



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT NOVEMBER 1999

Derwentside College

SUMMARY

The training provided by Derwentside College in engineering is excellent. The college has formed effective links with local engineering employers and has secured external funding to provide state-of-the-art resources and a centre of excellence for engineering trainees. The training provided in the areas of business administration, hair and beauty and foundation for work is good. Trainees' achievement rates in these areas are above the TEC area averages and many trainees continue to progress within the college. Training in leisure, sport and travel is satisfactory, but assessment processes are weaker in this area. The college has good arrangements for ensuring equality of opportunity for all of its staff and trainees. Support arrangements are comprehensive and are available to all students, trainees and New Deal clients. The college is committed to making all of its services, courses and programmes available to all members of the local, and wider, community. Training programmes are effectively managed and fully integrated within the college. The college's staff make excellent use of information technology to communicate with colleagues and trainees. Self-assessment is an important part of the college's quality assurance arrangements, although the college does not use data effectively to make continuous improvements.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	1
Business administration	2
Leisure, sport & travel	3
Hair & beauty	2
Foundation for work	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	2
Trainee support	2
Management of training	2
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ work-based training fully integrated within college
- ◆ good internal and external communication
- ◆ comprehensive and well-established self-assessment arrangements
- ◆ well-planned and taught off-the-job training
- ◆ good key skills training in most areas
- ◆ wide range of support facilities for trainees
- ◆ high achievement rates in most areas

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient account taken of on-the-job training arrangements in some training plans
- ◆ internal verification arrangements not fully effective
- ◆ ineffective reviews
- ◆ no monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ some missed opportunities for work-based assessment

INTRODUCTION

1. Derwentside College was established as a tertiary college in 1986, when Consett Technical College and the sixth form colleges of five local schools were amalgamated. The college has over 800 full-time and 4,500 part-time students, of whom 218 are trainees funded through contracts with County Durham Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and Tyneside TEC. There are an additional 36 New Deal clients, of whom 16 are full time, eight are on the subsidised employment option and 12 are on the environment task force option. Of the full-time clients, three are in engineering, one is in health, care and public services, one is in hairdressing and 11 are in business administration. Work-based trainees are taking national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1 to 4 within the occupational areas of agriculture, engineering, transportation, business administration, leisure, sport and travel, hospitality, hair and beauty, health, care and public services and foundation for work. The areas of agriculture, transportation, hospitality and health, care and public services were not inspected owing to low numbers of trainees.

2. Derwentside College operates from five main sites: Consett, Lanchester, Stanley, Stanley Fire Station and Langley Park. The work-based training programmes are administered from the college's main site in Consett. In 1998, the college undertook a rural vocational training initiative to broaden access to vocational training in the rural locations of Haltwhistle, Corbridge and Kirkwhelpington. This initiative links computers in these rural locations to the college's computers, providing remote access to training and college resources. The college plans to increase access to these facilities in other rural locations in 2000.

3. The Derwentside district of County Durham covers an area of 27,100 hectares in the north west of the county. Its total population is 85,400. The area is semi-rural with 54 per cent of land designated as agricultural. The two major centres of population are the former steel-production town of Consett (population 29,700) and the former coal-mining town of Stanley (population 17,100) situated some eight miles from Consett. The present economic activity is centred around small to medium sized enterprises, based mainly on industrial estates around the area. Manufacturing accounts for just over a third of all jobs in the area, followed by public administration, education and health and distribution, hotels and catering. Although the general trend, over recent years, has been for unemployment to decline (by 37 per cent overall since 1996) there has been a small rise in unemployment recently from 9.4 per cent in December 1998 to 10.5 per cent in July 1999. This is significantly higher than the national rate of 5.4 per cent, or the County Durham rate of 7.9 per cent for July 1999. People from minority ethnic groups in the County Durham area account for less than 1 per cent of the total population.

4. Fifty-six per cent of 16 year olds progress to further education compared with the national figure of 68 per cent. The proportion of year 11 school leavers entering training is 14 per cent, compared with the national figure of 10 per cent. In 1998,



the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 35.7 per cent for County Durham compared with 46.3 per cent nationally.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. The college has a well-established routine of self-assessment which links into its annual cycle for strategic planning and performance monitoring. The college produced its self-assessment report for the Training Standards Council (TSC) in August 1999, three months before inspection. Each curriculum area of the college produced appropriate sections of the report, facilitated by the quality manager and staff from the training and employment programmes (TEP) unit. The findings were matched against the quality statements from the Further Education Funding Council's self-assessment and inspection framework and those of *Raising the Standard*. The two separate self-assessment reports were posted on the college's intranet service for further comment by staff and students.

6. Derwentside College was inspected jointly with inspectors from the FEFC. The TSC's inspection team was made up of seven inspectors and inspections lasted a total of 28 days. They interviewed a total of 68 trainees and New Deal clients, 19 representatives from employers and 25 staff from the college. Inspectors visited 22 employers' sites. They examined assessment procedures, trainees' files and portfolios, staff's qualifications and quality and management arrangements. Inspectors observed trainees' reviews, assessments and 10 off-the-job learning sessions. The grades awarded for these sessions are shown below.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Engineering			2			2
Business administration			3			3
Leisure, sport & travel			2			2
Hair & beauty		2				2
Foundation for work		1				1
Total	0	3	7	0	0	10

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering

Grade 1

7. The engineering department consists of fabrication and welding, mechanical engineering and electrical engineering sections. Trainees are recruited onto training programmes following discussions with the local careers service or as a result of the college's visits to schools. All trainees undergo a basic skills assessment to determine whether any additional literacy and numeracy support is required. There

are 95 trainees in engineering, of whom 46 are working towards an NVQ at level 2 in engineering manufacture foundation. The remaining trainees are working towards appropriate engineering NVQs at level 3. Of the 46 trainees working towards NVQ level 2, 14 are undergoing training in mechanical engineering, 19 in electrical engineering and the remaining 13 in fabrication and welding. NVQ level 2 training is carried out on a full-time basis in the college's workshops for the first 20 weeks of the programme. During this period NVQ assessment is carried out by the college's teaching staff. At the same time, trainees have the opportunity to work towards a foundation, intermediate or advanced general national vocational qualification (GNVQ). On completion, or near to the end, of their NVQ level 2, trainees enter work placement positions with local engineering firms. It is at this point that trainees start their NVQ level 3. More than 75 per cent of trainees become employed at this stage and transfer to modern apprenticeships programmes. Trainees who leave the programme early mainly go to the armed forces or other training positions. There are currently 21 modern apprentices in mechanical engineering, three in electrical engineering and 18 in fabrication and welding. These trainees attend the college on a day-release basis for theoretical training and guidance such as portfolio-building. Engineering college lecturers visit level 3 trainees in their workplace to assess them by observation and to review their progress. In addition to the youth trainees and modern apprentices, there is one national trainee, three New Deal clients on the Full Time Employment and Training option and three trainees on adult training programmes. Of 35 trainees who left the programme in 1998-1999, 60 per cent left with an NVQ qualification. Statistics for the whole of the County Durham TEC area, indicate that of 298 engineering trainees who left in the same period, only 30 per cent left with a qualification. The self-assessment report was, on the whole, an accurate reflection of the engineering programmes. The grade awarded by inspectors is higher than that given in the self- assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ strong and effective support from employers
- ◆ excellent workshop facilities in mechanical engineering and fabrication and welding
- ◆ well-planned and -taught off-the-job training in mechanical engineering and fabrication and welding
- ◆ good integration of on- and off-the-job training in mechanical engineering and fabrication and welding
- ◆ high rate of progression into employment
- ◆ opportunity for trainees to gain additional qualification

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped electrical engineering training

8. Derwentside College has helped to form a local engineering employers' forum. One of the main aims of the group is to address local skills shortages in engineering. The college meets regularly with the group as part of its programme to improve the quality of the engineering training programmes and to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of employers. Collectively, the forum is working towards improving the image of engineering as a profession. The college has created a centre of engineering enterprise as part of its strategy to improve engineering training. One local engineering firm donated a new Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machine to the college for trainees and students to use. Additional funding has also been attracted from external agencies as a result of the commitment demonstrated by the employers' forum. This has enabled the college to update the engineering resources in its centre of engineering enterprise.

9. In the mechanical engineering section a new CNC machine and new milling machine have been installed. Eight new lathes are currently on order. Funding has also enabled it to purchase industrial-standard software for computer assisted design (CAD) machines. In the fabrication and welding section there are 12 welding booths. In each booth there are newly purchased electrical TIG and MIG welding sets of industrial-standard capability. All workshops have adjacent teaching classrooms for theory training sessions. There is a shared computer laboratory that is used for CAD training.

10. Training is well planned and taught by well-qualified and enthusiastic staff. Experienced engineering technicians support the teaching staff. Trainees work through a series of set exercises and their progress is marked on a chart on the workshop wall. Trainees are aware of their own progress. Most trainees join the engineering courses in either July or August. However trainees can join the programme at any other time and begin the NVQ units or set exercises that the majority of trainees are working on. They eventually complete all units but may do so in a different sequence to the main groups. The same teaching staff train, assess and review trainees' progress. They also carry out theory training sessions. All the college's engineering staff work effectively as a team to integrate work-based trainees with all other engineering students and clients.

11. Staff have one day each week allocated to visit trainees in the workplace. They visit trainees between every six and nine weeks. This is more frequent than the TEC contract demands. Staff involved in off-the-job training and assessment also carry out assessments, review trainees' progress and monitor training in the workplace. They have excellent working relationships with employers' staff. They liaise with employers to provide any additional support or training required.

12. Trainees attend the college for theory training which leads to additional qualifications. Initially trainees receive training, leading to GNVQs, for two days each week in addition to their NVQ level 2 training. All trainees also work towards key skills awards.

13. Recently the college started to offer electrical engineering NVQs. Nineteen trainees have started the electrical engineering programme since April 1999. In addition to the NVQ, the college is planning to offer additional electrical industrial courses such as Institute of Electrical Engineers 16th edition of wiring regulations. Currently, basic wiring exercises are carried out on wooden boards but three electrical installation wiring booths have recently been installed in a converted classroom. This programme is not as fully developed, or as well resourced, as the other engineering training programmes. The college has advertised the post of lecturer to be in charge of work-based training in electrical engineering.

Business administration

Grade 2

14. Derwentside College offers NVQs at levels 2, 3 and 4 in accounting, at levels 1, 2 and 3 in administration and NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3 in information technology. There are currently 57 young people, 21 adults and 11 New Deal clients in training in this occupational area. Of the young people in training, there are 19 modern apprentices, 15 national trainees and 23 on other TEC-funded training programmes. The New Deal clients are all taking the full-time education and training option. Two are working towards an NVQ in administration and nine towards an NVQ in information technology. Three modern apprentices are working towards NVQs in accounting, 15 are on administration NVQ programmes and one is working towards an NVQ in information technology. Thirteen national trainees are working towards NVQs in administration and two towards NVQs in information technology. Seven of the other youth trainees are working towards NVQs in administration and 16 towards NVQs in information technology. Within this occupational area, Derwentside College is currently working with 38 local employers in the public, private and voluntary sectors. These employers vary in size from small businesses, with less than five employees, to larger organisations with more than 1,000 employees. Derwentside College's staff provides off-the-job training and assessment. These staff have relevant occupational, training and teaching experience. All the work-based trainees attend regular off-the-job training sessions weekly on a day-release basis. Between April 1996 and 1997 there were six modern apprentices who started their training. Since April 1996 50 trainees have joined training programmes, and 37 have since left. Of these 37, 23 trainees achieved all elements of their individual training plans and a further five trainees achieved at least one NVQ. The self-assessment report provided an accurate assessment of the training in this area and an effective action plan which is already being implemented and already resulting in improvements. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-structured off-the-job training
- ◆ good integration of key skills with vocational qualifications

- ◆ good procedures for accrediting trainees' learning
- ◆ opportunities for trainees to gain additional qualifications
- ◆ good quality work placements in administration youth training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for training and assessment in the workplace
- ◆ lack of placements for adults and New Deal clients

15. Well-qualified and experienced college teaching staff provide the off-the-job training. In some cases trainees are working towards the same qualification while, in others, staff are teaching mixed groups of trainees and college students. Teaching staff use a variety of teaching and learning methods and adapt their style according to the mix of learners. Staff use information technology to support the theory training. Information technology staff have set up a work area on the college's intranet which contains the learning materials available for the full range of NVQs offered. Trainees access this material on-line and are able to learn at their own pace.

16. The college has taken a very positive approach to the teaching and assessment of key skills. All trainees work towards key skills even when this is not a required part of their framework. As part of the initial assessment process, trainees carry out a self-appraisal of their key skills abilities, through a series of set questions and exercises. Teaching staff follow this up with an initial assessment of their key skills, and they integrate the training and assessment of the key skills with the trainees' vocational qualifications. The procedures for accrediting trainees' prior learning are well developed and consistently applied. This has been extended successfully to the information technology programme and to assessing the prior learning and experience of trainees transferring to Derwentside College from other training providers.

17. Many trainees take the opportunities provided by the college to work towards additional qualifications such as the Higher National Certificate (HNC) in business and finance. In some cases, off-the-job training has been designed to minimise the workload of trainees so that they can meet the requirements of these other awards.

18. For youth trainees following administration NVQs, employers are supportive and provide interesting and wide-ranging work roles. These challenging work roles give trainees opportunities to collect naturally occurring evidence, to demonstrate high levels of occupational competence and in many cases to take on additional responsibilities. Members of the curriculum teaching staff visit work-places regularly to assess and review trainees. The youth trainees usually start on work placements soon after starting the programme.

19. Although placement arrangements for young people in administration are generally good, opportunities for training and assessing some trainees in the

workplace are missed. Employers are not all fully aware of the NVQ requirements and are not sufficiently involved in planning training and assessment. The arrangements for placing and visiting adult administration, all information technology trainees and all New Deal clients are at an early stage of development. Many of these trainees and clients have not found suitable placements. The job- search programme for New Deal clients and adult trainees is at an early stage of development.

20. The information technology resources available to trainees are variable. Some is recent industry-standard hardware and software. However, in other teaching rooms used by trainees following information technology NVQs at level 2 and 3, computers are slow and cause frustration when some applications are being used. The college's self-assessment report identified the lack of facilities to cover hardware installation, maintenance and repair for information technology trainees and clients. The equipment to address this issue has been delivered and currently awaits installation.

Leisure, sport & travel

Grade 3

21. There are 12 trainees working towards NVQs in operational services at level 2. All trainees are following work-based training for young people programmes. Trainees are recruited by the college either direct from school or through the local careers service. All trainees work at local authority sports venues, including a youth club, golf course, swimming pool and leisure centres. Trainees attend college one day a week for structured off-the-job training. Some trainees work towards first aid and life saving certificates. All trainees are assessed in their workplace by college teaching staff. They are assessed largely through direct observation and witness testimony. In 1997-98, 10 trainees left the sport and recreation programme, and of these, eight achieved all elements of their training plan. In 1998-99, eight trainees left the programme, of whom five achieved all elements of their training plan. In its self-assessment report, the college accurately identified the strengths in this occupational area, but it failed to recognise some of the weaknesses. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ high level of progression into employment
- ◆ good retention and achievement rates
- ◆ well-structured theory training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak assessment process
- ◆ training and assessment not individualised
- ◆ insufficient information for workplace supervisors

22. Past trainees have gained employment at sites where they were originally placed by the college. Workplace supervisors and managers train their trainees with the intention of offering full time employment as they become more experienced. Some trainees are given the opportunity, while they are still on their training programme, to undertake paid relief work. This helps to increase trainees' confidence and provides additional opportunities for them to collect evidence for the NVQ. The college has long-standing relationships with most of the work placements. In some cases, managers and supervisors at the work placements are past trainees or students from Derwentside College.

23. Attendance levels for off-the-job training sessions held at college are good. Attendance at the work placements is also consistently high. The college is successful at retaining trainees once they have started their NVQ training programme. For the period April 1998-99, 75 per cent of trainees remained on the programme, compared with the County Durham TEC area figure for leisure, sport and travel of 60 per cent.

24. Theory training is carried out on one day each week at the college's main Consett site. The training sessions are well planned and structured to ensure that all of the requirements for the NVQ units are met. Workbooks and standard exercises have been developed to reinforce the teaching. Trainees have ample opportunity to apply the theory to their workplace duties.

25. The assessment process is rigid and there are no work-based assessors. Naturally occurring assessment opportunities in the workplace are missed. Trainees are rarely assessed on evenings or weekends even though their shift patterns regularly cover these busy times. As a result, there is an over-reliance on simulated exercises and witness testimony. There is also no system for identifying suitable witnesses, who are often not aware of the relevant NVQ standards. Trainees are assigned to a workplace for the whole college year and there is no rotation to allow for easier assessment across the range of the NVQ units. Trainees attend the college for theory training relating to an NVQ unit, and are then assessed soon after that time. This limits the use of naturally occurring evidence which may be produced over a longer period of time. There is no systematic accreditation of trainees' prior learning, or opportunity for trainees with relevant previous experience or knowledge to achieve their qualification more quickly.

26. Trainees' training plans are not individualised and have very little flexibility to allow trainees to develop at their own pace. Although the operational services NVQ has 14 optional units, only five are offered by the college. This limits the immediate development and progression routes available to trainees. There is no co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Workplace supervisors are not aware of the programme of theory training that trainees are following, and opportunities for reinforcing learning in the workplace are not maximised. The amount of additional on-site training available differs depending on each workplace.

27. When work placements are arranged, workplace supervisors are not given any training to help them to understand their role in the overall process. There is no written information to assist supervisors and they are not given, as a matter of course, copies of the NVQ standards. Many supervisors and managers are keen to be more involved in their trainees NVQ programme.

Hair & beauty

Grade 2

28. There are 13 young people and one New Deal client working towards NVQs in hairdressing at levels 1 to 3. There are five trainees on modern apprenticeship programmes and six on national traineeship programmes. The two remaining trainees are following other work-based training for young people programmes. The New Deal client is on the full-time education and training option, working towards a hairdressing NVQ at level 1. Trainees are recruited through the local careers service, as a result of school careers events or direct to the college following local advertising and marketing initiatives. All trainees are employed within a variety of different types of hairdressing salons in the local area. All trainees attend college for off-the-job training and assessment once a week. There are no workplace assessors. Derwentside College employs one full-time and three part-time lecturers. All staff hold appropriate teaching and assessment qualifications. In the TEC contracting year April 1996-97, three trainees left the hairdressing programme. Of those leavers, all trainees achieved at least an NVQ and two of them transferred to the college's modern apprenticeship programme. Between April 1997 and 1999, 16 trainees left, from a combination of all hairdressing training programmes. Of those leavers, nine achieved all elements of their training plan and seven trainees did not achieve any. The self-assessment report was an accurate reflection of the training provided in this area. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective support from employers and staff at work placements
- ◆ well-presented portfolios
- ◆ good assessment practice
- ◆ excellent learning resources
- ◆ good off-the-job practical sessions

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of work-based assessment
- ◆ individual training plans do not accurately reflect NVQ requirements

29. Workplace supervisors are well informed about the NVQ process. Many of these salon staff have themselves achieved a hairdressing NVQ and, in some

cases, hold additional training and assessment qualifications. The training and support provided within salons is good and trainees progress well with their qualifications. Portfolios of evidence are kept by trainees. They are proud of their achievements and portfolios are clearly indexed and labelled, helping to ensure easy access for both the trainee and assessor. The majority of evidence is made up from assessment observation sheets, which have been completed by college assessors, together with supplementary evidence usually in the form of witness testimony and photographs from the workplace. The results of assessments are well recorded and comprehensive feedback is given to trainees. Trainees are able to monitor their own progress using a tracking sheet which is completed by the assessor after each successful assessment.

30. There is a relatively new team within the college's hairdressing department, and the majority of staff started work in September 1999. All are occupationally experienced and are extending their qualifications and industrial experience. In the short time that they have been working together, they have already identified a number of areas requiring further development. As part of the self-assessment process, action plans have been produced to improve areas such as key skills integration and the frequency of workplace assessment. The plans are realistic and action has already been taken in some areas, although it is too early to evaluate their effectiveness.

31. Trainees attend the college for off-the-job training sessions on a weekly basis. These sessions are a combination of theoretical input and practical classes. All sessions are well planned and structured to ensure that trainees can develop and progress according to their individual needs and requirements. Training sessions are further enhanced by good-quality handouts and training support packs. The practical sessions allow trainees to demonstrate their excellent teamwork skills and their high levels of occupational competence across a variety of technical areas. The practical sessions are run by two assessors, and there are plenty of opportunities for assessments to take place.

32. All assessments are carried out as part of the college's off-the-job training sessions within its commercial hair salon. There is no on-the-job assessment and no opportunity for employers to be more involved in the assessment process. The college has recently started to assess trainees in the workplace, as part of its self-assessment action planning process. All trainees have key skills training by specialist staff within the college. Some of the key skills training activities are not relevant to hairdressing, which leads to confusion for some trainees who are unable to relate their key skills work to the workplace or to recognise naturally occurring evidence of key skills. Individual training plans do not accurately identify the correct key skills requirements for the national traineeship framework. For instance, the level of application of number key skills which is recorded in the plans, and which is taught and assessed by the college, is too high. The information technology element is not identified in the plans, even though it is being taught and assessed. The working with others, improving own learning and problem solving key skills are also identified in trainees' plans, but is given as mandatory, rather than optional, within

the national traineeship framework. The college does not have a current copy of the national traineeship framework.

Foundation for work

Grade 2

33. There are 20 adult trainees on the basic employability programme. The programme lasts up to 26 weeks and its objectives are to enable long-term unemployed trainees to acquire additional skills and/or qualifications to help them to secure employment. Trainees are referred by the Employment Service and attend an interview to assess their eligibility for the programme. Each individual must have at least two identified barriers to employment plus additional skills needs and life skills needs. Basic skills are assessed and recorded at this stage. Trainees then progress onto a two-week induction programme and undertake a number of assessments to establish their individual needs. This induction process culminates in the production of an individual training programme which includes identified 'milestones' or targets, which may be basic skills, food hygiene, first aid, health and safety, job search, four weeks of work experience, individual NVQ units or a full NVQ. These are selected from an approved list. Trainees then progress to various curriculum areas within the college for three or four days each week, plus one day each week for a review with their support tutor. Trainees are currently working in the administration, information technology and basic skills curriculum areas. There are three trainees on work experience placements within college departments and one trainee placed in a local voluntary organisation. In the TEC contracting year April 1998-March 1999, 38 trainees started. Thirty-two trainees left the programme in the same period of time. Of these, 25 achieved one or more milestones or NVQ units and seven trainees did not achieve any. Of the 25 trainees, nine achieved a full level 1 NVQ and one achieved a full level 2 NVQ. Three trainees progressed into jobs. Trainees currently on the programme have already achieved 28 milestones, four level 1 NVQs and 3 level 2 NVQs between them. The self-assessment report included several strengths and weaknesses which were not applicable to this particular programme. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-structured and thorough basic employability programme
- ◆ good links between tutors and staff from across the college
- ◆ excellent support for trainees in training sessions
- ◆ high achievement rates

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some trainees unaware of their progress
- ◆ insufficient number of work placements for trainees

34. The two-week induction programme includes a wide range of assessments which go beyond the initial Basic Skills Agency screening tests. It includes self-assessments of personal effectiveness, life skills and job skills. Activities take place on a one-to-one basis, and in small groups. Additional activities are used to assess trainees' communication skills and provide basic information technology training. Trainees enjoy these activities and have gained in confidence and skills before entering their chosen vocational training.

35. All college staff hold appropriate basic skills qualifications and are all well experienced. All trainees have access to a wide range of additional support arrangements in the college. These include special support assistants (communicators for the hearing impaired, etc) and learning support assistants. Trainees in the catering department are fully integrated into a group of NVQ level 2 students and trainees.

36. The basic employability team is made up of the team leader for basic education and key skills and a basic employability tutor. A significant amount of work has gone into developing effective links between tutors and staff from across the whole college. From originally only offering information technology, the college now offers a comprehensive list of options. These are engineering, business administration, hairdressing and beauty therapy, hospitality and catering, information technology and basic skills. Trainees are offered vocational tasters in any of these departments and can attend basic skills sessions throughout.

37. Not all trainees have copies of a training plan and monitoring of their progress is dependent on the curriculum area they are in. For example, trainees in information technology have a detailed system for monitoring their own progress within each NVQ unit, as well as a colour-coded wallchart which is updated by their assessor. In contrast, basic skills trainees are aware of their progress in individual tasks, but most trainees have no idea where this fits into the overall qualifications. There is some weak target-setting. Trainees do have action plans but individual training plans only record the end date of the programme and are not used to set short-term achievable goals.

38. The work experience element of the basic employability programme is underdeveloped. The 26-week programme can include day release and it is a contractual requirement that it also include a four-week block placement before the end of the programme. There is only one trainee on a placement within a local council department. This is a good-quality placement with many opportunities for work-based assessment. However, the college has no plans to carry out any assessments. There are placements available but many of these are not suitable for basic employability trainees. The team has recognised the problem and is changing its strategy to find appropriate placements for each individual rather than fitting trainees into existing placements.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

39. The director of information and quality holds overall responsibility for equal opportunities at Derwentside College. There is also an equal opportunities co-ordinator and an equal opportunities forum. The college's equal opportunities and fair treatment policy meets contractual and statutory requirements and addresses a range of additional equal opportunities issues. There is a student charter which includes a promise of equality for all students and trainees and sets targets for responding to complaints of discrimination, and requests for childcare facilities. There is also a customer complaints procedure. Sixty-one per cent of trainees are men. Fourteen per cent of trainees have declared disabilities and one trainee is from a minority ethnic group. The self-assessment report was accurate and resulted in a clear and comprehensive action plan. Inspectors agreed with the grade given by the college in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive equal opportunities policies and procedures
- ◆ good equal opportunities action plan
- ◆ established review group for equal opportunities
- ◆ effective internal promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ excellent access to training for all groups

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little understanding of equal opportunities arrangements in the workplace
- ◆ no monitoring of effectiveness of equal opportunities arrangements in the workplace

GOOD PRACTICE

In order to raise students and trainees' awareness of equal opportunities, there are two competitions running throughout the college, with a cash prize for each winner. Entrants are encouraged to read the equal opportunities and fair treatment policy, and to design either an equal opportunities poster or a web page for the college's Internet site.

40. The college's equal opportunities policy was reviewed in 1998 and was re-drafted as an equal opportunities and fair treatment policy. This has a broader perspective and covers anti-harassment, anti-bullying, and includes a disability statement. A great deal of emphasis is placed on the college's responsibility for ensuring equality of opportunity for all those who access its facilities and services. Work-based training is not mentioned separately in any written procedures although all trainees are fully integrated into college curriculum areas on the college's campus and, as such, receive the same treatment as students. All trainees receive a copy of the student charter when they join a curriculum area.

41. There is an action plan for implementing the equal opportunities and fair treatment policy. It is distributed to all staff. The equal opportunities forum meets regularly to discuss equal opportunities issues across the college. Meetings are open

to any members of staff, students or trainees who wish to attend. Minutes and agendas are posted on the college's intranet.

42. The equal opportunities co-ordinator has made strenuous efforts to raise staff and trainees' awareness of equal opportunities issues. Plain language is used in all literature designed for students and trainees. The college has a pro-active approach to access to training for all on as many sites as possible. The college provides a team of special support assistants who are qualified to work with people who have visual impairments, hearing impairments or speech difficulties. They also use two different types of recognised sign language. A speech therapist is available to students and trainees when required. The college provides general classroom support, one-to-one support, dyslexia support, modified handouts and any specialised equipment that may be required, such as specially adapted keyboards for the visually impaired. One area of the college has been specifically rebuilt to cater for students and trainees with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the college provides easy access to all of its sites.

43. All work placement providers receive a comprehensive pack which includes an appraisal form. This does not, however, mention equal opportunities. Employers and trainees are unsure of their roles and responsibilities regarding equal opportunities and have little understanding of what constitutes equality of opportunity in the workplace. There are no written arrangements for promoting equal opportunities in the workplace, and no procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of workplace arrangements. Equal opportunities data are gathered as trainees join the college's training programmes and they are analysed. They are not, however, routinely used to help with management decision making or to make continuous improvements.

Trainee support

Grade 2

44. Most youth trainees approach Derwentside College after they have attended college presentations in their schools, through referral by the local careers service, or by recruitment from the full-time student population of the college. The training and employment programmes (TEP) unit, is responsible for co-ordinating the college's recruitment activities in respect of work-based training programmes and the New Deal options. TEP and curriculum staff interview all potential trainees before they are recruited to programmes. Trainees receive an initial assessment and induction by TEP staff and curriculum teams. All trainees, students and clients have access to the same support facilities and arrangements at the college. All trainees are reviewed in the workplace, generally by the same member of staff who provides their off-the-job training. The self-assessment report was an accurate reflection of the college's trainee support. Inspectors agreed with the grade given by the college in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ trainees able to join programmes at any time during year
- ◆ relevant, accurate and objective advice given to potential trainees
- ◆ good information given to trainees on progress to employment and higher education
- ◆ good links with external agencies provides additional support for trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some trainees and clients unaware of all support facilities available
- ◆ some reviews insufficiently focused on individual training plans

45. The director of curriculum has overall responsibility for all support facilities and services which helps to ensure that trainees receive highly structured and well co-ordinated support. The TEP unit administers a comprehensive initial assessment covering numeracy and literacy. Trainees are also helped to self assess their key skills abilities. Trainees are given good pastoral and vocational support, which helps them to feel secure and valued both in college and at work. The college provides a counselling service and professional support to trainees with identified learning difficulties and physical disabilities, and trainees have access to other facilities such as free transport and evening classes at no cost. The college provides excellent learning resources, which are available to all students, trainees and clients of the college. This includes the learning resource centre, which has an excellent library and information technology facilities, educational technology facilities and good teaching resources for the various occupational areas. All trainees have internet accounts and access to the college's e-mail and intranet systems which helps them to communicate with other trainees, and curriculum and support staff.

46. The college works to a 50-week year so there are no constraints on work-based training programmes from the traditional academic year. Trainees can join training programmes at any time. Potential trainees and clients are given relevant, accurate, impartial and objective advice. Trainees are encouraged to progress through the wide range of programmes available, and are helped to access higher education. The college's marketing literature for 1999 and 2000 has a section dedicated to progression, showing all potential routes to employment and higher education in an eye-catching and easy-to-understand graphical format. All youth trainees work towards key skills qualifications even though they may not be a requirement of their particular qualification framework. This is part of the college's strategy to help to make the transition onto national traineeship and modern apprenticeship programmes easier.

47. The college plays a key role in a range of local partnerships, many of which it has helped to set up and develop. Its involvement with local agencies, such as the careers service, the TEC, the Employment Service and local employer groups increases the support facilities available to trainees and clients and to potential

trainees and clients. Many local employers see the college as integral to their own recruitment strategies.

48. The college does not always successfully communicate the support available to trainees and clients. Some trainees are unaware of many of the formal support services and facilities available. Many of these services were originally designed to meet the needs of full-time students. They have not yet been fully established for youth training programmes, and are even less so for adult programmes. The college recognises this and is addressing it. Some trainees have a poor recollection of the content of the induction programme, and most associate induction with form filling, particularly those who do not start at the beginning of the college year. The college organises a college-wide induction programme at the beginning of the academic year. Induction at other times is less formal and comprehensive.

49. The review process is underdeveloped. The frequency of visits is good, and well within contractual requirements, but many reviews lack focus on the trainee's training programme, overall progress and personal development. In many cases, no connection is made between the individual training plan and the review process, and there is little sharing of good practice as regards reviews between different occupational areas. Many trainees cannot distinguish between reviews and action planning following assessments.

Management of training

Grade 2

50. In January 1998, Derwentside College merged with a local private training company. As a result of the merger, numbers of trainees increased substantially. At that time, the college had a separate department responsible for managing TEC-funded training. This department was managed separately to the college's curriculum and further education activities. In the early part of 1999, the college embarked on a major management restructure. This resulted in the creation of a training and employment programmes unit (TEP) which became the responsibility of the college's curriculum director. TEC-funded trainees, FEFC students and New Deal clients are now the responsibility of the same person within the college. The TEP unit offers administrative support and maintains links with employers, while curriculum staff provide off-the-job training. The same curriculum staff also visit the workplace to review and assess trainees. The college has been accredited with the Investors in People Standard. The self-assessment report provides a clear overview of the college's management arrangements. Inspectors broadly agreed with the college's findings in the self-assessment report and awarded the same grade as that given in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective management of merger and re-organisation
- ◆ work-based training fully integrated within college

- ◆ clear internal communication arrangements
- ◆ effective communication with external agencies and employer groups

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some individual training plans do not take sufficient account of workplace arrangements
- ◆ underdeveloped management information systems

51. The merger between Derwentside College and a local private training company was well planned and effectively managed. Staff from both organisations were kept informed of plans at each stage of the merger. The college anticipated some transitional problems from existing and new staff and contingency plans were produced and, in some cases, implemented. With this careful planning and effective communication, the college was able to keep staff turnover to a minimum. Following the merger, and subsequent management reorganisation, a decision was made to hand over responsibility for all TEC-funded training, together with New Deal, to the curriculum director and this has had a significant positive impact on trainees, students and clients. In most cases, the same curriculum staff member who carries out off-the-job training sessions also visits trainees and clients in the workplace. Trainees are assessed mainly in the workplace and this is also carried out by the same curriculum staff member. Curriculum staff are all appropriately occupationally qualified and experienced and they all hold relevant teaching and assessment qualifications. Trainees and clients are effectively integrated into all college activities. The college does not differentiate between the different groups of learners and makes a conscious effort to break down any potential barriers by referring to all learners as students.

52. The college is well represented at many local community and educational groups. Further afield, the college also shares good practice with similar organisations throughout the region. It is an active member of a regional network of further education colleges which was originally established to share good practice in the work-based training sector. Some of the occupational areas of training provided by the college, notably engineering, have formed very strong and effective links with local employers and groups of employers. The college develops its training programmes to suit the changing needs of the local industry and economy.

53. The college has a staff development policy which is based on a staff appraisal system and the requirements of the Investors in People Standard. The staff development programme has been affected by budget cuts in the college's 1998 financial year, but these restrictions have now been lifted and a comprehensive development plan has been approved, and is being implemented, for the current financial year. The college's internal communications arrangements are clear and effective. Information technology is an integral part of these arrangements, with all staff and students having access to internal e-mail and the college's intranet. Policies, procedures and the college's plans for the future are readily available

through the intranet and several discussion groups have been successfully established through this technology. Staff and students have access to key personnel, including the college principal, through e-mail, voice mail and a programme of meetings. The minutes of all meetings are available where appropriate.

54. The TEP unit secures work placements for trainees, students and New Deal clients. It is the curriculum staff, however, who provide the TEP unit with information to produce individual training plans. This is regarded by the college as a contractual and administrative task and many trainees who are following the same, or similar, NVQs have identical, rather than individual, training plans which do not take sufficient account of workplace arrangements. In some occupational areas, curriculum staff have challenged the lack of individuality within training plans, but the college has been slow to respond across all areas. Historically, the comprehensive management information data collected by the college have focused on the achievements of FEFC-funded students. More recently, and particularly since the management restructure, data have been collected which encompass all trainees, students and New Deal clients. In the last three months, the TEP unit has recognised that these data do not provide separate information on the achievements and progress of TEC-funded trainees or New Deal clients. In response, the TEP unit has designed a series of data collection sheets which are unique to this client group. They have been in use for only two months and it is too early to evaluate their effectiveness. The college recognises that these data sheets will need to be monitored and further developed before they can be used to help make management decisions.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

55. Derwentside College's quality assurance arrangements are well recorded. It has procedures covering several aspects of training, assessment, verification and support and these are reviewed at least once a year. Responsibility for quality assurance lies with a member of the college's senior management team. All external quality requirements are routinely met, and action plans for improvement and to address instances of non-conformity are a regular feature of the internal audit and self-assessment routine. Feedback is regularly sought from trainees and, more recently, employers. Trainees are represented on many of the college's working parties which have been formed to encourage continuous improvement. In its self-assessment report, the college accurately identifies a number of key strengths and weaknesses, in particular the well-established quality assurance procedures and self-assessment process and the difficulties encountered in identifying accurate achievement and destination data on trainees. Inspectors agreed with the grade given by the college in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good integration of self-assessment with quality assurance arrangements
- ◆ good communication of quality assurance arrangements to subcontractors
- ◆ quality assurance arrangements resulting in improving performance by trainers and trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of rigorous monitoring of some aspects of training programmes
- ◆ internal verification policies not effective across all occupational areas
- ◆ trainees' destinations and achievement data not effectively used to make continuous improvements

56. Self-assessment has been a focal point of the college's quality assurance arrangements for several years. Since the college reorganised its management structure to more effectively integrate TEC-funded trainees and New Deal clients with students, self-assessment against *Raising the Standard* has been relatively straightforward. The self-assessment process involved all appropriate curriculum staff and those from the TEP unit. The first draft of the report was posted on the college's intranet and comment was invited from all staff and trainees. The final report underestimated the strengths in the occupational areas of engineering and foundation for work. Inspectors awarded higher grades in these areas. The report overestimated the extent to which good practice in other occupational areas had been adopted in the occupational area of leisure, sport and travel and inspectors awarded a lower grade in this area. In the remaining occupational areas of business administration and hair and beauty and all four of the generic areas, the report was accurate, and inspectors agreed with the grades given by the college.

57. The college communicates its key objectives and achievements to employers and to the wider local community that it serves. Each year, the college publishes its annual review to its staff, students and subcontractors. The review celebrates the college's financial and academic achievement and reinforces its commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement. It has a comprehensive programme of classroom observations. Closely linked to staff development through the appraisal system, this helps to improve the performance of curriculum staff. However, this approach to quality improvement does not extend to other aspects of training programmes. There are inconsistencies in the way that trainees are assessed and reviewed in the workplace. Although the college has many quality procedures and standard documents to cover the key processes, they are still open to the individual interpretation of different staff. Some staff are more rigorous in their approach to completing trainee-related documents than others.

58. The college has established an internal verification panel. Staff from different occupational areas are represented on the panel which meets regularly to review the outcome of external verification visits and to develop a standard approach to

internal verification across the college. In some occupational areas, internal verification is effective. The college recognises that in other areas, internal verification arrangements do not always meet the high standards set by the college. Internal verification, in all areas, meets the requirements of awarding bodies. In some areas, however, there is a lack of suitably qualified staff, and this has led to a focus on verifying completed portfolios rather than on sampling and continuous improvement.

59. Through its self-assessment process, the college recognises that more can be done to accurately identify the achievements and destinations of trainees to inform continuous improvement. The college has procedures to establish the reasons why trainees leave their programmes before achieving, but these are not systematically applied. Where this information is collected, the college is quick to offer alternative arrangements or additional support to the trainee, but again, this information is not collected, or analysed, in a way which could be used to inform future programme developments. The college has recently introduced new techniques for collecting achievement data, but to date, information has only been collected and not fully evaluated.