



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Yeovil College

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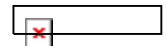
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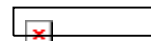
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Basic information about the college

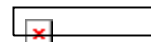


Name of college:	Yeovil College
Type of college:	Tertiary
Principal:	James Hampton
Address of college:	Mudford Road Yeovil Somerset BA21 4DR
Telephone number:	01935 423921
Fax number:	01935 429962
Chair of governors:	Tony Allum
Unique reference number:	130805
Name of reporting inspector:	Alan Marsh HMI
Dates of inspection:	8-12 November 2004

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



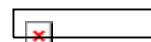
Yeovil College is situated in the medium-sized market town of Yeovil in south Somerset, and serves the communities of south Somerset and parts of north and west Dorset. It was established as a tertiary college in 1974 and now occupies one six-hectare campus on the edge of the town; it also manages a number of outreach centres across the community and has recently established a vocational skills centre in Shaftesbury.

The college serves a population of some 200,000 people. Some 81% of students travel to college from within Somerset and 16% from Dorset. Somerset has a high level of employment, but an average weekly income 13% below the national figure. There is a large proportion of micro businesses, but also some large employers. Key industries are engineering and manufacturing, land-based industries, tourism, and the wholesale/retail sector. Some 25% of the population are over 60, higher than the national average, and very low numbers of residents are from a minority ethnic heritage: 1%, compared with 12% nationally.

Somerset has high participation rates for pupils staying in education and training at 16: 85% of year 11 pupils stayed on in 2003. The rates decline sharply at ages 17 and 18. Progression to higher education (HE) is as low as 12% from rural parts of the county. Most state schools in the area are 11 to 16 or 13 to 16, but there are several nearby independent schools and one local school with sixth forms, and some further competition from other colleges in the county.

Yeovil College offers courses in all 14 of the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) areas of learning, although student numbers are very small in some of these. 10 areas were inspected, and 3 contributory grades were awarded for work-based learning. The college has recently been awarded the status of a centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) in advanced engineering. Most areas cover the full range of levels from level 1 to level 4, and the college has a growing University Centre Yeovil to provide courses in HE. In 2002/03, the college had 8,009 further education (FE) students on roll: this comprised 1,241 full-time and 349 part-time students aged 16 to 18, and 252 full-time and 6,167 part-time adults. The full-time equivalent total number of students was 2,907: 1,375 students aged 16 to 18 and 1,532 adults. There has been a 16% growth in students on roll over three years, largely in courses at level 4. In 2002/03, courses at level 1 made up 25% of the college's business, courses at level 2, 24%, and courses at level 3, 44%; these figures have been steady over this period, with a slight decline at level 3. The college's aspiration, set out in its mission statement, is 'excellence in all we do'.

How effective is the college?



The quality of the provision is good or outstanding in 50% of the areas inspected and satisfactory in the remaining 50%. Work-based learning is satisfactory except for in health and childcare where it is unsatisfactory. Inspectors judged the teaching, learning and attainment of students to be outstanding in English and communications, and in history. In science and mathematics; sports, leisure and travel; social sciences; and literacy and numeracy it is good. In engineering; business; information and communications technology (ICT); health and social care; and visual and performing arts it is satisfactory. Yeovil College serves its community well and functions effectively as a tertiary college. Teachers are committed and work hard. The college is strongly led. There is a good range of

Students receive very good personal and academic support. There are strong links with parents, employers and other agencies. The college is an effective leading partner in a regional Increased Flexibility (IF) programme to provide vocational education to school pupils aged 14 to 16, and plays a significant role in the Yeovil federation of college and schools. There are good resources for learning, but some accommodation is inadequate. Some aspects of teaching, tutorial provision and quality assurance processes need improving.

The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- clear leadership

- effective implementation of restructuring of college management

- very high retention rates on level 3 courses

- good achievement on most level 3 courses

- very well resourced and managed study centre

- helpful feedback to students on their work

- good range of provision and progression opportunities for students

- good individual support for students

- thriving partnerships and links with external agencies

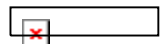
- wide range of enrichment activities enjoyed by students.

What should be improved

- pass rates for adult students on level 1 and level 3 courses
- the quality and consistency of group tutorials
- too much unsatisfactory teaching in some curriculum areas
- key skills provision
- accommodation in some areas
- the consistency and rigour of target setting and the monitoring of students' individual learning plans
- quality assurance practices and self-evaluation in some areas.

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	Good. There are high pass rates in science subjects. Students achieve a large proportion of A and B grades at advanced subsidiary level (AS level) and general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and attainment throughout the courses is very good. There is much enthusiastic and stimulating teaching. Retention rates are declining in some subjects and self-assessment is inadequate.
Engineering	Satisfactory. The contributory grade for work-based learning is satisfactory . There are high retention and pass rates on most

	<p>courses and good framework achievement in work-based learning. Students develop good skills in industry-standard facilities, but there is poor safety management in some areas. Much teaching is unsatisfactory, characterised by poor preparation and a lack of challenge to students.</p>
Business	<p>Satisfactory. The contributory grade for work-based learning is satisfactory. There are high pass rates on Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) courses and apprenticeship frameworks and high retention rates on all AAT courses. Professional and management courses have good progression routes. There is much uninspiring teaching and students' key skills are inadequately developed. Many staff lack recent industrial experience.</p>
Information and communications technology	<p>Satisfactory. Standards are high on all part-time courses and are satisfactory on full-time courses. Teachers have a good working relationship with students and engage them positively in discussions about their work.. Learning resources are well used. A significant minority of teaching is unsatisfactory and in too many lessons students are neither stimulated to learn nor is their understanding checked.</p>
Sports, leisure and travel	<p>Good. Retention and pass rates across all the courses have been consistently high until 2003/04, when they declined, resulting in some courses falling below the national average for the first time. Teaching and learning are good in sport, but there is some unsatisfactory teaching in leisure and travel. The sports facilities are excellent and provide very good opportunities for students to link theory to practice.</p>
Health and social care	<p>Satisfactory. The contributory grade for work-based learning is unsatisfactory. There are high retention rates on most courses, but low pass rates on the majority of courses for students aged 16 to 18. Work experiences help students develop good occupational skills. Support for students is highly effective. There is poor framework completion for work-based learners. There is insufficient planning of lessons to meet the needs of all students and resources are inadequate.</p>
Visual and performing arts	<p>Satisfactory. There are very high pass rates on some courses, but many students on AS-level and GCE A-level courses fail to achieve their target grades derived from prior attainment. Students are helped by good oral and written feedback and effective learning support. The accommodation for visual arts and media is inadequate. The level of technician support is poor.</p>
Social sciences	<p>Good. The contributory grade for history is outstanding. Retention and pass rates are high on AS-level and GCE A-level courses. Teaching is good and in history it is inspiring. Students develop excellent independent learning skills on most courses and are well supported both academically and personally. In a minority of lessons, teaching is dull, lacking variety, and tutorial practice is underdeveloped.</p>
English and communications	<p>Outstanding. Pass rates and proportions of high grades are very good on all courses. There are very high retention rates on AS-level and GCE A-level programmes. Outstanding teaching is supported by excellent learning resources and assessment objectives are comprehensively addressed. Students receive very good individual support. There is a lack of provision for the most able students.</p>
Literacy and numeracy	<p>Good. Achievements are good for adult students in both literacy and numeracy. Teaching is very good, with imaginative use of information and learning technology (ILT) to support learning. There are effective</p>

	partnerships with external agencies which widen participation. Key skills achievements in communication and application of number are very poor.
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How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college has clear strategic aims and an open and consultative management style with good communication. Curriculum management in most areas is satisfactory and good or very good in some. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in most areas, good in some and outstanding in one. Work-based learning is satisfactory in two of three areas inspected and unsatisfactory in one. Retention and pass rates remain at, or slightly above, national averages with the exception of retention rates at level 1 that are below national averages. Support for students is good. There has been a management restructuring of the college during the past year and this has delayed the implementation of improvements to the quality assurance framework. The college successfully promotes equality of opportunity. There are good links with schools, employers and other external agencies. There have been considerable improvements to management information and it is now accurate and accessible. The work of the governors is effective and financial management is good. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

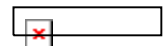
To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. The college demonstrates commitment to the promotion of equality of opportunity. An equality and diversity group meets regularly, chaired by the principal, and there is a detailed and updated race equality action plan. The college has set clear equality, diversity and impact measures which include targets for most curriculum areas. The strategic plan identifies a number of behaviours that are actively promoted within the college, including treating people with respect and valuing and celebrating diversity. The widening participation of students with disabilities, ex-offenders, people from minority ethnic groups and those students who are under-represented on programmes is encouraged by the college through celebration of their success and individual projects. The success of these initiatives is demonstrated in increasing numbers of students on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses, and small but increasing numbers of women in engineering. The demographic composition of the college fully reflects the local population. Courses are provided in convenient local venues over a wide geographical area and the college makes rapid responses to identified market demand. There has been a full audit of premises and the college is satisfying its statutory obligations under the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). The college has purchased suitable adaptive technology to assist students with physical disabilities. There is a senior member of staff with responsibility for child protection and staff have received training in a comprehensive student protection policy. There is insufficient analysis of data for different racial, class and gender groups to identify and respond to areas of underperformance.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Support for students is good. Students make good use of a very wide range of well-promoted services in a welcoming and friendly environment. Relationships with external agencies offering further support are excellent. The student executive represents students' views to college managers and staff. Information, advice and guidance are readily available in college and in partner schools. Interviews with a specialist team ensure that full-time students are recruited to the most appropriate course. Initial assessment is thorough. Induction for students, at the start of their courses, helps them to settle quickly into college life. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is particularly good, although the monitoring of the impact of support services is insufficiently thorough. The quality of group tutorials is uneven and the setting of improvement targets with students is not universally done well. Students and parents express very high levels of satisfaction with the personal and welfare support offered, but arrangements for careers education are fragmented. Responsibility for this aspect of development for students aged 16 to 18 rests with personal tutors who do not routinely have the specialist skills required. Work-based learners receive good support in the workplace. Students' attendance is closely monitored and absences followed up. The student support services team are active in promoting the welfare of vulnerable young people to governors, college managers and staff.

Students' views of the college



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

What students like about the college

- good support

- being treated as adults

- helpful and encouraging teachers

- college social life

- good computing facilities

- well-equipped and managed study centre

- helpful feedback from teachers on marked work.

What they feel could be improved

- overcrowding in the canteen at peak times

- the cost of canteen food

- parking

- some group tutorials

- more social spaces.

Other information

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

Part B: The college as a whole

Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

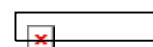
Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
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Teaching 16-18	61	28	11
19+ and WBL*	78	19	3
Learning 16-18	62	29	9
19+ and WBL*	78	22	0

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

**work-based learning*

Achievement and standards



1. Yeovil College offers a wide range of courses that can be studied full time and part time. There are courses in all 14 of the LSC areas of learning. Inspectors used data on students' achievements, drawn from the individualised learner returns to the LSC for the academic years 2001 to 2003. They also used college data, produced using kitemarked software, on pass and retention rates for 2004. Inspectors accepted the accuracy of college data in making judgements.

16 to 18 year olds

2. In 2002/03, there were 659 enrolments on level 1 courses, representing about 10% of the total enrolments for the college. In the three years 2001 to 2003, pass rates on long level 1 courses have been well above the national averages for similar colleges. In 2003, pass rates were 8 percentage points above the national average, placing the college in the top 25% of colleges of a similar type. However, over the same three-year period, retention rates declined from 12 percentage points above the national average in 2001 to 2 percentage points below in 2003.

3. There were 1,788 enrolments in 2002/03 on level 2 courses, representing 51% of the total enrolments for the college. Overall pass and retention rates on level 2 courses have been consistently above the national average for the three years to 2003. For example, pass rates in 2003 were 7 percentage points above the national average, and the retention rate for the same year was 5 percentage points above, placing the college in the top 25%. In 2004, in GCSE science, the higher grade pass rate was 100% against a national average of 46%; in GCSE English, it was 77%, against a national average of 49%.

4. In 2002/03, there were 3,023 enrolments on level 3 courses, representing about 70% of the total enrolments for the college. Pass rates on level 3 courses have improved slightly and the college is now in the top 25% of similar colleges. During the same three-year period, retention rates have been consistently above the national average by almost 10%, placing the college in the top 10% in two out of the three years to 2003. For example, in 2004, the retention rate for the AVCE double award in travel and tourism was 100% against a national average of 58%. However, the pass rate in the diploma in childcare and education in 2004 was 18%, against a national rate of 80%.

5. Students on AS-level and GCE A-level courses achieve a large proportion of grades A and B, although in some areas the proportion of higher grade achievement is declining. In AS-level chemistry, physics, human biology, English language, English literature and history, a large proportion of students have consistently achieved higher grades, often exceeding the national average by more than 20 percentage points. However, in visual and performing arts and media, the proportion of students achieving a higher grade is below the national average for many of the AS-level and GCE A-level courses, although there are notable improvements in GCE A-level film studies.

6. The college subscribes to an external independent analysis for the evaluation of students' performance in AS level and GCE A level against their average GCSE points score. This demonstrates that in 2004, the majority of students in both AS level and GCE A level achieved the grade predicted by their prior attainment GCSE score. Of the 38 AS-level subjects analysed, in only 2 subjects did students achieve one grade higher than that predicted; in a further 8, they achieved less than predicted.

7. Of the 3,700 students who completed a key skills qualification between 2001 and 2003, only 164 students have achieved, representing a 4% pass rate across all levels and subjects. Retention rates are, however, good at about 92%. There have been some recent improvements in pass rates at level 1. In 2004, for application of number, the pass rate improved to 52% and for communication it improved to 46%. However, pass rates have remained very low for all 3 core key skills courses at levels 2 and 3.

8. Overall, the standard of students' work was high in 56% of lessons observed, although it was unsatisfactory in 12% of the lessons observed at levels 2 and 3. In engineering, students' practical work is of a consistently high standard. In sport, dynamic, highly organised sport skills development events for young people with learning difficulties are delivered by students on a range of leadership programmes. In the mathematics and science lessons observed, attainment was almost 20 percentage points above the national average: students demonstrate good analytical skills and very good understanding of complex scientific concepts and mathematical ideas. In English and history, students produce coursework that displays research and evaluative skills of a high order, and they construct cogent arguments. However, in business, some level 3 students' work is generally below that which would be expected for their stage in the course and students' analytical skills are not sufficiently developed. The average student attendance rate in lessons observed was 81%, just above the national average.

9. Completion rates on apprenticeship frameworks are low. For example, in care and early years, of the 65 apprentices who started on the advanced apprenticeship since 1998, only 12% of learners have completed the full framework. Similarly, for the foundation level, of the 136 starters over the same period, 9% have completed. In hospitality, sport and leisure, for all apprentices, of the 82 learners who started since 1998 only 3 have completed. However, framework completion is very good in business and engineering. For the advanced apprenticeship in engineering, of the 263 learners who started their apprenticeship since 1998, 83% have either completed their framework or are still in learning. In business, of the 31 learners who started their apprenticeship, 70% have achieved their full framework.

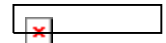
Adult learners

10. In 2003, 90% of enrolments on level 1 courses were for students aged 19 years or over. In the three years 2001 to 2003, overall pass rates on level 1 long courses have declined from just above the national average, to 16 percentage points below. During the same period, retention rates have declined from 7 percentage points above the national average to 4 percentage points below, placing the college in the bottom 10%. For example, pass rates for students on level 1 part-time information technology (IT) courses are low with computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) 12 percentage points below the national average and the City and Guilds 7261 certificate in computer applications almost 40 percentage points below the national average. At level 2, there has been a gradual improvement in pass rates, from 6 percentage points below the national average to 4 percentage points above during the same three-year period. The retention rate has been consistently above the national average for this period, although it is in decline. Retention rates on level 3 courses have also declined, from 10 percentage points above the national average to just 5 percentage points above the national average. Overall pass rates on level 3 courses have improved, but are still below the national average. Pass rates in 2001 were 12 percentage points below the national average and, in 2003, the pass rate had risen to 2 percentage points below the national average. The proportion of students gaining higher grades in AS-level and GCE A-level English language and English literature is below the national average. Similarly, the proportion of students achieving a higher grade is small in AS-level art, archaeology and psychology, and in GCE A-level business and human biology. However, the proportion of adult students gaining a higher grade is large in AS-level and GCE A-level history. For short courses, during the same period, the pass rates

have improved, but are still below the national average. In 2001, pass rates were 21 percentage points below the national average, and they were still 13 percentage points below the national average in 2003. The average attendance for adult students in lessons observed was 78%. The highest rates, over 90%, were in engineering and business. The lowest rates, below 65%, were in visual and performing arts and media and in English.

11. The attainment of adults is high in most lessons. Attainment levels are highest on level 2 and level 3 courses. The achievement of adult students is high in both literacy and numeracy. Students develop their skills well which in many cases has a positive impact on other areas of their lives.

Quality of education and training



12. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 182 lessons. They judged teaching to be good or better in 63% of lessons, satisfactory in 28% and less than satisfactory in 9%. The percentages of lessons graded for learning as good or better, satisfactory and less than satisfactory were 64%, 29% and 7% respectively. Teaching and learning were found to be particularly good in English and communications, history, science and mathematics, and discrete literacy and numeracy lessons. They had notably unsatisfactory elements in some lessons in ICT, engineering, business, and leisure and tourism. The quality of both teaching and learning is better for adults than for students aged 16 to 18.

13. The better lessons are well prepared and draw on good subject knowledge. Teachers take full account of the different abilities and intelligences exhibited by students, and devise tasks that stimulate and engage across a range of levels. There are good working relationships between all staff, including support staff and technicians, and students make good use of the generous time and effort that staff give them. Students are well motivated in most lessons and display an appetite to learn. They usually work well in groups, discussing, testing and refining ideas, and enjoy developing independent learning skills when given the opportunity to do so. Several curriculum areas make very good use of the college's virtual learning environment to enable students to study effectively outside formal lessons.

14. The more effective practical lessons are very well organized and executed, with constant links being made between theory and practice. In these lessons in particular, students develop very good interpersonal and team working skills. Vocational subjects are taught within an appropriately work-related context and there are productive links with a range of regional employers. Work experience opportunities, visiting speakers and professional companies, trips and tours, and national competitions are all used well to vitalize and extend students' experience. In many areas, there is very good deployment of learning resources, and in some areas assessment objectives are imaginatively used to focus students' learning in ways that clearly benefit their standards of work.

15. In poorer lessons, planning is often weak both in theory and practice. There is a preponderance of dull, uninspiring teaching in which too little is asked of students and the learning is largely passive. In these lessons, teachers do not make frequent enough checks on what students know or can do, and all students are taught at the same pace and in the same way with identical materials and tasks. This underestimates their need for some individually focused engagement in lessons. Essential study skills such as independent note making and problem solving are left to happenstance rather than being carefully cultivated by teachers.

16. Most staff are appropriately qualified. The majority of teachers have a recognised teaching qualification and many have a professional qualification appropriate to their specialist area. However, some staff have had no recent industrial updating. Staffing levels are generally satisfactory. There is excellent use of trained volunteer support staff in literacy and numeracy. Some 90 staff either have assessor/verifier qualifications or are working towards them. Teachers on national vocational qualification (NVQ) courses have appropriate assessor awards. All staff

employed at the college have good opportunities for relevant professional and college-based staff development activities and the take-up rate is satisfactory. The college has experienced significant difficulties in recruiting appropriate staff in some areas of the curriculum, for example, the specialist engineering expertise required for the CoVE in advanced engineering.

17. Since the last inspection, the college has made many improvements to its buildings, accommodation and learning resources. These are managed effectively. Most classrooms are well maintained, but many do not create a stimulating visual environment for learning. Some teaching rooms in business administration, English, humanities, sport, leisure and travel and engineering are cramped or not appropriate for the use to which they are put. Appropriate arrangements are made for a prayer room. The accommodation and resources in travel and tourism do not reflect industry standards. The accommodation for visual and media arts is very poor. The college is aware of the limitations in its accommodation and has a realistic building programme to overcome many of its current accommodation deficiencies.

18. The college has invested heavily in IT equipment at the main site and in its outreach facilities with Internet connectivity. On the main site, students have good access to up-to-date ICT and other resources in an attractive, very well-equipped study centre. The centre is well managed and used, and liaises very effectively with college teaching staff to make available up-to-date and relevant learning materials. Suitable adaptive technologies are available. The college has invested in a number of interactive whiteboards across the college accommodation and many teachers use these well. There is a ratio of one computer to four full-time equivalent students; however, some computers are old and, although able to accommodate up-to-date software, are slow. Students and staff in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel experience difficulty gaining access to appropriate IT facilities. The college's virtual learning environment is developing well and in some curriculum areas has had a very positive effect on students' capacity to study semi-independently. The intranet is also effective and has improved communications for both staff and students.

19. There is appropriate specialist equipment. For example, in engineering, the college has a wide range of industry-standard resources, and science laboratories and performing arts studio spaces are well equipped. There are excellent sporting facilities: two sports fields, a modern well-equipped gym with a viewing/teaching gallery, and students have access to an athletics track and hard court area adjacent to the main buildings. The college has no all-weather playing surface although this facility is available locally. However, temporary classrooms are poorly equipped for childcare. The college has invested in lifts and building alterations to meet the requirements of disability discrimination legislation, and students with restricted mobility now have access to all teaching accommodation. There is a nursery at the main site which is operating to capacity. The canteen offers a pleasing social environment to students, providing a wide range of products, although it is overcrowded at peak times. There are limited social and recreational areas for students.

20. Assessment practice is satisfactory or better in most areas. Standardised assessment procedures are in place. Assessment is good in science and mathematics, social sciences, accounting (AAT) courses and in English. Assignments are typically well designed, with clear assessment criteria reflecting awarding body requirements. In English, assessment tasks are particularly imaginative. By contrast, there is an over-reliance on portfolio evidence in work-based engineering programmes. Teachers return marked work regularly, annotated with comments to help students improve. Feedback on progress is particularly constructive to students in sports, visual and performing arts and media, social sciences, English and in science and mathematics. In engineering, late issue of some assignments makes it difficult for students to manage their time. Learning plans do not routinely take account of initial assessment at the start of students' courses. Progress reviews do not systematically record the improvements students make. In social sciences, target minimum grades are not consistently used to raise standards of students' performance. Internal verification practice is sound on most courses. External verifiers' reports are typically good and are regularly monitored by a senior manager. Actions that curriculum areas are required to take are checked. Good practice in assessment and verification is now being disseminated through recently established cross-college teams.

21. The college offers a good range of provision to meet the needs of students at most levels in the majority of curriculum areas. Level 1 courses have recently been introduced in some curriculum

areas where a need had been identified. Many students are undertaking qualifications that support their career aims. There are clear progression routes that enable students to move easily from one level of accreditation to the next. Market research is used successfully to identify potential demand and to develop new courses. For example, in response to increasing numbers of migrant workers, provision for ESOL is steadily increasing.

22. The college is committed to partnerships to develop a varied provision and has been working in recent years with local schools, pupil referral units, the local education authority (LEA) and outside agencies to provide education to young students either on a full-time or part-time basis. It is the lead member of a Yeovil IF programme to provide vocational education to school pupils aged 14 to 16. In collaboration with many partners, the college has played a lead role in the development of the Yeovil Federation project that works to achieve shared aims such as raising achievement and tackling disaffection. It also plays a leading role in the Yeovil Vision group working closely with the district council hospital and private businesses to raise aspirations and create a sense of pride in the local community.

23. The college is very responsive to the needs of employers and, in July 2004, launched its own business unit called Yeovil College Training (YCT). YCT offers bespoke, flexible training for employers at a range of venues. Management structure of the YCT is sound and business training managers are responsible for key areas of curriculum development. Training is promoted effectively through personal contact, innovative marketing events and a clearly written prospectus. Learning centres have been established through partnerships with trade unions in two local companies and these are planned to offer accessible, flexible and fun learning opportunities for employees. YCT is sometimes able to attract funding for training to support employers.

24. The college has good links with employers that benefit students. For example, the college is a member of the Somerset and Dorset manufacturing network which works with more than 90 companies in the area. A high level of consultation took place prior to developing and equipping the CoVE facility in advanced engineering where students benefit from improved resources. Curriculum programmes are often developed in response to the needs of local employers. Through good relationships with employers, the college is able to identify good work placements that give rich work experience opportunities for students.

25. Beneficial links with an extensive range of partners in the community have resulted in widening opportunities for students. Outreach provision has been recently established at seven centres across south Somerset and north and west Dorset, providing basic skills and IT education. In addition, a vocational training centre for young students and adults has been opened in Shaftesbury called the North Dorset Skills Centre. It provides educational and training opportunities in a number of occupational areas including electrical engineering, plumbing, hairdressing, business administration and IT. Programmes include apprenticeships and NVQs at levels 2 and 3.

26. Since 2002, provision for school pupils aged 14 to 16 has expanded, in collaboration with 6 local schools, Bridgwater college and Wessex vocational training to offer courses in business, ICT, performing arts, engineering, hairdressing, land-based studies, animal care, and motor vehicle studies. There are links with special schools whose pupils attend college for some of their lessons, and an individually-tailored alternative education programme 'Horizon' for up to 14 pupils unwilling or unable to attend school. From 2004, this provision has also been extended, in collaboration with the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole local LSC, to serve 5 schools in north Dorset, using the college's skills centre in Shaftesbury. By the second year of the IF programme, there were 184 students taking courses across 12 different vocational areas. Learning link assistants work with teachers on each course to provide classroom support. Information to pupils and parents, induction, supervision and teaching are all well managed by the college. However, information and quality assurance intelligence on school pupils aged 14 to 16 at college is in the early stages of development and in need of improvement. There are no targets set for outcomes or retention and pass rates although this work is currently under development.

27. Students value the wide range of enrichment activities that are offered. Many of these lead to additional qualifications and enhance employability. Links with local professional sports clubs and associations provide students with high-quality coaching, delivered by experienced professional

coaches. Students in visual and performing arts have many opportunities to exhibit and perform, and there is a college production each year staged in the local municipal theatre. These activities are particularly effective in displaying to the community the diversity and quality of students' talents in these disciplines, and students take pride in this work.

28. Religious needs are met adequately through the offices of the college chaplain, and a quiet room is set aside for prayer.

29. Support for students is good. The college has responded to the need for a more coherent guidance and support service in its recent restructure. A welcoming and friendly environment offers a very wide range of well-used services including financial support, counselling, learning support and personal tutoring. The college nurse, health adviser, and on-site chaplain all play an active part in college life. Relationships with external agencies are excellent, for example, the local police, youth service and National Health Service (NHS) trust. A general practitioner link has been established to improve the services offered by the college nurse.

30. The student executive ensures that students' views are represented to college managers. Students who are parents are helped to continue their studies through access to childcare in the college nursery. The college prospectus and course leaflets provide helpful guidance for prospective students. Full-time students are interviewed by a specialist team and are generally placed on the most appropriate programme. As a consequence, the number of students leaving their course, in the early stages of the year, has reduced. At the time of inspection, some 35 full-time students had withdrawn from their courses compared with 125 at the same time in the previous year. Information events are hosted in college and in partner schools. Year 11 pupils attend regular taster sessions and very good curriculum links enable more than 600 school pupils aged 14 to 16 to follow vocational courses in college. Many of these young people progress to further post-16 studies.

31. A comprehensive programme of initial assessment identifies the individual learning needs and preferred learning styles of full-time students. Information is usually shared promptly with subject teachers, but this is not always used effectively in planning for learning with individuals or groups of students. New student induction helps students to settle quickly into their courses. A cross-college system, based on a traffic light model, alerts teachers and tutors to be particularly vigilant when a student is at risk of early withdrawal from their course. Effective referral systems direct students to very well-promoted services. There is particularly good specialist support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Specialist needs such as dyslexia and those relating to multiple barriers, including physical disabilities, receive good support from qualified staff in a study centre equipped with a range of assistive technologies, such as voice recognition software. In 2003/04, attendance at support sessions was high at more than 86%. Most of these students expressed the view that the support they had received had helped them to complete their course. The college presents a very supportive ethos, but monitoring of the impact of the range of support services is not well developed.

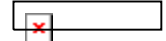
32. Students speak highly of the informal and individual support they receive. Some tutorials are purposeful and effective in supporting and monitoring students' progress. However, the quality of group tutorials is uneven. A few tutorials are poorly planned. Targets on individual learning plans are often too broad and insufficiently focused on addressing gaps in learning. A recently revised tutorial policy, with well-documented procedures and a common scheme of work, aims to improve tutorial standards. Part-time students have an entitlement to initial assessment and learning support through self-referral. Specialist teachers are assigned to support the additional needs of students in outreach centres. However, they sometimes lack the capacity to cope with the demand. Work-based learners receive good support from college staff and employers. Students' attendance is monitored closely and absences are followed up.

33. Students have appropriate access to careers guidance through Connexions personal advisors, although internal arrangements for the delivery of careers education are fragmented. Responsibility for careers teaching rests with personal tutors who do not have the specialist skills required. There is no centralised, specialist co-ordination of careers education or monitoring of the quality of students' experiences in careers lessons. An assistant subject librarian maintains the careers section of the library and has developed a range of helpful careers resources. These have recently been made

available on the college's intranet.

34. The college has a member of the senior management team with nominated responsibility for child protection issues. The support services team is active in promoting the welfare of vulnerable young people to governors, college managers and staff. At the time of inspection, staff training in child protection procedures was underway. Criminal record bureau checks are routinely completed on all new members of staff.

Leadership and management



35. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Most weaknesses identified at the last inspection in 2000 have been successfully addressed although inconsistencies remain in the application of quality assurance across the curriculum. The college has made considerable progress in developing its management information system. Financial information is detailed and provided to managers and governors monthly. Since the last inspection, retention and pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 have remained above national averages. During the same period, retention rates for students aged 19 and over have declined. A new principal was appointed in March 2003 after two years of uncertainty about the strategic direction of the college. A clear new management structure was introduced from April 2004. A major redevelopment of the main site of the college is planned to start during 2005.

36. In 2003, the college prepared its first three-year development plan. This is updated annually and, from 2004, has included contributions from curriculum managers and teams. The plan is comprehensive and identifies three realistic strategic aims to reflect the national educational agenda and the learning needs of the local community. Each of the aims is associated with explicit targets for improvement. There is clear strategic leadership from the principal and the senior team that is recognised by all in the college. The college has carried out detailed preparatory work on options for a new building that will improve teaching and learning facilities for students in engineering and visual arts. It is planned that the new building will be in use from September 2006. Over the past three years, targets agreed with the local LSC for students aged 16 to 18 have largely been achieved, but for full-time students, aged 19 and over, the college has been less successful. The financial health of the college and the management of resources are good. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

37. The management structure was substantially revised during 2004. All managers have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The changes in the structure were implemented smoothly, both staff and managers understand the new structure and it provides a strong framework for improving the work of the college. Senior managers work well as a team, and good team work is clear at all levels throughout the college. During the summer of 2004, managers undertook training aimed at creating high performing teams. It is too early to assess the impact of these changes on students. Teaching and learning are managed through four centres. Authority and accountability are delegated to the heads of centres. Curriculum management in most areas is satisfactory. Where it is effective, for example, in mathematics and science, visual and performing arts, and literacy and numeracy, there is good management of teaching and learning, effective team work, good course administration, effective internal assessment and verification, and good staff development. Where curriculum management is less good there is ineffective monitoring of teaching and learning. The college has determined that key skills will be embedded into the curriculum; however, managers have yet to raise the low esteem in which key skills is held by students aged 16 to 18 or the poor key skills achievements at levels 1 and 2. Students' attendance is monitored closely within each centre by a designated administrative officer. Overall attendance during the period of the inspection was 81%, with no area below 77%.

38. The college has identified issues over compliance with quality assurance. New procedures have been introduced in the last 18 months with responsibility for compliance placed clearly within the

authority of heads of centres. These revised procedures covering the quality of courses are good, but it is too early to assess the full impact of the changes. Course reviews are carried out three times a year and are linked to self-assessment with the development of action plans to deal with weaknesses. The quality of these reviews is variable across the college. In ICT, for example, course reviews are effective whereas in sports, leisure and travel they are inadequate and prevent the tracking of action points. In addition, senior managers meet the heads of department annually to review students' achievements and all other aspects of each department's work, which maintains their awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of individual courses. The departmental responses to this review are inconsistent across the college. The college's self-assessment is good. It is laid out clearly and provides a useful evaluation of the college's provision.

39. The lesson observation programme covers all teachers. However, grades given to many internal observations overstate strengths relating to teaching and learning and the comments provide insufficient guidance for improvement. The college recognised this and in May 2004 revised the lesson observation programme. Observations under the revised programme have now started, but it is too early to assess the impact of this revised programme on teaching and learning in the classroom. In addition to the formal programme, a system of voluntary peer observation has been introduced to support classroom teachers. Late in 2003, the college discerned that the quality of appraisal was inconsistent. A new appraisal system was introduced at the start of 2003/04 supported by training. The appraisal system covers all staff and, for teaching staff, it includes consideration of lesson observations. Only 51% of staff were appraised in 2003/04 as the restructuring interrupted the process. Since then, the system has been adapted to include appraisal for all managers. The revised system has not yet been fully implemented and it is too early to assess its full impact. Development needs identified during the appraisal process are usually met, but there is no formal assessment of the impact of training and development on teaching and learning.

40. The college has a committed governing body with a good range of relevant skills and experience. Governors are clear about the strategic direction of the college and understand their role fully. They monitor the development plan appropriately on a monthly basis, but do not seek sufficiently detailed information on areas of underachievement. Liaison between governors and senior managers is effective. Governors have insufficient knowledge of the college curriculum. The college budget is monitored closely and the monitoring information is timely. Detailed consideration has been given to college accommodation and the planned new building project. Clerking arrangements are effective. Minutes of board meetings are well presented and provide a clear view of the discussions, actions taken and resolutions made.

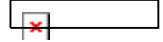
41. The management information system is good. It provides accurate, timely and reliable information on finances and student enrolment and tracking data for staff and governors. The system provides a wide range of relevant reports available to all staff through the college intranet. Currently, the detailed information available from these reports is not fully used to identify issues of course development and diversification.

42. There is an active commitment at all levels to widening participation and promoting lifelong learning to all. The college has a chaplain, a multi-faith prayer room and is active in celebrating religious festivals. There is an equal opportunities policy, a disability statement, a race equality policy and a race equality action plan complying with statutory requirements of disability discrimination legislation part 4 and the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000. All staff have received training in the significant elements of these policies. The college has undertaken an accessibility audit of its facilities, produced an action plan and undertaken activity against the action plan. There is very little critical analysis by course managers of data on attendance, retention and pass rates by gender, age, class or ethnicity to identify areas where provision is limited. There is a sexual and racial harassment policy that is currently under review. There are explicit complaints procedures accessible for all, but the monitoring of action to resolve complaints is inconsistent.

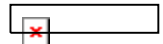
43. The college takes a pro-active role in developing and providing courses within the local community that will ensure the college is able to support students who do not choose to study in a formal setting, and has a learning centre in the town to attract students. Relationships with the local community, employers and partner schools are good. The college is actively involved in the Yeovil Federation with local schools and Yeovil Vision, a partnership brought together to raise the profile of

Yeovil. The management of work-based learning is satisfactory.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



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

Strengths

- high pass rates in science

- large proportion of grades A and B at AS level and GCE A level

- very good attainment

- much good teaching.

Weaknesses

- declining retention rates in some subjects

- inadequate self-assessment.

Scope of provision

44. There is a wide range of courses in science and mathematics at levels 2 and 3. GCSE is offered as a science double award and both foundation and intermediate tiers of mathematics are offered. The AS-level and GCE A-level curriculum includes biology, chemistry, mathematics and physics. Small numbers take AS-level environmental science and further mathematics. National diploma in applied science, first offered in 2003/04, provides a vocational option, but recruitment is low. Science and mathematics modules are taught within the access to HE course for adults. There is one evening GCSE mathematics lesson and another for AS-level human biology.

45. There are 627 students, mainly full time and in the 16 to 18 age range, enrolled for this area of study.

Achievement and standards

46. Pass rates are high in science. In the GCSE science double award, students achieved 100% A* to C grades in 2004, more than double the national pass rate for colleges of this type. The pass rates for GCE A-level physics and chemistry were also 100%. Over the last three years, AS-level physics and chemistry students and GCE A-level biology and human biology students have consistently achieved pass rates above the national averages. A large proportion of students achieve grades A and B at AS level and GCE A level. The proportions are particularly large for AS-level chemistry and physics, and for GCE A levels in biology and chemistry. GCE A-level human biology has a very low pass rate of 30%, half the national average. Retention rates are declining in some subjects: in AS-level physics, GCE A-level physics and GCE A-level mathematics they have declined from above to below national averages between 2001/02 and 2003/04.

47. Student attainment is very good and in observed lessons the percentage of good or better attainment was significantly higher than the national average. Students gain good understanding of scientific and mathematical ideas and are able to apply them to difficult problems. They develop adroit analytical skills in science, testing theoretical models against experimental data. In one lesson, students successfully investigated the oscillation of springs and the associated theory. Coursework is of a very high standard. Most AS-level mathematics students enter the United Kingdom mathematics challenge and, in 2004, nine achieved silver or bronze awards.

A sample of retention and pass rates in science and mathematics, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE mathematics syllabus B	2	No. of starts	142	159	167
		% retention	80	75	81
		% pass rate	47	33	39
AS-level biology and human biology	3	No. of starts	67	75	82
		% retention	90	93	94
		% pass rate	93	80	64
AS-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	41	31	32
		% retention	88	97	94
		% pass rate	72	77	77
AS-level physics	3	No. of starts	45	24	30
		% retention	100	92	77
		% pass rate	91	95	87
GCE A-level biology and human biology	3	No. of starts	38	63	45
		% retention	97	95	91
		% pass rate	84	95	90
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	52	40	51
		% retention	92	98	84
		% pass rate	92	90	86
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	38	34	17
		% retention	95	100	88

		% pass rate	97	88	100
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	20	20	20
		% retention	90	85	95
		% pass rate	100	76	100

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

48. There is much good teaching. Almost three quarters of the lessons observed were good or better. Lessons are well planned and taught by knowledgeable, highly skilled teachers. Students are diligent and attentive. Teachers' enthusiasm arouses students' interest. In both science and mathematics, stimulating exercises develop students' understanding of difficult concepts, and they are encouraged to think creatively about their subjects. In some GCSE mathematics lessons, excellent pair and group activities enhance the revision of statistics. In one science lesson, students had prepared in advance a specialist topic relating to energy production which involved students in a lively discussion of the relevant issues. In a further example of a well-managed activity, students enjoyed working out for themselves how to purify dirty water. Teachers often provide more able students with extra, challenging exercises or extension activities.

49. In some less successful lessons, many students remain too passive. For example, in one lesson, a video recording was shown for too long and students lost their concentration. These students had no exercise relating to the video they were watching or note taking activity to engage their attention. In another lesson, information was presented with no activities or questioning to involve students or test their understanding.

50. There are many good activities which widen the curriculum and provide opportunities for the most able students. For example, the biology department arranges two-week field trips to tropical areas as well as day studies more locally. Chemistry students enjoy visits to university laboratories in the Southwest and mathematics students attend lectures at universities. Students make use of problem-solving websites and have run a regular charity sweepstake based on pi number sequences.

51. Learning resources are good. The open-plan laboratory area provides a well-equipped and flexible teaching space which students respond to maturely. Technician support is very good. Several classrooms have a digital projector and/or interactive whiteboard and these are used to good effect. Classrooms are light and most have stimulating wall displays: in one mathematics classroom, a display of fractal images was positioned alongside related theory. However, few examples of students' work are displayed. Some classrooms are too small for the larger groups. Staff are well qualified: all have suitable degrees and almost all are teacher trained.

52. Students' progress is enhanced through regularly set assignments and homework. Most lessons end with some task for students to undertake outside the classroom. These tasks, and major assignments, are carefully marked by teachers who return them promptly with useful written feedback. Progress is monitored carefully and students' assessments inform their personal learning targets.

53. The provision is well matched to meet students' needs, and their ability levels on entry are diagnosed carefully. For example, courses in the foundations of advanced mathematics and additional mathematics are taken by students who lack the depth of knowledge for AS-level mathematics.

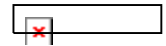
54. Students receive clear, detailed information on the requirements and expectations of each course. Students value the advice and support they receive from their tutors and speak positively about all aspects of their studies. They are assisted by a well-resourced study centre with a specialist librarian. Mathematics students make very good use of the college's virtual learning

environment and use its chat rooms regularly to discuss mathematical problems with their peers.

Leadership and management

55. Leadership and management are good. Course planning emphasises well the development of teaching and learning. Schemes of work are detailed and show clearly the range of activities, resources and assignments. Links with local secondary schools are helping to identify and support aspiring science and mathematics students and there is successful collaboration with a local primary school. The curriculum is well supported by staff development: recently, teachers from each of the main science subjects spent a week at a university updating their subject knowledge. Team meetings are held regularly, but some minutes do not show responsibilities for actions or timescales for their completion. The self-assessment reporting process makes insufficient use of achievement data to inform planning. For example, the science and mathematics self-assessment report for 2003/04 does not include an analysis of value added data, nor reference to the proportions of students gaining grades A or B at AS level and GCE A level. Similarly, managers have not analysed the low GCSE mathematics pass rates despite the very different outcomes at intermediate and foundation level.

Engineering



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

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

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates on most courses

- good framework achievement in work-based learning

- good development of skills in industry-standard facilities

- good academic and pastoral support for students.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on performing engineering operations NVQ level 2 and City and Guilds 2050 courses

- a significant minority of unsatisfactory teaching

- poor attention to safety in some teaching areas

- insufficient use of direct observation in the assessment of work-based learners.

Scope of provision

56. There is a good range of full-time and part-time courses in aerospace, electrical, electronic, mechanical and manufacturing engineering. Part-time courses are also offered in welding and computer-aided design (CAD). Courses range from foundation level to foundation degree level, reflect the needs of local industries and employers including the armed services, and offer comprehensive opportunities for progression. Full-time NVQ programmes provide progression to apprenticeships. There are work-based NVQ, apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship programmes in engineering and manufacturing. Enrolments on college-based courses have declined over the last three years although there has been significant growth in work-based learning and level 4 provision. The college has a CoVE for advanced engineering in which the focus is CAD and manufacture, numerical control, composites and process control. There are good links with schools and provision is developing for school pupils aged 14 to 16.

57. There are 643 students enrolled for this area of study.

Achievement and standards

58. Pass and retention rates are better than the national averages and are significantly better in some cases. Retention rates on most courses have been above national averages for three years, but pass rates for NVQ level 2 performing engineering operations and City and Guilds 2050-01 courses have dropped to below national averages. The proportion of higher grades achieved by students on AS-level and GCE A-level courses in electronics and design and technology have declined consistently over the last three years.

59. The retention rate of apprentices on work-based learning programmes is good: 87% for advanced apprentices starting since 1999 and 53% for apprentices starting since 2000. There is good achievement of the framework for advanced apprentices. Of those who started after 1997/98, 85% achieved all aspects of the framework. Many students interviewed had completed the mandatory technical certificate and were studying at a higher level. Key skills achievements have improved significantly over the past two years.

60. Students' work is of a consistently high standard, as is evident from CAD drawings, job cards, parts lists and digital images. There is high achievement of regional awards for excellence and these are rightly celebrated. A female student was apprentice of the year for the Southwest in 2003.

A sample of retention and pass rates in engineering, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
NVQ performing engineering operations	1	No. of starts	*	24	39
		% retention	*	100	95
		% pass rate	*	96	89
Basic training of	1	No. of starts	37	26	34

certificate		% pass rate	86	96	91
NVQ performing engineering operations	2	No. of starts	34	27	27
		% retention	91	85	85
		% pass rate	94	87	65
National certificate in engineering/ aerospace engineering	3	No. of starts	84	73	42
		% retention	86	75	98
		% pass rate	89	91	93
City and Guilds 2301 computer-aided engineering competences parts 2&3	2	No. of starts	53	36	29
		% retention	89	97	90
		% pass rate	91	100	**

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

* course not running

** data incomplete

Quality of education and training

61. Much teaching is unsatisfactory and many lessons that were judged satisfactory contained examples of ineffective practice. Lessons are sometimes poorly prepared, dull and lack pace. Too many lessons are teacher centred with an overuse of dictation and little variety. There is scant appreciation of differentiation to meet the diverse needs of everyone and the better students are not challenged. Teachers miss opportunities to make stimulating use of visual aids or ILT. Practical sessions are generally better taught than theory lessons. In some better lessons, students respond well to teachers' enthusiasm and good subject knowledge, and there is some effective use of gapped hand-outs to provoke students' thinking.

62. There is poor attention to health and safety in some teaching areas. Students were observed changing pulley speeds on a pedestal drill that had not been isolated. In one workshop, there were no prominent signs to reinforce good practice.

63. Students' skills are well developed using industry-standard facilities. The standard of equipment within companies is outstanding. Students have good exposure to modern equipment such as co-ordinate measuring machinery, sophisticated electronic equipment and high-quality CNC machines. The college delivers the foundation elements of some apprenticeship programmes in a well-equipped unit on a local industrial estate. This realistic working environment is much favoured by employers. An engineering workshop in the college is well resourced with a good range of conventional equipment. There is a very good learning centre which contains a substantial range of modern engineering texts. A virtual learning environment enables students to gain remote access to course materials and information, although much of this material is as yet underdeveloped.

64. Staff are well qualified and vocationally experienced. Some are still working towards their teaching qualifications. Recent staff shortages have had a negative impact upon the curriculum. For example, welding lessons have been cancelled, and the progress of students on a GCSE course has been impaired. However, the college is currently resolving many of these problems.

65. There is insufficient use of direct observation in the assessment of work-based learners and too few assessors to meet the needs of current students. Most of the assessment is based on students' portfolios. Assessment is often poorly planned and there is too much reliance on assessment towards the end of courses. Recent actions have been taken to address some of these weaknesses, although it is too soon to evaluate their impact: more assessors are now registered and a new assessment schedule was introduced this year.

66. The college has excellent links with local industry. There is an active engineering advisory

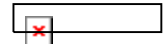
committee. The college's award of a CoVE for advanced engineering was developed after thorough consultation with local companies. Some company-specific courses are run to meet the needs of a major local aeronautical company. Apprenticeship frameworks are specifically designed for the aerospace industry with specialised units. There has been a significant increase in the numbers of students aged 14 to 16 attending the college to undertake an engineering course.

67. There is good support for students. Full-time students are well supported by tutors although there is some uncertainty about the process of progress reviews. Some parts of tutorial files are poorly kept and the quality of staff comments is variable. Part-time students also receive tutorial support, but less formally and consistently. Workplace visits are regular with much emphasis placed upon pastoral issues. There is good commitment from all of the companies visited to the training of young people in engineering.

Leadership and management

68. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is clear strategic direction. A head of department has been appointed recently. Roles and responsibilities are being clearly re-defined. The college has experienced difficulties in the recruitment and retention of specialist staff, and this has contributed to the delays in meeting targets. The CoVE is managed satisfactorily. There have been delays in the new building and the installation of specialist equipment, but these have now been resolved and the centre is fully equipped. Students are now using the facility and courses have been run for external clients.

Business



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

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

Strengths

- high retention rates on all AAT courses and high pass rates on AAT technicians course

- good achievement of apprenticeship frameworks

- good internal progression of students on professional and management courses.

Weaknesses

- much uninspiring teaching

- lack of recent industrial updating for staff

- o insufficient induction for work-based learners.

Scope of provision

69. The courses in this curriculum area range from full-time courses at levels 2 and 3, general national vocational qualification (GNVQ), AS levels and GCE A levels, and national diploma, to part-time GCE A levels and a GCSE in accounting. There are courses leading to NVQs in business administration from levels 1 to 4. These include professional courses in management, accounting, marketing, personnel and Institute of Legal Executives (ILEX). Business administration and accounting are taught at a number of centres across Somerset and north Dorset, including the North Dorset Skills Centre at Shaftesbury.

70. A total of 618 students are enrolled on business courses in 2004/05, of which 167 are full time and 451 part time. There are 69 work-based learners studying for predominantly business administration and accountancy qualifications.

Achievement and standards

71. Over the past three years, retention and pass rates have been high on management and AAT courses. There has, simultaneously, been a generally low progression rate from AS level to GCE A level in business, but there is good internal progression through professional and management courses.

72. Pass rates for apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships have risen to high levels: in 2002/03, 70% of learners achieved the full framework compared to 40% in 2001/02. Standards of students' work on AAT and supervisory management courses are particularly high, and their portfolios contain a well-balanced mix of college and work-based evidence. However, both the standard of work and the conceptual comprehension displayed by some national diploma and GCE A-level students are below expected attainment levels. There is little evidence of students on level 3 courses using appropriate analytical skills.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business administration, management and professional, 2001 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level business/ management/office studies	3	No. of starts	58	64	49
		% retention	90	74	94
		% pass rate	96	87	76
AVCE (double award) in business	3	No. of starts	21	30	25
		% retention	29	60	60
		% pass rate	100	72	93
Professional development award in management studies	3	No. of starts	*	17	20
		% retention	*	90	80
		% pass rate	*	89	80
GCE A-level business studies	3	No. of starts	31	30	16
		% retention	97	93	94
		% pass rate	97	100	100

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

**fewer than 15 students enrolled*

Quality of education and training

73. Many lessons are taught well. In the most successful lessons, teaching, learning and assessment have been carefully planned; teachers check students' understanding regularly and up-to-date examples from business are used to illustrate various commercial concepts. Students are not afraid to seek help and they also assist one another when appropriate. Through imaginative and flexible timetable planning, part-time students are able to follow a course of study which has been tailored to suit their individual needs and take account of their commitments. Working relationships are good and encourage learning; additional help is offered to students outside lessons and this is valued highly by them.

74. Many lesson plans and schemes of work lack detail. Some lessons are too undemanding of students. In these, teachers rely heavily on note taking and many teaching methods fail to inspire or stimulate students, and their development of skills does not match their potential. Students do not always concentrate sufficiently on tasks set and this is not always noticed by teachers. Sometimes teachers do not check that students have understood concepts. Students show limited ability to develop learning from previous lessons. For example, in a business studies lesson, students were unable to apply previous learning to complete a ratio analysis activity. Many full-time students have poor study habits: many do not bring previous notes or textbooks to lessons. In a lesson on finance, half of the students did not have with them the course text which the tutor was using.

75. Teachers are appropriately qualified, but lack recent industrial experience. Teaching accommodation is generally good although in some classrooms there is a noticeable absence of relevant material on display. Some part-time lessons take place in cramped conditions. Handouts and other printed materials are sometimes of low quality and little use is made of specialist resources, such as videos or electronic training materials, to enhance learning. Students' access to computing equipment in the department is limited: only two rooms have computers, which are old and slow.

76. Induction for work-based learners is inadequate. Learners are not made sufficiently aware of the framework requirements. Many learners collecting evidence in the workplace are unsure of its appropriateness. Assessors have regular meetings with work-based learners to oversee the compilation of evidence and ensure their timely achievement of apprenticeship frameworks.

77. Courses provide good progression routes from levels 1 to 4 and there are comprehensive arrangements to ensure that students are enrolled on appropriate courses. External links enhance the curriculum, with good use being made of visits and conferences; a particularly effective business connection is with Longleat. Links with employers, however, are underdeveloped for work-based learning. There is no clear strategy to identify and respond to the changing needs of employers.

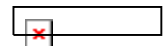
78. Assessments are imaginatively designed, although internal verification is not always carried out regularly. Marking is fair and accurate and many teachers supplement this with detailed and helpful feedback on how students may improve their work. Homework is set regularly and marked promptly. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are integrated into lessons and specialist support tutors assist curriculum teachers. Full-time students' key skills are not effectively developed after initial assessment and they are not embedded in the business curriculum.

Leadership and management

79. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The curriculum area has responded to the challenges of structural and procedural changes under new management and has been responsive in meeting the needs of students. Communication between staff is good, and there is satisfactory monitoring of students' progression and retention. Teachers meet regularly both formally and

informally as members of course and programme teams. Course files are comprehensive and administration is thorough. There are regular reviews of the provision and students' needs are carefully considered. Self-assessment is accurate in identifying key strengths and weaknesses, and a number of the issues identified in the development plan have already been implemented. The management of work-based learning programmes has improved and there is better co-ordination of off-the-job and on-the-job training. The implementation of new policies and procedures is still in its early stages and staff are encouraged to attend well-planned training and curriculum events. The staff appraisal system effectively identifies staff development needs and is integral to the staff development plan, but the issue of industrial updating for teachers has yet to be adequately addressed.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on AS-level ICT and AS-level computing

- high retention rates on part-time courses

- good use of resources to support learning

- good use of individual learning plans in outreach centres.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on some part-time courses

- a significant minority of unsatisfactory teaching

- poor use of tutorials to set targets and record progress of full-time students.

Scope of provision

80. There is a good range of full-time and part-time courses from level 1 to level 4. Full-time courses

include first and national diplomas for IT practitioners, and AS levels and GCE A levels in computing and ICT. Part-time courses include the European computer driving licence (ECDL), CLAIT and integrated business technology (IBT). Computer courses of up to a year's duration are provided in a number of community locations and at some employers' premises, and the college has responded well to local demand.

81. There are 163 full-time and 1,024 part-time students. Of the full-time students, 134 are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

82. Retention and pass rates on AS-level ICT and AS-level computing are high and have been above the national average in the three years to 2003. Retention rates on part-time courses are high and are at, or above, the national average; in 2002/03, on the 'computing for the terrified' short course and one-year ECDL course, they were 100% and 88% respectively. However, pass rates on the certificate for IT users (new CLAIT) and City and Guilds 7261 certificate in computer applications courses were well below the national averages in 2002/03 at 48% and 27% respectively.

83. Most students achieve a high standard of practical work. They use software confidently and develop good research skills through their use of the Internet. The coursework, projects and documents they produce show good creative skills. Students' assignments and projects, in particular, are often designed for use by local businesses and enable students to display their expertise: for example, they produce well-constructed databases. In practical networking sessions, students produce cables and computer connectivity devices which they either use at home or make available for their employers.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
City and Guilds 7261 IT (certificate in computer applications)	1	No. of starts	309	418	110
		% retention	65	49	47
		% pass rate	66	41	27
City and Guilds 7261 IT (information processing)	1	No. of starts	67	168	35
		% retention	93	89	86
		% pass rate	34	70	80
Certificate for IT users (New CLAIT) short course	1	No. of starts	479	615	244
		% retention	93	90	85
		% pass rate	59	53	48
Computing for the terrified - short course	1	No. of starts	86	35	28
		% retention	98	100	100
		% pass rate	79	91	100
ECDL - 1 year	2	No. of starts	28	182	280
		% retention	93	96	88
		% pass rate	81	45	69
AS-level computing	3	No. of starts	45	36	27
		% retention	91	94	89
		% pass rate	76	74	79

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

84. Where teaching is effective the lessons are well prepared and use a variety of teaching methods. In these lessons, teachers set challenging targets for their students and help them to achieve them. In the best lessons, teachers encourage students to work independently and make decisions for themselves. However, in several instances teaching is unsatisfactory and some lessons that were judged satisfactory contained examples of ineffective teaching. In some lessons, many students pay little attention to the content of the lesson. Some lessons have a very slow start and in these lessons the teaching often fails to engage students, with little attempt being made to motivate them or to check their understanding regularly. Some lesson content is poorly prepared and insufficiently exploited. For example, in many lessons, interactive materials were presented to students, but little use was made of activities to interest and engage the students in the content of these resources.

85. The use of IT resources to support learning is good. Computers are of industry standard, operate with commercial standard software and are networked. There are plenty of ceiling-mounted data projectors and electronic whiteboards and these are well used by most staff. The college has recently opened a networking room for students to build computers, install software and test networking policies and procedures. The range and availability of intranet-based learning materials is good. Students have access to learning materials through a virtual learning environment which is well used by students outside normal college hours and closely monitored by the college to evaluate activity. This facility is of particular value to outreach students to assist them with assignments. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced. Technical support for students is good. A specialist ICT technician is available to provide support and assistance to students with computing problems.

86. Computing classrooms on the main campus are spacious, bright, adequately ventilated and have useful wall displays. However, the layout of some classrooms is unsatisfactory and does not enable teachers to observe all computer monitors at once. In some of the smaller outreach centres, the computers are too close to each other and students suffer from a lack of working space in which to organise their notes. The study centre is well used. There is an adequate stock of books and other learning materials. The layout of recently refurbished computer classrooms has taken into account the accessibility and mobility needs of wheelchair users.

87. Assessment is fair and reliable and guidelines are clear. Teachers give detailed feedback on the quality of work and provide adequate guidance on improvements. However, some deadline dates are too close to each other. Students and parents receive regular reports on their progress.

88. The recording of individual tutorial sessions and individual learning plans for full-time students is poor. Many tutorial records are incomplete. Agreed achievement targets are inadequate, failing to give students realistic or measurable short-term goals. Comments on individual learning plans do not clearly specify actions to be taken and are general in nature. Many of the outcomes from literacy and numeracy diagnostic tests and associated action plans remain unaddressed by either tutor or student.

89. However, the use of individual learning plans for part-time students in outreach centres is good. These students frequently refer to their individual learning plans to recall their progress and identify future tasks, using their plans to help them move quickly to the next unit of study. These plans record realistic and measurable achievement targets for students, and are clearly informed by assessment and regular discussions with teachers.

90. The range of courses available is satisfactory. Students aged 16 to 18 are provided with good progression routes from the first diploma in IT practitioners through to level 3 courses. Computer courses of differing duration are provided in a number of community locations and at some employers' premises. These include introduction to computer courses, new CLAIT and ECDL. In many of the lessons, older students with no experience of ICT have learnt how to use the Internet

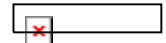
and e-mail to communicate with members of their family whilst others have undertaken courses to improve their job opportunities.

91. Additional support is available to students at outreach centres. Basic skills support is usually available at a time convenient to the student. However, the capacity to meet the needs of students is restricted by time and tutor availability. Basic skills tutors schedule their visits around the curriculum timetable, but it is not always possible to cover all courses at all the outreach centres.

Leadership and management

92. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Regular curriculum meetings are managed effectively and maintain a focus on students. Self-assessment is rigorous and involves all staff. Students' views on the quality of teaching are sought and acted upon. Staff work well together and benefit from the sharing of good practice. The college identified most of the strengths and weaknesses in this programme area in its self-assessment report. The promotion and implementation of equal opportunities is satisfactory. Adaptive equipment is available to support students with disabilities. Some students' tasks and assignments contain materials which promote educational and social inclusion. For example, in one lesson, students were asked to research and report on the range of adaptive equipment available for users with physical disabilities; in another, students investigated the range of software-based adaptations that could be applied to assist users with visual and hearing impairments.

Sports, leisure and travel



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on all level 3 courses

- high standards of sports students' practical and interpersonal skills

- much good teaching in sport

- very good sports facilities

- good participation in a wide range of enrichment activities

- excellent sports academies and elite development programme.

Weaknesses

- a significant minority of unsatisfactory teaching in travel and tourism

- inadequate access to ILT for staff and students

- too many inadequate classrooms

- inadequate quality assurance practices.

Scope of provision

93. There is a wide range of courses in sports from levels 1 to 4, but only a limited range in leisure, travel and tourism. Full-time programmes include the NVQ in sport and recreation at levels 1 and 2 and the first diploma in sport with three pathways at level 3, including AS-level and GCE A-level sports, games and physical education and national diploma in sport and exercise science. There are 15 pupils aged 14 to 16 from 2 local schools who are integrated into the NVQ level 1 programme. There are six sports academies with strong links with feeder organisations. An elite development programme has been established with the British Bob Skeleton Association (BBSKA) to identify and support potential athletes to represent Great Britain. The leisure and travel courses offered include first and national diplomas, but only the latter has recruited in 2004/05, replacing the AVCE. All students have the opportunity to take a range of industrially-relevant additional qualifications.

94. There are 151 full-time students aged 16 to 18 following courses in sport, leisure and travel. Some 120 students are on sports courses and a further 31 study leisure and travel.

Achievement and standards

95. For the last three years to 2003/04, pass rates for all the full-time sports courses at level 3 and for the AVCE travel and tourism course have been well above the national averages. The pass rate for the first diploma in sport has declined to just below the national average. Retention rates on most full-time courses have also been consistently above the national average, although some courses dropped below average in 2003/04. Pass and retention rates on the additional short courses are consistently above the national averages.

96. Standards of students' applied practical work are particularly high. For example, in a higher sports leaders award lesson, students demonstrated a high level of personal attainment whilst delivering a dynamic, inclusive sports session for young people with learning difficulties from the local MENCAP centre. In a trampolining enrichment lesson, students were given well-judged verbal and physical support to develop their technique and confidence in somersaulting, and most showed significant progress within the one-hour lesson. Leisure and travel students have good interpersonal and teamwork skills.

97. Students are regularly selected to represent the Southwest region at the British Colleges Sport Competitions, with notable success. A number of current students represent the county and the country in a wide range of sports. The college effectively celebrates the successes of its students

through an annual achievements awards evening, regular media features, and photographs and trophies on prominent display; these elicit pride and aspiration.

A sample of retention and pass rates in sports, leisure and travel, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
NVQ sport recreation and allied occupations	2	No. of starts	***	18	16
		% retention	***	72	69
		% pass rate	***	77	73
First diploma in sport	2	No. of starts	16	20	15
		% retention	100*	65	87
		% pass rate	56*	100	77
AVCE (double award) travel and tourism	3	No. of starts	21	23	***
		% retention	90	87	***
		% pass rate	95	95	***
National diploma in sport and exercise sciences	3	No. of starts	24	19	29
		% retention	75**	100	68
		% pass rate	94**	89	100
AS-level sports games and recreation	3	No. of starts	29	22	29
		% retention	83	82	86
		% pass rate	100	94	93
GCE A-level sport and physical education	3	No. of starts	***	18	15
		% retention	***	100	93
		% pass rate	***	83	100

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

* first diploma in science

** national diploma in science

*** fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

98. There is much good teaching in sport. Lesson planning is often very good. Teachers identify links with previous work, opportunities to develop key skills and tasks to stretch students of different abilities. Previous learning is reinforced and understanding checked regularly. Teachers set high standards and encourage students to reach them. Teachers use a range of strategies to engage students and relate their previous knowledge to new concepts and theories. For example, in a biomechanics lesson, the teacher made constant reference to the practical track sessions in which students regularly participate; students were able to translate theory to practical settings to reinforce concepts of velocity and linear motion. In another example, a guest speaker addressing a group of sports students effectively used discussions around recent tragedies such as the murders at Soham to highlight child protection issues relevant to the role of a sports development officer. In a leisure and travel lesson on recruitment and selection, the teacher used a range of exercises drawn from current recruitment practices to develop students' verbal and interpersonal skills.

99. Poorer lessons are characterised by insufficient planning, which lacks the detail to extend the most able students or develop key skills, and a failure to make objectives clear to students. In most travel and tourism lessons, teachers make insufficient use of their personal industrial experience to illustrate theoretical concepts and to help make lessons relevant and stimulating. Visual teaching is unimaginative: in many sessions little use is made of colour or graphical representation on whiteboards or overhead slides, and handouts are of variable quality.

100. The sports facilities are very good and include a sports centre with a viewing gallery and a well-equipped fitness gym, both of which are regularly used as realistic work environments. In addition, there are outside pitches and access to an athletics track and hard court areas adjacent to the college site. Resources in leisure and travel are limited. Students lack a simulated working environment in which to practise their professional skills, and there are insufficient industry-specific materials for them to gain experience of working with any of the commercial systems they are likely to use in future employment. Most theory lessons take place in rooms that are too small or inappropriate for purpose, restricting the opportunities for interactive work. Staff are appropriately qualified, but many leisure and travel staff lack contemporary industrial experience. Access within the curriculum area to ILT is poor for both staff and students, although good use is made of the learning resource centre.

101. The majority of students thrive on a wide range of enrichment activities. Many of these lead to additional qualifications and enhance students' employment prospects. The college runs six sports academies which enjoy close links with professional clubs or associations, and students benefit from a high standard of coaching and industrial collaboration. There is an elite sports development programme linked with the BBSKA through the high performance centre at the university of Bath.

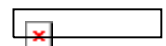
102. Most courses have well-designed assessments. Students are very clear about when and how they are to be assessed. Teachers mark work in detail, offering constructive comments on how students might improve. The roles of assessor and internal verifier are properly defined and fulfilled.

103. Through the tutorial programme, students review their progress and targets on a regular basis. There is good collaboration between teachers, support tutors and students, and learning support is given sensitively and generously. For example, in a sport and recreation lesson, the learning support assistant worked with the teacher to show the students how to use their preferred learning style to collect evidence for their portfolios. In another lesson on sports theory, college students were given responsibility for mentoring a group of school pupils aged 14 to 16. The students demonstrated a range of academic and interpersonal skills which resulted in a highly productive lesson for them all. However, the results of initial testing to identify learning support needs are processed and communicated to teachers and tutors too slowly.

Leadership and management

104. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is good internal communication with minuted weekly team meetings. These provide all staff with feedback from the college senior management meetings and cover departmental and course level issues. Staff contribute to the self-assessment process through course reviews, but some of these are inadequate and not all course leaders comply with the college's quality assurance procedures. There is insufficient recording and use of course data to identify issues and help planning. Staff appraisals and lesson observations effectively identify most staff development needs, which are supported. However, in leisure and travel, there is no formal system in place to ensure that staff update their industrial experience.

Health and social care



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

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

Strengths

- high pass rate on AVCE health and social care course

- high retention rates on most courses

- good work experiences that develop students' skills

- highly effective support for students.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on diploma in childcare and education, GNVQ intermediate and key skills courses

- poor framework completion for work-based learners

- insufficient planning of lessons to meet the diverse needs of all students

- inadequate resources.

Scope of provision

105. The college offers a good range of full-time and part-time courses in health and social care and early years education. Full-time access to HE courses are offered in social work and health. Full-time courses are also available in childcare from levels 1 to 3 and in AVCE single and double awards in health and social care. Some level 1 courses and a GCSE course have recently been introduced under the IF programme for school pupils aged 14 to 16. There are also a number of short courses including first aid.

106. There are approximately 100 students enrolled on full-time courses and 500 part-time enrolments within this area. There are 92 students on work-based learning programmes. Of these, there are 60 apprentices on childcare courses and 14 on care courses.

Achievement and standards

107. With the exception of the AVCE in health and social care, students aged 16 to 18 do not achieve well: pass rates are low, below the national average, and are declining. The pass rate for the diploma in childcare was very unsatisfactory at 18%. Adult students on access to HE courses achieve high standards and pass rates are high. Students on part-time NVQ courses take too long to achieve their qualifications. Work-based learning is unsatisfactory. Completion rates are low for care apprenticeships and the early years advanced apprenticeships, with no learners having yet achieved the framework. Retention rates are satisfactory for work-based apprentices, but low on the advanced apprenticeship in care. Retention rates for other courses have improved significantly to rates well above the national average. Students produce work of a satisfactory standard, but some students take too long to complete tasks. Full-time students work supportively and confidently in groups, and are keen to share personal experiences of childcare. They show good understanding of the links between theory and practice. They readily explore ideas and represent them in charts and diagrams that are shared with the whole class. Adult students use computers with confidence and demonstrate good research skills. Work-based learners undertake the review of books with enthusiasm and insight, but make little use of the Internet for research purposes. Students grow in confidence and develop their knowledge of care. For example, they gain a good understanding of children's development, medical conditions and the use of specialist equipment for the care of disabled people.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health and social care, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Basic health and safety	1	No. of starts	90	62	42
		% retention	99	100	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100
First aid at work	1	No. of starts	90	62	53
		% retention	99	100	100
		% pass rate	63	84	*
Access to HE	3	No. of starts	46	44	39
		% retention	61	70	69
		% pass rate	82	84	85
NVQ early years care and education (2 year)	3	No. of starts	29	76	53
		% retention	93	74	94
		% pass rate	52	57	*

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

* incomplete data

Quality of education and training

108. Teaching is satisfactory. In the better lessons, students are encouraged to draw on their own experience. Adults learn through exploration and discussion of new ideas and readily share knowledge with each other. For example, in one early years lesson, students produced a variety of collages that they then used to analyse the skills that children develop through creative play; they identified examples of fine motor skills, use of texture, language development and social skills through describing the work they had done on their collages. Teachers make good pedagogic use of students' direct experiences from their work placements to enable them to make confident analytical comments about children's development. Practice and theory are skilfully linked. For example, one teacher rewarded students with merit stickers as an introduction to a discussion on how to promote desirable behaviour in children. Students then moved on to consider theories of infant behaviour modification and gave examples from their work placements. In another lesson, adult students

considered child protection issues and discussed signs and symptoms of abuse in examples from their work. They gained a good understanding of how to identify signs of possible abuse and how to treat such situations with caution and sensitivity.

109. Poorer lessons lack planning and teachers often fail to provide a range of tasks to meet the wide ability spectrum of students in a lesson. The teaching of work-based learners is satisfactory, but does not often challenge or inspire them. Teachers make little use of paints, textiles, clay or artwork to provide a model of good practice for care workers, particularly those working with young children. Teachers often provide ideas and answers to questions rather than encouraging students to explore and express their own creative solutions to problems.

110. Staff are suitably qualified and have recent relevant vocational experience. Many classrooms, however, are under-resourced and restrict learning opportunities, and resources are not always well used. For example, in practical craft lessons in a classroom, the lack of space and materials inhibited students' capacity to explore creative play and practise skills for use in childcare settings. The college provides a toy library for students, staff and members of the public, but currently students do not use it. Noise from adjoining classrooms adversely affects students' concentration.

111. Assessment is thorough and regular, and guidelines to students are clear. Most students receive work back promptly with detailed comments on what to do to improve. There is a planned programme of assessment and progress reviews of work-based learners and students on NVQ courses, and employers are closely involved. Workplace supervisors observe practice and provide witness testimonies to support assessment.

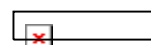
112. Students are very well supported. High and improving retention rates for most courses bear testimony to the effectiveness of the personal and welfare support given to students. Students place a high value on the generosity and efficacy of the support they receive from tutors. Most tutors use group and individual tutorials well, maintain up-to-date records and set and review targets effectively. Work placements are well managed.

113. The college has good relationships with employers and works well to secure high-quality work placements for students. NVQ courses are very well organised and supervised. Clear explanations are given in taught sessions and assessors provide good support in the workplace. When required, assessors visit learners in the workplace outside normal working hours.

Leadership and management

114. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The newly-appointed manager has introduced measures to address previously identified weaknesses, such as the clarification of staff roles and responsibilities, temporal targets for the completion of NVQ qualifications, and new procedures for internal verification. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of these changes. Communication is effective. Course reviews inform the self-assessment process, but most actions for improvement are imprecise as to what needs to be done, by whom and when. Evidence from the few lesson observations that have been carried out has not yet been used systematically to begin to improve teaching and learning. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory. Teachers are aware of issues that students need to understand when dealing with diverse client groups. There is no strategic plan to widen participation to under-represented groups.

Visual and performing arts



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on AS-level performance studies, AS-level video and film production and diploma in foundation studies courses

- effective oral and written feedback to students

- very good learning support for students

- good participation in a wide range of enrichment activities

- strong curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- poor achievement of target grades derived from prior attainment

- low pass rates on AS-level music technology and AS-level art studies

- inadequate accommodation for visual arts and media

- lack of technical support.

Scope of provision

115. There is a good range of courses at levels 2 and 3 in visual arts, including AS levels and GCE A levels in textiles, photography, fine arts, national diplomas in graphics and fine art, and the diploma in foundation studies for both full-time and part-time students. Part-time courses are available in life drawing, pottery, and interior design. Courses in performing arts and media range from entry level to level 4. They include an introductory certificate in performing arts, first diplomas in performing arts and media, AS levels in media studies, performance studies, dance, music technology, video and film production, and GCE A levels in dance, music technology, film studies, theatre studies and media.

116. There are 666 students aged 16 to 18 and 649 students aged 19 and over. In performing arts, there are 142 students aged 16 to 18 and 132 students aged 19 and over.

Achievement and standards

117. There are excellent pass rates on AS-level performance studies, AS-level video and film production, and the diploma in foundation studies in art and design: all have been at 100% for the last three years. There are also high pass rates on GCE A-level theatre studies, GCE A-level film studies, first diploma in performing arts, GNVQ intermediate art and design and national diploma graphics, with all courses significantly above national averages. However, the progress students make from their prior attainment levels is poor across most AS-level subjects, and many fail to reach their target grades. There are high retention rates on GNVQ intermediate art and design, AS-level music, and national diploma graphics courses. The pass rates on AS-level music technology and AS-level art studies are both very low and well below national averages, having declined to 25% and 57% respectively in 2003/04.

118. Students' work is satisfactory in visual arts. They are able to undertake independent investigation and explore techniques and materials with growing confidence. Graphics students quickly acquire the ability to relate design features to product function and marketing potential. Portfolios and sketchbooks show work in progress, but there is a lack of imaginative experimentation and attainment levels are limited by students not undertaking more detailed research. Students' critical evaluation of their own work is underdeveloped. In performing arts and media, much of the practical work is of a high standard, with students displaying mature levels of teamwork and self-critical awareness as they develop their expressive techniques. They have disciplined rehearsal and studio etiquette and show high levels of personal concentration and technical focus.

A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level art studies	3	No. of starts	52	90	123
		% retention	83	86	90
		% pass rate	91	91	57
Diploma in foundation studies (full time)	3	No. of starts	28	34	19
		% retention	96	82	95
		% pass rate	100	100	100
AS-level performance studies	3	No. of starts	28	20	26
		% retention	79	90	81
		% pass rate	100	100	100
AS-level film and video production	3	No. of starts	30	30	37
		% retention	90	87	84
		% pass rate	100	100	100

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

119. Teaching in visual arts is satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers have designed projects that encourage the acquisition of skills combined with the creation of interesting final products. For example, in a pottery lesson, students were learning coiling and slab pot making through observational busts of each other. There is some very good teaching in media, graphics and performing arts. The most successful lessons are characterised by energetic and enthusiastic teaching, underpinned by effective planning which allows students to develop their skills incrementally. For example, in a performing arts lesson on devising, students progressed from a knowledge of Laban through a discussion on stereotypes to gesture and finally to mask work. This sequence of activities provided a strong contextual framework for the ultimate task of improvisation and devising plays.

120. In poorer lessons, students are not stimulated enough and teachers do not offer extension tasks to challenge the more able students. For example, in one adult art lesson, students who had completed a piece of work took books back to the library whilst waiting for others to finish. Many adult students are not encouraged to draw on their personal experiences to develop their artistic concepts. Lesson plans state objectives and the intention to respond to the different needs and capacities of students in a lesson, but in practice these are often not implemented. Some lessons lack a clear focus, and teachers make insufficient checks on learning and progress.

121. Accommodation for art and design is inadequate. Temporary partitions, poor furnishing, cramped and overcrowded working spaces, cold, and invasive noise all impair students' learning. Efforts have been made by staff to improve the environment for students, but the building is not fit for purpose. Resources for media are also unsuitable. There is no blackout in the television studio. Students use different spaces across the campus for some of their practical work, making effective interaction difficult. The college has plans in place to improve much of this accommodation. Performing arts facilities are good, having benefited from the recent installation of a sprung dance floor and computerised lighting facilities. Staff are well qualified and committed, but there is a lack of technician support in art and design. Many resources are inaccessible to students outside lessons.

122. Assessment is thorough and students are given detailed oral and written feedback on how to improve their work. Students develop a capacity to give and take constructive criticism from each other. Tutorial records are carefully maintained and individual learning plans are developed with students to monitor their progress towards their personal targets. Internal verification is comprehensive and ensures consistency. Students receive very good support for their learning. Individual support is fully integrated into courses and helps students to achieve their potential. For example, on a media course, a student presenting Asperger's syndrome has been enabled to become an effective member of the production team, having been unable to make any lesson contribution at the start of the course. Key skills are not integrated into assignments in art and teachers lack the knowledge of key skills assessment to be able to support students effectively.

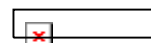
123. Full-time courses are enhanced by a lively enrichment programme which students enjoy. Students are encouraged to work with outside agencies, employers and to enter competitions. Performing arts students take part in workshops by professional companies, visit theatres frequently and host visiting professional touring companies. Graphics students often work to live briefs and have served a number of local corporate clients. There are regular educational visits to London and Barcelona.

124. There is a good range of full-time course provision from levels 1 to 4 that allows students realistic opportunities for progression. There are limited part-time courses specifically offered to adults, although in art the access to HE course is offered part time.

Leadership and management

125. Leadership and management are good. Managers have built effective teams with good communications and offer strong leadership and support to staff. The managers are recent appointments, but they have already made a number of changes that have benefited students. Careful timetabling has enabled staff to teach on a variety of programmes and to share their knowledge and skills across courses. The manager in performing arts has been very successful in merging media and performing arts and interesting collaborative projects take place.

Social sciences



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

The contributory grade for history is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on AS-level and GCE A-level courses

- much good teaching

- good and developing virtual learning environment

- rigorous assessment process

- high standard of written work

- good academic and personal support for students from teachers.

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory pass rate on GCSE psychology in 2004

- monotonous teaching methods in a minority of lessons

- underdeveloped tutorial practice.

Scope of provision

126. The college offers a broad range of AS-level and GCE A-level social science subjects for full-time and part-time students, mostly at level 3. These include AS levels in citizenship, classical civilisation, critical thinking, government and politics, history, law, psychology, philosophy, and sociology and GCE A levels in history, law, psychology and sociology. GCSE psychology is also offered. Most students are aged 16 to 18 and are full time. Courses are offered during the day and in the evening for part-time students, including AS levels and GCE A levels in psychology, sociology and law. A small number of students study by distance learning. Two general interest courses in psychology and vocational courses for legal secretaries and executives are also available in the evening.

127. There are 583 enrolments on full-time courses and 199 full-time students. 158 students are on part-time evening courses.

Achievement and standards

128. Retention and pass rates are high, and are excellent in AS-level and GCE A-level history and sociology. The pass rate on GCSE psychology was poor in 2004. Students' achievement of high grades in 2003/04 was well above national averages in AS-level critical thinking, sociology, history, psychology and GCE A-level history, but fell significantly to be at, or just below, national averages on GCE A-level sociology and psychology. Students on AS-level critical thinking and sociology courses surpassed their target grades derived from their prior attainment at GCSE whilst students on courses in AS-level classical civilisation and philosophy, and GCE A-level psychology and philosophy achieved lower grades than predicted by this same method.

129. Students' written work is of a high standard and they are able to construct cogent arguments based on thorough research and good subject knowledge. Their use of primary and secondary sources is well developed. In lessons, they debate and argue well, developing high levels of confidence both in their concepts and in their articulacy. Their technical vocabulary and evaluative skills are evident as they test and refine ideas. They take pride in their work.

A sample of retention and pass rates in social sciences, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	*	30	24
		% retention	*	67	75
		% pass rate	*	55	44
AS-level history	3	No. of starts	55	51	48
		% retention	87	88	92
		% pass rate	96	96	89
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	116	120	125
		% retention	79	87	91
		% pass rate	92	74	77
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	32	46	31
		% retention	97	93	100
		% pass rate	94	98	97
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	35	49	49
		% retention	97	94	93
		% pass rate	94	100	85
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	15	34	28
		% retention	100	94	96
		% pass rate	100	100	100

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

* fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

130. Much teaching on AS-level and GCE A-level courses is good, and in history it is very good or outstanding. The careful planning of lessons enables students to approach the difficult, more theoretical aspects of subjects with confidence. The better lessons are characterised by a brisk pace and well-designed tasks which help students to manage and further their own learning. Teachers have ways of developing in many students very good independent learning skills. For example, in an AS-level history lesson, students presented their detailed research on the competency of King James I as a monarch in the form of an Oxford debate on the proposition that James I was the wisest fool in Christendom. These speeches also contributed towards accreditation of the communications key skill at level 3. The students were able to discuss the nature and effect of political, economic and religious conditions in England at the time, and the significance of James' religious tolerance during the subsequent social unrest. The arguments presented were sophisticated, informed by theoretical perspectives, and were instrumental in shifting the opinion of the group from the opening to the concluding vote.

131. Students show good knowledge of their subjects, well-developed technical vocabularies and an ability to form well-supported critical judgements. For example, in an AS-level lesson in critical thinking, offered as an accelerated course to the most able GCE A-level students, the teacher effectively utilised the students' competitive spirit by scoring their on-the-spot analysis of short statements for their strengths and weaknesses of argument. This entertained students to such a degree that learning appeared effortless. The students responded enthusiastically and demonstrated an impressive speed and accuracy in processing and evaluating information. They also showed high levels of confidence in testing and refining new linguistic concepts. Classroom activities in many subjects offer opportunities for students to work towards achieving a key skills communications qualification at level 3, and these are well signposted in many assignments.

132. In poorer lessons, weak planning leads to some dull, uninspiring teaching where students have little opportunity to participate actively in learning. These lessons are also characterised by monotonous pace and content, with little account being taken of the diverse abilities or needs of students in a lesson.

133. Teachers are well qualified in their specialist subjects and over half hold higher degrees. The large majority are qualified teachers; those as yet unqualified are all working towards qualification. Most classrooms are well resourced and spacious, although many lack stimulating visual material and students' work is not often displayed. A few are cramped and overcrowded, and in those that are partitioned, invasive noise impedes learning. The supply and use of learning materials and course texts in the department are good. The developing virtual learning environment is becoming a valuable resource, enabling students with computers to gain unrestricted access to information, secondary sources and links to related sites. There are inadequate social facilities for students to meet for informal subject-based discussions.

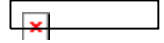
134. Written assignments are marked rigorously. Students receive extensive written feedback on their work and coursework standards are praised in moderator reports. In a few courses, formal assessment is too infrequent. The monitoring and assessment of students' progress is satisfactory, although there is variable practice in the use of minimum target grades and action plans in progress reviews. Students' attendance and progress are communicated effectively by teachers to tutors, who take prompt and appropriate action when required. Students receive good personal and academic support both formally and informally from their subject teachers. Personal tutors offer good support and advice in individual interviews. Other tutorial practices are underdeveloped and not always valued by students. Group tutorials are variable in content and quality. Personal tutors have had limited training for their role.

Leadership and management

135. Leadership and management are good. However, recent changes to try and improve quality assurance are not yet sufficiently embedded for any impact to be discernible. Communications with staff are effective and there is a strong emphasis on staff working together. Team work is good. Individual courses are managed efficiently. All staff participate in review and action planning, contributing to the departmental self-assessment report and there is a strong commitment to achieving the strategic objectives of the college. The monitoring of teaching and learning, however,

is insufficiently rigorous. There are good mentoring arrangements for new staff and all teachers participate in peer observations.

English and communications



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on all courses
- very large proportions of high grades on all courses
- very high retention rates on AS-level and GCE A-level programmes
- much highly skilled teaching educating independent learning from students
- excellent use of learning resources
- assessment objectives imaginatively and systematically addressed
- very good personal support for students' learning
- very effective curriculum leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- insufficient provision for the most able students.

Scope of provision

136. The subject area mainly serves the needs of full-time students aged 16 to 18 with AS-level and GCE A-level courses in English language, English literature and communication studies and a GCSE English course primarily directed at those wishing to improve their grade. A good range of part-time courses is offered to adults in the evening in response to local demand, including non-accredited courses in creative writing, creative journalism, GCSE English and AS-level English literature, although the take-up for these programmes is relatively small. Distance learning opportunities are also provided for the study of GCSE English and AS-level and GCE A-level English literature and English language and literature.

137. There are 386 students enrolled on these courses, of whom 314 are aged 16 to 18 and 72 are aged 19 and over.

Achievement and standards

138. Student achievement is outstanding. All courses have had pass rates well above national averages for the past three years. Excellent proportions of high grades A and B have been achieved by students at AS level and GCE A level: regularly over half of the group for some courses, and considerably above national averages. There is also an excellent pass rate in GCSE English with nearly 30% more students achieving a grade C or better than on similar courses nationally. Retention rates are very high on AS-level and GCE A-level courses, which are mostly well above national averages; but over three years, the retention rate on GCSE English language has declined from 84% in 2001/02 to 65% in 2003/04. Most AS-level and GCE A-level students achieve or surpass their predicted target grades derived from prior attainment at GCSE.

139. The quality of students' coursework is very good. Outstanding individual research projects are developed in GCE A-level English language and GCE A-level communication studies. Drawing on students' own interests and experience is a strong feature of the department's work, and students respond with personal commitment and engagement to the opportunities offered to them in this regard. Students also develop confident oral and presentational skills, along with the capacity to work effectively with others. They enjoy exploring the import of a range of texts with personal insight and fine critical discernment. They are able to apply critical concepts and linguistic frameworks to advantage. A number of students are working beyond GCE A level well before they complete their course.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English and communications, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE English (grades A* to C)	2	No. of starts	91	90	109
		% retention	84	72	65
		% pass rate	87	74	77
AS-level communication studies	3	No. of starts	*	20	18
		% retention	*	75	94
		% pass rate	*	100	94
AS-level English language	3	No. of starts	79	60	60
		% retention	94	82	83
		% pass rate	99	98	96
AS-level English literature	3	No. of starts	74	48	56
		% retention	82	85	84
		% pass rate	93	98	98
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	28	50	36
		% retention	86	90	94

		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	29	44	40
		% retention	97	98	95
		% pass rate	100	98	97

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

140. Most teaching is very good and some is outstanding: 69% of observed lessons were so judged. No unsatisfactory teaching or learning was seen. Lessons are stimulating, engaging and purposeful. Students are given a very positive, encouraging environment in which to learn and their work flourishes. They feel individually valued and nurtured as students, and both challenged and excited by the work they do. They learn to think and speak for themselves, developing secure independent study skills. For example, one GCE A-level English language student produced a very ambitious and cogent investigation into the impact of, and attitudes towards, the English language worldwide. In another example, a GCE A-level communication studies student generated an outstanding project to promote a local band, demonstrating flair and conceptual sharpness.

141. Learning is very well planned, and teachers ensure that all students, across a range of ability levels and learning styles, become fully absorbed in their work. They attentively monitor their progress and successfully sustain their interest. Teachers are versatile and fully committed, working across a range of courses and levels. In an AS-level English literature lesson on *King Lear*, students very much enjoyed their group task of staging the heath scenes in different production styles: modern setting, Hollywood film, traditional format, short cartoon, and radio. They had considerable fun with this idea, but were simultaneously enabled to engage critically and creatively with a challenging text. In another very good example of active learning, AS-level communication studies students enjoyed a lively, enthusiastic lesson on symbolic gestures culminating in a poster exercise in which they visually represented different types of symbolic gestures. Visual display exercises such as this are used on a range of courses, including GCSE English, to excellent effect to stimulate and consolidate learning.

142. There are very good resources to support students' learning in English and communication studies. A weakness identified in the last inspection report that 'there is little provision to help students learn on their own' has been effectively addressed. An excellent study centre is managed by very committed staff with high levels of expertise and extensive collective experience; it houses particularly good resources for English, and students have access to degree-level resources from the college's university centre. Collaboration between subject teachers and the study centre staff is very productive, and there are extensive, stimulating learning materials for students in a range of formats and styles, many produced by college staff. The virtual learning environment is developing into a valuable resource, enabling students with computers at home to have unrestricted access to learning materials.

143. The assessment of work is equitable and well organised, with objectives made clear and marked work returned promptly. Some written feedback needs to be more explicit and detailed in telling students what they need to do to improve. Assessments are used imaginatively to plan learning and show students what they need to do to achieve high grades: students are provided with helpful planning frames to encourage them to address assessment objectives systematically. Coursework is assessed and internally moderated consistently to proper standards. There is very good personal support for students' learning. Teachers know and take account of their individual qualities and needs, and are readily available for informal subject tutorials. Students would, however, benefit from sharper target setting and more precise personal action plans in formal tutorials.

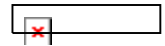
144. An appropriate range of courses is offered and the curriculum area's approach is inclusive and responsive to need. Key skills are well embedded in schemes of work and effectively delivered in

practice in the classroom. There is a popular programme of enrichment with, for example, trips to theatres and conferences. There is, however, insufficient provision for the most able students, of whom there are a high number. In particular, gifted English students need an extra level of challenge beyond GCE A level, together with enhanced opportunities for progression and fulfilment of their potential.

Leadership and management

145. Leadership and management are very good. There is a cohesive team ethos, with much sharing of good practice and resources, and communications between staff are very good. Courses are well managed. Course reviews and meetings are sharply focused on specific actions to improve learning and achievement. The curriculum area is inclusive with a genuine focus on the needs of individual students, and issues of equality, diversity, and educational differentiation are well embedded in its professional practice. Quality assurance processes are transparent and systematic.

Literacy and numeracy



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

Strengths

- high pass rates for students aged 19 and over in literacy and numeracy
- very good teaching
- highly imaginative use of ILT to support learning
- very good support for students
- effective partnerships with external agencies
- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- very low key skills pass rates in communications and application of number

- inconsistent embedding of basic and key skills across the curriculum.

Scope of provision

146. The range of literacy, numeracy and key skills provision is good and effectively widens participation through outreach centres. There are appropriate courses from entry level to level 2 at the main site and in community venues. Key skills lessons at levels 1 and 2 are provided for students aged 16 to 18 attending the main college site. Attendance for most adult students is part time. Programmes are flexibly timetabled to suit the needs of prospective students. In 2003/04, 209 students attended for additional support. In addition, key skills were taught to approximately 800 students. The basic skills provision for adults enrolled 412 in literacy and 270 in numeracy.

Achievement and standards

147. Achievements are good for adult students in both literacy and numeracy. In 2002/03, both retention and pass rates in the certificate in adult literacy at levels 1 and 2 well exceeded the national averages: the retention rate at level 1 was 100% compared with the national average of 83%; the pass rate at level 1 was 84% compared with the national average of 67%; retention and pass rates at level 2 were both 100% compared with the national averages of 82% and 91% respectively. In 2002/03, retention and pass rates in the certificate in adult numeracy at levels 1 and 2 were also well above national averages. In 2003/04, the college was included in a national research project to investigate the reasons for these high pass rates, which had a strong impact on students' motivation and self-esteem.

148. Progress in most literacy and numeracy lessons is good, and students systematically develop their skills in spelling, punctuation, grammar and functional numeracy. Students gain in confidence as their skill levels increase, which in many cases has beneficial repercussions on other areas of their lives, such as their employment prospects. Most students achieve their learning goals and some learn very rapidly: a number of students have progressed from entry level 3 to level 1 in three months, having never before achieved a nationally recognised qualification. The pass rate for those students following non-accredited programmes has increased from 85% in 2001/02 to 95% in 2003/04. Many students are acquiring literacy and numeracy qualifications to further their job prospects. For example, one student has passed the certificate in adult literacy at level 1, which has developed her confidence sufficiently to enable her to undertake a level 2 vocational qualification for work. Another student has secured his employment by undertaking a health and safety qualification, underpinned by basic skills. Achievements are celebrated positively by the college and students are justly proud of what they have achieved.

149. The pass rates for key skills in communications and application of number at levels 1 and 2 have been, and remain, very low. In 2002/03, the pass rate for communications at level 2 was 12% compared with the national average of 26%, and for application of number at level 2, it was 6% compared with the national average of 16%. Most students aged 16 to 18 do not value key skills qualifications, nor detect any relevance that they may have to their main programme of study.

Quality of education and training

150. Teaching is very good, meeting the individual needs of the majority of students. Enthusiastic teachers motivate students by making learning fun, and teachers create a relaxed but workmanlike atmosphere conducive to satisfying learning. Skilful use of humour, frequent celebration and reinforcement of personal success, and strong mutual support in the peer group are all effective strategies that teachers manage well to build confidence in students who have previously had poor experiences of education. There is a high level of student engagement in most lessons. In the better-planned lessons, differentiated tasks are set for each student to reflect their diverse needs and individual learning styles, which are assessed at induction. For example, in one numeracy lesson, alternative ways of explaining the rule of division were used for students with a more developed

visual intelligence. Teachers use good questioning techniques to check students' understanding. Students' own experiences and interests are positively mined. For example, a student's holiday experience of diving in Tenerife was used as the basis for a literacy presentation. In the most effective key skills lessons, learning materials are set within a vocational context.

151. Skills development tutors work effectively with teachers and in work-based settings to develop literacy and numeracy skills in curriculum areas. They attend team meetings and jointly plan assignments and some lessons in order to optimise the relevance of the support to students. In some curriculum areas, subject teachers integrate key skills effectively, making them relevant to students by linking them to their main programme of study. This practice is not universal or consistent.

152. Some poorer lessons are not well paced and fail to meet students' learning needs. For example, in one numeracy lesson, explanations of mathematical concepts lacked clarity and students learned little. In some key skills lessons, students are assigned to an inappropriate level of study.

153. Teaching accommodation is good. Many areas are attractively furnished and well lit. Students' work is prominently displayed, especially in the base rooms used by students aged 16 to 18. The study centre is extremely well resourced, providing adaptive technology for those with specific learning difficulties. Resources in the community centres are comparable to those on the main site. There is good access to ILT to support learning, both in college and in outreach centres, and it is imaginatively used. For example, in a literacy lesson, students accessed the local government website via the Internet to check minutes of council meetings relating to a topic on car parking charges which they were researching. In another example, a teacher made use of mobile telephone technology to teach spelling through text messaging. Learning resources are generally well produced; however, they do not promote diversity. Teachers are well qualified and trained. Despite a national shortage, the college successfully recruits enough trained staff to teach literacy and numeracy at high staff to student ratios.

154. The initial assessment process is used very effectively to assess the individual needs of all students, but the impact on lesson planning is inconsistent. Diagnostic results are used well to inform the discrete adult basic skills lessons and in some vocational areas such as work-based hairdressing, but they are less effectively used for the teaching of key skills. Some work-based learners are placed at an inappropriate key skills level. The rigour with which written work is marked varies widely. In some cases, there is little evidence of assessment having been carried out. Some marking only takes the form of ticks, but in other cases there is helpful written feedback, especially in the records kept by students doing discrete basic skills. Individual learning plans contain clear targets which are regularly reviewed in lessons. Most students can articulate the progress of their self-esteem and basic skills against these targets.

155. Students receive very good personal support, including from trained volunteers who particularly help those who require close individual attention.

156. Basic skills provision in the workplace and with partnership agencies is strong, with effective links to the probation service, Connexions and a wide variety of employers and agencies throughout south Somerset. There are a number of community venues across the county and clearly staged progression routes for students to move through accreditation levels. The provision successfully widens participation and reaches students who are notoriously difficult to engage.

Leadership and management

157. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear shared vision for the development of basic and key skills. There is positive inclusion of, and support for, part-time staff. Lines of responsibility and accountability are clear. There is a strong commitment to, and effective management of, systems for quality improvement. There is no comparative analysis of retention and pass rates, attendance or progression for students in receipt of additional support as against those who do not receive it. There is inconsistent embedding of basic and key skills across the curriculum,

and key skills achievements remain very weak. Equality and diversity are not promoted effectively in teaching and learning.

Part D: College data

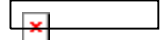
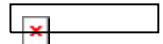


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2003/04

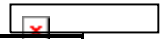


Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	13	47
2	20	18
3	37	11
4/5	0	3
Other	30	20
Total*	100	100

source: provided by the college in autumn 2004

figures have been rounded and may not total 100%

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2003/04



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	924	373	8
Land-based provision	19	166	1
Construction	90	122	1
Engineering, technology and manufacture	302	229	3
Business administration, management and professional	418	1,254	10
Information and communications technology	591	2,675	20
Retailing, customer service and transportation	27	90	1
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	526	356	5
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	87	120	1

Health, social care and public services	159	594	5
Visual and performing arts and media	666	649	8
Humanities	2,592	295	18
English, languages and communication	1,053	251	8
Foundation programmes	144	690	5
Unassigned to area of learning	23	832	6
Total	7,621	8,696	100

Source: provided by the college in 2003/04

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
		1	Starters excluding transfers	612	452	441	976
	Retention rate %	87	81	74	77	78	67
	National average %	75	76	76	70	71	71
	Pass rate %	74	72	80	68	48	61
	National average %	67	69	73	68	70	77
2	Starters excluding transfers	918	1,061	885	740	794	897
	Retention rate %	78	79	76	82	87	77
	National average %	70	71	71	68	68	67
	Pass rate %	73	78	80	61	66	78
	National average %	68	70	73	67	71	73
3	Starters excluding transfers	2,565	2,514	2,417	951	816	923
	Retention rate %	78	85	83	77	78	74
	National average %	70	77	77	68	70	69
	Pass rate %	75	81	83	56	66	71
	National average %	75	77	80	68	71	74
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	0	1	1	89	78	116
	Retention rate %	*	*	*	72	86	58

	National average %	**	**	**	67	68	69
	Pass rate %	*	*	*	47	57	66
	National average %	**	**	**	54	54	58

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

Sources of information:

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

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

* numbers too low to provide a valid calculation

** data not available

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)	62	27	11	102
Level 2 (intermediate)	55	35	10	48
Level 1 (foundation)	78	22	0	18
Other sessions	86	14	0	14
Totals	63	28	9	182

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