-time NVQ courses in food preparation and reception are offered at levels 2 and 3. Cake decoration and sugar craft is offered at a local community school. Short courses are offered in wines and spirits, food hygiene and nutrition at levels 2 and 3. The national licensees certificate was introduced in 1999. In 2001/02, there were nearly 600 enrolments to courses in the curriculum area, 60% of whom were learners aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

114. Retention rates are high on the certificate in wines and spirits course, the AVCE in hospitality and catering and on the NVQ 3 in food preparation. They are low on the NVQ 2 in reception and fluctuate about the national average in other NVQs, such as those at level 1 and 2 in food preparation. Pass rates are consistently high on many courses, particularly NVQ courses. In 2002, all learners who completed the NVQ 2 in reception successfully passed. In 2001, 95% of learners passed the NVQ 2 in food preparation compared with the national average of 77%. All learners who have enrolled on the food hygiene and safety diploma in the three years to 2002 have achieved the qualification. However, the pass rates for the NVQ 1 in food preparation and the AVCE in hospitality and catering fell below the national averages in 2002.

115. Foundation learners on the NVQ 1 in food preparation are making good progress in developing their practical skills. The food preparation skills of learners at levels 2 and 3 are underdeveloped, for example in peeling, trimming and shaping. Learner practice at level 3 is sometimes poor. An exercise in filleting fish produced excessive wastage and one learner used the wrong tools. Stocks and sauces are not sufficiently refined or flavoursome. Full-time and part-time learners with higher abilities are able to progress at a faster pace. Learners gain from participating in competitions and over the years have enjoyed success in some prestigious events.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hospitality and catering, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ in food preparation	1	No. of starts	9	7	12
		% retention	56	86	70
		% pass rate	100	100	71
NVQ in food preparation	2	No. of starts	70	77	59
		% retention	60	55	76
		% pass rate	90	90	95
NVQ in reception	2	No. of starts	10	7	13
		% retention	70	100	67
		% pass rate	71	86	100
Certificate in wines and spirits	2	No. of starts	8	23	25
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	88	83	70
NVQ in food preparation	3	No. of starts	24	19	23
		% retention	96	89	96
		% pass rate	78	89	91
Food hygiene and safety diploma	3	No. of starts	14	23	19
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100
AVCE in hospitality and catering	3	No. of starts	17	14	12
		% retention	71	86	83
		% pass rate	75	75	56

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

Quality of education and training

116. Timetables are well planned and contain an appropriate mix of theory and practical work. In some lessons, for example in a lesson dealing with complex aspects of licensing law, teaching made good use of the teachers' and learners' own experiences. Many theory sessions lack variety in the range of teaching and learning strategies. There is an over-reliance on question and answer and discussion and teachers often dominate these lessons. Visual aids are seldom used. Schemes of work focus too much on the topic and not enough on how the learning is to be developed and, in some cases, stipulate a very narrow range of learning activities. In some food preparation lessons, teachers rely too much on verbal description and not enough on demonstration. Key skills development is poorly managed. There is no strategy for delivering or assessing key skills within the context of the vocational area.

117. Specialist facilities and equipment for food preparation and service are very good. Learners are well prepared for the type of commercial operation they will find in employment. A modern restaurant is equipped with fully upholstered chairs and interchangeable tabletops. It attracts local people and has been identified by one publication as one of the best restaurants in town. Kitchen facilities are good, including, for example, combination ovens, blast chillers, modern mixers and food processors. The production kitchen contains a purpose-built kitchen suite.

118. Staff are well qualified and have good industrial experience. Most teachers undertake regular industrial updating. The learners are benefiting, for example, from the placement one food preparation teacher spent with one of the country's leading chefs.

119. The assessment of NVQs is well organised. Systems are streamlined and easy to manage. Learners are able to use college assessment documents, testimonials and digital images to construct valid and reliable assessment evidence. Timetabled lessons provide learners with the opportunity to work on their portfolios. Teachers support this activity effectively. Learners receive strong and effective support throughout their courses.

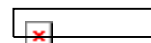
120. Many new learners join the college in the early summer for taster courses. Well-planned induction programmes quickly identify learner ability levels and help learners to settle in quickly through interesting ice breaking activities and trips. Additional learning support is quickly put in place and learners value the support they receive. One deaf learner has progressed from a specialist boarding school and receives support from a communicator in all classes and speaks highly about this support. There are well-defined systems for monitoring learner progress through termly checks. Clear progress targets are set for learners and these are closely monitored for achievement. In some reviews, learners are given insufficient encouragement to reflect on their own performance and the tutors dominate the reviews too much.

121. The wide range of provision meets the needs of learners, industry and the community well. Learners are able to take valuable additional qualifications. For example, AVCE and national diploma learners follow wine and spirit qualification and learners with an interest in progressing into the licensed house sector are encouraged to take the licensee's certificate.

Leadership and management

122. There is good communication and co-operation within course teams, which meet regularly. Learners attend course reviews to present their views. College procedures for learner support are firmly embedded and effective. Quality assurance procedures are not effective. Only cursory attention is given to improving the quality of teaching and learning and some course self-assessment reports are incomplete or contain little detail. There is over-reliance on the results of learner surveys in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are confident about the management information they receive, including the information provided by the centre administrator.

Sport, leisure and tourism



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates

- teaching which effectively relates theory to practice
- strong tutorial support
- good resources across all areas
- quality assurance procedures which raise standards.

Weaknesses

- poor attendance and achievement in key skills.
- teaching which fails to challenge some learners.

Scope of provision

123. Full-time sport, leisure and tourism and public services provision is growing. There are foundation, first, and national diplomas in public services, first and national diplomas in sports studies, and GCE AS and A2 courses in sport. There are AVCEs in travel and tourism and leisure and recreation and an intermediate diploma in leisure and tourism. Some 277 learners are studying sport and public services and 115 are studying leisure and tourism. Many learners gain additional qualifications such as air fares and ticketing and community sports leader award. There are a few part-time courses.

Achievement and standards

124. Retention rates are consistently high. They are above the national averages in all full-time courses. Retention rates, for example on the first and national diplomas in public services have been well above national averages in the three years leading up to 2001/02. The national diploma in sports studies was started in 2002/03 and so far the retention rate of the 123 learners enrolled is high. Pass rates for full-time courses are also well above national averages. They are high on public services courses. In 2002, they were above 90% on both the first and national diploma courses. In 2002, the pass rate for the GNVQ foundation in leisure and tourism was below the national average. In addition to their main qualification, many learners gain additional professional qualifications which broaden their experience and enhance their employment prospects. Key skills pass rates and attendance at lessons in key skills are low.

125. The quality of learners' written work is good. Course files are well presented and organised. Learners are able to apply their theoretical knowledge to practical activities. They demonstrate well their understanding in both their oral and written presentations and reports. Learners on the national diploma in public services use a wide variety of research methods to explain how major international events are handled.

126. Many learners are involved in college activities and have had considerable success in local and national competitions. A high proportion of learners progress to further courses, HE, or employment. In 2002, all public services foundation learners successfully progressed to the first diploma.

A sample of retention and pass rates in sport, leisure and tourism, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	42	49	55
		% retention	71	87	78
		% pass rate	73	85	88
First diploma in public services	2	No. of starts	22	20	22
		% retention	86	100	95
		% pass rate	78	85	90
National diploma in public services	3	No. of starts	28	40	41
		% retention	75	80	88
		% pass rate	85	97	94
AVCE leisure and tourism (6 units)	3	No. of starts	*	20	24
		% retention	*	90	79
		% pass rate	*	89	68

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

127. Much of the teaching is good in both practical and theory lessons. Teachers make use of a good variety of activities. They provide opportunities for discussion and debate and encourage learners to express their ideas. For example, learners in cabin crew preparation suggested ways of dealing with in-flight medical emergencies. Some teaching provides well for learners of different attainment levels. For example, in one lesson on physical fitness tests, two sets of tasks were used, one for the more able learners. The lower-attaining learners were given effective individual attention and the higher attaining were pushed to extend their learning. Learners are well informed about courses and lesson content. In a few lessons, teachers fail to engage all the learners. For example, in one lesson, learners investigating why children should become involved in sport were reluctant to suggest reasons and to complete exercises. Residential and day visits, an integral part of the course, bring variety to the curriculum and provide valuable opportunities for the assessment of learners' vocational skills and good opportunities for learners to find out about careers. Most public services and sports learners take part in the college enrichment programme.

128. Teachers are well qualified. Many are working towards additional qualifications. Most teachers have relevant professional experience and use it to good effect in relating theory to practice. Links with outside service organisations and local professional football clubs are strong. Travel and tourism teaching is well resourced. Specialist manuals are used widely in lessons. A well-developed intranet site provides further information for learners.

129. The range of courses caters for learners at different entry levels. Initial interview guidance and induction programmes generally make sure that learners are on the right course. Learners can follow relevant additional courses to enrich their main course of study.

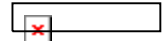
130. Learners' progress is closely monitored. Learners receive helpful feedback on written work and this helps them to improve their work. Written assessments are rigorous. Learners complete individual learning plans that are used to help learners assess how well they are performing. The

tutorial system provides good pastoral and academic support. A group profile helps teachers identify learners who need additional help or guidance.

Leadership and management

131. The curriculum area is well led. Teachers are appropriately involved in decision making and are well informed about college priorities. Weaknesses identified through, for example, self-assessment, and issues related to the development of courses are acted upon. For example, resources to support the new sports courses have been provided and the need for an improved curriculum offer in public services has been addressed. Course management is good. Close monitoring of retention and pass rates through the analysis of data has contributed to high levels in both. There are annual staff appraisals for most staff. For new staff they are twice yearly. Staff development supports the college and academy objectives, for example, in helping to widen participation.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy



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

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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on part-time courses
- good practical teaching
- wide range of industry links
- good support for learners.

Weaknesses

- low pass and retention rates on some NVQ courses
- too many dull and uninspiring lessons
- low completion rate for the full framework for work-based apprentices

- insufficient client base for practice and assessment.

Scope of provision

132. Hair and beauty is located in The Riverside Studios on the city centre campus. The section offers a broad range of courses. There are NVQs in hairdressing at levels 1 to 3 and in beauty therapy from foundation to level 3. There is a full-time national diploma course in beauty therapy, a diploma in holistic therapy and a diploma in sports therapy. Part-time courses include aromatherapy, reflexology, beauty specialist, manicure and pedicure, advanced nail techniques, waxing and depilation. There are also courses for those wishing to study body massage, sport and remedial massage, Indian head massage, management of sports injuries, nutrition, and anatomy and physiology. There are currently 208 learners aged 16 to 18 and 65 adults studying on full-time courses. Some 118 learners aged 16 to 18 and 417 adults are on part-time courses. There are 60 foundation modern apprentices in hairdressing.

Achievement and standards

133. Retention and pass rates are high on part-time courses. For example, the pass and retention rates on the diploma in aromatherapy have been high in the two years to 2001/02. Pass rates are low on the full-time NVQ level 1 and 2 courses in hairdressing. Retention rates on the level 1 course were also low in 2001/02. There is good recruitment to modern apprenticeships, but there is a high drop out rate and few apprentices achieve the full framework within the identified time period. For example, 60 learners started foundation modern apprenticeships in 1999 and 2000. Only 19 reached the end of the planned learning programme and only 2 learners have achieved the full framework. Achievement of the associated NVQs is better, but still low, with only 17 learners achieving this qualification.

134. Many learners have a mature approach to their learning. Learners' portfolios are especially well presented on the theatrical and media make-up course.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ hairdressing	1	No. of starts	9	12	28
		% retention	89	64	37
		% pass rate	75	29	60
NVQ hairdressing 2 year	2	No. of starts	65	76	*
		% retention	81	77	*
		% pass rate	67	62	*
NVQ beauty therapy	2	No. of starts	*	51	38
		% retention	*	70	65
		% pass rate	*	57	86
Certificate in manicure and pedicure	2	No. of starts	16	41	10
		% retention	75	56	60
		% pass rate	83	78	83
Diploma in	3	No. of starts	61	77	52

aromatherapy		% retention	92	91	81
		% pass rate	78	91	98
Indian head massage	2	No. of starts	38	100	67
		% retention	89	96	93
		% pass rate	53	72	89
National diploma beauty therapy	3	No. of starts	15	13	17
		% retention	93	85	81
		% pass rate	100	45	85
Theatrical and media make-up 1 year	3	No. of starts	15	18	11
		% retention	87	94	91
		% pass rate	54	53	100
Diploma in reflexology	3	No. of starts	49	65	50
		% retention	82	92	94
		% pass rate	90	88	96

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

*unreliable data

Quality of education and training

135. Most of the practical teaching is good. However, too many lessons are dull and uninspiring. There are well written schemes of work and clear lesson plans. There is good teaching on the theatrical and media make-up course. For example, one well-planned practical lesson started with a demonstration of the application of a latex nose. During the demonstration, good use was made of questioning to check understanding. The learners were then progressively involved in the work, with the teacher allowing them to make their own decisions, for example about choice of colour and questioning them about their choices. Good teaching also takes place in some practical lessons in beauty therapy and holistic courses, where learners receive useful advice from the teacher whilst they undertake practical work. On one holistic therapy course, learners provided paying clients with a professionally managed session and a good standard of care. Learners benefit from the up-to-date industrial experience of teachers on most courses. In a significant proportion of lessons, the pace of learning is slow. The teaching fails to motivate students or to improve the performance of the more able learners. Standards of professional dress are often poor and fail to reflect those of industry.

136. The physical resources provide a satisfactory learning environment. There are hairdressing and beauty salons, and a theatrical and media make-up room. There are also dedicated theory rooms, a laundry, dispensary areas and a general reception with a retail facility. The salons are well equipped, with a good range of appropriate equipment. Learners are able to use a selection of commercially available professional products. The learning resource area has a good selection of relevant books and a comprehensive range of trade magazines. Learners have access to computers via the Internet café. There is some excellent support for learners with significant physical difficulties. For example, visually impaired learners have been supported through a holistic course with the use of a specially calibrated piece of equipment that allowed them to mix their essential oils safely.

137. There are restricted opportunities for assessment in the workplace and in the college training salons. Some salons do not have an on-site assessor to record assessments. There are low numbers of clients in the college. These factors slow the progress of learners and apprentices significantly. Teachers give constructive feedback that helps learners to improve their performance. However, individual learning plans are not used consistently to track the progress of the learner in work-based learning and plan future work.

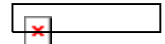
138. There is a good range of enrichment opportunities available for learners. For example, first-year hairdressing learners are offered manicure training. Other learners are offered Indian head massage. Commercial companies deliver product knowledge and specialist treatment training.

139. Most full-time learners receive good advice prior to joining their course. The induction process is helpful. There are regular group and individual tutorials for college-based learners, which ensure that progress is checked closely. Learners value the support they receive from their tutors. Effective procedures are used to monitor learner absences. Good feedback is provided on learners' progress for parents and employers. Good learning support is available from staff in the Internet café.

Leadership and management

140. Clear areas of responsibility are devolved from the academy manager to the 11 programme leaders. The course teams work closely to provide a supportive learning environment for their learners. Course teams recognise and understand their contribution to the self-assessment process through their own quality monitoring systems. There are weaknesses in the management of work-based learning. The self-assessment report recognises many of the weaknesses of the provision and the recent appointment of a work-based assessor has begun to address weaknesses in assessment practice.

Health, social and childcare



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

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

Strengths

- very high pass rates in 2002
- good teaching in practical lessons
- effective use of IT resources
- effective teacher support
- good work placement opportunities.

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory temporary accommodation
- unsatisfactory punctuality
- low framework completion for modern apprentices.

Scope of provision

141. A wide range of full-time and part-time courses, from levels 1 to 4, is offered. There are about 250 learners aged 16 to 18 and over 400 adult learners. Nearly all the adults study part-time and are equally divided between health and social care courses and childcare and early years courses. The learners aged 16 to 18 mainly study full time and two thirds are on childcare and early years courses.

Achievement and standards

142. Pass rates are high on many courses. In 2002, pass rates were outstanding with 100% pass rates on many courses at levels 1, 2 and 3. Pass rates on the diploma in nursery nursing, diploma in playgroup practice and NVQ level 2 care have been consistently above the national average for the past three years. Retention rates are at or above national averages on most courses. They have declined in the three years to 2001/02 on the diploma in nursery nursing, and the certificate in childcare and education.

143. Few modern apprentices achieve the full apprenticeship framework, largely owing to a failure to complete the key skills component of the framework. For example, of the 11 advanced modern apprentices recruited in 2000 only two have completed the key skills component. However, seven have so far completed the NVQ component and three are still on the programme. Learners who study for NVQs through work-based learning achieve higher success rates. For example, of the 59 learners who started such programmes between 1997 and 2000, 41 reached the end of the planned programme and 39 have achieved the NVQ. Progression rates to further studies in the college or elsewhere are high.

144. Learners' written work is well presented and of an appropriate level for their course. They are developing the skills and knowledge required in the workplace and demonstrate good practical caring skills both in lessons and when in work placements. Punctuality is unsatisfactory, with many learners arriving late for lessons. Teachers do not consistently challenge late arrival in lessons.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health, social and childcare, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	35	41	30
		% retention	86	78	73
		% pass rate	83	81	100
NVQ early years care and education	2	No. of starts	13	10	53
		% retention	92	100	94
		% pass rate	33	38	93

NVQ care (development)	2	No. of starts	46	36	46
		% retention	96	81	89
		% pass rate	90	79	100
NVQ early years care and education	3	No. of starts	17	13	27
		% retention	76	100	93
		% pass rate	8	31	100
Diploma in playgroup practice	3	No. of starts	22	38	50
		% retention	100	97	98
		% pass rate	97	64	100
Diploma in nursery nursing	3	No. of starts	38	41	17
		% retention	87	71	65
		% pass rate	91	92	100
Advanced certificate counselling skills	3	No. of starts	12	27	28
		% retention	92	93	86
		% pass rate	100	48	100
AVCE health and social care	3	No. of starts	*	18	10
		% retention	*	83	90
		% pass rate	*	78	100

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

145. The majority of lessons are well planned. The individual learning needs of learners are sensitively considered. The aims and objectives of lessons are shared with learners. Teaching is good in practical lessons. In the better lessons, teachers encourage learners to draw on their personal and work experiences to help them understand theoretical concepts and to share ideas. Many teachers plan and implement a range of challenging, exciting activities to promote both the professional role and reflective practice. For example, in an NVQ child development lesson, learners identified positive and negative images portrayed to children through songs and rhymes, building on the themes of familiar, unfamiliar and cross-cultural music. Learners work in groups to prepare activities for use in the workplace. Tasks are set which extend the more able. Learners receive very good teaching and training to increase their understanding and awareness of equal opportunities and health and safety in the work place.

146. In the less effective lessons, teachers provide learners with activities that are too narrow in scope. Some activities, whilst relevant, are insufficiently demanding for all learners, some of whom then become bored and distracted. In some lessons, teachers do not involve all learners sufficiently.

147. The majority of teaching areas are well maintained and provide a good learning environment. Displays in teaching areas and corridors provide evidence of learners' work. The temporary portacabin accommodation is unsatisfactory; the layout of the rooms is not conducive to group work or the development of practical skills. They are sometimes cold, and access to them is difficult. Learners have access to a well-equipped learning resources centre and make very good use of it. Learners on care and childcare courses make good use of ICT and the Internet. Learners appreciate the recently opened cyber café. Learners have web-based access to a vast range of resources to support their studies. The range of textbooks available in the library is restricted, and many

publications are dated. Most teachers have appropriate academic and professional qualifications. New staff who are vocationally competent, but do not have a teaching qualification, undertake appropriate teacher training.

148. Assignments are linked carefully to schemes of work. They are well written and emphasise appropriately the relationships between theory and work placements. Assignments are usually marked and returned within the agreed time span. Feedback from teachers provides clear guidance to learners on how to improve their performance.

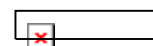
149. The academy provides a wide range of learning opportunities for learners aged 16 to 18 and adults from the local community. Provision of NVQ courses in care and childcare has been increased in response to local need and the requirements of local employers. The college has recently been awarded centre of vocational excellence status and is developing the range of services to meet the needs of local employers. Distance learning and short course provision are used to provide, for example, first aid, lifting and handling, and basic food hygiene. Many learners on care and childcare courses benefit from good work placements. Learners on the pre-nursing course are provided with work placements at a major local hospital. They are guaranteed employment on successful completion of their course and are also guaranteed sponsorship on to registered nurse training. Good use is made of visits to exhibitions and museums. Full-time learners have the opportunity to gain additional qualifications, for example, first aid and basic food hygiene certificates, which broaden their experience and enhance their employment prospects.

150. Guidance and support for learners are good. There are effective pre-course arrangements. Advice and guidance are provided through the college information team and the academy team. There is good impartial advice for learners wanting to progress on to higher or further study. Part-time learners do not always receive an induction. Learners' progress is recorded and monitored through a well-established and effective tutorial system. The quality of individual learning plans varies. In the best plans, goals and targets set are clear and well documented. In the less effective plans, the goals are unclear and there is little evidence of effective tracking and review of target completion.

Leadership and management

151. Management is good. The management team has been recently changed and it is introducing changes that are having a positive effect on the learners' experience. Teachers are appropriately involved in planning the changes. Strategies have been introduced to manage attendance and punctuality. However, whilst attendance management is effective, punctuality remains poor. Staff development opportunities are good. All staff are given the opportunity to update their occupational experience and new staff receive good support. Management of work-based learning is unsatisfactory. The structures and rigour required to ensure effective learning outcomes for learners on modern apprentice programmes are not satisfactorily promoted. All teachers are involved in the self-assessment process.

Visual and performing arts



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

Strengths

- improved and now high pass rates on most courses

- good resources in art, applied arts and music
- much good teaching
- a good enrichment programme.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on some courses
- some unsatisfactory accommodation
- low attendance on some courses.

Scope of provision

152. Full-time courses are offered from levels 1 to 3 in visual and performing arts, music and media. They include first diplomas in music and design and a range of GCSEs and Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diplomas in design, drama, music and media. The diploma in foundation art and design recruits very well. There are also GCE AS and A levels in a several subjects including photography, media, film studies, drama and music. Numerous short vocational and leisure courses are offered. Some, including sound recording and creative studies attract large numbers of learners. There are over 500 full-time equivalent learners, just over half of whom are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

153. Pass rates have improved over the three years to 2002 and are now high on many courses. For example, the pass rate on the GNVQ advanced media was 100% in 2002 and on the City and Guilds introduction to home interior design course, the pass rate has improved markedly from 79% in 2000 to 100% in 2002. Where higher grades are awarded, learners have also achieved above average percentages of high grades. Some 60% of the learners on the diploma in foundation art and design achieved high grades in 2001.

154. Retention rates are more variable. They are high on most art and design courses. On some performing arts courses, they are low. For example, on the advanced GNVQ in performing arts and its replacement, the national diploma in drama, retention rates have been well below national averages. Pass and retention rates on level 1 courses are often high. The introduction to home interior design course regularly achieves pass and retention rates in excess of national averages.

155. In art and design, the quality of work in learner portfolios and sketchbooks is high. In music, learners' instrumental and technical skills are good. Most learners have developed the ability to work

independently. Learners enjoy their studies. In art and applied arts, individual portfolios display a wide range of work. Foundation art and design learners following the sculpture option are able to explain their chosen materials in a critical manner using appropriate terminology. Learners respond well in question and answer sessions and are able to work with maturity on individual projects. Attendance, at 69%, was low overall in the lessons inspected. It is low, for example, on GCE A2 photography and the national diploma in music.

A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
City and Guilds 7819 intro to home interior design, 2 year	1	No. of starts	23	7	10
		% retention	91	100	80
		% pass rate	79	86	100
GCSE art	2	No. of starts	33	37	18
		% retention	55	76	78
		% pass rate	39	73	85
GNVQ advanced media 1999/2001 national diploma media production 2001/02	3	No. of starts	21	20	24
		% retention	52	80	71
		% pass rate	82	100	100
GNVQ performing arts 1998/2000 national diploma drama 2001/02	3	No. of starts	22	19	21
		% retention	55	56	24
		% pass rate	33	50	80
National diploma in design	3	No. of starts	81	96	55
		% retention	73	73	58
		% pass rate	89	79	94
Diploma in foundation art and design	3	No. of starts	117	137	158
		% retention	93	92	89
		% pass rate	96	90	93

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

Quality of education and training

156. Much of the teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and managed and teaching is supported by good handouts. Teaching is enthusiastic and, in some cases, highly imaginative. In one national diploma music class, for example, learners were taught about psychedelic music by a teacher dressed in psychedelic clothes. They were played music from the period and encouraged to relate it to the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War. The teacher carefully enabled learners with varying levels of ability to participate fully. Team teaching in foundation art and design works particularly well in supporting a diverse range of learner activity. Most teachers plan carefully to include all learners and learner feedback reflects positively on both the teaching and courses provided by the college. Learners make effective progress and contribute well in lessons. In music, learners are encouraged to be original in their compositions and performances.

157. Accommodation for media studies is good. Specialist art rooms, for example, the print making studio and the three-dimensional workshop, are well equipped. Storage space in some areas is insufficient. The music department has equipment, for example in the recording studio, which is of professional standard. There are some weaknesses in the accommodation for performing arts. For example, there is limited theatre and dance space. Effective use is made of the college's good IT

facilities.

158. Assessment is well managed. In art and applied arts, assignment briefs are clear and interesting. A good range of assessment methods is used, including peer review in the foundation art and design. Most teachers provide detailed verbal and written feedback to learners on the quality of their work and how to improve it. Internal verification is well established in some areas and good efforts are being made to standardise assessment practice across all areas of work.

159. The college provides a wide and diverse range of courses, which is appropriate to the area. Learners experience a rich curriculum, which includes a wide range of additional activities. For example, vocational programmes integrate visits to exhibitions and regular performances in local venues within the assignment work. Art and design and media learners go on visits to other countries.

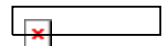
160. Learners receive good advice and guidance prior to enrolment and an appropriate induction to the college and their course. The tutorial system provides good guidance on careers and other progression opportunities. There are effective links between personal tutors and the college support services. For example, these support services provide good support for dyslexic learners.

161. Tutors contact learners who do not attend regularly. Administrative processes and learner tracking could still be improved.

Leadership and management

162. Most course teams work cohesively and communicate well. For example, media team meetings are held regularly and minuted effectively. They result in clear action planning and appropriate curriculum development. Managers liaise effectively with their teams. Self-assessment reports are suitably critical. Staff appraisal is effective. Quality assurance has had a positive effect on improving teaching and learning. Staff at all levels contribute positively to the implementation of improvements.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on many courses
- much good teaching
- good use of teachers' subject expertise
- interesting and well-used web-based learning opportunities.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on most GCE AS courses
- under-developed management of learners' progress
- insufficient marking of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Scope of provision

163. There is a wide range of provision at levels 2 and 3. Psychology, law, sociology, geography, history and philosophy are offered at GCE AS and A levels, and many of these through the access to HE courses. The GCSE provision includes psychology, humanities and history. Most of these courses are offered both through daytime and through evening classes. The access evening course is supplemented by whole-day sessions on Saturdays at approximately three-week intervals. Psychology GCSE is provided in the evening in two community centres. The college works in partnership with the local education authority to offer a GCSE humanities course to learners aged under 16 for whom school provision is not deemed appropriate. The humanities timetable allows considerable flexibility for learners to construct a programme of study that suits their interests and progression needs. Learners on GCE AS courses are offered key skills and GCE AS critical thinking. About 160 full-time equivalent learners (1,200 enrolments) study on humanities programmes; 30% are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

164. Pass rates on most courses are high. In 2002, for example, 52 learners completed GCE A-level courses in law, philosophy, and psychology, and 98% achieved pass grades. On GCE AS courses, pass rates in law and philosophy are above the average for similar colleges. A high proportion of learners achieve higher A to C grades at GCE A1 and A2 levels. However, the overall pass rate at GCE AS across all courses, with the exception of law, has fallen between 2001 and 2002. A high proportion, 68%, of learners on GCSE humanities courses obtained grades A* to C grades in 2002. Pass rates on the one-year access course are above the average for the awarding body.

165. Retention rates are unsatisfactory on many GCE AS courses. The rates are well below the averages for similar colleges. In geography, there has been a significant improvement in the year 2001/02 to well above the average. Retention rates on other full-time courses are satisfactory.

166. Learners' contribution to discussion in lessons is of a high standard. They often handle complex concepts even when using informal language. Much of the written work shows good subject understanding.

A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCE A-level* law	3	No. of starts	37	37	20
		% retention	68	73	80
		% pass rate	48	52	100

GCE A-level* psychology	3	No. of starts	56	56	42
		% retention	64	52	70
		% pass rate	72	71	100
GCE AS philosophy	3	No. of starts	**	40	27
		% retention	**	70	67
		% pass rate	**	79	78
Access to HE 1 year full time	3	No. of starts	152	120	97
		% retention	76	77	69
		% pass rate	70	78	74
Access to HE 2 year part time	3	No. of starts	61	54	33
		% retention	62	62	79
		% pass rate	64	78	60

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

*GCE A-level subjects changed to GCE A2 in 2002

**course did not run

Quality of education and training

167. Much of the teaching is good. Lessons are well structured, helping to ensure that learners are interested and engaged. Teachers on GCE A-level and AS courses plan a variety of activities and frequently check on learners' understanding. This is often done by probing questioning or by short quizzes and questionnaires that remain in the learner's file for revision purposes. In access course lessons, thoughtful use is made of learners' prior experience to help them understand new concepts. At all levels, including GCSE, teachers skilfully summarise learners' responses to questions, phrasing them in more academic and subject-related terminology. Learners make good progress in lessons and learn to use appropriate terminology confidently and accurately.

168. Schemes of work show a clear, logical development of theory throughout the courses. Individual lesson plans have clear learning outcomes, which are given to learners at the start of the lesson. When teachers share a subject group, they divide the work appropriately and ensure that they make links between the lessons. For example, in sociology two teachers share a group and ensure that they update each other frequently so that learners progress smoothly. This process is aided by a learners' study guide with links to relevant resource material.

169. Learning is well supported by good resources. Teachers keep their subject expertise up to date by a variety of methods: some do research into educational matters relating to the college, for example, the importance of faith groups for access learners; one has written a book on teaching level 3 philosophy; others are examiners. Recent data are used. For example, in one lesson, recent Home Office data were used in a discussion on crime. Teachers also use themselves as resources, for example, creating a simple dance routine to explain the different types of movement at the margins of tectonic plates. Web-based learning is used in interesting ways. There are self-marking revision assessments written by teachers. A philosophy discussion line enables debate to continue on problems such as why words change meaning, but numbers do not. As the site is web based, learners can and do access it at any time. Teachers closely monitor the use of these sites. Classrooms are bright, clean, well equipped and enlivened by relevant posters and displays. There is, however, little use of learner work in these displays.

170. Individual learners with identified learning needs are well supported through the provision of study support. Learners also praise the accessibility and helpfulness of their tutors. Some tutors use

the initial assessment in learning styles to help learners develop ways of changing the material they are given into a format more suited to them. For example, visual learners are helped to create mind maps or use colour.

171. Written work is marked thoroughly, often with helpful comments throughout the text. However, there is very little formative assessment of the basic writing skills necessary for the communication of complex concepts. There is very little marking of errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar, even when these lead to ambiguity or lack of clarity. Even when these errors are identified, there is no commentary to explain to the learner how they could improve. There is little assessment of learning skills. The assessment front cover sheet for access courses is designed to give equal space to subject and learning skills assessment. In most cases, the space for this feedback is used solely for subject comments.

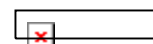
172. There are insufficiently developed strategies to manage learners' progress. Targets set in tutorials are not sufficiently specific and are not time-bound. There are very general targets such as improving time management or writing skills. In some cases, study support teachers have given specific advice about appropriate action to be taken, but this is not reflected in the tutorial records. The monitoring of attendance is also weak. Some registers were not up to date, so action could not be taken by tutors to intervene to help learners at risk of dropping out. All full-time and many part-time learners are offered regular tutorials and can contact staff easily for study support.

Leadership and management

173. Managers have introduced strategies for growth, widening participation and improved retention rates of current learners. These are in the early stages of development. Formal plans are in place for substantial staff development to enable key skills to be embedded into the GCE A-level subject offer. There has been an effective development to deliver key skill communication through GCE AS critical thinking. Meetings to develop strategy, operational meetings and tutorials are minuted and actions recorded.

174. Self-assessment involves staff appropriately. Three self-assessment reports are produced for humanities and the access course. Inspectors generally agreed with the findings of the self-assessment report, in particular with the identification of high quality teaching and the weak target setting.

English, and modern foreign languages



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most English courses
- much good teaching
- innovative coursework assignments in English

- confident use of foreign languages
- strong assessment procedures.

Weaknesses

- low attendance in GCSE English classes
- low pass rates on some modern foreign languages courses.

Scope of provision

175. There is daytime and evening provision in English literature and language and in modern foreign languages. Foreign language provision is provided at different levels in the four most common European languages and in Welsh. There are approximately 190 full-time equivalent learners, with 40% aged 16 to 18. About 125 learners are studying GCE A-level English and 160 are taking GCSE English. In modern foreign languages, 83 learners follow daytime courses and 260 follow evening courses. Approximately 120 full-time and fifty part-time learners study English as a foreign language (EFL) programmes, taking a range of qualifications from elementary level to level 6. Community-based provision is available in English language, the above mentioned modern foreign languages provision, and Japanese and Arabic.

Achievement and standards

176. Pass rates have been high on most English courses in the three years to 2002. For example, GCE AS English literature pass rates have been above 95% in both 2001 and 2002. The higher grade (A* to C) pass rates in GCSE English language are well above the national average. There is a high percentage of high-grade passes in GCE AS literature. Retention rates on GCE A-level English provision in the two years to 2001 were low. The introduction of the GCE A2 qualification has resulted in good retention rates; for example, 100% in English language. Retention rates in GCE AS English are close to the national average in both language and literature.

177. Pass rates in GCE AS modern foreign languages courses were low in 2001, but had improved significantly in 2002. In 2002, they were well above national averages in all four major languages. In 2002, retention rates on GCE AS courses were low in French and German, average in Italian, and high in Spanish. Pass and retention rates on GCE A-level modern foreign languages courses in the two years to 2001 fluctuated above and below the average. Pass rates in English and languages in the community programme are in line with similar provision nationally. Attendance is poor in GCSE English classes, variable in other English classes and good in lessons in modern foreign languages and EFL.

178. Learners demonstrate confidence in oral work in English. Some GCE A-level learners have developed sophisticated oral skills and can articulate complex arguments; this was illustrated by discussions on the contextual significance of the Union Jack and on the changing representation of male and female roles. Written assignments for coursework are generally of a good standard and show that learners have been challenged and stimulated. Some are excellent and have been awarded top marks. Some learners do not develop skills in selecting, prioritising and note taking.

Learners in modern foreign languages lessons use the target language with confidence. In a Welsh class, the learners actively entered into role play. In EFL lessons, some learners progress with speed in speaking and listening skills.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English, and modern foreign languages, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	206	169	186
		% retention	72	77	73
		% pass rate	52	59	69
GCSE Spanish	2	No. of starts	53	74	80
		% retention	63	70	64
		% pass rate	60	43	78
Cambridge first certificate (EFL)	2	No. of starts	55	***	15
		% retention	78	***	60
		% pass rate	58	***	33
GCE AS English language	3	No. of starts	**	18	45
		% retention	**	89	82
		% pass rate	**	94	76
GCE A-level * Spanish 1 year	3	No. of starts	29	20	18
		% retention	74	85	83
		% pass rate	88	94	87
GCE AS German	3	No. of starts	**	13	20
		% retention	**	62	55
		% pass rate	**	63	91
GCE A-level * English language	3	No. of starts	25	22	14
		% retention	64	52	100
		% pass rate	88	91	100
GCE AS English literature	3	No. of starts	**	39	47
		% retention	**	56	79
		% pass rate	**	95	97
GCE A-level * English literature	3	No. of starts	55	47	27
		% retention	53	68	93
		% pass rate	79	91	100

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* GCE A-level subjects changed to GCE A2 in 2002

** course not running

*** too few students to provide a valid calculation

Quality of education and training

179. Much of the teaching is good. The relationship between learners and teachers is purposeful

and learners are well motivated. GCSE learners are focused; especially considering that some have not had a positive prior learning experience. They make good progress and are attentive. In the best lessons, teachers use a variety of teaching and learning tasks with well-prepared resources. In English, the use of video extracts, OHP presentations, music, and visual images enhance learning effectively. The use of role-play, dramatic reading and theatre visits supports learners in their study of texts and language. Some lessons in English proceeded at an inappropriate pace and lack an appropriate variety of tasks.

180. In modern foreign languages, there is an unusually consistent use of the target language, both to manage classroom situations and to explain vocabulary and grammatical structures. The majority of teachers have a good command of modern foreign languages teaching methodology and make use of humour as an aid to memory. Modern foreign languages learners are generally very committed learners and many spend time practising the language outside the lesson. In EFL lessons, teachers use a variety of texts and resources including games and laminated word cards to support learning. Learners work in carefully composed groups to meet the needs of learners working at different levels and to permit more confident learners to support beginners.

181. There are effective assessment procedures. Teachers are assiduous in their marking and give helpful written feedback. Learners' progress is thoroughly evaluated and commented on by teachers through reports and individual learning plans. Teachers prepare learners well for examinations, making assessment objectives and examiners' expectations clear. Coursework assignments are innovative. Learners understand how to improve their work. In modern foreign languages, each class has its own recording form and assessments are carried out rigorously. However, insufficient use is made of learners' prior qualifications to set targets. In the community provision, assessment still needs to be developed. International learners enrolling on main college programmes have not all been screened for literacy and there are instances of learners with insufficient English skills to meet the demands of their course.

182. Accommodation is attractive and comfortable, with most rooms adaptable for different teaching and learning styles with the exception of an unsuitable language laboratory. The quality of accommodation in the community provision is variable. Most centres have access to videos and tape recorders. The library has good reference, language, literature, and fiction sections, which are used extensively. Teachers are well qualified, and keep up to date through staff development, including attending, and sometimes organising, external courses. Many teachers of modern foreign languages are native speakers.

183. There is good, broad provision in modern foreign languages at the main sites and at several levels. Community provision has flourished. EFL provision needs to be developed to meet most closely learners' requirements. The college is aware of this and is introducing new courses. Visits, social events, theatre trips and conferences enrich the formal teaching programme.

184. Learners are aware of the centrally provided support offered by the college and value it highly. Good individual support was observed in most lessons. In some GCSE lessons, there is additional one-to-one learning support. Group tutorials provide a good quality, coherent programme of pastoral teaching, including careers guidance and exam preparation.

Leadership and management

185. The area is effectively and efficiently managed. The quality assurance system includes course and programme area self-assessment reviews, which are well used to plan improvements. Lesson observation is methodical and the grades awarded are realistic. Staff development is encouraged and teachers are well supported. The community provision lacks subject-specific leadership. While members of different teams work closely together on sharing resources and curriculum materials, there could be more sharing of good practice of teaching and learning styles.

Literacy and numeracy



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

Strengths

- well managed provision
- much good teaching and learning
- a wide range of provision.

Weaknesses

- poor target setting for literacy and numeracy in study support
- some poor teaching materials and accommodation in off-site provision.

Scope of provision

186. The inspection covered literacy and numeracy below level 2 in the centre for foundation and community education. Currently, there are 396 learners in discrete basic skills and community education, 201 in supportive education. Fifty of these are learners aged 16 to 18. There are 530 learners receiving additional learning support; nearly all of these are aged 16 to 18.

187. Literacy and numeracy tuition is provided on both the main college sites. It is provided as discrete provision, in additional support sessions, on courses for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, on level 1 courses, and in many community venues and the workplace. A wide range of innovative courses is offered and developed in a variety of community venues to attract learners who are hard to reach.

Achievement and standards

188. In discrete basic skills provision, the achievement of learning goals is high and standards of learners' work in class and in portfolios are high. Specific individual targets for improvements in literacy and numeracy skills are not set in study support sessions. This makes the development of skills and the progress made towards achievement difficult to monitor and identify.

189. Retention rates are above national averages on most courses. In the classes observed, attendance was satisfactory, at 76%.

Quality of education and training

190. The quality of teaching is predominately good or better. In most sessions, the needs and

learning styles of learners have been accurately assessed and specific, challenging learning goals set, based on this assessment. The goals are clearly identified in individual learning plans, enabling teachers to plan learning and monitor progress and achievement accurately. Learners are aware of their learning goals and can identify how completed work contributes to their achievement. Learning plans also contain targets for the improvement of personal skills to contribute to the achievement of long term learning goals. Lesson plans are closely matched to the learners' needs and interests and include detailed reference to teaching and learning styles and the use of support staff. The wide range of teaching methods used motivates and stimulates learners.

191. In study support, teachers have a friendly approach. A range of teaching styles, methods and resources challenge and motivate learners. Work is clearly marked and evaluated and learners are given constructive feedback.

192. Most teachers have specialist basic skills teaching qualification and, having attended recent training, have a clear understanding of the new teaching and learning framework, including the national standards and core curricula for basic skills. However, recently-appointed staff have no specialist literacy or numeracy teaching qualifications.

193. Some off-site accommodation is poor. In one session, learners and teachers were using an unheated room and had to wear their coats. Learning materials used in some off-site provision are of poor quality. There is inadequate access to IT facilities for learners and teachers off site. However, this had no significant impact on teaching, learning or attainment in this area. Limited facilities and opening times at the Newmarket Road site learning resource centre mean that some learners are unable to practice and develop skills learnt in the evenings.

194. In discrete basic skills, the provision assessment of individual learning needs is robust and is used to inform a negotiated learning programme. Learners value the guidance they receive which enables them to be placed on an appropriate course. Access to additional learning support is good and there are sufficient resources to meet the assessed needs of most learners. Learners appreciate the learning and personal support to which they have access.

195. A wide range of innovative courses is offered to attract hard-to-reach learners in a variety of community venues. In one off-site venue, a Build-a-Bike course is offered. Numeracy skills are embedded in this practical workshop. At the end of the ten-week course, learners will own a restored bicycle, have learnt some practical skills and improved their numeracy skills. Learners who have completed a 'Keeping up with the children' course progress on to a 'Literacy through art' course at the local museum. Provision in the workplace is good. Company reports indicate that there have been improvements in productivity through the improvements in employees' basic skills.

196. All learners have a personal interview and initial assessment to identify starting points for the development of detailed individual plans. Their work is marked and evaluated, and clear and positive feedback given. Individual learning plans are regularly updated with detailed recording of achievement and progress made. Reviews of progress are carried out at regular intervals, although, in some cases, these intervals are too long to assess accurately the pace of progress and degree of achievement. There is a clear procedure for moderating the setting of targets and the quality of the individual learning plans in discrete basic skills provision. However, at present, there is no process for moderating the standard, consistency, and adequacy of work that counts towards achievement of non-accredited learning.

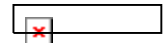
Leadership and management

197. There is a clear strategy for basic skills, which is an integral part of the overall college's strategy. This strategy is supported by a detailed action plan for the training and personal development of staff. Individual staff needs for training are identified through the appraisal process. Key skills, basic skills and study support are now managed within one centre. The new management structure supports the development of an integrated approach to basic skills across the college. This approach is not yet fully implemented and some areas of good basic skills practice are not sufficiently shared across the college. The excellent practice in individual learning planning in

discrete basic skills, for example, is not yet shared with staff in study support or initial studies. A weakness is the lack of current data to permit the analysis of the impact of literacy or numeracy support on the achievement of learners' main learning goals.

198. The provision is well managed. Communications within the centre are good. All academies have regular formal meetings and informal contact through small meetings and e-mail. Academy managers meet together on a regular basis. Course leaders are closely involved in the self-assessment process and all staff are aware of the planned developments for basic skills in the college.

English for speakers of other languages



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

Strengths

- teaching and learning well matched to individual need
- high pass and retention rates
- a programme responsive to local need
- well-managed provision.

Weaknesses

- inconsistent recording of progress
- a narrow range of learning resources.

Scope of provision

199. The college offers a programme of part-time ESOL courses. Learners attend language courses for up to ten hours a week as well as following ICT and numeracy provision. In addition to the courses offered at the city centre campus, courses are provided in a range of venues in Cambridgeshire. The college has a franchise arrangement for the delivery of a fast track, seven-day ESOL programme for recently arrived asylum seekers detained at an immigration centre. The recent restructuring of the college has brought together all discrete adult basic education and ESOL under

one academy. There are 585 adult learners and 31 learners aged 16 to 18 attending ESOL sessions.

Achievement and standards

200. Pass and retention rates are high. There are high pass rates in examinations at entry level and level 1. The overall standard of work is good for the level at which the learners are working. For those learners who are not working towards accreditation, achievement as shown by their individual learning plans is good. Learners are consistently keen, confident and hard working. Their levels of oral skills are high and their ability to communicate is good. Learners develop good personal and learning skills, develop confidence and increase their self-esteem. Attendance is generally satisfactory, but during the inspection it was poor, averaging 53%, with some learners taking extended vacations around the Christmas period.

Quality of education and training

201. Most of the teaching is good or better and well matched to individual needs. Students make good progress. Schemes of work and lesson plans are detailed and are linked to the national curriculum. Teachers are well qualified and experienced and use an effective and appropriate variety of teaching strategies to meet the needs of individual learners. Lively and innovative teaching enables learners to learn from and support each other during paired and group work and to develop confidence in using oral communication skills. In an entry level ESOL lesson held in a local primary school, learners worked in pairs on tasks that enabled them to practice and integrate skills in listening, reading, speaking and writing. The teacher made good use of the kitchen equipment in the room for cookery lessons, using it to teach vocabulary. Teachers' skilful use of repetition helps learners to build on concepts introduced in previous lessons and aids their understanding of grammatical structures. There is good use made of learners' experiences to develop oral skills.

202. In some lessons, there is an over-reliance on the use of textbooks as a teaching resource. There is little use of IT software to promote independent learning. Visual displays in the base rooms are poor.

203. Initial assessment identifies the broad needs of learners and is used to place them in appropriate groups. Further diagnostic testing is effective in identifying individual learning needs. Teachers are aware of the learning goals and progress made by the learners. However, teachers' recording of the progress learners make in each session is inconsistent. Individual learning plans have only recently been introduced for all learners and the progress made prior to their introduction was not always adequately recorded

204. The programme is responsive to local needs. There are good partnerships and strong links with the minority ethnic forum, which are used to inform the planning of provision. The recent increase in the number of young males taking up provision has resulted in an increase in the number of beginners' classes offered. Innovative programmes have been developed to motivate and meet the needs and interests of learners. They help them to develop their English skills and sometimes gain other qualifications, for example in first aid, food hygiene and job skills. The provision is responsive to the needs of local businesses; for example, a special course was tailored to the needs of local hospital staff and delivered on the hospital site. Provision developed at the immigration detention centre for asylum seekers gives learners essential skills in speaking and understanding English.

205. Learners receive good support and guidance. Those taking part in ICT courses have good in-class support from experienced ESOL teachers. Termly tutorials and progress reviews are used to identify achievement and set new targets. There is good support for ESOL learners on mainstream programmes through study support. Teachers help learners to make appointments with college guidance workers and with outside agencies who offer specialist advice and support. Learners who are not working and have free time are encouraged and helped by teachers to make use of the wide range of sports programmes available at the college.

Leadership and management

206. The provision is well managed by managers who set a clear direction to the work. The recent establishment of a new management structure bringing together the community and the college-based provision within the basic skills section, provides coherence. Managers' roles and responsibilities are well defined and the curriculum teams receive good support. Managers have a good understanding of the issues they need to address, and action has successfully been taken to deal with some weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. This includes the introduction of initial learning plans for all ESOL learners. Formal and informal systems of communication between managers and staff are effective. There is good support for staff. Teaching and learning observations identify staff development needs and all staff have attended training to deliver the new national curriculum. An effective internal verification system is in place for non-accredited learning.

Part D: College data

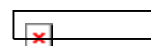
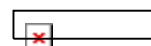


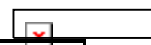
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18	19+
1	17	24
2	42	23
3	32	11
4/5	1	1
Other	8	41
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2003

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Enrolments %
Science and mathematics	980	993	8
Land-based provision	6	93	0
Construction	232	193	2
Engineering, technology and manufacture	337	311	2
Business administration, management and professional	507	2,719	12
Information and communications technology	1,026	4,492	22

Retailing, customer service and transportation	13	254	1
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	684	1,203	7
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	270	360	2
Health, social care and public services	736	2,407	12
Visual and performing arts and media	845	802	6
Humanities	398	821	5
English, languages and communication	1,146	1,383	10
Foundation programmes	919	2,096	11
Total	8,099	18,127	100

Source: provided by the college in 2003

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001
		1	Starters excluding transfers	333	793	581	2,077
	Retention rate (%)	76	88	82	77	82	80
	National average (%)	80	80	79	78	78	78
	Pass rate (%)	76	71	77	58	75	69
	National average (%)	59	65	68	60	66	68
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,383	1,755	1,883	1,542	2,265	2,074
	Retention rate (%)	77	79	79	77	80	78
	National average (%)	76	76	76	79	79	78
	Pass rate (%)	60	60	53	67	72	70
	National average (%)	65	66	69	62	65	69
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,743	1,598	2,103	1,596	1,784	1,891
	Retention rate (%)	75	76	71	76	80	78
	National average (%)	75	76	77	78	78	78
	Pass rate (%)	74	72	77	72	65	70
	National average (%)	72	74	76	62	66	69

4/5	Starters excluding transfers	*	*	102	134	182	189
	Retention rate (%)	*	*	89	82	90	87
	National average (%)	83	79	82	84	81	84
	Pass rate (%)	*	*	7	45	33	36
	National average (%)	64	66	55	56	56	53

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 and tertiary colleges).

Sources of information:

1. National averages: Benchmarking Data 1999 to 2001: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2002.

2. College rates for 1999 to 2001: College ISR.

* numbers too low to provide a valid calculation

3.

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)	60	31	9	132
Level 2 (intermediate)	64	31	5	98
Level 1 (foundation)	60	30	10	30
Other sessions	76	24	0	34
Totals	63	30	7	294