



Hertford Regional College

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Better  
education  
and care

# Re-inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published December 2006	Provider reference 106658
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## Introduction

Hertford Regional College was inspected in May 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 science and mathematics, engineering and work-based learning (WBL) hairdressing, 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 WBL area were re-inspected on 19-20 October 2006. The outcomes of the re-inspection are as follows.

Curriculum area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Science and mathematics	4	3

## Context

About 420 learners attend a range of subjects in science and mathematics. These include GCSEs in mathematics and science, GCE AS and A level provision in mathematics, chemistry, biology and physics and an access to higher education programme.

### *Strengths*

- *significant improvements in pass rates*
- *high proportion of high grade passes in GCE mathematics*
- *good teaching and learning*
- *effective strategies to improve learners' achievements*

### *Areas for Improvement*

- *low retention rates on many courses*
- *low pass rates in GCE AS biology*
- *insufficient access to science classes for those with restricted physical mobility*

## Achievement and Standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Pass rates were low at the last inspection, but have improved significantly on most courses in the last three years. Pass rates in GCSE science and mathematics are above the national average and those on GCE chemistry, physics and mathematics courses are well above the national average. However, the pass rate in GCE AS biology is low. The proportion of higher-grade passes in GCE mathematics courses is

high. Retention rates, however, have declined in 2005/06 and are below the national averages on many courses.

### Quality of Provision

The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers make effective use of experimental work in science to develop learners' practical skills. Learners participate and attain well in lessons and teachers check their learning. Assessment practice is satisfactory. The identification of and provision for learners' additional learning needs are effective. Subjects and courses meet the needs of learners. However, learners' involvement in enrichment activities is low. Guidance and support for learners are good. Teachers provide appropriate tutorial support, which learners appreciate.

### Leadership and Management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Curriculum leaders have introduced strategies which have led to improvements in learners' pass rates. Managers consistently apply more rigorous entry criteria. The self-assessment report is mostly accurate and staff have made good progress in addressing the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. However, it is too early to judge whether strategies aimed at monitoring learners' attendance and performance more effectively will improve retention rates. The teaching rooms and laboratories are well equipped and provide a positive learning environment. However, none of the science rooms on the Broxbourne site is accessible to students with restricted physical mobility.

Curriculum area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Engineering	4	3

### Context

About 280 learners are on engineering courses, most of whom are aged 16 to 18. About 180 learners are full time. Nearly 40 part time and evening learners attend courses in car maintenance, NVQ motor vehicle and computer aided design. About 60 learners aged 14 to 16 are on level 1 and 2 programmes.

### *Strengths*

- *significantly improved teaching and learning*
- *good progression to apprenticeships and employment*
- *highly effective recent improvements in curriculum management*

### *Areas for improvement*

- *continuing low success rates on many courses*

## Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates on computer aided design programmes are satisfactory. Incomplete college data for 2005/06 indicate improvements in apprenticeship and advanced vocational certificate in education (AVCE) provision. However, retention and pass rates on many courses are below national averages and there are no clear improvement trends over time. Progression rates from level 1 awards to apprenticeship programmes and employment are high. Specialist departmental tutors deliver key skills and key skills success rates have improved and are satisfactory. Most learners enjoy their work. The standards of current learners' work are satisfactory.

## Quality of provision

The quality of provision is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, curriculum content and delivery have improved to meet the needs of learners. Teaching and learning have improved significantly and are satisfactory. Teaching reflects individual learning styles. Lesson observation outcomes include appropriate developmental action plans. Teachers and learners use learning materials and information and learning technology (ILT) effectively. Assessment is good and includes newly introduced motor vehicle workplace assessment. Programmes meet the needs of learners and employers and match current local labour market requirements. Learners receive good care, advice and guidance. They agree comprehensive individual learning plans, which they review frequently with tutors.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory and have improved since the last inspection. Recent improvements in curriculum management are highly effective. Managers have improved the curriculum offer and the delivery and assessment of learning. They have taken appropriate action to remove many of the weaknesses in provision from the last inspection. Resources in engineering workshops are satisfactory.

Work-based learning area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Hairdressing	4	2

## Context

About 90 learners are on work-based learning apprenticeships. Over 50 learners are in their first year. Most learners are female. All learners work in salons in and around Ware, Hertford and other towns.

### *Strengths*

- *improving apprenticeship framework achievements*

- *high key skills achievements*
- *effective use of flexible training programmes*
- *good support for learners*
- *good management of work-based learning*

#### *Areas for improvement*

- *setting of challenging targets and timescales*
- *low frequency of review visits*
- *integration of on-the-job and off-the-job training schedules*

### Achievement and standards

Achievements and standards are good. In the last inspection, framework achievements in hairdressing were unsatisfactory. Managers have improved strategies relating to assessment procedures and the timing of key skills delivery and completion. Framework achievements have improved considerably over the last two years. Key skills achievements were also poor at the last inspection. These have improved greatly over the same period and are now high. Learners make good progress relative to their prior attainment. They enjoy their work and attend well. Learners adopt safe practices and acquire high levels of workplace skills.

### Quality of provision

The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is satisfactory and feedback is constructive. Levels of workplace training have increased. Progress review visits are insufficiently frequent. Target setting occurs at reviews in salons, tutorials and after assessments. Individual learning plans and assessment schedules do not indicate timings for completion of units. Learners do not receive sufficient challenge to achieve early or complete units fully. The college makes effective use of flexible training programmes to meet the different abilities of learners. Learners receive good individual and group support for their learning needs.

### Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. Good communications exist between on-the-job and off-the-job trainers. Managers have standardised systems and documentation. Salon trainers benefit from college-based staff development. Employers feel supported; the college seeks their views and acts on them. Managers do not integrate the on-the-job and off-the-job training schedules. Resources are good.



## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Hertford Regional College  
Date of visit: 19-20 October 2006

This feedback contains brief findings from the annual assessment visit. It focuses on the themes explored during the visit and does not attempt to give a comprehensive overview of the college's performance.

### Achievement and standards

Have the GCE AS pass rates improved in 2005/06 compared with 2004/05? Have success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses improved from 2004/05 and are they now at national averages?

- Incomplete college data for 2005/06 indicates that GCE AS pass rates improved in 2005/06, compared with 2004/05. However, retention rates declined. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses improved in 2005/06, compared with 2004/05, but they are still well below national averages. Pass rates and the proportions of learners achieving high grades on most national diploma courses improved in 2005/06 to above national averages.

Have retention rates met or exceeded college targets in 2005/06?

- Most retention rates in 2005/06 did not meet college targets, except for adult learners on level 2 and higher-level provision.

Are most full-time learners aged 16 to 18 achieving in line with or better than their predicted grades in 2005/06?

- Most full-time learners aged 16 to 18 achieved in line with or better than their predicted grades in 2005/06.

How well do learners receiving support in 2005/06 succeed compared with other learners?

- The college does not systematically compare the success rates of learners receiving support with those not receiving support. However, analysis of data shows that learners aged 16 to 18 receiving support achieved at the same rate as learners not receiving support.

Have the key skills success rates (for each key skill and at each level) improved in 2005/06 compared with 2004/05?

- The overall success rate improved significantly in 2005/06 compared with 2004/05, but is still low. Success rates for most key skills at most levels improved in 2005/06 compared with 2004/05. However, success rates for information and communication technology level 2 and application of number level 3 have fallen and are low, and the success rate for communications at level 3, although rising, is still very low.

Are work-based learning (WBL) success rates still improving and have catering and construction improved in 2005/06? Have overall success rates improved over three years, but are they still below national averages? Have timely success rates improved in 2005/06 compared with 2004/05, but are they still below national averages?

- The success rates for apprentices have improved significantly. The overall success rate for apprentices is now above the national average. Success rates for advanced apprentices have improved but to a lesser extent and their overall success rate remains below the national average. Timely success rates have also improved and are just below the national average.

How effective and rigorous are work-based learning assessment and internal verification?

- Assessment and verification in work-based learning are satisfactory. The college no longer runs engineering work-based learning, in which key assessment weaknesses existed at the last inspection.

## Quality of education and training

What has been the impact of the mentors' work with teachers receiving low lesson observation grades? What has been the effectiveness of staff development to raise the standards of teaching and learning?

- The approach to the mentoring system is comprehensive and rigorous. It involves relevant management and mentoring staff and uses a detailed action improvement plan within a specified timescale. Informal developmental observations lead to formal re-observations and half of these outcomes are at least satisfactory. Records and monitoring of mentoring activities and outcomes are thorough. Lesson observation strengths and areas for improvement are substantiated by clear evidence. An associate team of observers, having cross-college skills and expertise, supplements the core team.

Staff development links to main college policies and has been effective in raising the quality of teaching and learning.

Are lesson observation outcomes moderated or standardised? Have all teachers been observed in 2005/06? How do lesson observation outcomes link with performance reviews and staff development?

- External consultants moderate about one tenth of lesson observations. The quality improvement manager considers all observation reports and challenges grades where relevant. The links between lesson observation outcomes and appraisals are not systematically analysed. The links between lesson observation outcomes and staff development are clear and effective at both cross-college and individual levels.

What has been the impact of the actions taken to improve the lesson observation profile for key skills?

- There has been an improvement in the teaching and learning profile of key skills. The proportion of inadequate key skills lessons has fallen between 2004/05 and 2005/06. However, this proportion remains higher than the overall observation inadequacy rate. The proportion of good or better key skills lessons has not increased and remains below the college average.

How do learners benefit from their individual learning plans (ILPs)? How frequently do learners review progress and agree targets? How meaningful and challenging are these targets?

- The previous ILP process was ineffective because the format inhibited the aims of the process and staff and learners did not integrate the various tools used into the overall ILP. It is too soon to judge the effectiveness of the new system. Formal one-to-one ILP reviews only take place three times a year, but one-to-one tutorials supplement this process about once every six weeks. The quality of target setting across the college is inconsistent. Learners appreciate the value of the one-to-one tutorials.

## Leadership and management

What has been the impact of the increased management and monitoring of the key skills provision in 2005/06?

- Key skills performance, both in terms of learners' achievements and in the quality of teaching, has improved in 2005/06. The focus on monitoring and improving key skills is strong. In 2006/07, managers



are continuing with actions to improve both teaching and achievements further.

Are people with restricted mobility now able to access key areas of the college?

- One building on each site has insufficient access for people with restricted mobility. The new building programme aims to resolve these issues, but in the meantime, access to some science teaching areas remains poor. On both sites, access for learners with restricted mobility is possible, but is not ideal.

How well are data analysed to compare the success rates of learners by gender, age, disability and black and minority ethnic background? What changes as a result to benefit learners?

- Managers analyse data in several ways and are developing their ability to interpret data and understand issues. Annual departmental reviews focus on the performance of different groups of learners and agree actions.

How far has the college progressed with the staff list to verify identity, qualifications and criminal records bureau (CRB) checks?

- The college is making reasonable progress with CRB checks. Managers are seeking advice on how to proceed with staff employed prior to 2002.

What has changed as a result of learners' feedback? How well are learners informed of the college's response to their concerns?

- The college uses many types of feedback mechanisms to elicit learners' responses, based on different types of learner and completed at different times of the year. Managers give due emphasis to equality and diversity issues, but are aware of the need to adjust the language of the questionnaires for those studying English for speakers of other languages. Feedback outcomes feed into self-assessment reports and relevant action plans. Although the college responds well to learners' issues raised through the students' forum, it does not respond formally and publicly.

Which targets from the post-inspection action plan have yet to be achieved?

- The college incorporated post-inspection actions and targets into its self-assessment report. Managers have not yet fully completed targets in the humanities and business studies areas.

What is the impact of the actions taken to provide timely and accurate performance reports on WBL data?

- Curriculum managers are clear about their responsibilities for the delivery of WBL and for the progress and achievement of each learner. Performance in all areas has improved and rationalisation of provision has taken place.

How effectively does the college engage with employers and meet local skills needs? How do learners benefit from the college's engagement with employers? What is the impact of the college's partnerships on learners?

- The college has good and effective partnerships. It prioritises the five key employment sectors identified by the local learning and skills council. Work-based learning and 'Train to Gain' programmes focus clearly on priority areas. Managers are effective in developing links with employers, especially those of small and medium size.

Any themes from the pre-visit analysis not explored during the visit:

- No

Any other observations from the visit not identified in the pre-visit analysis:

- No