



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Exeter College

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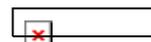
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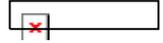
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Basic information about the college

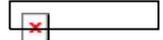


| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Name of college: | Exeter College |
| Type of college: | General further education/tertiary |
| Principal: | Richard Atkins |
| Address of college: | Hele Road Exeter Devon EX4 4JS |
| Telephone number: | 01392 205222 |
| Fax number: | 01392 210282 |
| Chair of governors: | John Laurence |
| Unique reference number: | 130645 |
| Name of reporting inspector: | Martyn Rhowbotham HMI |
| Dates of inspection: | 10-20 May 2004 |

Part A: Summary



Information about the college

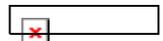


Exeter College was established in 1970 as the first tertiary college in England, bringing together the sixth forms of the former grammar schools and Exeter Technical College. The college's curriculum reflects the tertiary nature of the college. The college's two main sites are in the city centre, but the college occupies 11 sites in Exeter and its immediate neighbourhood. Within Exeter, there are five secondary schools and two special schools, none of which have post-16 provision. In Exeter, only 42% of pupils leave school with five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above compared with 54.2% nationally. There is also a high percentage of adults with low literacy and numeracy skills; 23% compared with approximately 14% nationally. The proportion of young people aged 16 who stay on in full-time education is 58%, some 11% below the national average. The Exeter Area Learning Plan shows that 14 of the 18 local authority wards have indices close to the national median for multiple deprivation and that Wonford is in the top 6% of the most deprived wards in England.

The college provides courses in 13 of the 14 areas of learning funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). It is also a major provider of work-based learning. In 2002/03, the college had 3,319 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 12,001 adult students, 476 of whom were full time. Over 40% of full-time students aged 16 to 18 were enrolled on level 3 courses and 41% of adults were enrolled on level 1 courses. Some 58% of students are female. Students from minority ethnic groups comprise a small proportion of the student body which reflects the local population.

In 2002/03, the college re-organised into three directorates for curriculum delivery; the sixth, workforce development and lifelong learning/ higher education (HE). In September 2004, the college assumes responsibility for the delivery of adult and community education in the city. The college plays a leading role in providing vocational courses for some 500 school pupils aged 14 to 16 in partnership with Exeter schools, the local education authority (LEA) and the local LSC. The college's mission is 'to inspire the community through successful learning'.

How effective is the college?



The inspection graded the quality of provision in 11 curriculum areas. Inspectors judged provision to be outstanding in one area, good in seven, satisfactory in two and unsatisfactory in one. Work-based learning was satisfactory in both of the areas inspected. The college's main strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- high retention rates on most courses for students aged 16 to 18

- high pass rates on most level 3 courses

- well-planned and effective teaching
- provision in English and communication studies
- robust self-assessment
- effective initial assessment and learning support
- productive links with schools, the community and HE
- rigorous monitoring of students' attendance
- good student support
- good provision of learning opportunities for school pupils aged 14 to 16
- good use of management information
- strong leadership and governance
- excellent accommodation for motor vehicle studies.

What should be improved

- achievements on work-based learning programmes and key skills

- pass rates on some courses

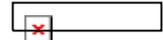
- unsatisfactory provision in construction

- much accommodation

- use of information and learning technology (ILT) in lessons.

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

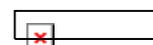


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum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

| Area | Overall judgements about provision, and comment |
|-------------------------|--|
| Science and mathematics | Good. Retention and pass rates on advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) and general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses are high. There is a very wide range of level 3 courses for students aged 16 to 18 and for adults. Teaching is good in science and students are well supported. There is insufficient access to modern laboratories and information technology (IT) in classrooms is restricted. |
| Construction | Unsatisfactory. Student progress is monitored effectively and there is good additional support in lessons. Retention rates are low and declining on many courses and pass rates are poor on many courses. There is much unsatisfactory teaching and learning and much of the accommodation and resources are inadequate. |
| Engineering | Good. Work-based learning contributory grade: satisfactory. Retention rates are high on most courses and there are high pass rates on motor vehicle courses. There is much good teaching on motor vehicle courses and curriculum management is good. There are productive links with schools, employers and the community. The achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks is low. |
| Business | Good. Work-based learning contributory grade: satisfactory. There are high pass rates on most business courses and on national |

| | |
|---|--|
| | vocational qualifications (NVQs) in accounting. There is much good teaching and students develop good vocational skills on a wide range of courses. There is very good support for students. The achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks is low. |
| Information and communications technology | Satisfactory. There are very good retention and pass rates on level 1 courses. Provision for adult students is good, including that based in the community which is effective in attracting new students. Support for students is good. There is ineffective management at course team level. |
| Hospitality, sport, leisure and travel | Good. There are very high pass rates on many courses with much good teaching, especially in practical lessons. Students are very well supported through an effective tutorial system and those students with additional needs receive effective learning support. Students develop good practical skills and there are many productive partnerships with external agencies and industry. Retention rates are low on leisure and travel courses. |
| Health and social care | Good. There are high pass rates on courses at levels 1 and 2, with a substantial proportion of high grades. There is much good teaching and learning, and curriculum management is good. There are effective partnerships with local employers and agencies, but the range of part-time courses for adults is narrow. |
| Visual and performing arts and media | Good. Pass rates are high and practical work is of a high standard on most courses. Teaching is very good in dance and foundation studies and students have good pastoral and academic support. The range of courses is wide with clear progression routes. Technical support and resources are insufficient and there is unsuitable accommodation in art, design and drama. |
| Humanities | Satisfactory. Retention rates are high on AS-level courses and pass rates are high on most GCE A-level courses, but they are low on GCSE psychology and access to HE courses. There is an extensive range of courses at level 3 and support for students is good. There are inconsistencies in curriculum management between subjects. |
| English and communication studies | Outstanding. There are very high pass rates and there is much good teaching. The standard of students' work is very high and assessment and monitoring of students' progress is very thorough. Curriculum management is very good. There are insufficient resources for students' independent study. |
| Literacy and numeracy | Good. There is much good teaching, informed by effective target setting. There is thorough initial and diagnostic assessment and additional learning support is very good. Effective partnership arrangements contribute to widening participation for adult students in the community. Quality assurance arrangements are insufficient and there is a lack of IT to support learning in adult literacy and numeracy lessons. |

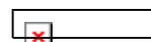
How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are good. Governors and senior managers set a clear direction to meet local and national priorities and this is clearly articulated in a comprehensive strategic plan.

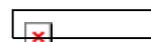
provision in the college and its outreach facilities. An example of the commitment to working in partnership and collaboration is the college's significant role in the city-wide planning of education and training, which aims to improve the levels of educational achievement in Exeter. The college provides some 500 places for young people aged 14 to 16 as part of a partnership with the city's schools, the LEA and the local LSC. The extensive accommodation strategy addresses the poor accommodation on some of the college's sites. Retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 are mostly above national averages and pass rates are generally at or slightly above the national averages. Retention and pass rates for adults are more variable. Progress towards the achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks is slow. Standards of teaching are good overall, with the proportion of lessons graded good or better higher than the average for colleges of the same type. Curriculum management is good in most areas and students are well supported on their courses. Quality assurance arrangements are good. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and constructively self-critical. Financial management is good and the college provides good value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



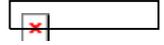
The college's response to education and social inclusion is good. The college is very aware of the social and economic context in which it operates. The college is committed to widening participation in further education (FE) and works in partnership with numerous groups in the community to achieve this. Adult basic skills and IT courses are offered in many venues to meet the needs of many students who are considering returning to education or training. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support in all areas of the college curriculum and integrate well into college life. The college's extensive provision for school pupils aged 14 to 16 makes a significant contribution to supporting young people some of whom may be underachieving at school. Students who require additional learning support are identified quickly and good quality support is provided. The college has reviewed and updated its equal opportunities policy to meet its obligations under recent race relations and disability discrimination legislation. Student data on gender, age, ethnicity and disability are gathered, but are not used systematically to inform recruitment or good practice. For example, there are very few women taking construction or engineering courses.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Guidance and support for students are good. There is a wide range of course guidance materials available and students are provided with information about services including counselling, financial assistance, welfare advice and health care. A central admissions team provides impartial pre-entry advice and guidance. Students aged 16 to 18 receive guidance from the college whilst in Year 11 at school and they have the opportunity to sample courses before making their choice of programme. Adult learning advisers are available to guide adult students and 'start-up' advisers raise awareness of opportunities and support potential basic skills students. There are good links with the local Connexions service. Initial screening takes place during induction. This is comprehensive, and students identified as having additional needs in literacy or numeracy are offered additional support. There is a 66% take up rate, with students accessing a variety of workshops, individual support and some work with whole groups. The tutorial system is good and students speak positively of their tutors' efforts on their behalf. There are three advanced practitioners supporting tutors who develop materials, monitor quality and ensure all students receive their entitlement. Attendance is monitored closely by seven student attendance monitors who follow-up absences, and manage the action plan and review system to improve individuals' attendance. Attendance rates across the college are good. Students receive good advice on progression into employment or further training, with particularly effective assistance with applications to HE.

Students' views of the college



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

What students like about the college

- knowledgeable and committed teachers

- encouragement to work hard and be independent

- being treated as an individual

- friendly and supportive staff

- support on personal issues

- helpful learning support staff

- the college's location

- opportunities to meet new people

- the adult environment.

What they feel could be improved

- poor accommodation in some areas

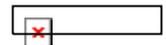
- large gaps in timetables

- some poor resources, particularly for IT

- limited space in common rooms

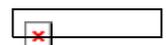
- arrangements for covering classes.

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 LSC. The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the LSC. The LSC should send to Ofsted only action plans from colleges that have been judged inadequate or have been awarded a grade 4 or 5 for curriculum provision, work-based learning and/or leadership and management.

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

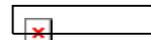


| Aspect & learner type | Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) % | Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) % | Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) % |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------------------|---|
| Teaching 16-18 | 68 | 28 | 4 |
| 19+ and WBL* | 67 | 29 | 4 |
| Learning 16-18 | 63 | 32 | 5 |
| 19+ and WBL* | 67 | 30 | 3 |

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 offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses from entry level to level 4. Courses are available in 13 of the 14 areas of learning as defined by the LSC. The inspection examined provision in 11 curriculum areas. Work-based learning is provided in construction, engineering, business, IT, health and care, catering and hospitality, and hairdressing and beauty therapy. The inspection examined work-based learning in engineering and business. Inspectors used data on students' achievements from the individualised learner returns to the LSC for the academic years 2000/01, 2001/02 and college and LSC audited data for 2002/03.
2. Retention rates are above the national average on courses at levels 1 and 3 for students aged 16 to 18 and at the national average for level 2 courses. Retention rates on courses for adult students are generally at the national average. Pass rates are above the national average on level 3 courses for both age groups. They are at the national average for level 1 courses and below the national average on level 2 courses for adults. Although the rates of completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks are low, the achievement of work-based NVQ is satisfactory.
3. Overall attendance in lessons during the inspection was 79% which is above the national average for colleges of a similar type. Highest attendance was in business at 88%. Lowest attendance was in construction at 71%. Students' attendance is monitored thoroughly and absences are followed-up through the intervention of student attendance monitoring staff and teachers have easy access to detailed information about students' attendance and punctuality. Students' punctuality during the inspection was good.
4. The college uses value added data to measure progress, set targets for students and help predict examination results for students on AS-level and GCE A-level courses. Whilst there is no formal system on vocational courses to measure individual students' progress from their original starting point, students have agreed targets in their individual learning plans.

16 to 18 year olds

5. In 2002/03, approximately 29% of students were aged 16 to 18. Of these, 3,319 were full time and just over 40% of enrolments were on level 3 courses. The entry qualifications of students joining the college are generally below average. In Exeter, the achievement of five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C is 42%, some 12% below the national average. The proportion of students who stay on in full-time education post-16 is low, at 59%. Female students account for 58% of all students aged 16 to 18. Retention rates have been consistently above national averages on level 3 courses since 2000/01. Retention rates are above national averages on level 1 and at the national average at level 2. This places the college in the top 25% of colleges of a similar type at levels 1 and 3 and the middle 50% at level 2. Pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 at level 3 have been consistently above national averages since 2000/01, placing the college in the top 25% of colleges of a similar type. Pass rates at level 2 are at the national average, but below at level 1. The overall retention rate of students aged 16 to 18 at the time of inspection was good, at 88%. Pass rates in key skills are low, particularly for students on AS-level and GCE A-level courses. A revised key skills policy has been implemented and indications at the time of inspection are that there is significant improvement, but it is too early to make judgements on the overall effectiveness of the policy.
6. In most curriculum areas, students make good progress. They develop appropriate skills for progression to further study or work and speak confidently about their work and achievements. Students' progress is particularly strong in business, visual and performing arts and media, health and social care, English and communication studies, and science and mathematics. It is satisfactory or better in all other curriculum areas. Students' attainment was significantly better in lessons for

students aged 16 to 18 than in lessons for adults.

7. Levels of internal progression to more advanced courses or work are good. Progression to HE is also good. For example, in 2003, 69% of full-time level 3 students progressed to HE with many gaining acceptance at their first choice university. Of those gaining places, some 250 students had followed level 3 courses other than GCE A levels.

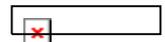
8. Data which compares students' pass rates on advanced level courses with their previous achievements at GCSE show that overall, students do at least as well as expected at AS level, GCE A level and in the advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE). For example, on AS-level programmes students consistently achieve better than their GCSE results predict in English language, English literature, computing, French, German and mathematics, but do less well in psychology. On GCE A-level programmes, students consistently achieve better than their GCSE results predict in biology and sociology, but less well in psychology and design and technology.

9. The college has 770 work-based learners of whom 276 are advanced modern apprentices, 433 are foundation modern apprentices and 61 are on work-based NVQ programmes. There is slow progress towards achievement of frameworks for some learners. There is satisfactory achievement on work-based NVQ programmes in many areas.

Adult learners

10. In 2002/03, approximately 12,000 enrolments were by adults. There were approximately 475 full-time adult students. Males accounted for 42% of adult students. The Exeter Learning Plan identifies the proportion of adults in Exeter with identified needs in literacy and numeracy as 23%, some 10% above the national average. Large numbers of adults enrol on short courses. For example, in 2002/03, there were 7,724 enrolments by adults on short courses. Retention rates were above national averages on level 3 and short courses and at national averages on level 2 courses. Retention rates were below national averages on level 1 courses. Retention rates on NVQ courses for adults have been consistently and significantly above national averages since 2000/01. For example, the retention rate of adult students on NVQ courses is 29% above national averages at level 1, around the national average at level 2 and 19% above the national average at level 3. Pass rates are above the national average on level 3 courses for adults and at the national average on level 1 courses. The college has reduced its franchised provision. This is appropriate action to address the poor pass rates on level 2 courses for adults.

Quality of education and training



11. Teaching, learning and students' attainment were graded by inspectors in 244 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 68% of these lessons, satisfactory in 28% and unsatisfactory in 4%. The proportion of good or better teaching is 5% above the national average for FE colleges and the amount of unsatisfactory teaching is 3% below the national average. Of the lessons that were judged to be good or better, 44% of these were either very good or outstanding. The highest proportion of good or better teaching was in English and communications, health and social care, hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, literacy and numeracy, engineering and visual and performing arts and media. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in science and mathematics, information and communications technology (ICT), health and social care, and English and communication studies. The weakest teaching was in construction where the amount of unsatisfactory teaching was 20%.

12. Teaching was better for students aged 16 to 18 than for adult students. In lessons for students aged 16 to 18, 68% of teaching was good or better compared with 63% in lessons for adult students. In lessons for work-based learners, 89% of teaching was good or better. The best teaching and learning was on courses at levels 1 and 3 and the least effective was on level 2 courses. On level 1 courses, the proportion of good or better teaching was 89% and on level 3 courses the proportion of

good or better teaching was 66%, whilst on level 2 courses it was 61%. There was no significant difference in the quality of lessons taught by full-time and part-time staff. New and inexperienced full-time and part-time staff are well supported in the development of teaching skills by the college mentoring scheme and by the advanced teaching practitioners who work across the college. The grades awarded by inspectors for learning were similar to those for teaching. The percentage of lessons in which attainment was good or better was 59% in lessons for students aged 16 to 18 and 50% in lessons for adults. This is significantly lower than the profile for teaching or learning. Teaching and learning are generally better on AS-level courses than on GCE A-level courses. Teaching is particularly strong on AS-level courses in business and visual and performing arts and media and on GCE A-level courses in science, mathematics and English and communications. It is less effective on GCE A-level humanities courses. Teaching on level 3 vocational courses is particularly good in health and social care and in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel.

13. Most lessons are well planned and have clear objectives. Students understand the purposes of the lesson and what is expected of them and learning is stimulating and productive. Time is managed well and there is much mutual respect between students and teachers. Teachers' expectations of students are high. In the best lessons, students' learning is checked frequently and they receive constant feedback on their progress. Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subjects and in motor vehicle, health and social care, hospitality, sport, leisure, travel and ICT lessons in particular, many use their industrial and commercial experience well to develop motivating activities for students. In the most effective lessons, teachers plan a variety of appropriately challenging activities for students and good progress is made. In motor vehicle lessons, students link theory to practice through the extensive use of demonstrations on models and vehicles. In science, good use is made of practicals, group discussions, demonstrations and modelling activities to enable students to understand complex information. In visual and performing arts, students receive clear guidance on how to improve their performance and in business, students discuss real business problems enthusiastically and develop good analytical skills. In literacy and numeracy, students have clear learning plans and individual objectives which help their learning to progress quickly. Students in English lessons work collaboratively in groups and produce a high standard of written work. In practical hospitality lessons, teachers assign tasks according to ability levels to ensure all students' needs are catered for.

14. In the less effective lessons, there is insufficient checking of all students' learning and progress. Questioning by teachers is sometimes too general and superficial and students' understanding of the points being made is not confirmed. There are no clear strategies to ensure that sufficient attention is given to individual students' learning needs during all lessons. Although access to IT is generally satisfactory in the college, there is little evidence of ILT being used in lessons to support and enhance learning. Although students' preferred learning styles are usually identified, this information is not taken into account in all curriculum areas. In some construction lessons, students are expected to copy text and drawings from the whiteboard or overhead projector for long periods and in a few hospitality theory lessons students are not actively involved in their learning and progress is slow. The whole range of abilities is not catered for in some humanities lessons and there is not enough checking of students' learning in some ICT workshop lessons.

15. Students' make good progress and develop their skills and knowledge well. Engineering and motor vehicle students develop a wide range of skills and students on literacy and English courses make good progress in their oral and written work. On hospitality, sport, leisure and travel courses, students display good practical skills that meet industry standards and they work hard to develop their skills further.

16. The college currently has 11 sites that it owns or leases in Exeter and the immediate surrounding area. These range from a nine-storey tower block at Hele Road, modern buildings at Victoria and Brittany Houses and former school buildings at Hele Road and Bishop Blackall. The motor vehicle engineering department is located in excellent purpose-built accommodation at Marsh Barton in the heart of the Exeter retail motor trade area.

17. The college has an ambitious and comprehensive property strategy which has been agreed and supported by the Devon and Cornwall LSC. The principal aims of the property strategy are, by 2007, to reduce the number of sites owned or leased by the college from 11 to 7 and to significantly

improve the quality of accommodation for teaching and learning. Implementation of the plan has already led to the closure of some centres and the transfer of courses to more suitable accommodation. Plans are well advanced for the construction department to move in the summer of 2004 into a new centre at Falcon House on the Sowton Industrial Park. This will bring together all construction trades into one purpose-built facility. Adult and community learning is located temporarily in modern accommodation at Trinity Court in the city centre. The general standard of accommodation for teaching and learning is satisfactory, with some good commercial-standard resources in Victoria and Brittany Houses for business and ICT studies. The vocational facilities for hairdressing and beauty therapy at Blackall Bishop are of a good standard. Some accommodation in areas due for disposal is drab and poorly decorated. There is poor and outdated accommodation at the Episcopal and York Wing sites, and some inadequate laboratories and classrooms at Hele Road. Construction of a new centre for the creative industries at Victoria Yard has begun with completion scheduled for autumn 2005. The college has conducted a full audit and survey of the accessibility of its accommodation to ensure that it complies with the Disability and Discrimination Act and new and converted buildings are designed to comply fully with this legislation.

18. Teachers and learning support staff are well qualified and suitably experienced. Nearly 90% of teaching staff have a recognised teaching qualification and 66% have a full teacher education qualification. In the vocational areas, staff have relevant vocational qualifications and occupational experience. Teachers are encouraged and supported to update their specialist knowledge and skills, but, in some cases, teachers' industrial experience is becoming outdated. There is a clear strategy for supporting newly appointed teachers who, if they do not already possess a teacher training qualification, are expected to do so within three years of their start date. The professional development programme is good, with a strong focus on enhancing the teaching skills of both full-time and part-time staff. There is effective use of the 10 advanced practitioners and the college mentoring scheme to support teachers and to develop the skills of newly appointed staff.

19. The college's self-assessment report recognises that the development of ILT has not been satisfactory across the college. There is inadequate use of ICT to support learning in literacy and numeracy, humanities, visual and performing arts and media, business, construction and health and social care. A recently appointed Head of ILT and learning resources is tasked with ensuring that greater emphasis is placed on increasing and improving the use of ILT to enhance and support teaching and learning. A college ILT strategy group is now also supporting this development as are the advanced teaching practitioners and a significant investment of some £400,000 in new hardware and software has been approved by the governors. The ratio of computers to full-time students is currently low at 1:5. Some computer rooms are stuffy and poorly ventilated. The overall ratio of computers for staff use at 1:1.1 is very good. The college has a well-used intranet site for students and staff. There are eight learning resource centres across six of the college sites. The centres provide a satisfactory range of books, materials and equipment for use by students and staff. The library areas at Brittany House and Hele Road are good. All the learning centres are well used by students. Frequent reviews and updating of books and other learning materials are undertaken. Technician support is good overall, but in some areas the deployment of technical support staff is ineffective to meet fully the needs of the increasing numbers of students. Specialist resources and equipment in most curriculum areas are at least satisfactory and are excellent in motor vehicle studies.

20. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are mostly good. Students receive an assessment of their basic skills needs during the induction to their course. In 2003/04, nearly 4,000 individual assessments for literacy and numeracy took place, most of these being conducted online. The take-up of additional learning support following initial assessment is good. For example, at the time of inspection, some 600 full-time students were accessing additional learning support. There are effective support arrangements for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Basic Skills Agency initial assessment process is used for part-time adult students and work-based learners. There is a variety of support available from in-class to drop-in workshops and individual sessions with a member of the additional learning support team. College monitoring data show a 14% improvement in retention rates amongst level 1 students taking up additional support. There are good links between support staff and course tutors, and in many cases the support teacher is a vocational specialist. Although the preferred learning styles of individual students are identified, this does not consistently inform teaching and assessment strategies.

21. The most effective schemes of work and lesson plans identify clear learning objectives and assessment opportunities. Assignments are relevant and some include additional tasks to challenge more able students. Assessment is well planned and linked to course objectives. On most courses, assessed work is returned promptly and there is constructive and meaningful written feedback. In AS-level history, and in science and mathematics, there is considerable variation in the quality of marking, and in performing arts and physics a few students reported some delay in having marked work returned to them. Students' practical skills are assessed in lessons and in their work-based learning situations, using appropriate procedures. There are good links between work experience providers and college-based activities. Parents and, where appropriate, employers are kept informed about students' progress. In most cases, there is sufficient detail, but some parents feel they could receive more regular information.

22. Although systems are in place, there is inconsistent use of value added methodologies for setting improvement targets for individual students and for assessing and monitoring their progress. There is effective use in English, mathematics and in biology and chemistry groups, but limited implementation elsewhere. Data on performance by gender and ethnicity are collected, but are not used systematically by managers to inform practice.

23. There is an assessment, moderation and verification policy in place, with associated guidelines and procedures. Central recording documentation is specifically produced for NVQ programmes. There are adequate numbers of qualified assessors and internal verifiers, and systems work well in engineering, business and health and social care. There is insufficient monitoring of assessment across the large number of literacy and numeracy classes. External verifier reports are received centrally, comments are closely monitored and followed-up by college managers and curriculum teams, with action points recorded when issues have been identified. Individual learning plans are effectively used to set and review targets on the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) foundation in ICT course, and in GCE A-level English. In other areas, targets in individual learning plans are not updated frequently enough, for example, in the foundation diploma in art and design. In some adult classes at the Metro centre, good use is made of IT systems to track progress and to issue reminders when reviews are due. Work-based engineering and business students have thorough and effectively managed reviews which agree performance targets in respect of training in the workplace and progress towards qualifications.

24. There is a good range of courses and programmes with clear progression routes that meet the needs of students from entry level to level 3 in most curriculum areas; the range at level 3 is particularly comprehensive. In several areas, the college provides opportunities up to level 4. However, there is insufficient breadth of provision in hospitality and level 2 provision in humanities is limited. Innovative partnerships with Exeter University and Plymouth University have led to close curriculum links in subjects such as, management, accounting, applied art, sports and recreation management, engineering and teacher education.

25. The college is responsive to the needs of the community. The college has developed very effective and successful links with external partners that enable it to provide programmes in response to the needs of the community. These programmes, involving several curriculum areas, include courses in basic skills for families and in the workplace, projects with minority ethnic groups and outreach projects in areas of the city where historically, participation in education and training has been low. The college also provides successful programmes for children who may be experiencing difficulties at school or at home. Links with local industry and commerce are mainly good. Training officers from the vocational areas maintain frequent and effective contact through visits and by attendance at liaison group meetings. The college has active international links with Germany, Italy and the United Arab Emirates.

26. Links with local schools are good. Collaborative initiatives with the city's high schools and special schools have resulted in a very successful vocational programme for pupils aged 14 to 16. Approximately 500 pupils attend the college as part of their Key Stage 4 curriculum. These vocational courses include catering, hairdressing, engineering, construction, business and motor vehicle. This provision enjoys high status and is an integral part of the college's strategic plan. Teaching staff work closely with colleagues from schools in lesson preparation, lesson observations and the sharing of good practice. Students on this programme are well supported by their schools,

are enthusiastic and speak very highly of their college course and the skills they are learning. Of the Year 11 students attending the programme, at the time of the inspection 92% have applied to the college to follow a course in the vocational area they have been studying at the college.

27. The college has a comprehensive enrichment programme. Students have the opportunity to gain additional qualifications or to participate in sport, leisure or recreational activities. The programme includes music, drama and dance, art, outdoor adventure activities, overseas trips and a wide range of team or individual sports. Timetable restrictions make it difficult for students on some vocational courses to take part fully in the enrichment programmes on offer. The college's sports academies are successful in supporting students of all abilities to develop their skills further. The college enjoys considerable success in national sporting competitions and several students have gained representative honours in their chosen sport. Student successes are celebrated in 10 prestigious annual awards ceremonies. These ceremonies are held in venues across the city and are organised by students, who gain valuable experience of planning and administering complex external events.

28. All full-time students and work-based learners have an entitlement to improve their key skills in application of number, communication and IT according to their needs or requirements of their programme. Students working below level 1 take basic skills qualifications as an alternative. Key skills are taught in the vocational programme areas as an integral part of the provision and as separate lessons in other curriculum areas. Retention and pass rates are very poor, as acknowledged in the self-assessment report. In 2003/04, responsibility for key skills passed to a member of the senior management team. Following a critical review, a new policy has been implemented, supported by staff training, to improve the participation, retention and pass rates in key skills. The review identified that many students have a poor commitment to key skills and to overcome this every student now has timetabled tuition and tutorials in each key skill and their attendance and performance are monitored closely. Whilst it is too early to make firm judgements as to the effectiveness of the policy, early indications are that retention rates have improved significantly and 47% of students in vocational areas have already passed their key skills tests. However, there remains some resistance to the policy from students on AS-level and GCE A-level courses.

29. Support for students is very good. There are effective links with local schools, and several open days and evenings, careers events and opportunities for pupils to experience their chosen subject before making their final decision. Prospective students receive good information about the college and the courses available. They are given initial advice and guidance by the college admissions team and there are clearly stated entry criteria for most courses. Students aged over 19 have access to adult learning advisers who can offer interviews and course information. In adult basic skills, 'start-up' advisers act as the initial contact, interviewing and placing students in provision that most suits their needs in terms of level and location. Currently, interviews are conducted by central admissions staff, but there are plans to return to a system where interviews are carried out by course teams so as to ensure all students are placed on the right level of course. Full-time students receive a comprehensive induction programme during their first week. This covers college services and procedures and course-specific information. The Freshers' Fair is a popular event early in the college year. All full-time and many part-time students undertake initial assessment and diagnostic testing to determine the level and nature of the additional support which they require. Following the assessment, appropriate support is then offered. The take-up rate of this support is good and there is evidence of significant improvements in the retention rate of students who take up additional support.

30. All full-time students are allocated a personal tutor. They provide very good pastoral support and monitor progress during the course. There are three advanced practitioners in tutoring who have devised a college-wide tutorial programme and a range of support and staff development materials. One advanced practitioner focuses on the particular needs of part-time adult students. Students value the relationship with their tutor and are positive about the efforts made on their behalf. There are seven student attendance monitors who have responsibility for tracking attendance patterns and implementing action where necessary. There is a close working relationship between the attendance monitors and group tutors, and their roles are complementary. Individual learning plans are produced by tutors and used to monitor progress. While most are thorough and useful, some targets are vague and some are not reviewed frequently enough. Tutors also receive 10-weekly reports from

learning support staff when students are receiving support in workshops or on an individual basis. Inclusion tutors work in identified curriculum areas to provide vocationally focused additional support.

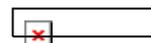
31. Procedures to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effective. Schools are visited between November and January, and there are referrals through Connexions, social services and schools themselves. Following this process, students are placed on courses to meet their identified needs. Each course has a dedicated support worker. There are also 14 excluded or non-attending Year 11 pupils currently participating in courses at college. This provision is very successful in helping young people with poor records of engagement and success into mainstream courses.

32. A progression officer ensures opportunities to move on to further studies both within the college and into HE are well publicised and supported. There are good links with the Connexions service, which is conveniently located next to the Victoria House site. Tutors appreciate the specialist support offered by the service.

33. There is a wide range of welfare support available. There are four staff providing counselling services, a college nurse, staff qualified to conduct dyslexia assessments, and welfare and financial support staff. A 79-place college nursery is available along with a large after-school club and summer club. There is good take-up of these services, predominantly by full-time students. There were 553 applications to the learner support fund up to the time of inspection, of which 535 were approved for financial assistance. Funds are available to meet costs for childcare, essential course equipment, course fees and transport. There is a designated person responsible for child protection, and the college has protocols in place for supporting the needs of looked after children.

34. Monitoring of the quality of the student support service is good. The college makes use of student satisfaction surveys and student forums, and advanced practitioners observe tutorials. The role and effectiveness of the student attendance monitors is reviewed regularly. The various cross-college roles complement those of the personal tutor, and students receive a comprehensive support service during their time at college.

Leadership and management



35. Leadership and management are good. Governors, the principal and senior managers provide strong direction and leadership to the college, in line with local and national priorities. The college has responded well to national initiatives such as the targets for literacy and numeracy and developments in work-related learning at Key Stage 4 of the national curriculum. The college is seen as a key stakeholder in the community and takes responsibility for the delivery of adult and community education in September 2004. The college's strategy and development plans are widely understood by teaching and support staff who share a clear sense of purpose. Key themes such as the improvement of teaching and learning and improving retention rates are highlighted in a detailed change management strategy, 'Aspiring to Excellence.' Effective strategic planning has guided the development of the college's extensive property strategy to improve much of its accommodation.

36. The focus on raising standards and developing an individual's potential is successful. Approximately 10% of students follow courses in curriculum areas where provision is outstanding, 54% of students follow courses in curriculum areas where provision is good, 34% follow courses in areas where provision is satisfactory and only 2% follow courses in areas where provision is unsatisfactory. Retention and pass rates are generally above or at national averages and the proportion of good or better teaching observed during the inspection was above the national average. Students show respect for each other and for staff. Students with low prior achievement make good progress.

37. Senior staff have responsibilities for curriculum areas as well as strategic areas such as links

with HE, franchise provision and workforce development. The lines of responsibility and accountability are clear and well documented. The recent restructuring into three teaching directorates, the sixth, workforce development and lifelong learning/HE has promoted greater teamwork and a greater emphasis on curriculum quality in each area.

38. Communication across the college at all levels is good. Staff see senior and middle managers as open, approachable and supportive of new ideas. The frequent formal meetings of senior and middle managers have documented follow-up actions and timescales are given for disseminating information to staff and these are monitored closely by line managers. Very effective use is made of electronic communications. The college intranet includes outreach centres where appropriate and informative bulletins and newsletters are produced frequently. In addition, there are full staff meetings and development days which are timetabled into the college calendar. Heads of departments give presentations on their work and future plans to college management and to governors. Students are often involved in these presentations and governors appreciate the opportunity to meet with students and staff. There is a wide range of events focusing on the celebration of students' achievements and these are well supported by governors, management, staff, employers, parents and community representatives.

39. Targets in some college policies are vague. For example, although the policy for improving teaching and learning is comprehensive, it does not contain specific and measurable targets against which successful implementation can be measured. Target setting and the monitoring of progress towards their achievement is well established at course level.

40. The college has a comprehensive property strategy which has been agreed with and approved by the local LSC. This will provide improved classroom and staff accommodation. The new accommodation for construction was nearing completion at the time of inspection and will be fully operational in September 2004. Accommodation currently across college sites is variable and some is poor. In some curriculum areas, buildings and classrooms are shabby and in need of decoration. General housekeeping is poor in visual and performing arts and in construction workshops where working areas are untidy and cluttered. The accommodation at Marsh Barton for motor vehicle studies is outstanding. The excellent learning resources at this centre are also used to deliver learendirect courses.

41. The college has close and effective links with a network of strategic partners and employers within mid, east and south Devon. These relationships are productive and ensure that the college is fully involved in the planning and delivery of education and training for these areas. The college is also a key member of the Exeter Learning City Initiative. There are now strong strategic and operational links with Exeter University that include use of the university's facilities and the provision of bursaries to Exeter college students. The provision for pupils aged 14 to 16 in partnership schools, the LEA and the LSC is particularly effective, with over 500 pupils aged 14 to 16 attending the college and participating in vocational programmes. The Commission into Education in the City of Exeter recommended that Exeter College should be retained as a tertiary college, with the five high schools being encouraged to bid to become Specialist Schools each with a different specialism.

42. Most curriculum and course management is good. In the best curriculum areas, there is a strong team ethos and course teams meet frequently to review retention rates and students' performance. In a minority of instances, course records are incomplete and do not always provide clear information about progress towards performance targets. The college has introduced advanced practitioners for teaching and learning and tutorials and staff are enthusiastic and supportive of this initiative. The advanced practitioners have a major input into the lesson observation scheme, the results of which are realistic and self-critical. They also share good practice in teaching between departments. In a few curriculum areas, the deployment of technician support results in insufficient technician staff being available to support lessons.

43. The college has improved its management information system and the use of management information greatly since the last inspection when it was identified as a key weakness. A comprehensive range of information is available to staff, including records of students' attendance and punctuality. Managers and staff use this information well to inform decision making. Detailed financial information is also used effectively for the purposes of monitoring budgets. New courses

are introduced in line with the college's strategic priorities and enrolments are analysed thoroughly to ensure the viability of courses. There are good systems in place for monitoring the recruitment, retention and pass rates of work-based learners and the college is developing additional systems to monitor partial and unit achievement of qualifications.

44. There is a college wide commitment to continuous improvement and the quality assurance framework is well established. There are rigorous course reviews in most curriculum areas and a thorough self-assessment process; strengths which were identified in the previous inspection report. Students' and staff views are systematically collected and analysed and used to inform changes and improvements where possible. For example, the introduction of presentations at directorate meetings and development days was a result of consultations with staff on how communications might be improved. There is an effective policy on lesson observations, the results of which are used to inform professional development. The college's self-assessment report was thorough and analytical, although the presentation of data was not focused sufficiently at course level. A college assessment, verification and moderation policy is in place, but there are some inconsistencies in assessment and verification practices particularly in the construction curriculum area. Quality assurance documentation is centrally controlled and is available to all staff through the college intranet.

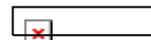
45. There is a strong commitment to staff development and training. The human resources department works closely with managers to ensure that all staff recruitment and professional performance reviews follows college guidelines. There is a well-documented and detailed performance review process in which all staff participate. The annual training and development plan, informed by staff appraisals and the lesson observation scheme, contains an appropriate range of staff development to reflect the strategic priorities of the college and there are several training days which are used to explore specific themes related to teaching and learning. These events are also used to share good practice and are well attended by governors. New staff are inducted well into the organisation. They are allocated a mentor and their progress is closely monitored. The training needs of governors are identified and met. The governors have recently drafted a job description for the chair and a protocol for governors visiting the college.

46. The college is committed to and successful in widening participation and educational inclusion. The college has an extensive programme of basic skills courses in over 30 venues across the city. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well integrated into college life and sensitive and professional support has enabled many students to achieve their ambitions. There are approximately 80 learners participating in the entry to employment (E2E) programme and the college plans to extend this provision further. The promotion of equal opportunities within the curriculum areas is variable. Equality of opportunity is promoted through the equality and diversity group which meets regularly and is attended by a governor. Senior managers gather a range of indicators regarding the performance of different groups of students, but little use is made of this information to inform decision making. Some areas of the college have limited access for students with mobility difficulties.

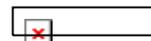
47. Governors are fully involved in the strategic planning and monitoring process. They bring specialist expertise to sub-committees and they work well with senior managers. Governors' awareness of the strengths of the college and areas for improvement is good. They validate the self-assessment process and approve the final report. The corporation receives accurate and detailed reports from sub committees and ensures the college complies with all legislation. Most governors are involved with training days and celebration events. There is effective clerking to the Board.

48. The college's financial management is good. The college has category B status. Financial expenditure is controlled carefully and prioritises the needs of the curriculum. The good performance of the college and the significant progress made by students confirms a recent report from external consultants that the college provides good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- high retention rates on most level 3 courses
- high pass rates on GCE A-level and AS-level courses
- high participation in a wide range of level 3 provision
- very good use of a wide range of teaching and learning activities in science
- good subject support.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates in GCSE mathematics and in human physiology and health
- inadequate laboratory accommodation and access to classroom IT facilities
- insufficient support for new part-time teachers, especially in physics.

Scope of provision

49. There is a wide range of courses in science and mathematics. In 2002/03, there were 1,792 enrolments in science and mathematics. There are 246 students aged 16 to 18 studying biology at AS level or GCE A level, 138 studying chemistry, 125 studying physics and 43 studying environmental science. There are 145 taking AS-level mathematics and 87 taking GCE A-level mathematics. In addition, there are 270 enrolments on part-time courses for adults in science and

mathematics courses which include GCSE, AS-level and access to HE courses. In addition, students follow science and mathematics options as part of the International Baccalaureate.

Achievement and standards

50. Retention rates are good on level 3 courses and satisfactory on level 2 courses in science and mathematics. Pass rates on GCE A-level and AS-level courses are good. They are well above national averages in AS-level mathematics, AS-level biological sciences and AS-level chemistry and also in GCE A-level biological sciences and GCE A-level chemistry. Higher grade pass rates are in line with national averages and are high in biological sciences. Students generally do as well as predicted from their previous qualifications, but achieve consistently better results than predicted in biology. Progression from level 3 courses to HE is good. Pass rates in GCSE mathematics and GCSE human physiology and health are low at 26% and 42%, respectively, in 2003.

51. The standard of students' work is good. For example, in chemistry, students predicted which conditions need changing to alter the equilibrium between chromate and dichromate ions. Physics students planned experiments confidently, for example, on Young's modulus. In AS-level biology, students used complex terminology about DNA replication correctly, and were able to explain the detail of the stages of protein synthesis. GCSE mathematics students successfully designed a dominoes game to reinforce their learning on percentages.

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

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|----------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| GCSE mathematics | 2 | No. of starts | 99 | 234 | 208 |
| | | % retention | 82 | 75 | 71 |
| | | % pass rate | 56 | 60 | 26 |
| GCSE human physiology and health | 2 | No. of starts | 53 | 70 | 96 |
| | | % retention | 81 | 81 | 72 |
| | | % pass rate | 30 | 30 | 26 |
| AS-level biological sciences | 3 | No. of starts | 209 | 224 | 243 |
| | | % retention | 84 | 83 | 80 |
| | | % pass rate | 89 | 82 | 79 |
| AS-level chemistry | 3 | No. of starts | 83 | 90 | 87 |
| | | % retention | 86 | 90 | 91 |
| | | % pass rate | 73 | 83 | 78 |
| AS-level mathematics | 3 | No. of starts | 195 | 172 | 165 |
| | | % retention | 85 | 85 | 88 |
| | | % pass rate | 73 | 73 | 82 |
| AS-level physics | 3 | No. of starts | 104 | 97 | 101 |
| | | % retention | 91 | 84 | 80 |
| | | % pass rate | 63 | 68 | 73 |
| GCE A-level biological sciences | 3 | No. of starts | * | 128 | 126 |
| | | % retention | * | 89 | 84 |
| | | % pass rate | * | 90 | 98 |
| GCE A-level | 3 | No. of starts | * | 113 | 114 |

| | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|---|----|----|
| mathematics | % retention | * | 81 | 83 |
| | % pass rate | * | 85 | 96 |

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

52. Most teaching in science and mathematics is good or better. Detailed schemes of work provide a good basis for teaching, especially in biology. There have, however, been problems in covering physics teaching where support materials and documentation available to new teachers is limited. Lessons are well planned and teaching in science and mathematics involves a good range of challenging activities for students. This includes practical work, demonstrations, use of videos and models, group work and many imaginative revision exercises. For example, an adult chemistry group consolidated work on halides through the identification of unknown ions. The inclusion of a mixture of an iodide and a chloride resulted in a valuable discussion of the earlier practical observations. Mind maps were used effectively to revise transition metals and thermo-chemistry and students participated enthusiastically in a challenging debate on the moral issues surrounding the alteration of the genetic makeup of bananas. In the best lessons, teachers plan individual objectives for students, but lesson plans rarely give explicit information on how these will be achieved. The use of computers to support learning in mathematics is restricted and teaching does not yet exploit the available resources fully. In the best lessons, students are very well motivated, are attentive and ask searching questions. In biological subjects at level 2, progress is on occasion limited by the inability of students to give good written accounts of their oral deductions.

53. All teachers and technicians are well qualified and experienced and many act as external examiners. Teachers participate in relevant training and development. Teaching resources are up to date and include a flexcam for biology and instrumental analysis equipment for chemistry. There is an increasing range of materials on the college intranet which students value. Whilst several laboratories have been refurbished, one physics laboratory is very dated and too many lessons take place in classrooms, which restricts the linking of theory and practical teaching. For example, only one third of AS-level biology lessons are taught in a laboratory. One mathematics room is very well equipped, but many lessons are taught in rooms without IT or access to the Internet.

54. Preparation for module examinations is thorough and all courses have regular assessments and there are termly reports to parents. Assessment is particularly rigorous in mathematics and biology and students receive detailed feedback from well-planned tests, including progress against their targets. In other subjects, assessment and the monitoring of progress, although satisfactory, is not as rigorous.

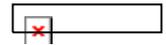
55. There is a wide range of level 3 courses in science and mathematics for students aged 16 to 18 and for adults who can attend GCSE, GCE or access to HE courses during the day. The availability of a wide range of AS-level subjects in the evening is a particular strength. Mathematics students are able to extend their learning through a national distance learning project. Students attend scientific conferences and some use specialist equipment at Exeter University. Enrichment opportunities include field trips to Kenya and to Wales for environmental science students, and participation in national competitions in chemistry and mathematics.

56. Students receive good subject support. Individual help in lessons is of a high standard. The results of initial assessment are used to inform mathematics teaching and a mathematics workshop is available outside of lesson times. The quality of additional learning support for deaf, partially sighted and blind students is very good. The college attendance monitoring system has helped to improve attendance. Students receive very good support on applications to HE.

Leadership and management

57. Leadership and management are good. Regular meetings and effective teamwork have enabled the department to function well, despite staffing difficulties. The college has done well to appoint experienced temporary staff to fill the vacancies across all subjects. However, insufficient monitoring at subject level, especially in physics, has meant that issues surrounding assessment, mainly by part-time staff, have not been fully identified. In other respects, quality assurance works well. Documentation is detailed and thorough and good use is made of value added information to analyse achievement. A detailed development plan identifies strategies to improve weaknesses. Good use is made of lesson observation to raise standards. Staff are aware of equal opportunities issues and analyse achievement of different groups of students.

Construction



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

Strengths

- good monitoring of student progress
- effective additional support for students.

Weaknesses

- low and declining retention rates on many courses
- low pass rates on many programmes
- much unsatisfactory teaching and learning
- inadequate resources for students' use.

Scope of provision

58. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in carpentry and joinery, bricklaying, plumbing, electrical installation and technician studies. There are 687 enrolments on construction courses. There are 85 students on level 1 courses, 127 students on level 2 courses and 163 students on level 3 courses. Just under 50% of students are aged 16 to 18. There are approximately 240 apprentices whose programme is provided in partnership with local industry. Pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools also attend construction courses and the department also provides short courses in

construction for adults.

Achievement and standards

59. Retention rates on the NVQ level 1 in trowel occupations and the NVQ level 1 in wood occupations, though declining, are satisfactory, but many retention rates are well below national averages. The retention rates on the NVQ level 2 wood occupations, NVQ level 2 bricklaying are low and have been declining since 2000/01. The retention rate on the NVQ level 2 mechanical engineering services (plumbing) was 10% in 2002/03 and on the AVCE in construction and the built environment, the retention rate was some 20% below the national average. Pass rates are good on the NVQ level 1 in trowel occupations, but are mainly below national averages on most other courses. For example, in 2002/03, the pass rate on the NVQ level 2 in mechanical engineering services (plumbing) was 33%, some 45% below the national average. Pass rates on advanced modern apprentices are also poor. In 2001/02 and 2002/03, only 3% and 15%, respectively, of those who started on the programme achieved the full award.

60. The standard of students' work is generally satisfactory and is of a high standard in carpentry and joinery where students produce good practical work. In brickwork, poor housekeeping and working practices within the workshops do not promote the achievement of high standards of work and the specialist accommodation is very poor. Students do not develop their practical skills sufficiently and there is little use of IT to promote on learning on craft programmes.

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

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|---|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| NVQ trowel occupations (construction) 1 year | 1 | No. of starts | 12 | 12 | 25 |
| | | % retention | 92 | 92 | 76 |
| | | % pass rate | 91 | 100 | 79 |
| NVQ wood occupations (construction) 1 year | 1 | No. of starts | 32 | 17 | 49 |
| | | % retention | 84 | 100 | 82 |
| | | % pass rate | 93 | 88 | 58 |
| NVQ wood occupations (construction) 2 year | 2 | No. of starts | 32 | 12 | 8 |
| | | % retention | 50 | 33 | 25 |
| | | % pass rate | 63 | 75 | 100 |
| NVQ bricklaying (construction) 2 year | 2 | No. of starts | 12 | 9 | 15 |
| | | % retention | 75 | 67 | 53 |
| | | % pass rate | 89 | 83 | 38 |
| NVQ mechanical engineering services (plumbing) 2 year | 2 | No. of starts | 9 | 9 | 31 |
| | | % retention | 89 | 67 | 10 |
| | | % pass rate | 50 | 67 | 33 |
| AVCE in construction and the built environment 2 year | 3 | No. of starts | * | 17 | 12 |
| | | % retention | * | 59 | 42 |
| | | % pass rate | * | 40 | 60 |
| Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) national certificate in civil engineering studies 2 year | 3 | No. of starts | * | 17 | 21 |
| | | % retention | * | 65 | 43 |
| | | % pass rate | * | 45 | 67 |

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

61. There is a high proportion of teaching and learning in the department that is unsatisfactory. Punctuality is poor on technician programmes and students are not appropriately challenged when they are late. In one class, students started to leave the practical lesson 20 minutes before the end without challenge and the whole class had left 5 minutes before the scheduled end of the lesson. Attendance at lessons during the inspection was low, at 73%.

62. The better theory lessons are introduced effectively, maintain a good pace and engage and challenge students. They are well planned and include appropriate activities including good use of visual aids. In the better practical lessons, students work hard and make good progress and, where appropriate, teachers draw on students' experience of the workplace. For example, in a practical carpentry and joinery lesson, students were producing sash windows and cabinets and answered questions correctly to demonstrate their understanding. In another lesson, students were developing good skills whilst working on second-fix projects. Well-produced workbooks are used extensively, including those designed to support students in literacy and numeracy. In the unsatisfactory lessons, students are insufficiently challenged and often spend too long copying text and drawings from overhead transparencies, some of which are of poor quality. There is insufficient checking of learning and students are not given the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge. In some classrooms, lighting is inadequate. During one lesson, two students were sent to the library to work on their key skills portfolios. No specialist support was available to them and they achieved very little during the lesson.

63. Accommodation at the York Wing campus is inadequate. This is identified within the college's self-assessment report. Timber stocks held at the York Wing campus are good and the plumbing workshops are of a good standard. They are well organised, tidy and there are good working practices to help promote high standards. Many classrooms are untidy. Specialist accommodation for trowel trades is very poor. The workshop is cluttered with used mortar, bricks, blocks and other materials. The students are expected to re-use all the cuts so they do not develop skills to the levels expected. The hard-burned bricks they use also make the skill of cutting bricks difficult to learn. Newly delivered bricks and blocks are stored outside without any protection from the weather. The workshop roof leaks and there is a risk of students' work being damaged by water leaking through the roof. Working practices do not promote high standards. There are also poor arrangements for technician support.

64. The college recognises the difficulties and has invested £2.2 million in new accommodation for construction programmes. The building works were well advanced at the time of inspection and are on schedule to be fully operational from September 2004. The facility has been designed to accommodate an integrated approach to the delivery of building crafts programmes.

65. All full-time students take a vocationally related initial assessment. Accurate records of students' progress are kept by teachers and the information is replicated in student files and on wallcharts. Staff carry out regular reviews with work-based learners. Records of progress in additional basic skills are comprehensive. Students do not always receive effective feedback on theory work and details of how to improve. There are missed opportunities for the inclusion of on-site assessment into students' programmes. Log books are used to record on-site activities, but no assessments are carried out on site. In brickwork and carpentry and joinery, there are no qualified assessors in place to carry out anything other than generic core unit assessments in the workplace.

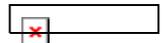
66. Additional learning support for students is good. All full-time students undertake an initial diagnostic test to identify any support needs they may have. This support is put into place early in the programme. Any additional support needs for full-time and part-time students that become apparent throughout the year are also accommodated effectively. Tutorial reviews and individual

learning plans are inconsistent and mainly poor.

Leadership and management

67. The leadership and management of the curriculum area are unsatisfactory. The department has recently been restructured and there is now recognition of the need to improve and an action plan to implement improvement has been written. The lesson observation scheme and quality assurance procedures are not implemented systematically within the department. Outcomes of lesson observations are not linked to annual appraisals or to inform staff development. Advanced practitioners, external consultants and mentors are now used to support improvements in teaching and learning, but it is too early to measure the impact.

Engineering



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

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

Strengths

- high retention rates on most courses

- high pass rates on motor vehicle and computer-aided engineering courses

- good teaching on motor vehicle courses

- good links with employers, schools and the community

- highly effective key skills teaching

- good management of curriculum and work-based learning.

Weaknesses

- low achievement of foundation modern apprenticeship frameworks

- poor workshop practices in a few lessons

- insufficient use of differentiation in engineering lessons.

Scope of provision

68. There are currently 485 students on engineering programmes. Courses in motor vehicle repair, basic engineering competencies and computer-aided engineering are offered at NVQ level 1 through to level 3. National certificates, foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships are also offered. Engineering training is carried out at the college city centre site while motor vehicle training is offered in a purpose-built training facility on the outskirts of the city. There are 327 students on engineering courses and 158 students on motor vehicle courses. Of these, 152 students are full time and 333 are part time. There are 231 trainees on work-based learning programmes. Some 194 are students aged 16 to 18 and 146 are adults. In addition, the college provides engineering training to 145 pupils aged 14 to 16 in partnership with local schools. Female students account for 3% of the total.

Achievement and standards

69. Retention rates across most programmes are high and are above national averages. For example, retention rates on the NVQ level 1 vehicle maintenance and repair and the City and Guilds basic engineering competencies are both some 14% above national averages. There has been significant improvement in the retention rate of work-based learners and the retention rate is now satisfactory.

70. There are high pass rates on motor vehicle and computer-aided engineering courses. For example, the pass rate on the City and Guilds 2301 computer-aided engineering competencies was 100% in 2002/03. The achievement of advanced modern apprenticeships for work-based learners has steadily increased over the last three years, but there is slow achievement of foundation modern apprenticeship frameworks. Improvement strategies are in place to address this and pass rates are beginning to improve.

71. Students produce high-quality work during classroom and workshop lessons. Students take advantage of opportunities to improve their learning and develop a wide range of engineering skills. There are frequent awards ceremonies and events to celebrate students' achievements.

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

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|--|-------|------------------|------|------|------|
| NVQ vehicle maintenance and repair | 1 | No. of starts | 26 | 28 | 25 |
| | | % retention | 92 | 82 | 72 |
| | | % pass rate | 13 | 74 | 83 |
| City and Guilds basic engineering competencies | 1 | No. of starts | 12 | 23 | 19 |
| | | % retention | 67 | 61 | 63 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 86 | 75 |
| City and Guilds 4351 computer-aided design | 2 | No. of starts | 32 | 45 | 47 |
| | | % retention | 94 | 82 | 81 |
| | | % pass rate | 37 | 68 | 68 |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---------------|-----|----|-----|
| City and Guilds 2301 computer-aided engineering competencies | 2 | No. of starts | 16 | 12 | 10 |
| | | % retention | 100 | 83 | 80 |
| | | % pass rate | 56 | 90 | 100 |
| AVCE in engineering | 3 | No. of starts | * | 32 | 32 |
| | | % retention | * | 69 | 66 |
| | | % pass rate | * | 73 | 76 |
| BTEC national certificate in engineering | 3 | No. of starts | 30 | 33 | 25 |
| | | % retention | 80 | 64 | 72 |
| | | % pass rate | 92 | 90 | 83 |

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

72. There is much good teaching, particularly on motor vehicle courses. Teachers use a wide variety of effective techniques including group discussion, project work and simulations. Students are enthusiastic and keen to increase their understanding. There is extensive and relevant use of up-to-date ILT in motor vehicle lessons which is used well to link practice and theory. For example, in a theory lesson on diesel electrical systems, students worked enthusiastically on a computerised simulation before visiting the workshop to observe working models.

73. Whilst there is rigorous monitoring of health and safety practices within work-based learning programmes, there are a few poor practices in college workshops. For example, students did not apply correct manual handling techniques when moving heavy equipment and some students did not wear safety glasses when operating machinery. There was a delay before staff corrected these practices.

74. The resources at the motor vehicle training centre are excellent. The classrooms are well equipped with the latest technological teaching aids and these are used well by teachers to support learning. The workshops have a wide range of modern diagnostic test equipment, engine running rigs and teaching aids for vehicle electrical systems. There is a good range of vehicles in the workshop. Local companies often donate equipment and sponsorship from local engineering companies has allowed expensive equipment upgrades to be completed. Resources in the engineering department are well maintained. Teaching and support staff are well qualified and experienced in their occupational area. Some facilities for students are poorly maintained.

75. There is frequent and thorough assessment of students' work and they receive extensive and constructive feedback. Progress reviews are managed effectively. Information gained from marked assignments and tests is used to set new targets and students are well informed as to their progress. Assessment in the workplace is flexible and rigorous and there are many examples of good practice. For example, a work-based learner was preparing a vehicle for the application of a primer coat of paint. The employer contacted the assessor who rescheduled his placement visit in order to carry out the assessment of this work. A first-year student carried out inspections of commercial vehicles before beginning to rebuild engines, supported by trained staff. Feedback from learners about workplace support is discussed with employers and there is extensive promotion of health and safety and equality and diversity in the workplace.

76. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses at level 1 to 3. Students are fully aware of progression routes to higher qualifications. Engineering is well promoted in schools with whom the department has strong links. Courses for pupils aged 14 to 16 allow progression into FE or apprenticeships. Parents' evenings in schools are used well to promote engineering courses. An employers' advisory group is working effectively to advise on the engineering curriculum.

Employers also encourage teaching staff to attend their workplace for skills and knowledge updates. Engineering is further promoted through links with local community groups. Students from the Royal School for the Deaf frequently use the engineering facilities to enhance their curriculum.

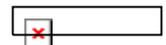
77. There is good initial assessment during students' induction. Occupationally qualified support teachers are employed in the engineering department to good effect. There are detailed records kept for students with additional support needs. The college offers a range of additional lessons in numeracy and literacy often during lunchtime and in the evening. Key skills are integrated well into lessons. Assignments and exercises use occupationally relevant terminology and activities to develop students' basic skills. Of the first-year students, 85% have already passed the key skills tests and are working on the portfolio element of the qualification. There is a lack of differentiation in engineering lessons. Where students' preferred learning styles are identified, teachers do not always take these into account in lessons and on occasions, some of the more able students are not sufficiently challenged.

Leadership and management

78. The leadership and management of engineering and work-based training are good. There are highly effective quality assurance arrangements in place including internal verification and the frequent observation of teaching. Information is routinely collated from a wide variety of sources such as student performance data, employer and student feedback, course reviews and lesson observations. This information is analysed rigorously and used to identify opportunities for improvement. The progress of each student is recorded on the management information system and updated weekly. There is a wide range of in-house staff development. Weekly staff meetings consider student performance, curriculum development and improvements in teaching and learning.

79. Self-assessment is used effectively for measuring performance and initiating change. Awareness among college teaching staff about issues of equal opportunities and diversity is weak, though strategies are in place to improve recruitment of students from minority and ethnic groups.

Business



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

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most business courses and NVQs in accounting

- high and improving retention rates on foundation modern apprenticeship frameworks

- very good development of students' vocational and interpersonal skills

- much good teaching
- wide range of successful courses
- very good support for students.

Weaknesses

- low pass rate on AS-level accounting
- low achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks in business administration
- poor access to IT and other resources to support learning.

Scope of provision

80. The college provides a wide range of full-time and part-time business-related courses at Brittany House, Victoria House, the Episcopal Centre and the main college site. There are full-time and part-time courses in business studies, business administration and accounting and a range of specialist professional courses. Full-time business studies courses include GNVQ at foundation and intermediate level, GCSE, AVCE, AS level and GCE A level. There are 63 full-time students aged 16 to 18 on GNVQ and AVCE courses and 191 on AS-level and GCE A-level courses in business subjects. There are 72 learners enrolled on work-based programmes in business administration or accounting. There are 452 adults enrolled on part-time business courses and 52 pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools are following the GCSE applied business double award. A recent development has been the establishment of a centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) in business administration in partnership with a local training provider.

Achievement and standards

81. Retention rates are high and generally above national averages. For example, retention rates on the GNVQ foundation business and the AVCE in business are 25% and 10%, respectively, above the national average. There are high pass rates on vocational courses, particularly on the GNVQ foundation and intermediate, the AVCE and NVQ accounting at levels 1 and 2. In 2003/03, the pass rate on the AVCE in business was 100% compared to the national average of 67% and the pass rate of 85% on the GNVQ intermediate business is some 20% above the national average. The proportion of high grade passes in GNVQ intermediate in business are 35% above national average and in AVCE business are 13% above the national average. In GCE A-level business studies, the high grades are 19% above the national average. There was a low pass rate on AS-level accounting in 2003. The retention rate of 81% on the foundation modern apprenticeship in accounting is good. Completion of full framework achievements for foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in business administration is low. Many of these learners have been recently transferred from a local

training provider, most of whom have yet to achieve the full framework. Attendance during the inspection was high, at 87%, and students' punctuality was good.

82. Students' work is of a high standard and shows very good analytical skills. Work-based learning students' portfolios are particularly well organised and professionally presented. Students work well in class, present clear and thoughtful answers to questions and participate enthusiastically in activities and discussions. For example, administration students finalised accounts correctly, AS-level business students took part in a detailed discussion about current interest rates and inflation and a student in the workplace established a comprehensive system to track sales records and information.

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

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| GNVQ foundation business | 1 | No. of starts | 15 | 19 | 17 |
| | | % retention | 60 | 79 | 76 |
| | | % pass rate | 78 | 93 | 77 |
| GNVQ intermediate business | 2 | No. of starts | 44 | 38 | 19 |
| | | % retention | 70 | 84 | 68 |
| | | % pass rate | 90 | 75 | 85 |
| NVQ accounting | 2 | No. of starts | 32 | 34 | 42 |
| | | % retention | 88 | 74 | 86 |
| | | % pass rate | 79 | 68 | 81 |
| AS-level accounting | 3 | No. of starts | 78 | 72 | 81 |
| | | % retention | 82 | 90 | 81 |
| | | % pass rate | 64 | 78 | 55 |
| AS-level business | 3 | No. of starts | 141 | 100 | 127 |
| | | % retention | 89 | 86 | 88 |
| | | % pass rate | 82 | 83 | 74 |
| AVCE business | 3 | No. of starts | * | 25 | 36 |
| | | % retention | * | 52 | 64 |
| | | % pass rate | * | 85 | 100 |
| NVQ accounting | 3 | No. of starts | 39 | 36 | 48 |
| | | % retention | 82 | 83 | 75 |
| | | % pass rate | 78 | 63 | 69 |
| GCE A-level business studies | 3 | No. of starts | 115 | 87 | 56 |
| | | % retention | 72 | 90 | 88 |
| | | % pass rate | 81 | 88 | 93 |

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

83. There is much good teaching. Lessons are well planned and in the best lessons teachers strengthen students' understanding by engaging them in a range of activities that stimulate interest and promote learning. For example, in a GNVQ foundation business lesson, students worked in pairs to discuss their own skills for employment. They transferred this information to posters and included photographs to produce a very professional display. In another lesson, students presented their findings to the rest of the class after a lively group discussion had taken place to determine the main learning points of the subject of the lesson. Role-play is also used effectively to simulate business environments. Teachers encourage students to participate in the lesson through targeted questioning and meaningful discussion. Students are confident and articulate and speak enthusiastically about their work and the progress they are making.

84. Staff are well qualified and experienced and support students well. They use their own business experience to explain complex issues and frequently consult with industry to ensure the curriculum is up to date. The use of ILT in classrooms is limited. There is a lack of access to computers which inhibits the ability for students to conduct immediate research. Some lessons take place in the computer suite to support the development of practical IT skills. There are insufficient reference materials such as journals, videos, textbooks and professional workbooks for students to use in lessons on most courses or in work-based learning. GCE A-level business students are provided with a CD-ROM of useful materials including the course handbook, lecturer notes, web addresses and extension materials to support their course. There is a dedicated departmental library at the Brittany House site, which contains a range of business textbooks and reference materials.

85. Most of the accommodation is satisfactory. However, some classrooms lack displays and information pertinent to business courses. A large proportion of full-time students on both administration and business courses participate in work experience either in the college or with local employers and there are dedicated workshops for the delivery of key skills.

86. Students on work-based learning programmes are given good guidance about portfolio completion in timetabled workshops, tutorials and in subject lessons. For example in an Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) level 2 lesson, the teacher helped students to identify and cross reference evidence from completed accounting tasks to the NVQ standards and at the same time indicated appropriate evidence for their key skills. The students then organised this evidence in their portfolio to ensure they were clear about what they needed to do to progress and improve their performance.

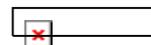
87. Completed work is marked promptly and returned to students with detailed feedback. Students have detailed action plans and reviews in work-based learning are effectively managed and involve employers. Learners are visited regularly and assessment is planned and carried out thoroughly. Individual learning plans are regularly updated and shared with employers. Single unit accreditation is used effectively to motivate students. Students value the range of events held by the college to celebrate achievement.

88. Students on both college and work-based programmes speak highly of the support given to them by teachers. Initial assessment is effective and students are allocated a personal tutor. There is a positive learning ethos within the department and teachers have high expectations. Students develop good personal, academic and vocational skills and are well prepared for employment, or FE and HE.

Leadership and management

89. Leadership and management are good. There is a clearly focused commitment and agenda for improvement. Course reviews are thorough and inform the self-assessment report. Course teams systematically analyse retention and pass rates and implement changes to improve teaching and learning. There is a regular programme of formal and informal lesson observations which inform the staff development programme and best practice is shared through organised development days and regular team meetings. Equal opportunities are covered at student induction, but on occasions lack reinforcement in the classroom. Students with various learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well. Work-based learning managers do not have immediate access to an overview of student progress and achievements.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- very good retention and pass rates on full-time level 1 provision
- good provision for adult students
- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on national diploma in computer studies
- ineffective management at course team level.

Scope of provision

90. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses. There are good opportunities for progression from foundation to advanced level courses and HE. Full-time courses are available at all levels and include GNVQ foundation and intermediate, the national diploma in computing, the AVCE in ICT, AS level and GCE A level in both computing and ICT. There are approximately 110 students aged 16 to 18 studying full-time computing courses. Approximately 1,500 adult students attend part-time day or evening introductory IT courses at learning centres within the city or through one of many community locations.

Achievement and standards

91. Most retention rates are around national averages. However, the retention rate on the GNVQ foundation in IT was 96% in 2002/03 against a national average of 77%, but the retention rate on the GNVQ intermediate in ICT was 11% below the national average.

92. Pass rates on all ICT courses are generally in line or slightly better than national averages. The pass rates on the GNVQ foundation and the NVQ level 1 in using IT show continued improvement over the last three years and were 100% and 93% respectively in 2002/03. Courses for adults attending part-time courses such as the European computer driving licence (ECDL) and computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) are in line with national averages. Pass rates on the AS level in ICT are at the national average and students achieve well on GCE A-level courses. Pass

rates on the national diploma in computer studies have declined significantly since 2000/01 and are now below the national average. The standard of students' work is satisfactory and many students make good progress during their time at college. For example in 2002/03, 70% of AS-level students obtained a higher grade than predicted by their GCSE results.

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

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|---|-------|------------------|------|------|------|
| CLAIT *New CLAIT | 1 | No. of starts | 941 | 717 | 111* |
| | | % retention | 89 | 86 | 88 |
| | | % pass rate | 71 | 71 | 68 |
| GNVQ foundation IT | 1 | No. of starts | 35 | 20 | 23 |
| | | % retention | 77 | 75 | 96 |
| | | % pass rate | 44 | 73 | 100 |
| ECDL | 2 | No. of starts | * | 299 | 326 |
| | | % retention | * | 50 | 70 |
| | | % pass rate | * | 69 | 62 |
| GNVQ intermediate ICT | 2 | No. of starts | 51 | 51 | 41 |
| | | % retention | 78 | 80 | 66 |
| | | % pass rate | 85 | 73 | 70 |
| AS-level ICT | 3 | No. of starts | 130 | 82 | 62 |
| | | % retention | 80 | 76 | 82 |
| | | % pass rate | 60 | 61 | 65 |
| GCE A-level computing | 3 | No. of starts | 38 | 30 | 31 |
| | | % retention | 63 | 83 | 87 |
| | | % pass rate | 83 | 88 | 93 |
| BTEC national diploma in computer studies | 3 | No. of starts | 15 | 17 | 31 |
| | | % retention | 60 | 76 | 55 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 62 | 71 |

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

93. Teaching is satisfactory or better. Teaching is better in lessons for adults than for students aged 16 to 18. In the most effective lessons, teachers make good use of computer projectors to explain applications and motivate and challenge students by placing them into small groups to work on appropriate activities within structured time constraints. Students benefit from good access to a range of additional materials available on the college intranet which has been amended by staff to allow students to access materials from home as well as from college. However, in some lessons, students are insufficiently challenged. For example, students spend long periods working from textbooks or searching for information on websites. In one lesson, the giving of individual support and feedback to one student allowed the majority of the class to drift and their progress was slowed. Students learn skills appropriate to the industry and a few students have used their knowledge from

the course to set up their own business outside of college. For example, a student has used part of a national diploma assessment on developing live websites for a local audio shop and another student has designed software for an electrical company. One NVQ student has used his knowledge gained on the course to develop an electronic portfolio for his work. The adult learning centres have knowledgeable and committed staff, but in one busy outreach centre the teacher also was responsible for setting up online exams for students, during which time there was no technician support available or support for other students. Teachers of most full-time courses are unclear about the delivery and assessment of key skills, the exception being the GNVQ foundation which has good pass rates in all three key skills.

94. IT resources are adequate. However, a minority of students complain that in some rooms access to the college network is too slow for effective use during lessons. Technical support is sometimes delayed when the problem is remote from the main site. Some rooms are too hot and windows need to be opened for ventilation resulting in lessons being disrupted by noise from outside. Staff are appreciative of the professional development opportunities available. Take up is high on courses to update their IT and teaching skills. The learning centre has good specialist hardware and software for visually impaired students.

95. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good. In lessons for adult students, good use is made of computer-based monitoring systems that track progress and remind staff when reviews are overdue. In a few IT learning centres, there is insufficient checking of adults' work and, in a minority of cases, students' learning and progress are not maximised. Students appreciate the prompt return of work. Written feedback on assignments is detailed and contains helpful advice on how to improve. Assignments on vocational full-time courses are scenario-based and set students challenging and realistic problems to solve. The use of target setting and progress monitoring through individual learning plans is good on the GNVQ foundation programme, but poorly developed on the other full-time courses for students aged 16 to 18.

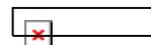
96. There are many opportunities for adult students to learn IT skills and to gain qualifications. Many are based at appropriate venues in the community and many are delivered in partnership with community and minority groups including faith groups, charities and groups for people with mental health problems. This provision makes a significant contribution to widening participation in education. Co-ordination of these courses is developing, but progression routes for students are not always clear. Progression routes for full-time students aged 16 to 18 are clear and progression to higher-level courses is good. For example, in 2002/03, 90% of students on the GNVQ foundation course progressed on to higher-level courses or employment. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and students often progress successfully. There is limited involvement with employers, except through work placements, for NVQ and AVCE students.

97. All students are well guided and supported. Induction is comprehensive and a variety of enrichment opportunities are available. Initial assessment for additional learning needs is thorough and action is taken to provide support for those who need it. Students appreciate their individual tutorial support. For example, one student commented how effectively the college had linked in with Connexions to provide him with timely advice on accommodation and personal issues. In a number of lessons, effective use is made of knowledgeable support assistants and specialist equipment. Recently, the support given to a student enabled her to become the first blind student in the country to pass the ECDL. There is very good support on work-based NVQ courses and links between the training officers and college teaching staff are effective.

Leadership and management

98. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The self-assessment report evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the provision realistically and there is a comprehensive development plan in place. However, most course teams do not discuss the weaknesses raised in the plan frequently enough or other issues such as resources or strategies to improve teaching. Opportunities to share good practice within teams are not exploited, although the development plan which addresses this for adult courses has made some progress.

Hospitality, sport, leisure and travel



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

Strengths

- high pass rates

- much good teaching

- very good support for students

- very good development of vocational and practical skills

- successful sports academies

- productive external partnership arrangements.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on leisure and travel courses

- insufficient breadth of provision in hospitality

- unsatisfactory teaching of theory in hospitality in a minority of lessons.

Scope of provision

99. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time provision in hospitality, sports and leisure and travel. NVQ courses are available in hospitality from levels 1 to 3. AVCE, GNVQ, progression awards and national diploma courses are also offered. Further courses are available to full-time and

part-time students. Examples include the national licensee certificate, basic and advanced pastry, basic expedition leaders' award, community sports leader award and the Association of British Travel Agents Certificate (ABTAC). There are 82 full-time students aged 16 to 18 on catering courses, 57 on full-time leisure and travel courses and 97 on the national diploma in sports science. In addition, there are 85 students aged 16 to 18 on AS-level physical education and 85 students on GCE A-level physical education courses. Male students account for 54% of students within the curriculum area. The college also has a small work-based learning provision of about 45 learners.

Achievement and standards

100. Retention rates in hospitality are high and many are above the national average. For example, the retention rate on the NVQ level 2 in catering and hospitality (serving food and drink) was 34% above the national average in 2003/03. Retention rates are satisfactory on sports courses overall, but they are below national averages on full-time leisure and travel courses. For example the retention rate on the GNVQ intermediate in leisure and tourism was 54% in 2002/03.

101. Pass rates are very high on most courses. On sports, and leisure and travel courses, these have been significantly above the national averages for the last three years. Pass rates on the AS-level and the GCE A-level physical education were 90% and 98%, respectively, in 2002/03 and the pass rate on the AVCE travel and tourism course was 100%. Pass rates are also high on the NVQs in catering and hospitality (serving food and drink and food preparation and cooking) and are significantly above national averages.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, 2001 to 2003

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|---|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| NVQ catering and hospitality (serving food and drink) | 2 | No. of starts | * | 45 | 34 |
| | | % retention | * | 78 | 82 |
| | | % pass rate | * | 91 | 93 |
| NVQ catering and hospitality (food preparation and cooking) | 2 | No. of starts | 50 | 82 | 79 |
| | | % retention | 60 | 67 | 54 |
| | | % pass rate | 73 | 82 | 84 |
| GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism | 2 | No. of starts | 33 | 54 | 37 |
| | | % retention | 88 | 67 | 54 |
| | | % pass rate | 90 | 67 | 95 |
| AS-level physical education | 3 | No. of starts | 112 | 106 | 116 |
| | | % retention | 88 | 83 | 84 |
| | | % pass rate | 83 | 90 | 90 |
| GCE A2 physical education | 3 | No. of starts | 86 | 62 | 68 |
| | | % retention | 80 | 92 | 82 |
| | | % pass rate | 87 | 98 | 98 |
| AVCE travel and tourism | 3 | No. of starts | * | 28 | 34 |
| | | % retention | * | 82 | 56 |
| | | % pass rate | * | 91 | 100 |

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

102. There is much good teaching in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel. Lessons and assessments are well planned and link clearly with detailed schemes of work. In hospitality, students follow a rota to ensure they undertake different roles within the kitchens and restaurants and have access to a wide variety of learning and assessment opportunities. Staff draw on their industrial experience to illustrate key points, helping to make lessons relevant and exciting. In hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, teachers use a variety of effective questioning techniques to stimulate discussion and check learning. They provide clear information in a confident and lively manner and students remain interested and attentive throughout lessons. They demonstrate a keen willingness to learn. Individual and small group tasks are challenging and stimulate much discussion and analysis. In most lessons, students display good practical skills and make good progress. In many lessons, the mixed abilities of students are managed well. Practical sports lessons underpin the learning of theoretical concepts well and students are motivated to perform at their best in these lessons. The well-equipped sports hall is used effectively to support learning.

103. In hospitality, the teaching of theory is unsatisfactory in a minority of lessons. These lessons lack variety and students are not sufficiently engaged in their learning. Visual aids, when used, are of poor quality. Questioning is not used effectively to involve all students or to check understanding. In one session, too much information was covered and students were directed to write down notes as they were dictated by the tutor which did not challenge students sufficiently or give them opportunities to demonstrate their learning.

104. The sports hall is well equipped. There is also a small fitness suite which is functional, but does not meet industry standards. The college's sports fields are situated approximately three miles from the main sites in the city centre, but students also use one nearby successfully. Specialist facilities throughout the local area are also used, including those at the nearby University of Exeter, with whom the sports department have close links. There is a brasserie and a more traditional restaurant, both of which are open to the public. The restaurant is very busy and numbers of diners are consistently high. The kitchens attached to these restaurants are well equipped, though some pieces of equipment are awaiting maintenance and not available for use.

105. Assignments are creative and provide a good opportunity to obtain higher grades. Students find the assignments, interesting and motivating. Key skills assignments are vocationally relevant in all areas. Generally, tutors give timely and appropriate feedback. However, on a small number of sports studies assignments, feedback from teachers is too brief.

106. Trips and visits to local, national and European destinations support classroom learning and are used effectively to gather evidence for assignments. Residential courses for AVCE students provide good opportunities to reinforce learning.

107. The sports academies are very successful. The college sports department has won a number of awards at local, regional and national level. Individuals have been successful at all levels through to national standard. Students with a range of abilities are given the opportunity to develop their sports skills. There are numerous sports teams for students to join as well as individual events for students to participate in. In hospitality, students develop good practical skills, relevant to industry and there is very good progression into employment. In 2002/03, 100% of the NVQ level 3 in catering and hospitality students progressed into employment within the industry. There is high-quality celebration of students' achievements within the department, irrespective of level of programme. Presentation awards ceremonies are held and a formal dinner is organised by sports students to celebrate the college's numerous sporting achievements and the hospitality department hosts a popular awards ceremony. There are displays of photographs within the departments together with case studies of successful ex-students. These factors help to create a professional learning environment which encourages and motivates students.

108. Support for students is very good. Individual and group tutorials are effective in providing practical support and advice to students on a range of important issues. Students value tutorial time and use it productively. All students complete an initial assessment to identify additional support requirements. Learning support is good and is particularly effective for hospitality students with

identified additional needs. Students from the Royal School for the Deaf also access the college's resources to enrich their curriculum. Support given by college staff is recorded and regular reviews are held to ensure that the support is effective. Attendance is monitored and absenteeism is effectively followed-up on all courses.

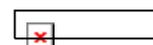
109. The range of courses meets the majority of the needs of full-time, part-time and workplace students. Courses are available at entry level through to HE, providing good progression opportunities. Full-time students also have access to additional courses that enhance their progression and employability. There is, however, insufficient breadth of provision in hospitality and the focus is on food preparation and food and drink service.

110. There are many productive external partnerships. For example, the college works with the Youth Hostels Association (YHA) for its outdoor physical education programme and this partnership includes the joint delivery of programmes by YHA and college staff. Good links exist with many different sporting clubs throughout the area. In hospitality, there are good links with employers and some well-known professionals from the catering industry attend the college as guest chefs and for award ceremonies.

Leadership and management

111. Leadership and management are good. Formal and informal internal communications are effective. Directorate meetings are held weekly and provide staff with feedback from senior management team meetings. Minutes are recorded and most previous actions are addressed. Staff are involved and contribute to the planning process. Student surveys and course reviews are conducted systematically. The results are analysed and used by course teams to inform the self-assessment report and to develop action plans. There is good access to key management information and staff make effective use of this to plan improvements. Staff appraisals are conducted on an annual basis and are used to identify staff development requirements, which are supported by managers. Lesson observations form part of the appraisal process. Good links exist between the college's work-based assessors and industry. The internal verification system is satisfactory.

Health and social care



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on courses at levels 1 and 2

- much good teaching and learning

- clear and effective quality assurance procedures

- effective partnerships with local employers and agencies

- o strong team ethos within the department.

Weaknesses

- o limited access to IT to support learning
- o poor accommodation and facilities at the Episcopal centre
- o narrow range of courses for part-time and adult students.

Scope of provision

112. There are 269 full-time and 195 part-time students enrolled on courses in the curriculum area. Of these a majority are aged 16 to 18, and there are few adult students attending college-based courses. A further 34 students follow work-based courses in care and early years. A schools links programme has 36 students currently engaged on an applied GCSE health and social care course. Full-time courses are available at levels 1 to 3 in care and public services, and at levels 2 and 3 in early years. There are counselling courses available at intermediate and advanced levels through a franchise arrangement. NVQs in care and early years are offered in the workplace, with flexible approaches to assessment and the provision of underpinning knowledge. Courses for adult returners to learning are offered in collaboration with the Devon early years partnership, and local social services, but the range of courses for part-time and adult students is narrow. Enrichment opportunities include food hygiene, first aid, sign language and self-defence courses as well as a number of sports and recreational programmes.

Achievement and standards

113. There are high pass rates on most courses at levels 1 and 2. For example, on the GNVQ foundation in health and social care and the intermediate counselling skills courses, the pass rate was 100% in 2002/03. Students achieve high grades above the national average on several courses. Though retention rates have declined, most are still above the national average. There are several work-based learners still on programme beyond their anticipated completion date.

114. Students' assessed work is of an appropriate standard to course level. Portfolios are well organised and presented. Work placements are regarded as a valuable resource for learning and links are effectively established between college-based and workplace-based components of programmes. Attendance and punctuality are good, reflecting students' high levels of motivation. Students' progression is good. Many level 3 students are keen to move into HE and the college's own planned foundation degree in early years is awaiting validation.

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

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|-----------------|-------|------------------|------|------|------|
| GNVQ foundation | 1 | No. of starts | 13 | 20 | 17 |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---------------|-----|-----|-----|
| health and social care | | % retention | 92 | 75 | 82 |
| | | % pass rate | 67 | 93 | 100 |
| First diploma public services | 2 | No. of starts | * | 23 | 31 |
| | | % retention | * | 78 | 65 |
| | | % pass rate | * | 61 | 85 |
| First diploma caring | 2 | No. of starts | 14 | 15 | 34 |
| | | % retention | 79 | 80 | 79 |
| | | % pass rate | 82 | 83 | 74 |
| Counselling skills intermediate (1 year) | 2 | No. of starts | 36 | 33 | 16 |
| | | % retention | 100 | 91 | 88 |
| | | % pass rate | 97 | 100 | 100 |
| AVCE health and social care (double award) | 3 | No. of starts | * | 38 | 37 |
| | | % retention | * | 66 | 65 |
| | | % pass rate | * | 96 | 71 |
| National diploma early years | 3 | No. of starts | 32 | 37 | 40 |
| | | % retention | 69 | 73 | 68 |
| | | % pass rate | 86 | 81 | 89 |
| National diploma public services | 3 | No. of starts | 32 | 20 | 35 |
| | | % retention | 72 | 80 | 71 |
| | | % pass rate | 87 | 100 | 76 |

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

115. There is much good teaching and learning. Where teaching is very good, teachers are enthusiastic and make effective use of their extensive vocational experience. This expertise is highly regarded by students. Lessons have clear schemes of work supported by thorough lesson plans identifying individual learning needs and the preferred learning styles of students in the class. There are frequent changes of activity, and a good balance between practical tasks and theory. In the first lesson for a new class of NVQ students, a role play helped break down barriers and draw out issues around confidentiality in care settings. In a public services lesson, students in small groups considered the implications of a major incident outlined on video, and compared their group findings with the professionals on the film. Students on most courses are expected to reflect on their learning and describe what they have personally gained from the lesson.

116. The less effective lessons have repeated tasks and an overemphasis on reinforcing the same point, thus slowing progress. Some key skills lessons have poor attendance, but in general key skills are well supported by subject and vocational specialists, and students make good progress. Although there are good vocational resources including specialist equipment and texts, there is limited access to ILT to support learning. There are few classrooms with computers and a small number available on a drop-in basis. There are no interactive whiteboards available and the use of technology to enhance learning or quality of presentation is rare.

117. Most teaching takes place at the Episcopal centre. The accommodation and facilities are poor. The buildings are in a poor state of repair, and there is no access to the upper floor for students with

restricted mobility. The refectory and learning resource centre facilities are too small for the number of students attending classes. Staff and students do, however, make the most of their accommodation and there is a wealth of students' work and relevant stimulus material displayed on the walls.

118. Assessment is effectively planned and students appreciate the prompt return of their work. There is detailed written feedback identifying strengths and areas for further development to improve grades. There are often extension tasks for students seeking to achieve higher grades. Verbal feedback is always made available. There is a comprehensive internal verification system.

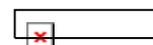
119. Students receive effective support from their tutors and cross-college services. Student attendance monitors review attendance regularly and employ a two-week 'on referral' system to promote improvement. Reviews of students' progress are well documented at subject level, but when these are aggregated into tutor reviews, most targets are vague and there is limited evidence of monitoring taking place. Individual learning needs are identified and well supported. For example, a student with hearing loss has a signer accompany him in all lessons.

120. The teaching team works together effectively and are well qualified in their vocational subjects. There are good opportunities for personal and professional development. There are many effective partnerships with local employers and agencies, with team members acting as representatives to the local early years partnership, liaising with work placement providers, and supporting training in care for Devon county council.

Leadership and management

121. The curriculum area is managed very effectively. There is a strong team ethos within the department, which has only existed in its current form since September 2003. The staff team have covered long-term sickness effectively, they work together to link subjects within courses, and there is a clear sense of common purpose which students greatly appreciate. There are clear and effective quality assurance procedures in place, both within courses and at departmental level. Internal verification systems identify roles and responsibilities and deal effectively with issues of assessment and standards moderation. The self-assessment process involves the whole team, and has identified key strengths and weaknesses accurately.

Visual and performing arts and media



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

Strengths

- high pass rates

- very good teaching in dance and foundation studies

- wide range of courses with clear progression routes

- good support for students
- high standard of practical work.

Weaknesses

- unsuitable accommodation in art and design and drama
- insufficient technical support and resources.

Scope of provision

122. Provision in visual and performing arts and media is large with over 1,100 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 110 adult students following programmes in the department. Some 500 students aged 16 to 18 are taking AS-level and GCE A-level courses in visual and performing arts subjects. Most students are enrolled on level 3 courses. There are national diplomas in media, photography, performing arts, music practice and AVCE in art and design, AS levels and GCE A levels in art and design, drama and theatre arts, music technology, dance, communication, media and film studies. There are also a diploma in foundation studies art and design and part-time access to HE courses. At level 2, there are qualifications in sound engineering, sound recording and video production, a first diploma in performing arts, GCSE dance and art, GNVQ foundation in art and design and GNVQ intermediate in art and design, and media. Evening classes include art and design, film studies, life drawing and City and Guilds photography.

Achievement and standards

123. Retention rates are generally high and most are above national averages. The retention rate on AS-level drama has been consistently above the national average for three years and the retention rate on the GNVQ intermediate in media is also high. The retention rate on the first diploma in performing arts and the diploma in foundation studies in art and design are at the national averages.

124. Pass rates are high on most courses. There is a large proportion of high grades in AS-level and GCE A-level art and design subjects and drama. In 2002/03, the pass rate in AS-level drama was 96% and in GCE A-level art and design it was 97%. The pass rate on the diploma in foundation studies in art and design was slightly below the national average in 2002/03.

125. Value added data is used on most courses for target setting and students understand the systems which predict their grades. Students' practical work is of a high standard on AS-level and GCE A-level dance and music, national diploma in performing arts and on visual arts courses. For example, second-year national diploma in drama students rehearsed intensively at the request of the English department, to produce a dynamic interpretation of *Dr Faustus*, in which a chorus of devils taunt Faustus, singing raucous and violently rhythmic settings of Marlowe's verse. AVCE art and design students are accepted directly on to HE programmes. Students are articulate and discuss the development of ideas and concepts, based on personal research with enthusiasm. Art and design students use a wide range of media, with skills supported by relevant sketchbook work. Film production is competent with well-considered sound tracks and editing. Photography skills and presentation on national diploma courses are less well developed. Internal progression from level 2

vocational courses in art and design, media and performing arts to level 3 programmes is high. There is very good progression to prestigious HE institutions and to employment.

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

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|--|-------|------------------|------|------|------|
| First diploma performing arts | 2 | No. of starts | 15 | 27 | 18 |
| | | % retention | 87 | 96 | 78 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 88 | 100 |
| GNVQ intermediate media | 2 | No. of starts | 21 | 15 | 20 |
| | | % retention | 71 | 60 | 90 |
| | | % pass rate | 60 | 78 | 78 |
| AS-level drama | 3 | No. of starts | 88 | 89 | 86 |
| | | % retention | 92 | 88 | 90 |
| | | % pass rate | 90 | 96 | 96 |
| GCE A2 dance | 3 | No. of starts | 41 | 20 | 25 |
| | | % retention | 68 | 70 | 92 |
| | | % pass rate | 93 | 100 | 100 |
| AS-level art | 3 | No. of starts | 357 | 320 | 393 |
| | | % retention | 82 | 80 | 80 |
| | | % pass rate | 83 | 94 | 89 |
| Diploma in foundation studies art and design | 3 | No. of starts | 138 | 156 | 147 |
| | | % retention | 91 | 96 | 90 |
| | | % pass rate | 94 | 91 | 93 |
| GCE A2 art and design | 3 | No. of starts | 136 | 181 | 185 |
| | | % retention | 65 | 87 | 85 |
| | | % pass rate | 95 | 96 | 97 |

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

Quality of education and training

126. There is much good teaching and there is very good teaching on dance and foundation studies courses. Teachers plan thoroughly and give students supportive individual advice. Students report that they have learnt more than they anticipated on their course and commend the quality of their teaching. In the best lessons, learning and progress is checked and clear guidance is given on exam revision in music technology and history of art. Theory is often integrated with practice. For example, one student on a foundation course used his knowledge of biology to inform a series of drawings on symbiosis, another explored small areas of painted colour from a still life integrated to a dissertation on colour theory. The less effective lessons are disrupted by late arrivals and a minority lack pace.

127. Staff are well qualified, with 74% having a teaching qualification and 22% working towards one. However, there are insufficient technical staff to support the growing numbers of students. There are fractional technical posts in media, drama and photography and the post in art and design was unfilled at the time of inspection. Teaching staff have to prepare studios and classrooms before their lessons and prior to photography evening classes, teachers have to prepare the necessary chemicals.

128. Accommodation is unsuitable in art and design, and drama, with many rooms too small for the large numbers of students. Drama accommodation is shabby and one cramped room is up steep stairs and is poorly ventilated. In the Hele building, accommodation is crowded with mismatched furniture and cluttered with old art work. Where classrooms are shared, there is a lack of identity and ownership and relevant reference material is not available to enhance learning. The photography darkrooms at Hele Road are poorly maintained and some equipment is out of date. There are insufficient media edit suites and photography resources for the number of students, which limits the opportunity for extending practical work. Computers do not have appropriate industrial-standard software for the vocational programmes.

129. Assessment is fair and rigorous and a variety of methods such as critiques, presentations and performances are used. Verbal and most written feedback is good, however, in drama and media, feedback is less helpful in showing students what they need to do to improve their grade. On the diploma in foundation studies in art and design and national diploma in photography, the feedback is insufficiently critical. Internal verification is satisfactory.

130. Student support and guidance are good. After early contact with schools, students are advised on their most suitable course. Good initial assessment identifies learning support needs and induction ensures an effective transition from school for students aged 16 to 18. Students report they felt immediately at ease in a friendly, relaxed and purposeful atmosphere.

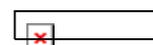
131. Students with additional support needs successfully undertake courses in all subjects. For example, three students with Asperger's syndrome are well supported on performing arts and photography courses and a student with severe hearing and visual impairment successfully completed the national diploma in performing arts with an overall merit grade and has been provisionally accepted on a HE course. In rehearsal for the end of course show, he was a fully involved member of the company, with sensitive and discrete support from students and staff.

132. The relationship between staff and students is good. The tutorial system supports students well in academic and pastoral matters and specialised advice from the student support service is readily available. Students have clear targets that are regularly reviewed. Individual learning plans are underdeveloped in some areas.

Leadership and management

133. Leadership and management are good. Staff have a high awareness of equality and diversity issues and there is a good mentoring system for new and part-time staff. Staff development is identified at appraisal and many staff maintain their own professional practice in art, dance, music and drama. Quality assurance is in place and all staff contribute to the detailed and self-critical, self-assessment report, but there is insufficient monitoring of action plans at course team level. There are no formal mechanisms for sharing good practice within the department. There is insufficient technical support for the large and growing numbers of students. Some resources are unsatisfactory. This impacts on staff efficiency and quality of learning. New accommodation is planned within the college's extensive building programme.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- high retention rates on AS-level programmes

- high pass rates on most GCE A-level courses

- good support for students

- extensive range of level 3 programmes.

Weaknesses

- low and declining pass rates on GCSE psychology and access to HE courses

- low retention rates on GCE A-level sociology, psychology and geography

- insufficient use of ILT to enhance learning

- inconsistencies in curriculum management.

Scope of provision

134. The college offers a very wide range of advanced level subjects. Students can take GCE A-level and AS-level courses in classical civilisation, geography, history, law, philosophy, politics, psychology, religious studies and sociology and AS-level courses in critical thinking, general studies, social policy and world development. A narrower range of GCE A-level and AS-level courses is provided for adult students in the evening. Humanities subjects are included as options on the international baccalaureate course and the access to HE course. Only a limited number of courses are offered at levels 1 and 2. There are 981 students aged 16 to 18 and 359 adult students on humanities courses. Approximately 85 of the adult students are on full-time courses.

Achievement and standards

135. Retention rates on most AS-level courses and the access to HE course are high. On AS-level psychology and AS-level sociology courses, retention rates were 84% and 86% respectively in 2002/03. Retention rates on GCE A-level psychology, sociology and history courses are low and have declined since 2001. Pass rates are good on most GCE A-level courses and on the International Baccalaureate programme. Pass rates in AS-level psychology, sociology, history, geography and critical thinking are all above the national average. All students passed GCE A-level religious studies and philosophy in 2003. The proportion of students gaining high grades is above national averages in GCE A-level sociology and geography and AS-level sociology, history, general studies and critical thinking. Pass rates in GCSE psychology and on the access to HE course are

low. Pass rates exceed those predicted by students' GCSE grades in GCE A-level sociology, AS-level history, general studies and geography.

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

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|--------------------------|-------|------------------|------|------|------|
| GCSE psychology | 2 | No. of starts | 53 | 39 | 65 |
| | | % retention | 58 | 64 | 72 |
| | | % pass rate | 65 | 52 | 43 |
| GCE A-level psychology | 3 | No. of starts | 227 | 133 | 165 |
| | | % retention | 68 | 79 | 76 |
| | | % pass rate | 83 | 88 | 85 |
| AS-level psychology | 3 | No. of starts | 285 | 313 | 318 |
| | | % retention | 85 | 83 | 84 |
| | | % pass rate | 79 | 74 | 76 |
| GCE A-level sociology | 3 | No. of starts | 82 | 62 | 67 |
| | | % retention | 61 | 77 | 80 |
| | | % pass rate | 82 | 94 | 98 |
| AS-level sociology | 3 | No. of starts | 144 | 146 | 108 |
| | | % retention | 82 | 83 | 86 |
| | | % pass rate | 82 | 82 | 86 |
| GCE A-level geography | 3 | No. of starts | 88 | 78 | 91 |
| | | % retention | 84 | 90 | 75 |
| | | % pass rate | 85 | 100 | 98 |
| AS-level geography | 3 | No. of starts | 140 | 134 | 119 |
| | | % retention | 91 | 96 | 94 |
| | | % pass rate | 83 | 81 | 83 |
| Access to HE certificate | 3 | No. of starts | 39 | 37 | 36 |
| | | % retention | 85 | 78 | 81 |
| | | % pass rate | 79 | 97 | 59 |

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

Quality of education and training

136. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the most effective lessons, teachers use a range of imaginative strategies that maintain students' interest and involve the whole class for the development of study and examination skills. In an AS-level history revision lesson, students completed definitions on flash cards of key concepts relating to the development of anti-semitism in Nazi Germany. Students then enhanced their understanding of the terms by working enthusiastically in teams to identify definitions. In a GCE A-level law lesson, students matched legal cases to case studies and then discussed the cases to establish the relevant case law. In the less effective lessons, there is limited use of targeted questioning to assess students' learning and insufficient attention to the learning needs of all students.

137. Teachers are well qualified and knowledgeable about their subjects and many are also subject

examiners for examining boards. They have produced a wide range of materials designed to structure learning and provide strategies to improve revision and examination techniques. AS-level politics students used a cleverly designed grid to explain the roles of political parties and pressure groups and identified appropriate examples to include in examination answers. Teaching accommodation and some resources are unsatisfactory. Staff have good access to computers in staff rooms, but there is insufficient use of computers and IT to enhance learning. The department has only five laptop computers for teaching and access to computer rooms for lessons is difficult as most are booked out for the full year. The college intranet for humanities subjects is in a very early stage of development. Classrooms are dedicated to subjects, but there is very little current subject specific information, or students' work on the walls. The layout of several rooms makes it difficult for students to work in groups and for the tutor to get around to support students and the configuration of the some rooms mean that some students are not able to see the projector screen without moving from where they are working.

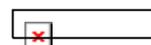
138. Data on predicted grades are used with students to set targets for achievement. All work is marked and returned promptly. In most cases, helpful comments identify strategies for improvement. However, there is variability in the quality of feedback to students. Students in GCE A-level history receive good feedback with comprehensive and relevant comments and, in psychology, teachers provide detailed feedback on a series of drafts before a final grading is given. These processes have improved student motivation and levels of achievement. In AS-level history, insufficient guidance is given to students on how to improve and there is insufficient attention given to poor spelling and grammar. Parents receive helpful information in reports about the progress of students aged 16 to 18.

139. Support for students within humanities is good. All students have an initial assessment to identify additional support needs. Support is provided promptly and the outcomes of monitoring students' progress are reported back to tutors. Effective in-class support is provided where necessary. Examples are a learning support assistant in a GCSE sociology class and an enabler supporting a student with dyspraxia in a law class. Tutorials are effective. Students are able to opt to be placed in a tutor group based on preferred subject. Target grades are set and there is good monitoring of student progress. Students evaluate their own progress and with their tutors, set personal targets for attainment, punctuality and coursework. Student attendance monitors follow-up absences promptly by careful checking of registers. There is a good range of support services for students including counselling and financial support. In September 2003, adult learning advisers were appointed to support adult students.

Leadership and management

140. Leadership and management in humanities are satisfactory. Communications are good and there is a regular cycle of formal meetings to discuss curriculum and management issues. The quality cycle is well understood by course teams, but some important aspects are not carried out consistently or with sufficient rigour. Management information is available to all staff and considered to be accurate. Teachers use this in course reviews and to monitor attendance. Target setting at team and departmental level is inconsistent. In some curriculum areas, no targets have been set for the current year. Course teams review progress against action plans regularly, the head of department reviews poorly performing courses and the departmental development plan termly, but there is little monitoring of progress towards targets for achievement at student and course level. The self-assessment report is self-critical and the development plan is detailed. Lesson observations are carried out at least annually using trained internal observers supplemented by external consultants. Internal lesson grades are higher than those awarded by inspectors. Appraisal is carried out annually to identify personal and professional development needs.

English and communication studies



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

Strengths

- high retention rates on AS levels

- very high pass rates

- very high standards of student work

- much good teaching

- very thorough assessment and monitoring of students' progress

- very good course and curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- insufficient resources for independent learning.

Scope of provision

141. There are approximately 1,500 students studying English and communication studies within the department. Some 160 students aged 16 to 18 are taking AS-level English language and a similar number are taking AS-level English literature. Approximately 100 students aged 16 to 18 are taking GCE A-level English subjects. There are approximately 300 part-time adult students including those studying GCE A levels in English on intensive courses in the daytime. There are also over 300 students taking GCSE English language. The department also teaches the courses in English on the standard and higher International Baccalaureate.

Achievement and standards

142. Retention rates on AS-level English language, English literature and communication studies are all consistently and significantly above the national averages. Retention rates on the International Baccalaureate are also high. Retention rates on GCE A levels are mostly at the national average. Pass rates are very high and significantly above national averages in all subjects. The proportion of high grades in all AS levels and GCE A levels is also very high and in some cases more than double the national average. For example, in AS-level English language, the pass rate was 93% in 2002/03 compared with a national average of 83%. The proportion of higher grade passes was 49%

compared with a national average higher grade pass rate of 20%. The qualifications on entry of many students are lower than for many other subjects. Supported by their teachers, students aged 16 to 18 develop confidence and work well in groups. Their oral work, in particular discussion of literature and language issues, is of a very high standard. In one GCE A-level revision lesson, students performed a mini-drama, humorously acting out Dr Faustus's deep boredom with life. This led one student to relate this interpretation of the character to a controversial production she had seen, in which Faustus walked offstage to hell rather than being dragged off. Students' analytical writing is also of a very high standard with much being outstanding. Many students progress to HE, with high numbers going on to read English or English-related subjects. Adult students also make excellent progress on their courses. Their oral and written work is also of an extremely high standard. Students work with great enthusiasm and make very good progress in their lessons. The pass rates and standards achieved by students aged 16 to 18 and by adult students are much higher than their initial qualifications would predict.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English and communication studies, 2001 to 2003

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|--------------------------------|-------|------------------|------|------|------|
| GCSE English language | 2 | No. of starts | 117 | 324 | 300 |
| | | % retention | 72 | 69 | 72 |
| | | % pass rate | 73 | 65 | 56 |
| AS-level English language | 3 | No. of starts | 158 | 145 | 159 |
| | | % retention | 82 | 83 | 85 |
| | | % pass rate | 90 | 93 | 93 |
| GCE A-level English language | 3 | No. of starts | 86 | 74 | 97 |
| | | % retention | 72 | 86 | 90 |
| | | % pass rate | 79 | 100 | 100 |
| AS-level English literature | 3 | No. of starts | 260 | 224 | 157 |
| | | % retention | 86 | 89 | 89 |
| | | % pass rate | 93 | 94 | 93 |
| GCE A-level English literature | 3 | No. of starts | 205 | 158 | 162 |
| | | % retention | 75 | 94 | 88 |
| | | % pass rate | 96 | 97 | 98 |
| AS-level communication studies | 3 | No. of starts | 95 | 81 | 85 |
| | | % retention | 79 | 78 | 86 |
| | | % pass rate | 83 | 90 | 92 |

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

Quality of education and training

143. Much teaching is very good or good. None is unsatisfactory. Most teaching is highly imaginative, and very effective in extending students' perceptions and attainment. Students are encouraged to work together in many lessons. This they do well and with great enthusiasm and they learn effectively from each other. In one outstanding GCSE English lesson for students aged 16 to 18 who were retaking the course, the teacher shared teenage diary extracts and family photographs with a group of students, several of whom had challenging personal needs. This encouraged students to reflect, very openly and maturely, as to how the poem *Love after Love* by Derek Walcott explores the theme of self-awareness. Students then discussed in depth and with great feeling and in some cases emotion, how coming to terms with one's own identity takes time and can be a real

struggle. Students also interpret complex texts and language very well. In a successful AS-level English language lesson, they explored gender language stereotypes by describing photographic portraits of various men and women, and in groups, analysed the underlying sociolinguistics behind them. In an outstanding adult evening class, a student delivered an articulate, sustained and well-evidenced defence of Iago's motivations in *Othello*. Students' writing is very thoroughly marked and teachers' comments reinforce understanding and give detailed advice on how to improve. Teachers are committed to helping students achieve to their maximum potential. They are exceptionally well-qualified and extremely enthusiastic about their subject. This enthusiasm motivates students and helps them perform at their best and to express themselves in a mature and appropriate way. In one lesson, students learned enthusiastically how to analyse sound and rhythm in Keats's faux-ballad, *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. Staff work well together to provide consistently high quality teaching across the department. In a very small minority of cases, teachers find more lively, independent, or lower ability students difficult to integrate into classes, and very occasionally the college fails to identify particular learning needs among the wide intake encouraged to join English courses.

144. Much of the department moved recently into a well-appointed, discrete sixth form building. However, there is only one small open-access resource/ILT room and one room that is heavily used for key skills lessons. These are inadequate for the large number of students in the department, and this restricts independent study. There are no computers in classrooms used for English lessons. There are insufficient facilities to display students' work professionally in corridors or public areas or in publications. The work and considerable achievements of the department are not celebrated or publicised in local schools and the wider community.

145. Teachers know and monitor their students extremely effectively. The general level of support is very high and valued greatly by students. Documentation to track and assess student attainment is copious and shows the depth of teachers' knowledge of their students. In particular, English students value greatly the quality and speed of marking undertaken by their teachers, which is especially impressive given the volume of writing students produce on such courses. Teachers keep very detailed assessment and pastoral records. Individual learning plans are used effectively to keep students informed of their progress and to help them to improve their writing. Working relationships between staff and students are exemplary. One teacher wrote a parody of Yeats' *Easter Rising* for her class, in which she named them all, and their comical and serious achievements in class; an example of practical criticism and praise rolled into one.

146. English courses meet the needs of many students. High numbers progress to HE, many to study English or related subjects, and pass rates on the GCSE re-sit courses are above the national average. The International Baccalaureate is a particular strength of the provision, and English teachers both teach and examine International Baccalaureate English. There is also very effective teaching on the adult daytime and evening provision, and on the adult access to HE course. Opportunities for further enhancement of learning are made available to students. These include theatre trips, conferences and residential visits.

147. Students are extremely well guided and supported in tutorials which are led by students' own subject teachers. Minimum grades are used to give students clear targets to encourage them to improve their performance. Students value the detailed support and advice they are given and are very appreciative of the personal and academic help they receive.

Leadership and management

148. Leadership and management of English and communication studies are very good. There is a highly collaborative and co-operative working atmosphere, consistent practice, and a shared commitment that this should support students of all abilities. Enthusiasm for English and a commitment to good teaching underpins the department's ethos. There is extremely good communication between curriculum managers and staff, and evidence of active and creative development between subjects within the department. Staff have very good access to internal and external training and events, including those run by examining boards. Good practice in aspects of teaching and learning are shared across the department in a supportive culture of continuous improvement. There is a strong commitment to meet the needs of less able students and those who may not have experienced success in English before. The self-assessment report is detailed and

self-critical.

Literacy and numeracy



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

Strengths

- effective individual target setting

- much good teaching

- thorough initial and diagnostic assessment

- effective partnerships to widen participation

- very good additional support.

Weaknesses

- inadequate use of IT to support learning in adult literacy and numeracy

- insufficient quality assurance arrangements.

Scope of provision

149. The college provides a wide range of basic skills courses to help address the low literacy and numeracy levels within the area. The skills for life and learning department has three sections, namely learning support, basic skills and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). There are courses in literacy and numeracy for students aged 16 to 18 and for adults. The college organises students' individual learning plans termly and provides opportunities to progress to the adult literacy and numeracy national tests at the appropriate level. There are 334 adults studying literacy and numeracy. Provision is offered on the main college sites and in 29 community venues. Daytime and evening courses are available throughout the year. National tests are available to students on demand. Students on pre-foundation access, vocational and modern apprenticeship programmes have an initial assessment to identify their level of literacy and numeracy and any additional support

needs. On the pre-foundation course, literacy and numeracy is embedded into the majority of the lessons. There is a successful bridging course to enable students to progress to level 1 foundation programmes.

Achievement and standards

150. In 2003/03, the college re-organised its basic skills provision in light of the national targets for literacy and numeracy. Students now work towards the completion of individual learning plans, the achievement of personal targets and for external qualifications where appropriate. Retention rates are good overall. The college offered the City and Guilds certificates in adult numeracy and adult literacy for the first time in 2002/03. Retention rates were good and pass rates were at least satisfactory.

151. The standard of students' work in adult literacy and numeracy courses is mostly good. Students' targets reflect their personal aspirations and are informed by thorough initial diagnostic assessment. Students speak confidently about what they can do and list examples linked to work and home. They demonstrate good skills in number, for example, in the use and application of fractions, decimals, estimation and mental arithmetic. Students' literacy skills are also good and they use spelling strategies effectively. For example, one group extracted information from a tourist information brochure and another demonstrated their understanding of a newspaper article and recognised the use of persuasive language. In all lessons, students work hard and remain interested. They ask questions for clarification, work well independently and share a sense of pride in their achievements.

Quality of education and training

152. There is much good teaching. Teachers plan and prepare well to ensure students benefit from an appropriate balance of group and individual work. Students' personal goals and diagnostic results inform planning and resources are mapped to individual needs. In the best lessons, specific tasks are identified at different levels for each student. In a numeracy lesson on measurement, a variety of bottles and packets were used well to enhance understanding of weight and volume. The exercises were followed by a lively discussion on which products gave the best value for money. In the less effective lessons, some activities and materials lack relevance to vocational or life skills.

153. There is inadequate use of IT to support learning. There is limited access to computers, software and the Internet. This reduces the opportunity to meet students' individual learning styles. Teaching accommodation is satisfactory. The base rooms for teaching literacy, numeracy and study skills are good. These rooms have visual displays to reinforce the main principles of the subject, for example, information on ratio, number lines and properties of circles. Students' literacy projects on Victorian dress and tropical fish are also prominently displayed. This adds interest and motivation. The rooms used for other lessons are dull. Resources in the community venues are up to date and used well, but there is an over-reliance on paper-based materials and insufficient use of ILT to support learning. Staff are well qualified and experienced and a number of specialist staff have experience in specific learning difficulties for example, hearing and visual impairment, dyslexia and autism. The temporary accommodation restricts access for some students.

154. There is thorough initial and diagnostic assessment to plan learning for students. Staff regularly checks students' work in lessons. Practice tests are used to encourage students and build confidence to enter the national tests. Students' work is marked thoroughly and helpful comments on how to improve are included in the feedback. Homework is encouraged to reinforce and promote independent learning. Students receiving learning support are monitored frequently to check progress and to evaluate if support is still needed. In a minority of adult literacy and numeracy lessons, students' individual targets are not systematically tracked or linked clearly to their work. This reduces the overall understanding for these students of their overall readiness to take the national tests.

155. There is good access to adult literacy and numeracy programmes in venues suited to students' needs. This is effective in widening participation and serves as a first step into learning for many

students. The programmes allow students to progress through the levels of literacy and numeracy at their own pace. Students' views on their course are systematically gathered at the end of each module of learning. These comments are used well to inform improvements to learning and teaching. There are productive partnerships with organisations such as Social Services, the Probation Service, Connexions, minority ethnic groups and groups for people with mental health difficulties. There are also numerous projects working in schools and with employers.

156. There is very good additional learning support for students. Students have very good access to support through individual tutorials, small group lessons or in lessons. Additional support on vocational programmes is planned at times and venues best suited to their timetable. For example, a work-based learner who cannot access support in college receives regular support in the workplace. Students take advantage of the open access support through the study centre. There is access to qualified specialist staff to support learning for visual and hearing impairment, dyslexia and for students with autism. Where signers are used, there is good management and liaison with teachers. There is a very effective referral system and initial assessment and referral is co-ordinated well. The results from diagnostic assessment are used effectively by staff to plan learning targets. Where further assessment is required to establish more specific learning needs, an educational psychologist is available to ensure support is provided promptly. An adult learning advisor is available to adults for course advice and guidance. In the absence of formal tutorial time for adult students, the advisor is available to discuss all aspects of support needs and progression possibilities. Where the advice is outside the advisor area of expertise, students are referred to an advice and guidance worker based at the college main site.

Leadership and management

157. The leadership and management are good. The restructuring of the department has provided clear direction and the strategies to widen participation and improve the levels of literacy and numeracy for students are successful. There is effective dissemination of good practice in teaching and learning and there has been intensive staff development in a range of identified priorities, for example, target setting, differentiation in learning and classroom management. There is good support and guidance to staff following lesson observations and learning and teaching enjoy a high profile within the department. Curriculum teams are effective, but there is insufficient attention to formal internal quality assurance on adult literacy and numeracy courses. There is little evidence of internal moderation taking place throughout the year.

Part D: College data

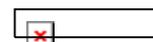
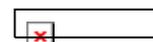


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

| Level | 16-18 % | 19+ % |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| 1 | 14 | 41 |
| 2 | 27 | 17 |
| 3 | 40 | 14 |
| 4/5 | 0 | 4 |
| Other | 19 | 24 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |



Source: provided by the college 2004

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

| Curriculum area | 16-18 | 19+ | Total |
|--|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| | No. | No. | Enrolments (%) |
| Science and mathematics | 2,155 | 725 | 8 |
| Land-based provision | 40 | 41 | 0 |
| Construction | 326 | 361 | 2 |
| Engineering, technology and manufacture | 570 | 466 | 3 |
| Business administration, management and professional | 1,022 | 2,565 | 10 |
| Information and communication technology | 2,639 | 4,937 | 22 |
| Retailing, customer service and transportation | 47 | 125 | 1 |
| Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel | 1,547 | 1,104 | 8 |
| Hairdressing and beauty therapy | 526 | 497 | 3 |
| Health, social care and public services | 695 | 1,351 | 6 |
| Visual and performing arts and media | 2,005 | 820 | 8 |
| Humanities | 1,914 | 737 | 8 |
| English, languages and communication | 2,726 | 867 | 10 |
| Foundation programmes | 1,463 | 2,090 | 11 |
| Total | 17,675 | 16,686 | 100 |

Source: provided by the college in 2004

Table 3: Retention and achievement

| Level (Long Courses) | Retention and pass rate | Completion year | | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-------|-------|------|------|-------|
| | | 16-18 | | | 19+ | | |
| | | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
| 1 | Starters excluding | 1,138 | 1,432 | 1,501 | 979 | 764 | 1,729 |

| | | | | | | | |
|------------|------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | transfers | | | | | | |
| | Retention rate % | 79 | 81 | 82 | 73 | 66 | 65 |
| | National average % | 75 | 76 | * | 71 | 71 | * |
| | Pass rate % | 70 | 78 | 63 | 61 | 74 | 69 |
| | National average % | 67 | 69 | * | 67 | 70 | * |
| 2 | Starters excluding transfers | 2,082 | 2,326 | 2,124 | 1,521 | 1,665 | 1,596 |
| | Retention rate % | 79 | 76 | 71 | 74 | 71 | 68 |
| | National average % | 71 | 72 | * | 69 | 68 | * |
| | Pass rate % | 72 | 73 | 70 | 67 | 76 | 61 |
| | National average % | 68 | 70 | * | 67 | 71 | * |
| 3 | Starters excluding transfers | 7,950 | 6,508 | 6,619 | 1,624 | 1,559 | 1,471 |
| | Retention rate % | 81 | 84 | 79 | 73 | 75 | 73 |
| | National average % | 70 | 77 | * | 68 | 70 | * |
| | Pass rate % | 81 | 85 | 85 | 66 | 73 | 75 |
| | National average % | 76 | 78 | * | 68 | 71 | * |
| 4/5 | Starters excluding transfers | ** | ** | ** | 187 | 193 | 171 |
| | Retention rate % | ** | ** | ** | 87 | 61 | 86 |
| | National average % | 74 | 71 | * | 67 | 68 | * |
| | Pass rate % | ** | ** | ** | 62 | 59 | 48 |
| | National average % | 54 | 55 | * | 53 | 54 | * |

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

Sources of information:

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

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

* data unavailable

** fewer than 15 students enrolled

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

| Courses | Teaching judged to be: | | | No of sessions observed |
|---------|------------------------|----------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Good or better | Satisfactory % | Less than satisfactory | |
| | | | | |

| | % | | % | |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------|
| Level 3 (advanced) | 66 | 30 | 4 | 140 |
| Level 2 (intermediate) | 61 | 34 | 5 | 56 |
| Level 1 (foundation) | 89 | 7 | 4 | 28 |
| Other sessions | 70 | 25 | 5 | 20 |
| Totals | 68 | 28 | 4 | 244 |

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