



Uxbridge College

Better
education
and care

Re-inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published TBC	Provider reference 130446
--------------------------	------------------	------------------------------

Introduction

Uxbridge College was inspected in February 2004. Inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) carried out the inspection under Section 62 of the Learning and Skills Act. The quality of provision was found to be satisfactory or better in all areas inspected, except in business, health and social care, English, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and work-based learning in hairdressing and engineering which were found to be less than satisfactory. Ofsted is responsible for re-inspecting all provision that is less than satisfactory within two years of the original inspection. If inadequate areas of learning or aspects of provision remain inadequate following re-inspection, inspectors will continue to monitor progress at annual assessment visits, but the areas will not be re-graded. They will be re-inspected during the full college inspection.

The less than satisfactory curriculum areas and work-based learning provision were re-inspected on 21 and 22 February 2006. The outcomes of the re-inspection are as follows.

Curriculum area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Business	4	3

Context

A wide range of administration, business and legal courses are offered on a full-time and part-time basis. They range from level 1 to level 4 and include higher national courses. At the time of the re-inspection there were 485 full-time and 174 part-time learners, and one accounting apprentice. Just over half of these learners are aged 16 to 18.

Strengths

- Good retention
- Wide range of courses
- Good use of information and learning technologies (ILT) in teaching and learning

Areas for improvement

- Low pass rates on most full-time courses with no consistent pattern of improvement
- Low added value on GCE AS and A2 business studies
- Insufficient additional learning support for literacy and numeracy for GCE AS and A2 learners

Achievement and standards

Retention is generally good. It is consistently at or above national average on many courses. Relatively few students have withdrawn from programmes 2005/06. However, there is no consistent upward trend of pass rates on most programmes. Pass rates are high on Institute of Personnel and Development programmes, but those on full-time courses and NVQ in accounting are generally below national averages. Learners on GCE AS and A2 business studies achieve less well than expected in relation to their qualifications on joining the programmes. The college has taken positive steps to improve learners' punctuality. Attendance and punctuality for lessons are now satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory or better. Both teachers and learners contribute good examples of current business practice in lessons. Teachers use information and learning technologies well to enrich learning. They also make good use of case studies and visiting speakers. However, in some lessons, the more able students dominate and teachers do not check that all students have made sufficient progress. The college offers a good range of courses, including specific English as a second language (ESOL) support for learners on business administration and NVQ level 2 accounting programmes. However, there is insufficient literacy and numeracy support for learners on GCE AS and A2 business studies.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are improving. Significant progress has been made in improving teaching standards, punctuality and assessment practice. However, measures taken have yet to impact on raising pass rates. Internal lesson observations do not always address the extent to which all students in a lesson make progress. The self-assessment report was suitably self-critical in identifying weaknesses, but exaggerated the significance of some strengths.

Curriculum area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Health and social care	4	3

Context

The college offers a broad range of full-time courses in health and social care, childcare and public services studies, from entry level to level 4. This area has grown significantly since the last inspection and now has around 500 students on the various programmes. Courses include the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE) and the Certificate in Childcare Education (CCE).

Strengths

- Good progression to related employment or higher education
- Good work experience for students
- Good learning support for students with additional learning needs

Areas for improvement

- Incomplete internal verification arrangements
- Poor retention rates on the AVCE and CCE programmes
- No consistent pattern of improvement in success rates on Access to Nursing and AVCE programmes

Achievement and standards

Attendance and punctuality in health and social care is above the national average. Of the students who complete courses, most progress to related employment or higher education. However, retention rates for both the AVCE and CCE programmes are poor. Actions to address this include reviewing the interview and selection process to ensure students are placed appropriately, closer monitoring of attendance and punctuality and marking interim assignments to monitor students' progress more closely. Success rates for the AVCE and Access to nursing courses are not showing a consistent pattern of improvement.

Quality of provision

The assessment and internal verification (IV) systems have improved since the last inspection. However, in some areas of health and social care the IV systems are still incomplete. Teaching has improved and is now generally satisfactory. Staff have benefited from staff development and internal observations. Learning objectives are more clearly identified in lesson plans. Students are well supported. Additional support needs are identified at initial assessment and clear plans developed to address identified support needs. Good use is made of learning support staff. In the previous inspection there was effective work experience for students on childcare courses. This has been expanded to health and social care courses and students now have good work experience opportunities.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management have improved and are now satisfactory. A number of cross-college quality assurance initiatives have impacted positively on this curriculum area. Using improvement plans, managers have had a clear focus on addressing weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Many staff have been involved in the self-assessment process. Effective meeting and communication structures have been established to support course management.

Curriculum area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
English	4	3

Context

In this curriculum area the re-inspection focussed on English as the college no longer offers modern foreign language courses funded by the Learning and Skills Council. At the time of inspection there were 484 learners in English, mostly following A level, AS and GCSE English courses.

Strengths

- Good success rates in GCSE English and good pass rates for the Certificate of Achievement in English
- Effective and rapid development of e-learning to improve teaching and learning

Areas for improvement

- Low and declining success rates in AS English Language
- Some poor punctuality
- Some aspects of course management

Achievement and standards

Success rates on GCSE courses and the Certificate in Achievement in English are good, significantly above national averages for GCSE. The success rates on most A level and AS courses are also good but the proportion of high grades on these courses are mostly well below national averages. The success rates in AS English Language are low and declining. A range of measures have been put in place to address areas of unsatisfactory achievement but it is too soon to judge their impact on students' success. Whilst student attendance has improved, punctuality is still poor in some lessons, despite actions put in place for improvement.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved and this is recognised by students. The effective and rapid development of e-learning has impacted positively on the quality and variety of activities and resources regularly used in lessons. Teachers have a good understanding of the importance of meeting the needs of all learners through the use of initial assessment and differentiated activities. Teachers do not always, however, take these aspects sufficiently into account when planning lessons. The effectiveness of written feedback on students' work has improved and comments are often helpful and constructive, informing students of ways to improve. However, the marking of students work is not always at the right level. Actions for improvement are in place but the impact of this has yet to take effect.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management have improved. Overall they are satisfactory but some aspects of course management are still in need of further development. These include some patchy student performance, inconsistent marking of students' work and inconsistent use of initial assessment. Curriculum meetings are minuted but insufficient attention is given to recording and monitoring action points.

Curriculum area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	4	3

Context

The college offers a range of courses in hairdressing, beauty and holistic therapies from level 1 to 3. These include provision for pupils aged 14 to 16 from local schools, as well as courses for students who do not speak English as a first language. Around 290 full-time and 140 part-time learners are enrolled.

Strengths

- High pass rates on full-time NVQ course
- Good use of ILT in theory lessons
- Good support for students

Areas for improvement

- Low and declining pass rates on some part-time beauty therapy courses
- Ineffective management of level 1 hairdressing

Achievement and standards

Retention and pass rates are high and improving on full-time NVQ courses. For beauty therapy at level 3, for example, pass rates rose from 40% in 2003/04 to 88% in 2004/5 and hairdressing level 2 pass improved from 75% to 100%. However, pass rates are low and declining on some part-time evening courses, including the diploma in sports massage. The standard of students' written work is generally good and most students develop good practical workplace skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Very good use is made of e-learning to enhance theory lessons and to track learners' progress. The realistic working environment is now satisfactory. In practical lessons, assessment planning and target setting have improved. However, initial assessment and/or entry qualifications are not taken into account for full-time hairdressing students. Whatever their background, all new learners are enrolled on to level 1 but are taught level 2 skills. As a result, some students struggle while others are insufficiently challenged, particularly those who have several GCSE passes at level C or above or have been assessed at level 3 in their literacy initial assessment. Part-time learners, on the other hand, are offered the opportunity to commence their training at level 2.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. College-wide quality assurance systems have had a positive impact. Actions have been taken to monitor and improve attendance, retention and pass rates and to extend the opportunities for students to gain practical competences in college salons. However, some part-time beauty therapy courses remain unsatisfactory and insufficient attention is given to placing students on the appropriate level of course.

Work-based learning area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
--------------------------	----------------	---------------------

Context

Apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships are offered in hairdressing with learners attending off-the-job training in college one day a week. There are 58 apprenticeship learners and 9 on advanced apprenticeships.

Strength

- Significant improvement of apprenticeship framework achievement

Area for improvement

- Weak internal verification of workplace assessment

Achievement and standards

Achievement of the apprenticeship framework has improved significantly from 41% in 2003/04 to 60% in 2004/05. Key skills are completed in the first year using assignments from the main programme. Learners make satisfactory progress on their course and are able to successfully complete assessments in the workplace and college. Learners show sufficient knowledge for the requirements of their qualification. Those who take up the opportunity to attend manufacturer product training extend their knowledge and skills.

Quality of provision

On-the-job training is satisfactory and planned around the needs of the individual learner. Training takes place in salon at least once a week or on demand. Internal verification of workplace assessment is weak. The quality of practical assessment decisions and feedback given by new in-salon assessors is not monitored sufficiently. Learner reviews are satisfactory. Work-based assessors visit salons on a monthly basis to conduct reviews and assessments with learners. The reviews are a three way process between learner, assessor and employer/trainer. Progress is discussed and an action plan is completed with agreed targets and dates. Assessors give appropriate support and guidance and establish a good relationship with their trainees.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The proportion of learners achieving the apprenticeship framework has improved. Regular reports are sent to employers and attendance is being monitored. Productive monthly meetings are held for all assessors and the college principal chairs work-based strategy group meetings at which those learners who are identified as 'at risk' are discussed in detail.

Work-based learning area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Engineering	4	3

Context

The college offers work-based learning programmes in mechanical engineering, electrical installation and motor vehicle engineering. There are 49 students on apprenticeship programmes and 22 students on advanced apprenticeship programmes. They are all employed locally by companies which provide on-the-job training and they attend the college for off-the-job training.

Strengths

- Good on-the-job training
- Good management of engineering work-based learning

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient improvement in the framework success rate for apprentices
- Poor recording of students' progress against individual learning plans in electrical installation

Achievement and standards

Students' achievement of the complete framework qualification has improved substantially. Staff are better able to advise prospective work-based learners and recruit those likely to complete the framework. In 2004/05, five of the seven advanced apprentices left the programme with the full framework, a success rate of 71%. However, of the 28 apprentices who left the programmes in the same year, only 10 completed the full framework. This success rate of 36% for apprentices remains less than satisfactory but compares well with the completion rates in the two previous years when very few of the work-based learners completed the full framework. Students now complete their key skills qualifications at an early stage of their programme. They acquire good workplace skills and are trained to work safely.

Quality of provision

On-the-job training for students is good. Health and safety is given a strong emphasis. Employers plan the training to give students a broad range of experience and skills. Workplace supervisors have a good understanding of the qualifications and some are qualified assessors. College staff make frequent visits to students in the workplace to assess them and to review their progress. Resources at the college for off-the-job training are very good.

1
Students benefit from the concentrated period of training they receive in their first year and they gain valuable skills. The standard of assessment is satisfactory. Assessors receive good support from internal verifiers at standardisation meetings. Records of progress reviews given to students are insufficiently detailed and contain too few targets. The review of progress in the workplace by first year electrical installation apprentices has been too irregular.

Leadership and management

Work-based learning is well managed jointly by the School of Engineering and the college's department responsible for links with employers. Improvements in the quality and performance of the work-based learning programmes are managed effectively using improvement plans and well-structured, regular meetings at all levels of management. Engineering staff now take greater responsibility for quality and performance. They have clear targets and receive good training themselves in work-based learning.