



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards  
in Education

## Thames Valley University

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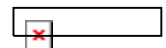
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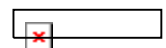
**Basic information about the institution**



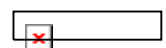
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Name of institution:	Thames Valley University
Type of institution:	University
Principal:	Professor Geoff Crispin
Address of institution:	St Mary's Road Ealing London W5 5RF
Telephone number:	020 8579 5000
Fax number:	020 8231 2350
Chair of governors:	Dino Adriano
Unique reference number:	133901
Name of reporting inspector:	Stephen Oliver-Watts
Dates of inspection:	23-27 February 2004

**Part A: Summary**



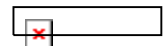
**Information about the institution**



Thames Valley University is a vocational university which provides further education (FE) courses in nine areas of learning. It has two main campuses: at Ealing in West London, and in Slough, which is about 19 miles west of Ealing. The majority of the FE provision is based at Ealing, though some large areas, such as health care, are also based at Slough. FE provision is mainly funded by the London West Learning and Skills Council (LSC). According to the 2001 census, the population of Ealing is approximately 300,000 and that of Slough is 120,000. The Borough of Ealing includes some wards with high levels of unemployment and deprivation. Minority ethnic groups make up about 41% of the population of Ealing, and 36% in Slough; the minority ethnic population of London as a whole is 29%. The local population has a significant number of refugees and asylum seekers. Unemployment in Ealing was 2.9% in November 2003, and in Slough it was 3%. These figures are between the national average of 2.4% and the West London LSC average of 3.5%. In 2002/03 there were 5,317 FE enrolments, 96% of which were adult students. Almost all students are studying on a part-time basis, except in catering where there are 61 full-time students. The largest areas of FE provision are hospitality and catering and healthcare. In 2002/03, students aged under 19 represented 11% of FE enrolments, and 44% of students were from minority ethnic groups. The university aims to provide progression routes through initial vocational qualifications to higher education (HE) and employment. In its mission statement it 'supports the aim of widening participation in HE as a contribution to lifelong learning, equality, and social justice', and aims to play 'a significant role in the educational, cultural and economic life of the region'.

In January 2004, Reading College and School of Art and Design merged with the university, significantly increasing its FE provision. Reading College and School of Art and Design was inspected in autumn 2003. The university inspection dealt solely with the FE provision which was offered by the university prior to the merger, and did not include the provision offered by the former Reading College and School of Art and Design.

### How effective is the institution?



The university provides good learning opportunities for most of its students. Its provision is well matched to the demands of the diverse and rapidly changing population of west London. There is satisfactory provision in business, Access to higher education, and foundation studies; provision in hospitality and catering and health care is good; and in modern foreign languages it is outstanding. Pass rates are at, or more often above, national averages at levels 2 and 3 for all students. Procedures for initially assessing the needs of students are not systematically applied. Support is good for students who receive it, but not all learners with basic skills needs are identified. There is insufficient support for the relatively large number of part-time learners for whom English is a second language.

#### **Key strengths**

- good progression routes for students
  
- good links with employers
  
- good resources for teaching and learning

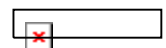
- effective management of teaching teams
- effective policies for ensuring equality and diversity
- good pass rates on many courses
- good support for students.

***What should be improved***

- poor retention rates on some business, catering, and Access programmes
- insufficient arrangements for initial assessment and addressing individual students' needs
- implementation of new quality assurance arrangements
- slow completion of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in programmes based in the workplace.

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**

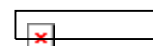


*The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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
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Business	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Students' work is of a very high standard and is assessed well. Many students progress to higher level qualifications. They receive exceptionally good academic, personal and pastoral support. Poor and declining retention rates is a feature of some part-time evening courses where open access is used to widen participation. Inadequate initial assessment and a lack of formal arrangements to help students improve their basic skills contribute to increasing numbers of early leavers.
Hospitality	<b>Good.</b> There are very good pass rates on vocational courses, and much good teaching and learning. Retention rates are poor on some courses. Students take part in extensive enrichment activities and courses provide good progression and employability. NVQ assessment and verification are insufficiently rigorous and planning and use of resources do not fully meet individual learning needs.
Access	<b>Satisfactory.</b> The health studies, midwifery and nursing course is particularly strong but on other courses retention rates are low and punctuality sometimes poor. The quality of teaching varies from outstanding to poor; most is satisfactory or good. Provision is successful in widening participation and developing students' skills in preparation for HE. The additional learning needs of a significant minority of students are not met.
Health care	<b>Good.</b> There is good progression through the NVQ levels and to assessor awards and nurse training. Links with employers are effective in delivering responsive and flexible programmes with good support from staff. There is inadequate initial assessment of learners and slow completion of NVQ programmes by some learners. Workplace experiences are variable in supporting training and assessment. The health care team is enthusiastic and committed, working within well-managed structures to maintain high standards of delivery, teaching and workplace learning.
Modern foreign languages	<b>Outstanding.</b> There is excellent teaching, good pass rates and outstanding resources. There are high levels of student attainment and satisfaction across a range of languages and levels. There is excellent leadership which engenders a deep-rooted commitment to improving the quality of provision at all levels. Attendance is poor but there are strategies in place to ensure that this does not adversely affect achievement of learning outcomes.
Foundation	<b>Satisfactory.</b> There is good pastoral support which increases students' self-confidence and learning skills and effectively prepares them for further learning. A comprehensive range of additional learning support is provided. There is some poor teaching and a lack of any systematic review process. Achievement is not always recorded and uptake of additional learning support is neither routinely monitored nor evaluated.

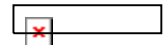
#### How well is the institution led and managed?



Leadership and management of FE provision at the university are satisfactory. There is a strong commitment to FE and good strategic leadership. Lines of communication within the university are good, and management of the large teams of part-time staff is effective. The university has

procedures specific to FE have recently been introduced but are not yet fully effective. There is a lack of consistency in students' experience, particularly in respect of initial assessment of students' needs and procedures for target setting and support. Some courses have poor retention rates and some students progress more slowly than they should. The analysis of student data is not sufficiently developed to provide useful management information on the quality of courses. The self-assessment process builds on course reviews carried out across the university. These took account of the views of students but were insufficiently informed by data on retention and achievement. Inspectors found that, while some weaknesses were not identified and some strengths overstated, the report provided a generally accurate picture of the provision.

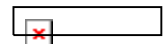
### **To what extent is the institution educationally and socially inclusive?**



The institution's response to education and social inclusion is good. The university community has a minority ethnic representation of 44%, against a national average of 41%. The managing diversity forum has set in place race equality action plans for staff and students. The group has representation from all levels of the organisation including students. The group is chaired by a governor. A number of initiatives are in place, including the election of diversity and equality champions. Strategies to increase participation from minority groups have had an impact on enrolment figures. Between 2000 and 2003, the percentage of students from minority ethnic groups increased significantly; the proportion of Asian students tripled. Over the last 3 years, the percentage of students from minority ethnic groups on the Access programme has increased to 75%.

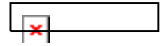
The university has made a good response to the implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). Facilities for learners with restricted mobility are good; only one building has some limitations. Students and staff are made aware of the importance of access to car parks and lifts. There are lifts and toilets for disabled people in most buildings. Access to dining and leisure facilities is good. A high proportion of the staff have received recent training on the implications of the legislation. Access to courses for disabled students is good. The university has made a good response to compliance with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The university's diversity forum has the responsibility of updating the plan and complying with the legislation. Much training has been undertaken. A thorough diversity action plan is being implemented.

### **How well are students and trainees guided and supported?**



Students receive good impartial advice and guidance, and are able to make realistic and informed choices. There are unsatisfactory arrangements for the provision of initial assessment in some programme areas. Staff are aware of this and are implementing new procedures. Induction programmes are effective in enabling learners to settle into their programmes quickly, to understand their rights and responsibilities and the demands of the programmes. Students receive high-quality support on personal issues from their tutors and value highly the accessibility of their tutors. Learning support services are planned well and managed effectively. They are delivered through a culture which values the dignity and status of learners and is sensitive to equality of opportunity. Formal and informal tutorials are effective in building self-esteem and confidence, and breaking down personal barriers to learning. Careers employment service is effective in engaging students at all points of their programme and is highly regarded by students.

## Students' views of the institution



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

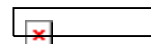
### ***What students like about the institution***

- knowledgeable staff who relate teaching to the world of work
  
- support and encouragement of all staff
  
- learning resource centres
  
- friendly, mature and purposeful environment
  
- student services
  
- enrichment opportunities.

### ***What they feel could be improved***

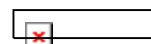
- cost and availability of parking
  
- slow response of computers
  
- availability of workplace assessors
  
- use of information technology (IT) in teaching.

## Other information



The institution inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the institution. Once published, the institution has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The institution's action plan must show what action the institution will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the local LSC. The local LSC should send to Ofsted only action plans from institutions 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 institution as a whole



### Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

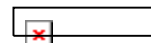
Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18*	86	14	0
19+ and WBL	63	27	10
Learning 16-18*	86	14	0
19+ and WBL	66	24	10

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

*WBL is work-based learning*

*\*only 7 lessons for students aged 16 to 18 were observed*

## Achievement and standards



1. The university offers FE courses in nine areas of learning, of which six were included in the inspection. Of the 7,630 enrolments to FE courses in 2002/03, only 5% were aged 16 to 19. The great majority of students at the university are on part-time courses. Less than 100 FE students are full-time. Almost 30% of students were studying in hospitality and catering, and almost 20% were on health care courses. There are also large cohorts in modern foreign languages (1,235 students, 16 % of the total), and business. Enrolments are spread approximately equally across all levels: however, most long courses are at level 3, and most short courses at levels 1 and 2.



2. The university does not return data on the performance of individual students to the LSC, but is required to return less detailed data to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). Accurate data was available from the university's database, and was used by inspectors in combination with data derived from course teams and the self-assessment report in order to reach judgements about the provision. There were some restrictions on the ability to analyse data, for example, the performance of the small number of students aged 16 to 18 could not always be separated from that of the adults. The data used by inspectors has not been subject to audit by the LSC.

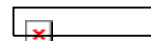
3. Attendance at lessons observed during the inspection was 79% overall. This is slightly above the average attendance in college inspections in 2002/03, which was 78%. The best attendance was in hospitality and catering lessons, where it was 87%, which is 9% above the national average for this subject. Attendance in health care lessons was also good, with 83% attendance against a national average of 78%. Modern foreign language lessons had the worst attendance, at 59%. Many students on these evening classes had particular barriers to attendance, and the course team has procedures in place to enable students who miss a lesson to maintain good progress.

4. Students on most courses produce a high standard of work and develop their learning skills to help them to progress. Working in groups, students analysed problems and presented their results, developing their communication and research skills. In Access lessons, there were good standards of debate, and students showed developing confidence in expressing their personal responses to the topics under discussion. Students of modern foreign languages achieved high levels of fluency and pronunciation and developed their appreciation of the culture of the country as well as its language. Much written work is of a high standard, and shows development of research skills. Portfolio work was particularly strong in business and health courses, where much of the evidence for achievement is gathered in the workplace. Where appropriate, students' practical skills are well developed. Catering students work confidently and achieve good standards in relation to both their qualification goals and their own prior attainment. They are challenged by special assignments such as providing catering for industry events and award ceremonies. In foundation lessons, students achieve well: they learn to recognise their natural learning style and develop strategies to improve their performance. However, on business and access courses, some students struggle to grasp the more difficult concepts and terms, particularly those whose first language is not English.

5. Overall, retention rates are similar to the national averages for general FE colleges, but in some areas retention rates are poor. Over the last three years, retention rates have declined for long courses at levels 1 and 2, but have slightly improved at level 3, which has the largest cohort of students on long courses. On the Access programme, retention rates are consistently low on all courses except health studies. However, performance in the current year shows considerable improvement, though punctuality remains poor. Retention rates are also low on business courses, particularly evening provision in accounting and they are above national averages on health care courses. Some specialist catering courses also have low retention rates and those for language courses and short courses are satisfactory.

6. Achievement in most areas is satisfactory or good. Overall pass rates are above national averages at all course levels, and in some, such as health care and modern foreign languages, they are considerably higher. Pass rates are high on most Access courses. In some areas, such as business and health, a high proportion of students fail to complete their qualifications within the allotted time, though many will go on to successfully complete later. However, achievement on some business evening courses is poor and has declined over the last 3 years. The number of students aged 16 to 19 in the university is small. Most are studying catering at levels 2 and 3. Pass rates on these courses are well above national averages. The development of these students' personal and learning skills is satisfactory, but key skills results are poor. There is insufficient attention paid to the integration of key skills within the vocational teaching programme.

## **Quality of education and training**



7. Teaching, learning, and attainment were graded by inspectors in 66 lessons. The profile of grades awarded is similar to the average for colleges inspected in 2002/03, though the proportion of unsatisfactory lessons is slightly higher. The profile of grades for lessons where students aged 16 to 19 predominated was better than for those aged over 19, but the sample size was too small to be significant in forming judgements. The best teaching was in modern foreign languages, where a third of the teaching was outstanding and there were no unsatisfactory lessons. The worst was in foundation studies, where a third of the lessons observed were unsatisfactory and only one was good.

8. In most lessons, teachers successfully manage learning for a very diverse group of students. They build positive relationships with the students, many of whom are studying part-time and have to overcome personal obstacles to attend. The best lessons are well prepared, with a mix of activities designed to involve students and to help them build on their existing experience. In health and business lessons, students are encouraged to draw on their current work experience and relate it to the lesson topic. Teachers frequently link the topic under consideration back to earlier learning and encourage students to do the same. This reinforcement is particularly helpful on part-time courses where students only attend once a week. Good use is made of carefully planned group work, particularly in modern languages, but also in Access and catering lessons. In practical lessons, the learning environment is well managed and students work purposefully, safely and to high standards. Students on level 3 courses undertake supervision of level 2 students in some kitchen practicals, under the direction of teachers. This provides a valuable opportunity to enhance personal skills. Theory lessons in catering provide opportunities to question the teacher and for lively discussion; on one occasion, a visiting speaker attended. In general, teachers make good use of their own industrial experience to stimulate students and remind them of the standards expected in industry. In health care and business, many students receive effective and well conducted visits in the workplace to assist learning and carry out assessment.

9. In many of the poorer lessons, not enough consideration was given to the needs of individual students. In many lessons, the ability range was very wide, but this was not reflected in the lesson plan. In some cases, adult part-time learners had not undertaken an initial assessment of their learning needs. Even where this had been done, teachers did not always address these needs adequately. Resources such as handouts were not written so as to meet the needs of students with differing abilities. This was particularly evident with students whose first language is not English. In a small number of lessons on health and Access courses, poor class management meant that many students were not involved and not learning. In the unsatisfactory foundation studies lessons all students tackled the same problem, which was too easy for some and too difficult for others. Teachers in a few lessons made good use of information and communication technology (ICT), but this was the exception. In health care, much of the teaching is carried out in the workplace. This is well planned. Most students are well supported in the workplace by mentors who ensure they achieve high levels of skill, and by visiting tutor-assessors from the university. However, some employers provided less effective support, leading to slow progress by the students.

10. The university's teaching accommodation is good. FE courses are taught at the Ealing and Slough campuses. Much of general teaching accommodation has recently been refurbished. The university does not segregate FE students from those on HE courses, so all facilities are available to them. Library and learning resource centres on both sites are excellent. In Ealing, a large computer facility is open 24 hours a day. Computer workstations have been installed in cafés to further extend access. The university has introduced an intranet which allows students to access course notes and handouts, along with additional learning materials, from any computer. However, while this was used by a few students, most are not yet accustomed to accessing learning materials in this way.

11. The planning of facilities shows good awareness of the needs of learners with disabilities. At both sites, wheelchair users have access to 95% of buildings. One major campus building in Ealing, however, provides unsatisfactory access for wheelchair users. Speaking lifts have been installed and a number of classrooms have hearing loops. Specialist facilities for health care, business, and languages are generally good. There is a well equipped clinical skills centre at the Slough site, and excellent language centre facilities to support independent study at the Ealing campus.

12. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. The majority of FE teaching is carried out by part-time staff. Of these, 83% have a teaching qualification or are working towards one. Many are current practitioners with good and up-to-date occupational competencies. In areas such as catering and care, full-time staff maintain very good links with industry to keep their knowledge and skills up to date. There are good opportunities for staff development. Part-time staff are paid to attend development and updating sessions. A performance review scheme for teaching and support staff has been introduced but has not yet completed its first cycle.

13. Assessment practice on most courses is satisfactory. Assessment in modern foreign languages is particularly effective in providing regular feedback to students and encouraging progress. Students on most courses have a clear understanding of the assessment criteria, and know how and when they will be assessed. Teachers make use of a wide range of assessment methods. Assessed work is annotated with useful comments and returned promptly. Regular reviews inform learners how they are performing and make recommendations for improvement. Progress towards learning goals are well recorded, but target setting sometimes lacks rigor. The internal verification of assessments is well planned and rigorously applied. There is regular monitoring of the quality of assessment. Staff have frequent standardisation meetings and receive support and feedback from the internal verifier. External verifiers' reports are quickly shared and acted upon. However, this has not been effective in detecting unsatisfactory assessment practice in hospitality and catering.

14. Arrangements for initial assessment are unsatisfactory. There is no overall policy for initial assessment and no standard instrument for measuring students' needs. Arrangements for diagnosing and addressing individual needs are inconsistent across curriculum areas and in some, such as health care, there is no initial assessment at all. In many curriculum areas, lesson planning places insufficient emphasis on meeting the differing needs of students. Learning support is provided but, without systematic initial assessment, it is not clear whether it is reaching all those who need it. There is no analysis of the effectiveness of learning support in improving the retention and achievement of those who receive it.

15. Employers and, where appropriate, parents are kept well informed of students' progress through written reports, parents evenings and open days. Tracking of attendance and punctuality is satisfactory.

16. The university offers a satisfactory range of courses to meet the needs of local people and employers, and a particularly good range of vocational programmes in catering and care. Programmes are generally available at appropriate levels, though there is limited level 2 provision for Access students. Modes of attendance are carefully planned to enable employees and those with caring responsibilities to take advantage of them. For example, professional studies courses are offered both in the day and in the evening. There are excellent links with a wide range of employers, particularly in the catering and care industries, where many are regularly consulted in the planning of new courses. Students completing these courses are well equipped for work in the industry and a high proportion move directly into employment. The university recently participated in the Heathrow Workforce Development Project, which successfully trained a large cohort of students who gained employment following the course. The university has well-established links to the local community. For example, it collaborates in projects such as 'IT for Acton', and runs summer schools, Saturday chef lessons for pupils aged 14 to 16, a junior music college and skills courses in community centres. It is centrally involved in many partnerships and initiatives for regeneration of the locality.

17. Progression routes, particularly in care, catering, business and modern foreign languages are clear and well used. The design of modern foreign language courses allows learners to begin on a short course at an appropriate level and then progress to more advanced courses. An Associate Student Scheme has been developed as a bridge between FE and HE. Learners on 15-week courses accumulate credits towards a place on a degree programme. Last year, 80% of completers gained a place in HE. The Access programmes are also successful in enabling students who do not have traditional entrance requirements to enter HE courses.

18. Hospitality and catering students benefit from a good range of industry-related enrichment activities. For example, a charity dinner is organised annually by the students at a prestigious venue. They are involved in a dining club which visits leading London restaurants. Each year, a number of

celebrity chefs visit the catering department to give demonstrations, and regular overseas visits are organised to learn about and sample food products. However, most other curriculum areas have few, if any, enrichment opportunities.

19. Students have access to a very good range of services and resources. Student support services are well planned and managed. A team of advisors is present on both campuses to provide assistance on a wide range of issues when required. For example, Access course students are helped to manage their individual financial situations and given information on funding and benefit entitlements. Students with dyslexia are helped to use a range of specialist software and, where appropriate, are provided with additional class support. All students can be referred to workshops to address their literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) needs. Help is also given for wider needs, such as appropriate accommodation for registered blind students. A counselling team links with outside agencies, such as Connexions and Citizens Advice Bureau, to support learners with other problems. These services are delivered through a culture which respects the learners and is sensitive to equality of opportunity. Students on the Access programme are encouraged to develop mutual support through a buddy system.

20. The university's centre for guidance provides good impartial advice, helping students to make realistic and informed choices. Students value the opportunity to discuss their programme choice on an individual basis with a range of specialist staff. Programmes to help students make good choices are in place. For example, prospective students can choose to shadow a student for a day. There is good access to the careers employment service which is on the campus and is able to assist them to find work experience or temporary jobs as well as long-term careers.

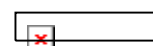
21. Students receive effective, high-quality support on pastoral and personal issues from their tutors. For example, tutors sometimes accompany learners to interviews pertaining to social and financial issues. In most areas, the tutorial system is effective. It builds self-esteem and confidence, assesses existing and transferable skills, develops reflective and independent skills and breaks down personal barriers to learning. However, in some areas, the recording of tutorial activities is underdeveloped, reducing their effectiveness.

22. The provision for the support for learners with additional learning needs is poorly co-ordinated and inconsistently applied. Individual learning needs are not always identified, particularly for students on part-time evening courses. Where they are identified, there is no systematic procedure for recording the results and ensuring that they are acted upon. Where additional support is provided, it is satisfactory or good, but there is no evaluation of its impact on the progress of those who receive it.

23. Induction programmes are satisfactory in enabling learners to settle into their programmes quickly. There are satisfactory measures in place for recognising poor punctuality, non-attendance and poor performance. Students are speedily contacted and offered assistance to return to their programme.

24. The university has a designated member of staff responsible for child protection issues, who has received appropriate training. Procedures are in place to deal with any incidents. There is a referral system in place and a panel of staff to deal with any issues arising. Police checks are carried out on all university staff and volunteers. Students working towards qualifications in health and social care and working in the community are also subject to disclosure.

## Leadership and management



25. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a high level of commitment by governors

The pass rates are high and well above the national averages for FE colleges. Although the overall retention rates for the FE provision are satisfactory there are many courses where the retention rates are below national averages. The quality assurance and self-assessment arrangements are relatively new and have not been used effectively to improve the provision. There is weak use of management information. On courses that have a large component of training in the workplace, the completion of awards by trainees is often slow. There is no overall policy for initial assessment or additional learning support. Performance reviews of staff have been introduced but not all have completed the process.

26. Staff and governors understand the mission and values of the university. The strategic plans for the university and for the Centre for Access and Further Education are good. The objectives for the university are to achieve the highest standards in teaching and learning, to ensure that the support for students is effective, to establish an extensive e-learning service and to develop a network of alliances. There is an additional set of objectives for the Centre for Access and Further Education. The objectives include; ensuring that those excluded from the labour market gain basic and key skills, and a drive to recruit more school leavers. A number of these objectives have not yet been achieved for FE students.

27. Curriculum management is satisfactory. Courses are managed through three faculties: the faculty of health and human sciences; the faculty of professional studies; and the centre for access and continuing education. There is considerable variation in management approach between the faculties. The majority of staff are part time. Staff meet regularly and there are very good arrangements to ensure that staff are kept well informed and contribute appropriately to the developments within faculties. Leadership and management of languages are outstanding, in most other areas they are good except for foundation programmes where they are unsatisfactory. Although target setting for retention and pass rates are well established, there are considerable weaknesses in monitoring the achievement of these targets. For example, the fact that some learners on courses with a substantial amount of work-based training are taking longer than planned to complete has not been properly evaluated. Many programmes would benefit from a more rigorous approach to initial assessment of students and changes to the teaching as a consequence of this work. Additional learning support needs are not identified sufficiently systematically. There is insufficient evaluation of these activities. In some faculties, staff have undergone performance reviews; in others, no such appraisal has taken place. Staff development is good, all staff, including part-time staff, benefit from considerable professional development. However, there has been insufficient staff development addressing teaching and learning issues to improve the quality of delivery.

28. Much work has been carried out to establish a quality assurance framework for the FE provision. It is relatively new and therefore its impact has been limited. There is a well-established programme review process. This includes setting of targets for recruitment, retention and achievement for each course or programme. The arrangements for setting these targets are good but, partly as a consequence of the volatile market, there have been considerable difficulties in setting and meeting recruitment targets for individual courses, though overall recruitment targets are met. The main objectives for the quality assurance system are; to improve attendance, retention rates, teaching and learning; to receive more thorough feedback from students; and to involve all staff in the self-assessment process. The system has been successful in improving the arrangements for eliciting students' views and in involving staff in the self-assessment process. However, it has not been successful in a number of other areas. Attendance rates are generally good but remain very poor on some programmes, for example, in modern foreign languages where the attendance has averaged about 60%. Retention rates vary greatly and in many areas remain well below the national averages. Peer observation has been in place for a number of years. A more formal lesson observation arrangement has been introduced. However, the proportion of good or better lessons is lower than at the previous inspection in 1999, and the quality of teaching varies considerably, both within and across programmes of study.

29. The university's student records are generally accurate. A new student record system is to be implemented by April 2005. This should allow on-line consideration of performance data by middle managers. Currently all reports are constructed by the central management information system team on demand or through a set of standard reports. Most of the work of this central team is based

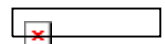
around the three formal census points each year. Middle managers receive monthly reports on students that remain on courses and the income that they generate. Much work has been carried out to improve the management skills of middle managers in using the data. However, the available reports do not enable them to analyse trends or reach clear judgements about the performance of courses. For example, there has been considerable confusion and difficulty in interpreting the data for courses where students have a variety of start dates.

30. The university has a good policy on equality of opportunity. There has been effective progress in meeting the requirements of the SENDA. A special educational needs steering group is charged with ensuring that the act is complied with. Following a thorough audit an action plan has been written. The implementation of this plan has been carefully monitored. The plan is updated and re-launched each year. Much effective training has taken place. General support for learners with restricted mobility is good. Access to buildings is also good, except at Westel House where it is often difficult to use the lifts. A similar approach has been used in complying with the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000. Much training has been undertaken and a thorough diversity action plan written. The plan is being implemented and carefully monitored. The diversity forum has the responsibility of updating the plan and complying with the legislation. One of the remaining objectives is to establish champions in each faculty that can effect changes in teaching and learning to reflect the requirements of both these acts.

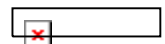
31. Governors meet their responsibilities effectively. An FE board has been established as a committee of the full board of the university. One of two governors chair the committee, other members are from the academic board. They meet approximately termly and receive reports from managers of the FE provision. Committee members consider carefully the retention and achievement targets and the progress made towards meeting them. Members of this committee have a thorough knowledge of the FE work. They consider, comment upon and monitor the implementation of the strategic plan. New courses or revalidation of existing courses are considered. They have a thorough understanding of the new self-assessment report, which they evaluated and approved.

32. Financial management is sound. The local LSC classify the university's FE financial management as strong. The budget for the FE provision of about £2 million is very small when compared to the total budget of over £70 million. There are regular and effective meetings between finance managers and budget holders who receive frequent reports on expenditure. This arrangement is irrespective of whether the income is for FE or HE. It is not therefore possible to evaluate the effectiveness or efficient use of the FE budget in isolation. An analysis of value for money in 2000 led to a realisation that the FE provision was highly subsidised from the HE budget. This was partly due to staff on HE contracts delivering FE provision. This has now been partly addressed through new contractual arrangements for some staff. FE students undoubtedly benefit from their access to all of the university's resources and support functions. The average class size is larger than the national average for FE colleges. The pass rate is high but the retention rates in certain areas are low. Consequentially, value for money is satisfactory.

## Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



### Business



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

### **Strengths**

- very high quality of students' work
- extensive progression to higher qualifications
- thorough and rigorous assessment of students' work
- exceptionally good support for students in university and in the workplace.

### **Weaknesses**

- poor and declining retention rates in accounting
- inadequate initial assessment
- lack of basic skills support for part-time evening students
- slow progress towards NVQ completion.

### **Scope of provision**

33. There are 606 enrolments on FE business programmes, all of whom are adults. Of these, 109 are within the faculty of professional studies. There is a range of courses leading to awards accredited by professional bodies, such as the certificate in accounting technicians, the certificate in personnel practice and institute of credit management (ICM) award. Almost all these students are employed by local companies in accounting, credit management or human resources roles. Some of these courses are available at both the Ealing and Slough campuses. Business courses are also offered within the care and health care programmes. These include customer service and administration NVQs at levels 1, 2 and 3, and management NVQs at levels 3 and 4. There are also 126 students working towards the level 4 registered manager award for care home managers. Most of these learners work in local hospitals and care homes. They learn and are assessed in the workplace. They attend six study days per year at the university, in order to gain the underpinning knowledge needed for their qualifications.

### **Achievement and standards**

34. There are high pass rates for students who complete the certificate in personnel practice course

at both centres. Retention rates are better in Slough than in Ealing. However, retention rates are poor and declining on accounting and credit management courses. On the certificate of accounting technicians, retention rates have fallen from 87% in 2001 to 41% in 2003. Many students on this course find that they are unable to meet the standards required. This is often because of poor literacy and numeracy skills or because of difficulty understanding some of the technical terminology. This has been recognised and a foundation level course in credit management has been introduced.

35. Students' work is of a very high standard, particularly that seen in NVQ portfolios. Students demonstrate underpinning knowledge through personal logs. These are invariably well written and provide detailed explanations of what they have learned and how they apply the knowledge to their work. Too many students do not achieve the NVQ awards within a reasonable time scale. For example, students undertaking assessor awards make slow progress with many still working towards their qualification two years after enrolment.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Certificate in personnel practice	3	No. of starts	63	71	56
		% retention	87	73	79
		% pass rate	100	98	100
Certificate of accounting technicians	3	No. of starts	54	60	51
		% retention	87	57	41
		% pass rate	0*	0*	57
ICM certificate	3	No. of starts	30	42	30
		% retention	87	74	56
		% pass rate	38	17	0*
Training and Development Leading Body D33 certificate	3	No. of starts	29	119	1
		% retention	79	82	100
		% pass rate	87	37*	100
A1 certificate	3	No. of starts	***	***	216
		% retention			91
		% pass rate			12**
ICM foundation certificate	2	No. of starts	***	***	16
		% retention			94
		% pass rate			67

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

\* data not available

\*\* excludes students still in learning

\*\*\*\_course did not run

***Quality of education and training***

36. Most teaching is good, with some inspiring and lively lessons. Students participate in imaginative



activities that promote and stimulate their learning. Teachers are aware of the needs of individual students and encourage them to use the experiences gained in their jobs within lessons. Students clearly understand the links between course topics. For example, one student described how a class discussion of training needs analysis linked to earlier learning on leadership. Lesson planning is effective. Each lesson has clear aims and a variety of teaching techniques are used, including effective small group work. Teachers demonstrate a good depth of up-to-date knowledge and commercial experience. On a few occasions, tutors did not consolidate and share the learning from group work before moving onto the next activity. Study days for work-based management programmes are effective in delivering the knowledge required to underpin NVQs. Teaching resources are good. Tutors use a satisfactory range of equipment including whiteboards and flipcharts, overhead projectors and screens. Handouts are brief, informative and up to date, although there are a few cases where their reproduction is poor.

37. Assessment of students' work is thorough, rigorous and well structured. Workplace assessors are adept at evaluating students' work, recognising and recording their competences and linking them to the qualification standards. They provide excellent feedback which helps students to progress. There is no initial assessment of students who enrol for business programmes. Accounting technician courses are described as open access, but there are examples of many students leaving early. Some students for whom English is not their first language, or who cannot understand the often complicated terminology of accounting do not receive the additional support they need.

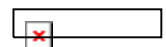
38. Good opportunities are provided for students to progress from basic to higher levels. For example, a health care student who started on a level 2 course is now working towards a level 3 qualification as an assessor. Another student who began at level 2 is now working towards a management qualification at level 4. Students find business courses highly relevant to their work.

39. Students receive exceptionally good academic support. They value highly the help given by tutors who often contact students by telephone and e-mail. NVQ assessments are scheduled to fit with individual students' patterns of work. Students also receive high-quality support on personal and pastoral issues. For example, one student who suffered serious illness during the programme was given materials to allow him to continue with his study in hospital and during convalescence. There is a learning skills unit which provides help to improve literacy, language and numeracy skills. However, this support is not available in the evening. Some evening-class students have benefited from individual support from their course tutors, but this has been on an informal basis. Many tutors do not have the specialist expertise necessary to improve students' basic skills.

### ***Leadership and management***

40. Management of business courses is satisfactory. Courses are reviewed regularly. Existing programmes have been improved and new programmes introduced in response to local needs. Retention rates on evening courses have been recognised as low and strategies to address this weakness introduced. The retention and achievement data used to inform these judgements is not always accurate or well used. The self-assessment process involved all staff, including those who work on a part-time basis. Full-time and part-time staff have good development opportunities. Full-time staff receive an annual review of their performance with their line manager. This leads to a development plan. Part-time staff have no formal appraisal. There are informal arrangements to review their performance. There has been good training on equality of opportunity for all staff.

### **Hospitality**



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

### ***Strengths***

- very good pass rates on vocational courses
- much good teaching and learning
- comprehensive and high-quality enrichment provision
- good preparation for employment and progression.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor retention rates on some courses
- planning and the use of specialist resources do not fully meet individual learning needs
- insufficiently rigorous NVQ assessment and verification practice.

### ***Scope of provision***

41. There are currently 304 students, mainly aged over 19, studying for NVQs, national diploma and Hotel and Catering International Management Association qualifications. Full-time students undertake key skills at an appropriate level. A range of food preparation and cooking, food service and specialist craft courses leading to NVQs at level 3 are provided. Specialist NVQ courses are available in Asian culinary arts and Japanese cooking. Additional short courses in food hygiene, health and safety and the National Licensees' Certificate are also available. There are external links with employers and other organisations that provide sponsorship and support for students. Links with local schools provide taster opportunities for young people. There are good progression routes into employment and HE. The university has recently been awarded funding to develop a centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) in hospitality and catering.

### ***Achievement and standards***

42. There are very good achievement rates on most vocational courses. Achievement on courses at NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3 is very good, generally some 20 percentage points above national averages. Short course pass rates are also very good. There have been improvements in the achievement of intermediate level awards. However there are low retention rates on some courses. The main NVQ level 2 courses have retention rates between 7 and 9 percentage points below national averages. The NVQ level 3 courses for kitchen and larder work are over 10 percentage points below national averages, and in patisserie and confectionery, retention rates have declined to almost 20 percentage points below national averages in 2003. Retention has been identified as a weakness by managers and measures are in place to improve it. However, it is too early to judge their effectiveness. The

standard of students' work in relation to learning goals and their prior attainment is good. Students' confidence levels and communication skills are raised and they are well prepared for employment in industry.

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

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
NVQ food preparation and cooking	1	No. of starts	71	47	18
		% retention	85	66	94
		% pass rate	95	100	94
NVQ food preparation and cooking	2	No. of starts	71	152	170
		% retention	73	73	71
		% pass rate	100	92	100
NVQ food preparation and cooking	3	No. of starts	*	29	26
		% retention	*	83	88
		% pass rate	*	92	100
NVQ kitchen and larder	3	No. of starts	8	40	45
		% retention	63	67	75
		% pass rate	100	96	100
NVQ patisserie and confectionery	3	No. of starts	*	28	37
		% retention	*	86	68
		% pass rate	*	100	100
Intermediate food safety certificate	2	No. of starts	*	26	67
		% retention	*	88	99
		% pass rate	*	48	88

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

\*\_course not offered

***Quality of education and training***

43. There is much good teaching and learning. Students develop good practical skills through thorough demonstrations, questioning and individual support. Students work with confidence, and are keen to seek support and find solutions to problems where necessary. There is sound preparation for lessons, with clear objectives. Where appropriate, good use is made of students on level 3 courses to assist those on level 2 courses. In theory lessons, teachers make good use of questions to challenge and encourage students. There is little use of ICT. Lesson plans do not focus sufficiently on individual learning needs.

44. Overall, resources are satisfactory. Staff are well qualified with a wide range of experience and they update their subject knowledge regularly. Specialist equipment and the availability of small equipment are good. Students work in a well-organised, safe and controlled environment. There are effective food safety and control procedures. Kitchens are adequate or good, but there are some cramped patisserie facilities. Theory classrooms are uninspiring. However, corridors have good displays showing students' achievements. The restaurant is fit for purpose although a little dated; however, some improvements are planned. The learning resource centre is satisfactory.

45. NVQ assessment and verification are insufficiently rigorous. Staff have differing understanding and interpretation of the assessment requirements. Most students are unaware of the competence basis of the NVQ programmes. Assessment planning is based on expected outcomes of lessons, rather than individual students' practice and performance. Much of the recorded evidence on students' performance is invalid, as it is gathered in training sessions, where students may be assisted in meeting performance requirements. There is an over-reliance on one summative assessment to infer competence. Answers to theory questions often do not reflect an individual student's understanding as they are recorded in group sessions. Internal verification is ineffective in detecting this poor assessment practice. Assessment and moderation of non-NVQ courses are satisfactory. An effective tracking system is in place, which records students' progress.

46. Courses clearly meet the needs of students and employers. The university has good consultation processes with industry. A wide range of courses is offered, with many opportunities to gain additional awards. Students find work easily or progress through to FE or HE courses. The Saturday chefs' school introduces students aged under 16 to catering courses. There are strong partnerships with employers, industry representatives and schools. Part-time students are visited every three to four months for a review of progress. Full-time courses include work placements. Students take part in extensive and wide-ranging enrichment activities. These include visits abroad, visiting restaurants, speakers, demonstrations and competitions.

47. Pre-course advice and guidance are adequate. Induction is satisfactory and students enjoy visits, which conclude the induction week. Initial assessment is focused on key skills and does not address adequately the preferred learning styles and individual learning needs. Whilst teachers are generally aware of individual needs, they do not always adequately differentiate during lessons. Extra lessons are provided for students who require additional tuition or practical experience. In some lessons, there is an over-reliance on verbal instruction by teachers, which results in some lack of clarity. High-quality support materials are not always available. Tutorials are adequate in meeting the pastoral and personal needs of students. Students are actively encouraged to progress to HE. There are adequate procedures for monitoring attendance, punctuality and poor performance.

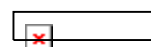
### ***Leadership and management***

48. There is effective curriculum management. Staff development and training are good. Arrangements for staff appraisal are satisfactory. Internal communications are effective. All new staff have mentors. Initiatives have been introduced to improve retention and pass rates. Students and staff are fully aware of equality of opportunity and diversity issues. There are good facilities for people with disabilities. Students are aware of the appeals procedure, and there is evidence of it being used. Internal verification has not identified poor NVQ assessment practice. The self-assessment report is insufficiently evaluative, some strengths identified were what would be expected, and some weaknesses were understated.

### ***CoVE***

49. The university has recently been awarded funding to develop a CoVE in hospitality and catering. The centre is able to use the wide range of good facilities within the university, for example, a recently refurbished realistic working environment and ICT facilities. There are many plans to develop the facilities further. The provision fulfils many of the CoVE criteria.

### **Access**



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

### ***Strengths***

- good pass rates on most courses
- successful provision in health studies, midwifery and nursing
- good development of study skills in preparation for HE
- well-planned and thorough assessment of students' work
- provision successfully widening participation
- courses are managed and co-ordinated well.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low retention rates
- failure to provide for the differing abilities of students in numeracy lessons
- insufficient emphasis in staff development on improving teaching and learning
- failure to meet the additional learning needs of a significant minority of learners
- poor punctuality in many lessons.

### ***Scope of provision***

50. Access courses meet the needs of students who wish to study part-time. Teaching takes place on two days or two evenings a week. Six vocational subjects are offered: health studies, law, business and enterprise, media studies, computing, and psychology and social sciences. Of the approximately 250 students on these programmes, almost half study health studies, which includes midwifery and nursing. Pre-Access provision is available in health studies, but not for other Access

courses. Teaching takes place at two campuses, Ealing and Slough, but only health studies is provided at both. Computing, law and business and enterprise courses are taught in the evenings. Three-quarters of all Access students come from minority ethnic groups. There are well-established routes of progression from pre-Access to Access courses and then on to degree courses at the university.

### ***Achievement and standards***

51. Standards of work are mostly satisfactory or better, but in a few lessons, students are not making the progress expected of them. In health studies, very well-motivated students make good progress. They work well in groups, and are quick to generate ideas and debate amongst themselves. Their written work reveals effective research skills and an increasing ability to make use of complex information. Access students with little previous experience of IT make rapid progress to acquire a useful range of skills within a short time. Students in many lessons displayed the ability to discuss their subjects with confidence. By contrast, in several lessons, students' brief and unsubstantiated answers went unchallenged. Difficult concepts and terms elude many students, in particular those whose first language is not English. In a few lessons, a significant minority of students remained silent. Students' numeracy skills vary from good to unsatisfactory. Students who already had a competent grasp of basic numeracy were not stretched by the work done in lessons. A few students show exceptional interest and inquisitiveness. Their questions clearly indicated independent and critical thinking. Access students make good progress in acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary for HE.

52. Pass rates on Access courses in media studies, law and health studies have improved and are now high whilst in other subjects they are generally good. However, many students fail to complete their courses. Except in health studies, retention rates are low and three courses show a declining trend. Of students who began a health studies course in 2002, two-thirds were successful in gaining their qualification. Across the remaining five Access courses, fewer than two out of five students were successful. Retention rates are worst on evening courses. However, university data for 2003/04, show much higher mid-year retention rates than for the previous year. In lessons observed during inspection, attendance and punctuality were high in health studies. Punctuality was poor on business studies, media studies and psychology and social studies courses. Students arriving late caused frequent disruptions to teaching and learning. There are good rates of progression to HE, with 50% of students gaining places at the university.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in Access, 2001 to 2003***

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
Access to business and enterprise	3	No. of starts	32	29	28
		% retention	50	69	50
		% pass rate	80	80	79
Access to computing	3	No. of starts	30	30	29
		% retention	60	67	52
		% pass rate	72	79	53
Access to law	3	No. of starts	25	31	23
		% retention	60	65	44
		% pass rate	80	85	90
Access to media studies	3	No. of starts	25	25	20
		% retention	64	56	45
		% pass rate	53	86	89
Access to psychology	3	No. of starts	26	22	24

and social science		% retention	58	59	58
		% pass rate	100	85	79
Access to health studies, midwifery and nursing (September starts)	3	No. of starts	63	56	69
		% retention	82	75	72
		% pass rate	96	95	90

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

### **Quality of education and training**

53. The quality of teaching varies from outstanding to poor; most is satisfactory or good. In the best lessons, students learnt enthusiastically when they applied new insights to their own experience. In one lesson, students from different ethnic backgrounds described examples of non-verbal communication associated with their culture. This led to a deeper understanding of what is involved in active listening. Good teaching proceeds at a brisk pace and is well planned. Students had a clear sense of purpose and most adjusted to the challenge of increasingly complex material. In weaker lessons, too few or insufficiently stimulating resources are sometimes combined with unvaried teaching methods. In a few lessons, students learn little. Difficult work is not made accessible; attempts to check understanding are haphazard or ineffective. Generally, too little account is taken of the individual needs and abilities of students. The very wide range of ability in maths lessons is known to teachers but not adequately addressed.

54. There is a high proportion of part-time teachers, nearly all of whom have a teaching qualification. Part-time staff are well integrated and receive effective support from the full-time staff and the course manager who has used lesson observations to provide detailed feedback on teaching methods. However, the university's programme of professional development gives insufficient emphasis to improving the quality of teaching and learning. There is little formal sharing of good practice and no appraisal of part-time staff linked to their professional development. Students make good use of the university's facilities. Helpful staff in the learning resources centres enable students to benefit from the wide range of readily available resources. On the main sites, students have easy access to computers, although many are old and operate slowly. Many classrooms are well furnished and adequately equipped. However, some rooms are cramped, hot and lack sufficient desks.

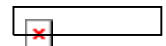
55. Assessment is very good. It is well planned and suitably varied to develop students' skills and appropriate levels of vocational understanding. Students know in good time how and when they will be assessed. Detailed criteria for assessment are closely related to the objectives for learning. Teachers return marked work promptly, making clear whether the criteria for assessment have been met. Marking is detailed and provides constructive guidance to students on how to improve. Effective procedures for internal verification ensure consistent standards are maintained across the provision. Students are encouraged to develop the capacity to assess their own work. They gain useful practice in planning how to achieve short-term and long-term targets. Halfway through the year, students sit examinations. These provide good experience of an alternative way of assessment and give students further information about the progress they are making.

56. Students receive sound information and guidance before choosing their courses. They have an appropriate induction. Whilst initial assessment in numeracy and literacy identifies students who need additional support, not all students take up the offer. For some evening class students, the demands of employment make it difficult to attend additional support lessons. The monitoring and evaluation of additional support are inadequate. Students appreciate the accessibility and guidance of their teachers. E-mail is commonly used for communication. Individual discussions between students and tutors are helpful in setting and monitoring progress towards targets. The procedures for monitoring students' attendance are systematic. Close links with staff from the university's careers service and from relevant faculties enable students to make informed choices.

### **Leadership and management**

57. Leadership and management of Access courses are good. The provision is co-ordinated well. Good communications with the many part-time staff contribute to effective team work. Staff receive up-to-date guidance on policies and practice. Students are clearly informed about the requirements for each part of their course. Team meetings pay close attention to the needs and views of students. Teachers are successful in addressing issues of diversity and equality of opportunity, particularly in health studies. Access courses are regularly reviewed. Arrangements to strengthen quality assurance have begun to improve the quality of the provision. Pass rates are now higher than at the last inspection. Whilst retention rates remain low, university data show much higher retention rates at this stage of the year compared with last year. Students' attendance at lessons observed during inspection was higher than at the last inspection. However, poor punctuality is prevalent.

## Health care



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

### **Strengths**

- very good retention rates on NVQ programmes
  
- good progression
  
- effective partnerships with a range of employers
  
- good support for learners
  
- effective team work.

### **Weaknesses**

- some slow completion of NVQ programmes
  
- inadequate initial assessment
  
- inconsistent quality of workplace experiences for learners.



### **Scope of provision**

58. There are 830 students on health and social care courses. All courses are provided at several sites on a part-time basis. There are NVQs in care at a number of levels. Approximately 106 learners are at level 2, 526 at level 3 and 65 at level 4. On other level 2 programmes, there are 4 students on the operating department support, 11 students on the healthcare apprenticeship and 29 on a foundation course in caring. There are 25 students undertaking basic health and safety certificates by day release and 27 on the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH) certificate by distance learning. There are 22 students on Open College Network (OCN) basic counselling and 15 on Royal Society of Arts (OCRSA) counselling courses. The great majority of students are aged over 19.

### **Achievement and standards**

59. Retention rates on NVQ programmes are high. Over 80% of students on level 2 courses and 89% of those on level 3 courses in 2002/03 were retained. There is some slow completion of NVQs. The pass rate at level 2 in 2001/02 of 49% and at level 3 of 36% are low, but a high proportion of the remaining students are still following the programme. Some learners achieve the qualification early: for example, at Charing Cross National Health Service (NHS) Trust most learners complete NVQ level 3 in 9 months. Counselling courses have retention and achievement rates below national averages for FE colleges. Attendance and achievement on short courses are satisfactory.

60. There is a good standard of work in learners' portfolios. Evidence is diverse and makes good use of learning situations that occur naturally in the workplace. Courses are relevant to the work environment and develop learners' confidence and personal skills effectively. Learners gain high levels of practical skills in demanding work environments. At NVQ study days, learners discuss their experiences appropriately making good links with theory and practice.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in Health care, 2001 to 2003**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
NVQ in care	2	No. of starts	20	61	55
		% retention	85	93	83
		% pass rate	35	49*	**
NVQ in care	3	No. of starts	127	242	272
		% retention	94	89	89
		% pass rate	51	36*	**

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

- a high proportion of learners are still in learning
- results not yet available

### **Quality of education and training**

61. There is much good teaching. Theory is linked well to practice and there is good use of relevant

teaching materials. Learning is regularly checked and attainment is good. In the better lessons, there was regular reference to, and questioning of, the previous topic. This reinforced learning effectively and developed the confidence of the learners. In weaker lessons, there was poor management of the classroom environment. Learners were not involved sufficiently in the activity. Teachers used closed questions and failed to build on the learners' own knowledge. A lack of initial assessment leads to poor differentiation in planning and delivery. Most lessons had several learners who had English as their second language. There was insufficient planning for this and little attempt to explain difficult words or terminology.

62. Staff are appropriately qualified for their job roles and have good opportunities for staff development. There are good learning resources at all sites. Most teaching rooms are satisfactory although some at Westel House were cramped for the size of class. There are no displays or resources in the classrooms. There is some poor access at Westel House with slow and overcrowded lifts. The workplace offers high-quality, current and relevant experience; for example, students benefit from work in acute hospital settings, in the community, mental health units, learning disability and residential care homes.

63. Initial assessment has not been undertaken although, following a pilot project, it will commence from March 2004. Currently there is very limited assessment of individual learners' needs. One cohort of learners is selected for an NVQ level 3 programme purely by the funding NHS Trust using literacy and numeracy tests. There is regular and thorough assessment and verification of portfolios with good feedback. Assessors from the university give effective support both in the workplace and at drop-in centres. These are used well, offering individual and group advice for gathering evidence, building portfolios and planning assessments. Internal verification processes are good with regular standardisation meetings and effective feedback to assessors. External verifiers' reports are satisfactory and are shared with all staff. Assessment by workplace assessors is variable depending on their availability, which adversely affects some learners' progress. For example, some learners experience significant delays in assessments and receiving witness testimonies from ward staff. In addition, some have had too many changes of assessor.

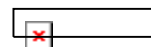
64. There is a wide range of programmes, which are delivered flexibly to meet the needs of individuals and employers in healthcare. NVQ programmes are tailored to enable progression to nurse training: 55 learners have progressed from NVQ programmes to nurse training since 2001. There are effective links with employers including NHS Trusts, Primary Care Trusts and independent healthcare providers. Learners progress from level 2 to level 3, and thence to assessor awards, nurse training and, once they are qualified, degree level courses. There is a range of updating courses, apprenticeship programmes and courses to meet NHS workforce requirements. Other programmes that meet local needs include work with local schools, summer programmes in first aid, aromatherapy and life-saving skills.

65. Support from staff is highly valued by learners and is effective in helping them to progress. In the workplace the level of support varies. Some wards are too busy to give consistent or timely support. There have been attempts to identify and support those learners through the introduction of additional peripatetic assessors. There is good support for those with additional learning needs but the lack of initial assessment means that access to support is not guaranteed.

### ***Leadership and management***

66. There is strong leadership and management, creating effective team working with good communication across a wide geographical area. Courses are well organised. Staff feel well supported and regularly attend standardisation, updating and development meetings. They are involved in the writing of the self-assessment report. The report is comprehensive but lacks analytical rigour. The analysis and use of data are poor with little target setting in most areas. For example, there has been insufficient use of data in identifying the rate at which NVQ candidates have completed their programmes. There is limited sharing of good practice in the effective use of data. The quality assurance system does not adequately address the variation in learners' experience of assessment and support in the workplace.

## Modern foreign languages



Overall provision in this area is **Outstanding. (grade 1)**

### **Strengths**

- very good teaching and assessment
  
- good pass rates
  
- outstanding resources
  
- excellent leadership
  
- exceptionally high levels of student satisfaction.

### **Weaknesses**

- poor attendance in evening classes

### **Scope of provision**

67. A good range of modern foreign language programmes to meet the needs of the local community is offered. Within each programme there are good opportunities for progression. French and Spanish are offered at levels 1 to 4; Polish is offered from level 1 to level 3; Italian, German and Japanese are offered at levels 1 and 2. Some courses are sustained with low numbers. The provision has responded well to market demands. For example, Japanese and Polish have been offered to promote interest among large numbers of native speakers living in the community. Polish at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) is offered on a Saturday morning for school-age pupils from the local Polish community. At present, there are no classes in Japanese, Italian and German beyond level 2. Almost all learners are adults.

### **Achievement and standards**

68. Students' achievement is excellent. There are high pass rates at all levels and for all languages: all except one are well above national averages. All level 1 and 2 students of Japanese and Polish passed in 2003. Students attain high standards thus displaying high levels of fluency and good

pronunciation in all lessons. Students are enthused by their learning. After several lessons, they continued to converse with each other in the target language after the lesson had finished.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in Modern foreign languages, 2001 to 2003***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
French	1	No. of starts	*	85	98
		% retention	*	80	88
		% pass rate	*	91	85
Spanish	1	No. of starts	*	365	347
		% retention	*	82	84
		% pass rate	*	98	94
Italian	1	No. of starts	*	107	117
		% retention	*	83	87
		% pass rate	*	92	88
German	1	No. of starts	*	52	49
		% retention	*	85	73
		% pass rate	*	80	83
French	2	No. of starts	*	88	60
		% retention	*	94	83
		% pass rate	*	89	88
Spanish	2	No. of starts	*	87	78
		% retention	*	89	95
		% pass rate	*	87	82

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

\* - reliable data not available

***Quality of education and training***

69. Teaching is effective and learners progress well. There is good teaching in almost all lessons and much is excellent. In every lesson, students work in different groups to increase their language ability. Tutors move around groups listening to students, answering questions and giving positive support and correction. In a level 1 lesson, Italian music played softly during group activities so that students were completely surrounded by their target language.

70. Plenty of extra individual support is given by all tutors; they are also willing to accept correspondence in the target language by e-mail. Students report that this is corrected and responded to within 24 hours.

71. Schemes of work and lesson plans are detailed and thorough. They often include consideration of students' preferred individual learning styles, and indicate teaching strategies to address the needs of all. For example, pair and group work is organised by teachers so that students are given opportunities in some activities to work with students at their level of attainment and in other activities they work with more able students. This ensures that all students receive suitable challenges whilst building confidence and encouraging rapid progression. This arrangement was organised by the tutors in a way which did not highlight the ability of any particular students because

it was seen as a natural way to work. Teachers provide additional work for students who need extra support. Holiday work is also provided to those who need it. Attendance is poor. Many students have work or other commitments which make it difficult for them to attend every lesson. However, strategies are in place to ensure that this does not affect the achievement of the learning outcome. Small group and paired work ensures a sense of belonging and cohesion. In some lessons, a buddy system is in operation. In others, the tutor sends the work that students have missed by e-mail. All students receive a warning letter after missing three consecutive weeks.

72. Resources are excellent. All teachers are native speakers of their target language. They attend relevant, responsive staff development events throughout the year. Part-time staff are paid to attend staff development days. Times are varied so that provision does not clash with their other commitments. In some cases, programmes are repeated at different times during the year. There are abundant books and electronic media for use in lessons, and a good range of material to stimulate interest in the cultures of other countries. There is an outstanding language centre where students can study independently. There is a good intranet which has a range of learning materials and which lists excellent external links for language students.

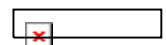
73. Assessment across the programmes is very good. All applicants for places are tested on their language skills to determine which level of course would suit them best. Assessment is carried out continuously within the teaching programmes, usually by the teacher observing students' performance in class activities. Each student has an individual learning action plan which is reviewed as they make progress. This means progress is obvious both to staff and students. Moderators across all languages comment positively on the suitability and rigour of assessment.

74. There is excellent guidance and support. At enrolment, students are able to learn about the programmes from subject specialists. They appreciate the efficiency of the enrolment process and the welcoming attitude of staff. Teachers encourage all students to contact them weekly by e-mail in the target language. These e-mails are then corrected and returned to provide an additional learning resource. Good enrichment activities are offered by most subject tutors on an informal basis. For example, a number of cultural evenings are hosted by tutors in their own homes. National and international festivities are recognised and celebrated within lessons.

### ***Leadership and management***

75. Leadership and management are excellent. There is a clear sense of direction and support from faculty, programme and curriculum managers. There is good communication with part-time teachers, effectively engendering commitment and enthusiasm and a sense of team spirit. Teachers are regularly encouraged to try new methods, and the results are widely shared to improve the performance of all. Lesson observations are used effectively to monitor teaching quality and to inform support and staff development needs. There is a good breadth of staff development provision, with high levels of participation by part-time staff. Staff meetings are well attended and purposeful. There is an effective subject and course review procedure which informs planning. However, centrally held data are not used well to inform judgements on the quality of the provision

### **Foundation**



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

### ***Strengths***

- effective preparation for further learning

- comprehensive range of additional learning support
- good pastoral support.

### ***Weaknesses***

- some poor teaching
- lack of systematic review.

### ***Scope of provision***

76. Additional learning support in literacy and numeracy is offered to all students who have been assessed as requiring it. The university offers a pre-Access foundation course which is known as Gateway. Support is provided at foundation level 1 and 2, and for learners who speak English as a second language, who comprise half of all foundation level students. There are regular drop-in sessions offering immediate access to additional learning support on a one-to-one basis. Students attending drop-in sessions are, if necessary, referred for further timetabled support. They receive additional learning support from literature that is freely available in training rooms and in the learning resources centre. Adult students have the opportunity to apply for the Adult Learners' Award, which celebrates the success achieved by Access students. Resources to assist students with dyslexia include providing the use of a laptop computer and printer and one-to-one learning support. At the time of inspection, there were 100 learners receiving additional learning support.

### ***Achievement and standards***

77. The achievement of learners on these programmes is good. They are well prepared for further learning, and nearly all Gateway learners progress onto Access programmes. There are several examples of learners moving from Gateway, through Access and on to degree courses. Students gain increased self-confidence and develop independent learning skills. For example, students are given training in how to use the learning resources centre to carry out research. They develop an understanding of learning strategies and recognise the importance of personal learning styles. They develop the capacity to work collaboratively. Staff have high expectations of learners. Students appreciate the benefits that foundation programmes have brought them. Several who were poor attenders at school are now regular and enthusiastic students.

### ***Quality of education and training***

78. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, but it ranges from good to unsatisfactory. Generally, support sessions are well planned. In good sessions, tutors used a variety of learning strategies with much positive reinforcement. Learners were motivated during these sessions and made good progress. In the poorer sessions, there were inappropriate levels of challenge. The teacher took insufficient account of the individual attainment of students, and failed to use the range of available resources effectively. There were good relationships between most tutors and learners. Materials and methods promoted equality of opportunity. Most learners are confident of their progress, but a few are unclear about how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve.

79. Full-time and part-time staff are adequately qualified and experienced. Full-time teachers either hold specialist qualifications for this area or are working towards them. All staff have professional development opportunities, funded by the university. However, there is presently a shortage of ESOL teachers. There are dedicated classrooms for Gateway students which provide a suitable setting for teaching and learning. However, IT resources in these rooms are insufficient for the current number of learners. Other computer suites are available but these do not effectively meet the needs of all students. Lack of IT leads to an over-reliance on paper-based resources in lessons. The range of classroom resources, such as books and handouts, is appropriate for the different ability levels of students. However, these are not used appropriately by all tutors.

80. New students are not assessed systematically to determine their learning needs. Many departments have their own initial assessments, and refer students for literacy and numeracy assistance where appropriate. A variety of screening and diagnostic tools are used but the information derived from them is not routinely recorded in learners' individual plans. Information generated in separate exercises, such as at enrolment, classroom and drop-in sessions is maintained in different files. Despite this, tutors are very knowledgeable about their learners' progress and potential obstacles to learning. Assessment of students on foundation programmes is satisfactory. Achievements of soft skills, such as improved confidence or punctuality, are not always recorded. The review process is underdeveloped. Currently students receive one formal review each semester which briefly discusses progress. The targets set tend to be vague, such as 'brush up on skills', so are not effective in promoting progress. The impact of this is mitigated by the strong informal processes such as whole class reviews, completion of feedback sheets, e-mail communications and informal meetings.

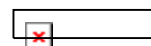
81. Foundation programmes meet the needs of current learners. There is a good range of opportunities for students to receive learning support. These include literacy and numeracy sessions, workshops on English and maths, and topics such as academic writing. Teachers have produced a series of user-friendly guides on common problems and practical uses of numeracy and literacy. There is currently no specific provision for learners whose first language is not English; they are taught in general literacy lessons.

82. There is good pastoral support for foundation students, which extends well beyond timetabled sessions. Learners feel respected by staff and regularly approach them for advice and guidance. Staff are knowledgeable about sources of advice and can refer students to agencies which can help them. Where necessary, teachers are in frequent contact with learners by phone and e-mail. For example, a learner who was bereaved received much support in efforts to maintain his attendance. Teachers have accompanied learners to interviews in order to support them. For many learners, the personal support they receive is effective in helping them maintain progress with their studies.

### ***Leadership and management***

83. There is unsatisfactory management of additional learning support provision. Arrangements for initial assessment are unsystematic, and do not ensure that the needs of all students are being met. The uptake of support for literacy and numeracy by particular groups is not routinely monitored nor is there any evaluation of the impact of additional learning support on those who receive it. Management of the delivery of literacy and numeracy teaching is satisfactory. Staff are fully aware of the strategic objectives, in particular the commitment to actively promote social inclusion. They were fully involved in the self-assessment process and recognise the final report as an accurate representation of their work. Teaching observations have been introduced and teachers have received both oral and written feedback, which they consider has improved their teaching. There is good communication between the foundation team and university managers.

## **Part D: Institution data**



**Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age**

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	51	33
2	34	35
3	15	29
4/5	0	3
Other	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: provided by the institution in spring 2004

**Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age spring 2004**

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	0	0	0
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	0	0	0
Business administration, management and professional	14	1053	14
Information and communication technology	42	893	12
Retailing, customer service and transportation	10	28	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	324	1791	28
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	136	1266	18
Visual and performing arts and media	9	134	2
Humanities	0	240	3
English, languages and communication	67	1168	16
Foundation programmes	2	453	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>7026</b>	<b>7630</b>



Source: provided by the institution in 2004

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
		<b>1</b>	Starters excluding transfers	9	18	10	108
	Retention rate %	67	78	60	87	64	59
	National average %	79	80	n/a	77	77	n/a
	Pass rate %	0	93	100	35	100	100
	National average %	67	69	n/a	67	70	n/a
<b>2</b>	Starters excluding transfers	188	118	138	399	360	542
	Retention rate %	81	74	70	73	82	77
	National average %	75	76	n/a	76	77	n/a
	Pass rate %	100	77	86	88	90	86
	National average %	68	78	n/a	67	71	n/a
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	97	95	88	2477	2558	1968
	Retention rate %	79	76	76	80	86	85
	National average %	76	81	n/a	77	79	n/a
	Pass rate %	100	91	89	93	93	93
	National average %	76	78	n/a	68	71	n/a
<b>4/5</b>	Starters excluding transfers	0	2	2	72	94	220
	Retention rate %	0	0	50	90	71	79
	National average %	82	81	n/a	82	83	n/a
	Pass rate %	0	0	0	100	16*	88
	National average %	54	55	n/a	53	54	n/a
<b>H Long</b>	Starters excluding transfers	0	0	0	19	12	7
	Retention rate %	0	0	0	100	58	57
	National average %	82	81	n/a	82	83	n/a
	Pass rate %	0	0	0	37	0*	25
	National average %	54	55	n/a	53	54	n/a
<b>Short (exc</b>	Starters excluding	137	145	282	2169	2777	4197

<b>key skills)</b>	transfers						
	Retention rate %	95	91	94	93	90	92
	National average %	92	93	n/a	93	94	n/a
	Pass rate %	89	83	90	81	84	86
	National average %	74	78	n/a	77	82	
<b>Key skills</b>	Starters excluding transfers	240	87	84	163	27	63
	Retention rate %	85	76	57	79	89	76
	Pass rate %	98	61	54	98	33	31
* Results not received from Professional Body							

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

Sources of information:

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

2. Institution rates for 2000 to 2003: Institution ISR..

**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)	69	25	6	32
Level 2 (intermediate)	75	25	0	12
Level 1 (foundation)	58	34	8	12
Other sessions	50	20	30	10
<b>Totals</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>66</b>