



# Sir George Monoux College

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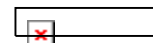
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#### **Basic information about the college**



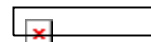
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Name of college:	Sir George Monoux College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Richard Chambers
Address of college:	Chingford Road London E17 5AA
Telephone number:	020 8523 3544
Fax number:	020 8498 2443
Chair of governors:	Derek Harris
Unique reference number:	130458
Name of reporting inspector:	Stephen Carville HMI
Dates of inspection:	11-15 February 2002

#### **Part A: Summary**



## Information about the college

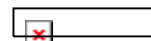


Sir George Monoux College is a sixth form college in the London borough of Waltham Forest. It was established in 1986 as part of a secondary reorganisation in the borough. It is located on a single site. There have been recent improvements to facilities and at the time of the inspection, further major building work was being undertaken.

The college serves a wide catchment area. In 2001, 47% of its students came from outside the borough of Waltham Forest, many of them from Newham, Haringey and Hackney, but also some from Redbridge, Enfield, Tower Hamlets and Islington. The college is one of very few sixth form colleges nationally to have a high 'widening participation factor' which is an indicator of the level of deprivation. It ranks seventh on a list of 105 colleges. The student population is ethnically diverse. Over 80% are from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are more female students (55%) than male. Student numbers have increased over recent years from 1,116 in 1998, to 1,524 in 2001. The college aims to expand further to 1,600 students. There is no provision aimed specifically at adults, although a few young people do remain at the college beyond the age of 19.

The college provides courses in 31 subjects at General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced level (GCE AS and A level), although two of these (dance and German) are only offered as GCE AS courses. Courses leading to Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCEs) are provided in five areas: art and design, business, information technology (IT), leisure and tourism and media. Courses leading to General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) at intermediate level are also provided in these subjects, as well as in health and social care. There are GNVQ courses at foundation level in business, and in leisure and tourism. There is also a small amount of provision in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). The college also provides General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSEs) courses in mathematics and English. All advanced level students take a GCE A-level course in general studies.

## How effective is the college?



Most students do well in their examinations and a high proportion continue their studies at university. Most teaching is good and much of it is very good. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching. Leadership is strong. Good use is made of resources and the college provides good value for money. Students' progress is closely monitored. The college provides a secure learning environment and caring ethos. Results on a minority of courses are poor and learning support is not consistently effective.

### **Key strengths**

- good pass rates on many courses
  
- high proportion of good teaching

- effective monitoring of students' progress
- strong leadership and open, accessible managers
- high rate of progression to higher education (HE)
- impartial and comprehensive pre-course guidance
- caring, supportive ethos, which raises aspirations
- safe, secure environment, which promotes learning
- culture of mutual respect between staff and students
- recognition of all students' achievements
- students' pride in their work.

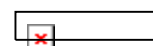
***What should be improved***

- retention rates, value added and pass rates on some courses
- learning support
- sharing of best practice across college departments

- uptake of enrichment activities
- students' punctuality.

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	<b>Good.</b> Good teaching and effective learning result in high pass rates and a high standard of students' work. Science courses are well managed and resources are used effectively. Retention rates are low in some subjects.
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Pass rates have improved on GCE A-level and GCSE courses over the last three years. Management of the mathematics courses is effective. Well-motivated students benefit from the good resources in the mathematics workshop. Poor punctuality hampers some students' progress.
Business studies	<b>Good.</b> A high proportion of the teaching is very good. Students' progress is monitored carefully and excellent support is provided for individual students. Pass rates are above average on advanced level courses, but the proportion of higher grades achieved is low. Development of students' independent learning, research and analytical skills is weak.
Information and communication technology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Pass rates on some courses are unsatisfactory. Staff share teaching resources effectively. There is effective monitoring of students' progress. Some of the teaching does not challenge or inspire students. The management of the curriculum area is sound.
Visual and performing arts	<b>Good.</b> The standard of students' work is generally high. Retention and pass rates are good. Much of the teaching is good. Students are successfully encouraged to work on their own.
Psychology, sociology, law, philosophy, politics	<b>Satisfactory.</b> The social science provision is satisfactory overall, but teaching, learning or examination results are unsatisfactory on some individual courses.
History, geography and economics	<b>Good.</b> Teaching and learning are responsive to the needs of students, resulting in good and improving examination results. Retention rates are low in geography. Support and guidance are

	effective.
English	<b>Good.</b> Most teaching is good or better. Students are serious learners. Pass rates on GCE A-level courses are above average, but GCSE course results are poor.

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

Leadership and management are good. The style of management is open and managers are accessible. The principal and senior managers provide clear goals in a recently agreed four-year academic strategy, which has the full support of staff and governors. Quality assurance procedures are well established. Examination results on advanced level courses have improved. Results on intermediate GNVQ courses are good. Management at course level is generally good, but self-assessment lacks rigour in one or two curriculum areas.

### To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college is strongly committed to social inclusiveness and this is reflected in all its work. It recruits a large number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Some 80% of students are from minority ethnic groups. Teaching and learning take account of this cultural diversity. All students are encouraged to have high aspirations and, where appropriate, to progress to HE. The college sees itself as a provider of courses for students aged 16 to 19 and does not plan to run courses for adults. It has introduced courses at foundation level, but only three course groups are currently offered. The college's pursuit of equality of opportunity is a central feature of its activity.

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

For most students, support and guidance are at least satisfactory. There are comprehensive pre-course advice and guidance arrangements. Induction procedures are thorough and are appreciated by students. The tutorial system is well established. Tutors have clear procedures and are provided with timely information about students' attendance, punctuality and performance. However, the effectiveness of tutorials is not monitored and some are ineffective. Some students and tutors do not make good use of students' progress files. Good, impartial and up-to-date careers guidance is provided. The guidance support unit is effective in providing practical support. All students' additional learning support needs are assessed during induction, but not all those who need help receive it. There is no regular, systematic monitoring to assess the effectiveness of the learning support provided.

### Students' views of the college

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

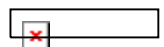
***What students like about the college***

- welcoming and friendly relationships between staff and students
- good range of advanced courses
- good teaching by helpful teachers
- good advice and guidance before enrolment, followed by useful induction and tutorials
- helpful subject workshops.

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

- general studies and critical thinking lessons
- social areas for students
- noise disturbance in some classrooms
- overcrowded corridors and canteen, especially in adverse weather.

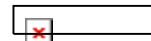
**Other information**



The college has two months to prepare an action plan in response to the report. It must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report.

and the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

## Part B: The college as a whole



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

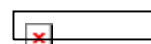
Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	74	24	2
19+ and WBL*	**	**	**
Learning 16-18	72	24	4
19+ and WBL*	**	**	**

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

\*\* there is no provision designed specifically for adults or work-based learning

### Achievement and standards



1. The large majority of students at Sir George Monoux college follow courses leading to GCE A levels and AVCEs. At this level, pass rates have improved over the last three years and in 2001 were broadly in line with national averages for all sixth form colleges. Considering the level of deprivation amongst students in the college, compared with most sixth form colleges, this is creditable. The average GCE A-level points score achieved has also risen over the same period and, at 13.1, compares favourably with the local average, but remains well below the national average.

2. For students taking advanced level courses, analysis of value added data shows that, in 2001, students performed broadly in line with predictions based on their prior achievements on GCSE courses. The value added scores for the college as a whole have improved over the last three years, from those in 1999, which indicated that students were under performing. On some courses, such as English literature, economics and philosophy, students achieved significantly better grades than those predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. However, on other courses, such as law and computing, the converse was true.

3. In 2001, some 262 young people completed on courses leading to GNVQs at intermediate level, and 73% achieved the qualification. This compares favourably with local and national averages. The college's overall performance on courses leading to qualifications at level 2 is poor. This is largely



due to low pass rates in English and mathematics GCSEs. Nevertheless, the pass rate in GCSE mathematics has improved and was slightly above the very low national average in 2001. In English GCSE, pass rates have declined to well below the national average.

4. Comparatively few students take foundation GNVQs. In 2000/01, only business studies was offered at foundation level. Some 86% of students passed, in line with the national rate. There have been considerable variations in both pass and retention rates at this level over recent years. These variations appear more pronounced as a result of the low numbers of students involved. In September 2001, the college introduced courses leading to leisure and tourism GNVQ at foundation level in response to an identified local need.

5. The proportion of students who complete their courses at advanced level is largely in line with the national retention rates for sixth form colleges. On level 2 programmes, retention rates are good and have been above national levels for the past three years.

6. The attendance rate at lessons observed during the inspection was 85%. Within this overall average, the attendance rate was low in ICT, at 76%, while it was high in science and mathematics, at over 90%. Poor punctuality was identified as a weakness by the college in its self-assessment report and confirmed by inspectors. Latecomers hampered progress in many lessons.

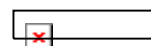
7. Around 75% to 80% of students on advanced level courses go on to HE. Many of these students come from families with no tradition of continuing in education and the high rate is a reflection of the encouragement to study they receive at the college. In some curriculum areas, the progression rate to HE is particularly high. For example, in 2001 it was over 85% in science. In recognition of the demands of HE and employment, the college has, as a central aim of its academic strategy, the promotion of independence in students. In some curriculum areas, this aim is not yet being achieved. For example, in business studies and English, students do not develop the skills needed for independent research and learning.

8. Students' attainment was good or better in 54% of lessons, satisfactory in a further 41%, and unsatisfactory in 5%. Students' attainment was good, for example, in performing arts, where confidence and self-discipline, allied to focused and economical use of movement, served to illustrate and heighten the text being studied. In law, in a debate on double jeopardy, students showed good understanding and an analytical approach to the topic. In the minority of lessons where inspectors observed unsatisfactory attainment, students lacked the knowledge, understanding and skills to contribute fully to the lesson or to complete the tasks required of them. In GCSE mathematics, for example, students did not have the numerical skills expected on such a course. In a discussion in social sciences, students' lack of knowledge and understanding meant they relied too heavily on their teacher to provide the analysis required to carry the discussion forward.

### **Adult learners**

9. There are no courses aimed specifically at adults. Only 2% of the students at Sir George Monoux College are aged 19 or above. Most of these joined the college before their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday and they all work towards the same qualifications as the 16 to 18 year olds. Well over 80% of these older students are in the second year of their course and have recently reached the age of 19. Only a few students start their programmes at 19. Of these a small minority are slightly older. Some 42% of students aged 19 or over are working towards GCE A levels and most of the rest are working towards advanced vocational qualifications in business studies or IT.

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



10. Teaching and learning are very effective. There is a high proportion of good and very good teaching and very few unsatisfactory lessons. Inspectors graded teaching, learning and attainment in 123 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 74% of the lessons observed. Within this, teaching was very good or excellent in 28% of lessons. It was satisfactory in 24% and less than satisfactory in only 2% of lessons. In science, all but one lesson was at least good and in English 14 of the 16 lessons observed were good or better.

11. The large majority of lessons are carefully planned and well structured to develop the subject matter logically and coherently. Staff know their subjects and generally make skilful use of questions to involve all students and to check their understanding of what is being taught. In many lessons, students were relaxed and confident, worked with energy and enthusiasm and expressed their knowledge of the subject in an articulate and analytical manner. Most teachers gave students of all abilities the chance to take part in discussions and other learning activities. Where appropriate, they made links between theory and practice. In general, teachers had high expectations of their students which were usually met. For example, in one outstanding philosophy lesson on the theory of knowledge, students were required to provide definitions and reasoning for key concepts. Students provided perceptive comments on the distinction between belief and knowledge. In many subject areas, workshops are provided to help students and extend their learning.

12. The teaching was unsatisfactory in only three of the lessons observed. In these lessons, the teachers talked too much and the students were bored. Questions to the whole class elicited minimal responses; discussions were poorly managed; poor use was made of the time available and the teachers' expectations were low.

13. Teaching staff are well qualified. All full-time teachers have appropriate academic or vocational qualifications. Some 97% of all teaching staff have recognised teaching qualifications. Technicians and support staff are also, for the most part, appropriately qualified. Arrangements for staff development are generally good. The college has made a commitment to improve the IT skills of its staff. A research project with Middlesex University provides teachers with a chance to reflect on their teaching practice and to develop learning materials and schemes of work collaboratively.

14. The college has made significant investments in physical resources. There have been many recent improvements to facilities and an extensive building project is currently underway to provide new accommodation. At present, poor quality rooms and studios in a minority of curriculum areas reduce the effectiveness of lessons. Most of the college buildings are bright, modern and clean, providing a good learning environment. This is particularly true of the science block and the learning resources centre. In newly refurbished areas, teaching rooms are welcoming, well equipped and well furnished. Some temporary accommodation is unsatisfactory.

15. The last inspection report by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) noted insufficient space for students to socialise. The college has built a new student centre, which is well used. It has the friendly atmosphere of a large common room, and also comprises a cafeteria and social spaces. Many of the students spoken to during the inspection felt that social areas were still inadequate and that the canteen was too overcrowded.

16. The college has invested heavily in IT equipment. All rooms, apart from the cafeteria and counselling room, are networked. There is a good ratio of computers to students and staff. The newly refurbished learning resources centre has 60 computers with Internet access. It has fewer study places than previously and is underused. There is a college intranet to which all students have access. Teachers in some curriculum areas have not made any learning materials available on the intranet. The book stock is barely adequate in some curriculum areas.

17. Access to the college for students with restricted mobility is good. The accommodation provides a safe working environment. The college health and safety committee carries out regular risk assessments.

18. Most teachers assess students' progress in a fair, rigorous and regular manner. The feedback

given to students on their work is usually thoughtful and constructive, identifying clearly what they need to do to improve. In a few subjects, such as geography, the feedback is too brief. In some areas, for example mathematics, there is a clear, well-understood homework policy, implemented by all. In other areas, for example politics and ICT, insufficient work is set. There are some good examples of assessment and monitoring of students' progress during lessons, particularly in visual and performing arts. However, in art and design, opportunities for peer and group assessment are too infrequent.

19. Assessment against awarding body standards is usually accurate. In ICT, however, teachers marked coursework too generously. Subsequent downgrading by the external moderator caused confusion and concern amongst students. Internal assessment and verification procedures for key skills on intermediate and foundation programmes are not standardised across the college.

20. Students' progress is closely and effectively monitored in all curriculum areas. The college identifies minimum target grades for each student and monitors their current level of achievement against these grades. Any student whose performance falls below what is expected, is identified promptly and appropriate action is taken. Parents and students receive regular progress reports and parents can meet teachers at parents' evenings. Teachers make good use of assessment information to plan their lessons and courses. The college monitors students' final grades against those predicted on the basis of their entry qualifications, and uses this value added information when evaluating the effectiveness of its courses.

21. The college offers a range of courses that match the aspirations of its students. There is a good range of GCE A levels, which are carefully timetabled to allow students to choose combinations of subjects that meet their individual needs. There are some courses leading to vocational qualifications at levels 1 to 3 that enable students to progress within the college. There are examples of a few students who have progressed from foundation to advanced vocational courses. However, progression rates from arts vocational courses and intermediate business studies are low. There have been few changes to the subjects offered in the last few years, though the number of groups has been increased and a full-time ESOL course has been introduced. Around 150 gifted and talented students are taking a GCE AS course in critical thinking. A high proportion of students progress into HE.

22. The college markets its programmes effectively through a variety of activities. A student-produced video is used to give a clear overview of what college life is like. The college celebrates the achievements of all its students. The prospectus contains case studies of students who have gone onto university. Notice boards around the college are used effectively to display and celebrate students' successes and there are regular press releases in the local newspapers and on the college web site.

23. The college collaborates effectively with several local universities, whose staff visit the college to talk to students and staff about HE. One university offers students places on a winter school, which is jointly tutored by the college and university. College teachers are working with Middlesex University on projects to review teaching strategies. The college is involved in various partnerships with other local educational organisations. A local employer has been working closely with the college to provide support and guidance for students interested in entering full-time employment.

24. There is a wide range of enrichment activities. Students of law and politics visit law courts, the Houses of Parliament and Brussels. Students of English make regular trips to the theatre and an annual trip to a national creative writing project. The college has two new initiatives with other organisations and provides excellent enrichment opportunities for business studies students and students with an interest in IT. There is a varied range of musical activities and some successful sports teams. The college arranges talks by external speakers and short courses in preparation for driving theory tests and first aid. While students are keen to take part in trips and events directly linked to their courses, wider and more general enrichment activities are less well attended.

25. The college uses the GCE A-level general studies course to broaden the curriculum of students on advanced level courses and develop their key skills. The organisation of this course is satisfactory. There are shared schemes of work and effective internal verification procedures for the

key skills elements. For students on intermediate and foundation level programmes, key skills are taught within the vocational areas. There is a lack of co-ordination of the key skills work on these courses and there are inconsistencies in the methods of teaching and standards of assessment. Results in external IT key skills tests were poor across the college as a whole last year. There were good examples of the integration of key skills work and vocational work in assignments for GNVQ leisure and tourism.

26. For most students, the support and guidance provided by the college are at least satisfactory. Students on GCE A-level courses have a weekly group tutorial, usually lasting 30 minutes at the end of the teaching day. On GNVQ and AVCE courses, tutorial work is often done during normal lessons. Apart from group tutorials, students can make individual appointments to see a tutor and take part in regular progress reviews. Through these, students' progress, attendance and punctuality are monitored regularly. There are well-understood procedures for dealing with problems.

27. The tutors' handbook, published in 1999, contains information about students' entitlements, tutorial policies and procedures, and the two-year programme of tutorial work. Updates are produced as required. Student progress files were introduced in September 2001 and have, in part, reduced the need for the tutors' handbook. However, these files are not yet being used effectively in all curriculum areas. A student progress and monitoring group meets regularly, but senior managers do not routinely observe and monitor the implementation of the tutorial policy and procedures. Attendance in some tutorials was poor. In some tutorials, there was a lack of purpose and direction and the majority of students paid little attention. By contrast, in other tutorials, there was an atmosphere of purposeful activity and all students appreciated the tutorial activities and found them very helpful.

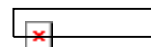
28. Pre-course guidance is impartial and comprehensive. There is a general induction programme for all new students which is often supplemented by subject-specific induction. Many courses have useful course handbooks. In response to surveys in 2000 and 2001, more than 88% of students said they were satisfied with the help they got from the college in choosing courses. Communication with parents about choosing courses and about students' progress whilst at college is effective. Careers education and guidance are good. The careers resource centre is in an appropriate location and students make good use its facilities and resources. The range and quality of information meet the needs of students and materials are updated regularly.

29. The guidance support unit is very effective in providing practical help and advice to students, responding to requests for information, and directing students to external agencies if necessary. A counsellor is available on a drop-in basis or by appointment two days each week. The strong administrative team helps students who receive financial support, supplies information on courses and enrolment and maintains student records, including those relating to attendance and punctuality. Although tutors receive this information regularly, it has not led to any improvements in punctuality.

30. The majority of students are well supported in lessons through effective teaching and differentiated learning tasks. There is no discrete basic skills provision. All students are tested and interviewed on entry to the college to identify any additional learning support. If necessary, students are given additional help by placing an additional teacher in the classroom, workshops organising or, where appropriate, dyslexia support sessions. In some, though not all subject areas, this is having a noticeable impact on retention and pass rates. However, the two learning support teachers are unable to provide help for all those requiring it. For example, in a class of 22 students, where over 80% had been identified as needing additional learning support, the additional learning support teacher was unable to work with all the students who needed help. The learning support teachers do not have prepared lesson plans and work largely as classroom assistants.

31. The college has no staff with specialised qualifications in the teaching of numeracy. Some students who need help with numeracy are referred to subject workshops to receive additional help, but their attendance is often erratic. The monitoring and follow-up of students who receive learning support is informal and ineffective. Links between subject and course teachers, ESOL teachers and learning support teachers are weak.

## Leadership and management



32. Leadership and management are good. The principal provides clear and positive leadership. The recent development of a four-year academic strategy involved careful and wide consultation with staff and governors. Its aim, to raise retention and pass rates by promoting a positive work ethic and encouraging students to work on their own, is widely supported by staff. The strategy intends to encourage students to engage more strongly with their chosen subjects and to promote in them the capacity to develop the analytical and argumentative skills appropriate to success in HE. The college's retention and pass rates on level 3 courses are at, or near, national averages. The academic strategy aims to raise them to above average. In its early stages the plan focuses on staff development to improve teaching and learning; the development of students' use of the learning resource centre; and the forging of links with local universities.

33. The corporation supports the college's academic strategy. Governors were involved in developing the strategy during their annual two-day residential conference in April. Their standards committee has been renamed the academic strategy monitoring committee, and has a clear remit to monitor and evaluate the college's progress towards the aims set out in the strategy document. The initial evaluation will be led by the principal in July 2002. Governors participate with senior managers on the academic strategy monitoring committee in the setting of targets for retention and pass rates. They compare results with national averages and report to the main board. Governors are aware of the college's strengths and are clear in their wishes to remedy its weaknesses.

34. The principal and senior managers are openly accessible to the staff. Their open door policy and their willingness to engage in discussion and listen to views is greatly valued by staff.

35. Most heads of department manage their subject areas well. Communication is clear and effective. Teams meet regularly, and curriculum issues are discussed. Recent promotions of staff within departments have strengthened the management and delivery of the curriculum. Most courses are well planned and have appropriate work schemes. Projects arising from the academic strategic plan are underway in a number of subject areas. These include a peer mentoring scheme system in business studies, and a project on improving teaching in English and law. A project on language skills is planned. Three times each year, heads of department review retention and pass rates in their subjects with their line managers. These reviews include an analysis of individual students' performance relative to their GCSE point scores on entry, as well as the department's overall performance. Targets are set and progress towards them is monitored.

36. Lesson observations are carried out as part of the quality assurance procedures. Teachers are observed each year and their lessons are graded. In a number of curriculum areas, the grade profiles were more generous than those awarded by inspectors. Students' views are also collected. Self-assessment is generally thorough, but in a number of subject areas the strength of examination results and retention rates has been overstated. Comparing students' performance with what would be predicted on the basis of their GCSE scores on entry is widely and successfully used, both to set targets for individual students, and to judge the performance of whole departments.

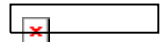
37. Senior post holders are appraised by the governors each term. All other staff are appraised by their line managers each year. This year for the first time, teaching observation has been done by line managers and has been taken into account in staff appraisal. A comprehensive and well-funded staff development programme is produced each year. It is based primarily on the requirements of the academic strategy, but also takes into account the needs and aspirations of individual teachers.

38. The college's pursuit of equality of opportunity is a central feature to all it does. More than 80% of students are from minority ethnic groups. The staff respect different cultures and beliefs, and there is clear evidence of the recognition of diversity in the curriculum. For example, in literature lessons African-Caribbean and Asian literature figure prominently. There are effective links with a

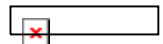
local south-east Asian community organisation for informal counselling and advice. There were well-attended talks during Ramadan by speakers from an Islamic organisation.

39. The college's information system is able to provide appropriate data to managers to help them make decisions. This system is about to be replaced with one which can store and analyse data about students more effectively. College budgets are tightly controlled and effectively monitored. Financial management is sound, though at present the corporation does not have a member with a strong financial background. The governors are aware of this and expect to recruit a new member with financial expertise soon. Value for money is assured by the effective deployment of staff and resources. A major building project is underway and is on time and on budget.

## Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



### Science



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

#### **Strengths**

- good teaching and effective learning
- high pass rates
- good accommodation and resources
- good rate of progression to HE
- effective teamwork and leadership.

#### **Weaknesses**

- low retention rates in physics and chemistry

- low proportion of passes at the higher grades in biology.

### **Scope of provision**

40. Students work towards a GCE AS qualification in biology, chemistry or physics over one year and then work towards the GCE A level over a second year. Many students choose to study three science GCE A levels and a fourth GCE AS from a wide range of complementary courses, such as mathematics, computing or psychology. Students wishing to study science subjects at GCE AS or A level are normally required to have five GCSEs, including mathematics at grade B. There is no GCSE provision and no vocational courses are offered. Until the end of 1999/2000, the college taught GNVQ science, but the demand for this course fell and the college discontinued the course.

### **Achievement and standards**

41. Approximately 250 students study on GCE AS or A-level science courses each year. Most take the relevant GCE AS examinations at the end of the first year and continue to GCE A level in the second year. Fewer than 10 students each year complete a GCE AS course in physics, chemistry or biology, but do not continue to GCE A level. Overall pass rates in these subjects at GCE A level are well over 80%. The proportion of students gaining the higher A to C grades in biology is below the national averages for both sixth form and general FE colleges and is average in chemistry and physics. Retention rates in physics and chemistry are low.

42. Students monitor their own progress in regular reviews with their subject teachers and using progress files in which they record weekly homework, the dates for completion of assignments and the grades achieved. In lessons, students are attentive and make appropriate notes, which help them to revise and to complete homework assignments. Most students' attainments are above average. Overall attendance is good at over 90% and most students are punctual. Over 85% of successful students progress to HE, where they study a wide range of subjects, including medicine and related disciplines, computing, engineering and a range of science subjects. The destinations of those not going to university are not monitored.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in science, 1999 to 2001**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	71	48	58
		% retention	66	81	78
		% pass rate	87	79	85
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	71	46	61
		% retention	69	76	70
		% pass rate	86	97	91
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	28	26	57
		% retention	75	73	68
		% pass rate	65	79	87

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

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

43. Teaching and learning are good or better in almost all lessons. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. Students study with enthusiasm, ask appropriate questions and work well with other students. They use correct terminology and develop good reasoning skills. In laboratories, the students work safely and develop the skills of careful observation and accurate measurement. In written laboratory reports, they identify sources of error in their experiments and critically evaluate their work. There are no arrangements to visit science-based industries or to invite speakers from local companies into the college.

44. Lessons are well prepared and students undertake a variety of activities including listening to short explanations from teachers, using video, watching demonstrations and completing science crosswords. All science students undertake practical work. All courses have schemes of work, which are shared with the students. Some schemes of work specify assessment requirements and indicate opportunities to develop key skills. Others are less detailed. All homework is carefully marked. Teachers make corrections and comments. The written feedback varies in usefulness, but all teachers give further feedback during lessons. In physics, model answers to exercises are available on the college intranet. In chemistry, the model answers are filed on paper. Little use is made of IT in lessons, but computers are used in practical work for data logging and are used by students in the learning centre outside of lesson time.

45. In many lessons, students worked in small groups on challenging exercises and teachers provided helpful comments as necessary, but allowed students time to develop their own problem solving skills. In a biology lesson, students used electrophoresis to analyse DNA samples. They used technical terminology correctly in their explanations and developed appropriate practical skills. Students in a chemistry lesson analysed the proportion of copper in an alloy, taking care in the safe use of apparatus and making accurate measurements. In another chemistry lesson, students worked in groups to make models of organic compounds and then compared results. The relationships between staff and students are supportive. Students develop a thorough understanding of their subjects, willingly share their ideas and discuss their understanding with others. Physics students in one lesson accurately predicted the likely scattering pattern of radioactive particles before watching a video of similar experiments. In addition to problem solving skills, students develop good skills in observation and measurement and make appropriate links between theory and practice. Students are not given sufficient opportunities to demonstrate key skills during science programmes, and level 3 communication skills are assessed only on the GCE A-level general studies course.

46. The science teachers are well qualified. Some have industrial experience. Teachers benefit from staff development in topics such as preparing for curriculum changes and the use of IT in the classroom. There is good technical support and equipment is well maintained. The sciences are taught in adequately equipped, comfortable laboratories with IT and video facilities. Handouts are of good quality. The learning resources centre has an adequate stock of books and periodicals. There are class sets of textbooks in the laboratories and all students have copies of textbooks for use at home.

47. Students with additional learning needs are identified through careful screening on entry to the college. Each is then given an individual learning plan and extra subject support. All students agree minimum target grades with their tutors and these are compared with the grades gained during their course. When weaknesses are identified in regular progress reviews, the students join subject support workshops, which are staffed by specialist teachers.

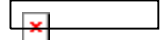
### ***Leadership and management***

48. Leadership and management are effective. Teachers work well as a team and communicate regularly with senior managers. They hold weekly planning meetings which lead to agreed actions. The teachers have high expectations of students and work closely with each other to monitor the students' progress. The staff share ideas and discuss problems. Schemes of work vary in format and some are more comprehensive than others. Quality assurance arrangements include double marking, checks on students' folders and peer assessment. Teachers support students formally through workshops and informally with individual help. They compare students' grades with what would be predicted on the basis of their entry qualifications, and use this and other data to monitor



the performance of the department. They prepare honest and self-critical annual self-assessment reports.

## **Mathematics**



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

### ***Strengths***

- improving pass rates on GCE A-level and GCSE mathematics courses
- strong team leadership
- good teaching
- well-resourced mathematics workshop, providing effective support
- well-motivated students
- good use of IT in teaching and learning.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor punctuality in some lessons
- no suitable course for students with poor mathematical skills.

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

49. The college provides mathematics courses at intermediate and advanced levels. There are 305 students currently studying mathematics at the college. Students are only allowed to take GCE A-level mathematics if they have a grade B in GCSE mathematics. They are able to choose from a wide range of GCE A-level modules. A small number of students, most of whom have GCSE A

grades, take GCE A-level further mathematics. The college plans to offer a new GCE AS course in the use of mathematics for the first time in 2002. This will allow students with lower grades to continue studying mathematics. A GCSE re-sit course is available.

### **Achievement and standards**

50. Pass rates have improved steadily over the last three years in GCE A-level and GCSE mathematics. Retention rates are close to the national average. At GCE A level, the pass rate of 80% is now close to the national average for sixth form colleges. The percentage of students obtaining high grades has increased from 26% in 1999 to 53% in 2001. On the GCSE course, there was a drop in the retention rate in 2001, but an increase in the pass rate to 45%. This exceeded the, albeit low, national average for the first time.

51. Most students achieve grades the same or slightly higher than those predicted on the basis of their entry qualifications. Last year 17 students obtained grade A in GCE A-level mathematics and 5 of them also got an A grade in further mathematics. The progression rate to HE is high. Four students are going on to study mathematics-related subjects at Oxbridge. Attendance in the lessons observed was good at over 90%. In many lessons, students did not arrive punctually, which hampered progress.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in mathematics, 1999 to 2001**

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	98	145	141
		% retention	74	76	69
		% pass rate	27	35	45
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	99	68	133
		% retention	78	78	76
		% pass rate	67	75	80
GCE A-level further mathematics	3	No. of starts	9	3	10
		% retention	56	67	80
		% pass rate	50	100	100

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

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

52. In mathematics, all the teaching observed was at least satisfactory and 80% was good or better. Staff demonstrate very good subject knowledge and have productive working relationships with their students. Good practice is shared among the staff, who use a wide range of appropriate teaching styles. Some teachers use IT effectively to support teaching and learning. For example, in one lesson students used computers in the learning resource centre to investigate graph functions. However, these computers are not always available when mathematics teachers wish to use them. In another lesson, students made a model slide rule and the teacher used a computer linked to a projector to provide a stimulating introduction to the exponential function.

53. Most lessons include a range of appropriate activities, but in a few the teaching is over directive and students are not given sufficient opportunities to contribute. Questioning is used effectively by teachers to check students' progress and understanding and also to challenge and extend their thinking. Students are responsive and well motivated. In most lessons, they are willing and able to question each other's methods when working in small groups.

54. Staff apply homework and marking policies consistently. Teachers mark work promptly and some, though not all, include solutions and constructive comments. Students' performance, progress and attendance are monitored effectively in tutorials. Students in need of extra help are set a specific programme of work to follow in the workshop. There are schemes of work for all courses, but the format and amount of detail in lesson plans varies.

55. The mathematics section runs a successful taster day for new entrants. This, along with well-structured and informative course booklets, ensures a smooth transition from school to college. Students receive the booklets at the start of their courses. The booklets contain a syllabus, scheme of work, information about assessment, and other useful advice and guidance. A weekly maths puzzle is popular with students. In November 2001, 50 students entered the national maths challenge and 2 progressed to the British Maths Olympiad.

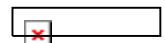
56. Mathematics lessons take place in a suite of adjacent classrooms. The rooms are well furnished and appropriately equipped. Interesting displays of students' work and posters create a stimulating learning environment. The daily mathematics workshop is well attended and highly valued although the room in which it is held is sometimes overcrowded. The workshop is well resourced and expert help is available when needed. The workshops are skilfully managed. Staff work effectively with different groups, asking probing questions giving hints and reassurance. They also provide more in-depth remedial help. Very effective learning takes place, as students discuss methods, concepts and solutions.

57. For a small minority of students at the college, there is no appropriate course to enable them to gain a qualification in mathematics. Young people on foundation or intermediate level programmes work towards the key skills qualification in numeracy. However, students on advanced level programmes who are not studying mathematics at GCE A level, only have the option to retake GCSE mathematics. This is not always appropriate for students who have previously achieved only very low grades and many of these students are unsuccessful on the retake course.

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

58. The mathematics department is very well led and managed. Students' achievements have improved steadily. Courses are rigorously reviewed annually. Team meetings are regular and effective and staff share good practice. There are well-established and appropriate procedures for dealing with student absence and lack of progress. There is an effective homework policy. Teachers interview all students soon after the start of the course so that any problems can be tackled early.

### **Business studies**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- high proportion of very good teaching
- high pass rates on advanced level courses
- effective development of students' key skills on foundation and intermediate level

programmes

- excellent individual support and guidance
- imaginative initiatives to enrich students' experiences
- well-led, mutually supportive teams.

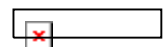
### ***Weaknesses***

- poor punctuality
- insufficient development of students' research and independent learning skills
- students' limited awareness of, and interest in, current business affairs.

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

59. The college provides GNVQ business programmes at foundation and intermediate levels. At advanced level, the college provides GCE A-level courses in business studies and accounts and a course leading to the AVCE in business. At the time of inspection, there were 129 students following the GCE AS/A-level course in business, 93 on the GCE A-level accounts course, 91 on the AVCE course, 72 on the intermediate GNVQ course and 51 on the foundation level course. The college collaborates with a banking group to offer selected AVCE first year students a place on the Academy of Finance programme. This is based on a similar programme developed at the bank's New York offices. It involves study of some additional units devised by the bank and offers guaranteed paid work experience at the bank's London offices during summer holidays. Sir George Monoux College is one of just three colleges in the United Kingdom to participate in this project and currently 20 students have been selected to participate.

### **Achievement and standards**



60. The achievements of business and accounts students are broadly in line with national averages for sixth form colleges and better than those of most colleges serving communities with similar

GCSE results. The college is more successful at helping students with low GCSE entry scores to obtain a pass at GCE A level than it is in enabling more able students to achieve a high grade.

61. During lessons, students show through their responses to questions that they understand the topic under discussion. Their responses within lessons and their written work is of a high standard in relation to their learning goals. Students at foundation and intermediate levels demonstrate growing self-confidence and impressive communication skills when presenting information and participating in role-play exercises in front of their peers.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in business studies, 1999 to 2001***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ foundation	1	No. of starts	25	46	48
		% retention	84	83	73
		% pass rate	90	74	86
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	47	75	68
		% retention	81	87	88
		% pass rate	84	83	77
AVCE business	3	No. of starts	24	25	35
		% retention	67	84	86
		% pass rate	88	86	90
GCE A-level business	3	No. of starts	54	38	45
		% retention	59	76	78
		% pass rate	88	100	91
GCE A-level accounts	3	No. of starts	27	46	27
		% retention	74	59	70
		% pass rate	75	89	84

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

***Quality of education and training***

62. Lessons are carefully planned to ensure that students experience a range of appropriate learning activities. Teachers organise lessons to ensure that tasks are sufficiently varied to maintain students' interest. This is particularly true at foundation level. Students work hard in most lessons.

63. Teachers are good humoured and relaxed in their approach, but firm and effective in maintaining the attention of students. Teachers demonstrate concern for, and awareness of, the progress of individual students. Their support and guidance of individuals is excellent. Students feel able to ask for clarification throughout lessons and show respect for their teachers and peers. Teachers work hard to make lessons fun. One effective lesson on customer service involved groups of students role-playing disgruntled and difficult customers returning goods they no longer wanted to a retail store. Everyone enjoyed entering into the spirit of the role-play, but at the same time valuable lessons were learnt.

64. In lessons at foundation and intermediate levels, teachers pay particular attention to the development of key skills and some excellent teaching was seen where the teaching of grammar was combined with developing students' understanding of the use of data. In another lesson, students on an intermediate level course worked efficiently in groups to study information in tabular

form, identify underlying trends and explain and present these in graphical form to their peers all within 20 minutes.

65. In lessons at advanced level, teachers demonstrate good command of their subjects and are skilled in directing questions to all students to check their progress and understanding. Difficult topics are well-handled and, due attention is paid to the development of examination techniques. However, in some classes, topics were not developed to the depth required for the highest grade passes.

66. Students on advanced level courses work hard outside lessons and make good use of their textbooks and case study materials. However, they do insufficient additional reading or independent research. In one GCE A-level lesson, no one was aware of the headline inflation rate that had been announced the previous day. In general, students have not developed much interest in current business affairs.

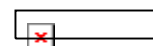
67. Staff are well qualified and benefit from appropriate professional development. Accommodation and resources are good. Appropriate use is made of easily accessible ICT resources. Students' progress is monitored closely and appropriate action is taken if necessary. The department's homework policy is effective and the feedback to students on their work is generally comprehensive and useful.

68. The department is working with two external consultants to improve the repertoire of teaching styles and classroom management techniques used on foundation level courses. A mentoring scheme partners students on foundation level programmes with volunteers from the second year of the AVCE programme to provide individual coaching and support. Both initiatives are highly effective. Coaching is available in workshops to help students capable of getting higher-grade passes at GCE A level to achieve their potential. An external consultant and former students offer students a combination of one-to-one coaching and some inspirational talks. The Academy of Finance initiative is also highly successful.

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

69. There is strong and effective leadership in the business department. A democratic style of management has led to strong and cohesive teams with mutually supportive members and effective communication between colleagues. There is a strong sense of common purpose based on a commitment to helping students achieve their full potential. There is also a culture of honest self-criticism. This is evident from the well-written self-assessment report for the department. Many of the weaknesses identified through self-assessment had been remedied by the time of the inspection.

### **Information and communication technology**



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

### ***Strengths***

- good retention and pass rates on GNVQ and AVCE programmes
- good rates of progression within and beyond the college for the majority of students

- effective learning support for students.

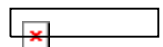
### **Weaknesses**

- poor retention rate on the GCE A-level ICT programme in 2001
- failure of some students to achieve their full potential
- failure to check that learning has taken place in some lessons
- insufficient language support for students whose first language is not English.

### **Scope of provision**

70. There are over 490 students in the curriculum area, and enrolments are increasing on all programmes. Most courses are at advanced level. Courses include GCE A-level computing, GCE A-level ICT and AVCE in ICT. The college also offers a GNVQ course at intermediate level. The college has recently become a CISCO academy and is offering the course to 20 advanced level students.

### **Achievement and standards**



71. Students do well on GNVQ and AVCE courses. Retention and pass rates are significantly above the national averages. The picture is less clear-cut for GCE A levels. The retention rate on the GCE A-level ICT course in 2001 was well below the national average. Pass rates on GCE A-level computing have been below the national average for sixth form colleges for the last three years. Students on this course do not do as well as would be predicted, based on their GCSE grades when they join the college. Entry requirements have been increased this year in an attempt to improve pass rates. The rate of progression from GNVQ intermediate to AVCE is good. A high proportion of students go on to study IT and related subjects in HE.

72. Students' attainment in most lessons is satisfactory or better. However, in 13% of lessons observed the level of attainment was below that expected. Progress reports show that almost half of students on second-year GCE A-level programmes achieve lower grades in their tests than those predicted on the basis of their GCSE scores on entry. The same is true for first year students on the GCE A-level computing course, but test grades are closer to predicted grades for first year students on the GCE A-level ICT course. Attendance, overall, was low at 76%.

73. Most students have well-developed practical skills. For example, some students use advanced features of database packages to develop complex applications. Students are encouraged to develop their skills by devising their own projects. For example, students have designed database projects about mobile telephones, films and compact discs. One student was working with a local school to design a database to track pupil behaviour and attendance patterns. The standard of some students' work is low.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in information and communication technology, 1999 to 2001***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ intermediate ICT	2	No. of starts	48	69	79
		% retention	85	90	92
		% pass rate	78	69	73
GCE A-level ICT	3	No. of starts	64	92	95
		% retention	73	81	66
		% pass rate	84	78	89
AVCE ICT	3	No. of starts	27	23	34
		% retention	78	87	94
		% pass rate	68	75	84
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	47	41	49
		% retention	70	86	73
		% pass rate	65	63	66

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

***Quality of education and training***

74. Some 60% of the teaching observed was good and 40% was satisfactory. Most lessons were well planned. Teachers gave clear explanations and used good handouts. In practical lessons, teachers were effective in helping students to learn. In one lesson on microprocessor logic operations, the teacher linked the topic well to students' existing knowledge and included a range practical exercises, which took account of the varied levels of attainment in the class. The more able students were given tasks which stretched them, and the teacher spent time with individuals who needed additional help.

75. Some of the lessons were poorly planned. Teachers in these lessons did not check what students knew at the start of the lesson or what they had learned at the end. In one case, there was over-reliance on a handout to explain networks and network topology and insufficient use of questioning to challenge and involve students. When questions were asked they were not directed at individuals and the more able students tended to dominate the discussion.

76. There are timetabled workshops, staffed by three ICT tutors, in which students can seek help with their projects and assignments. Lesson notes, assignments and examples are available on the college's intranet. Most IT resources are to industry standards. The overall ratio of computers to students is satisfactory, but in some lessons involving large groups there are insufficient workstations to meet the needs of all students. Hardware and software have been updated in the past year. Students have supervised access to the Internet. The majority of staff have a teaching qualification and experience in the ICT industry. However, few staff have the high level IT skills necessary to support the most able students. Links with industry are weak. Students are not given the opportunity to gain work experience or hear from visiting speakers.



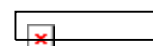
77. Some assignment briefs do not provide guidance for students on grading criteria. Assignments on the AVCE course are sometimes set too close together. The development of students' key skills is not an integral part of their ICT courses and opportunities to develop and access key skills are not identified in assignments. Key skills are taught and assessed on the GCE A level in general studies course for students on GCE A-level or AVCE programmes. Most teachers mark students' assignments satisfactorily and provide helpful comments on how they might improve their work. There is effective internal moderation on the AVCE programme, but on the GNVQ intermediate programme, the awarding body has identified inconsistencies in marking. GCE A-level ICT first-year projects were marked too leniently last year, resulting in most students' work being downgraded. Interim assessment has been introduced for GCE A-level projects this year.

78. The basic skills of students on intermediate level courses are assessed when they join the college. Individual learning support is provided by placing a learning support tutor in the classroom for one hour each week. This is insufficient for one group, where 80% of the students have been identified as needing help with communication skills. Some students whose first language is not English were disappointed that they had been placed on a programme at intermediate level, rather than the AVCE programme. Many have appropriate GCSE qualifications and good IT skills and feel they are marking time on the intermediate programme. However, self-assessment has identified several students on advanced level courses who are not achieving their predicted grades due to weaknesses in their English language skills.

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

79. The head of department understands the strategic objectives of the college, but this is not true of all members of staff. Targets for recruitment and retention and pass rates are set. The self-assessment report identified strengths and weaknesses in the provision. There is an associated development plan and action has already been taken to address some of the weaknesses. There are regular, effective meetings and staff share good practice. Course files for the AVCE and GNVQ intermediate programmes include an equality of opportunity self-assessment report. The head of department has observed the teaching of six members of staff and identified some of the strengths and weaknesses. There are good arrangements for monitoring the progress of GCE A-level IT students, and it is planned to extend these to other programmes.

### **Visual and performing arts**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- good retention and pass rates on most courses
- encouragement of students to work on their own
- good teaching
- effective planning on most courses

- good monitoring of students' progress.

### **Weaknesses**

- some learning disrupted by lateness and persistent absences
- too few opportunities for group assessment in art and design
- insufficient sharing of good practice in among teachers.

### **Scope of provision**

80. About 450 students study on visual, performing arts and media courses. GCE A-level courses and GCE AS courses are provided in art and design, photography, media studies, music, music technology and performing arts. AVCE and GNVQ intermediate courses are provided in art and design and media. An attractive addition to the curriculum is the opportunity for students to receive individual tuition on a variety of musical instruments. While mainly of benefit to those studying music, it is an opportunity which is extended to all.

### **Achievement and standards**

81. On all but one of the courses at intermediate and advanced level, pass rates in 2001 were above national averages. On all courses, retention rates were also above national averages. Students achieve at levels predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. Progression rates on to art foundation courses are high.

82. Standards are good in both written and practical work. In performing arts, students demonstrated good technique and performance skills in an interpretation of Steven Berkoff's play 'East'. Evaluation of students' work is a structured part of lessons in media, music and performing arts. Some advanced level art and design students have well-developed research and study skills and produce good work in their visual diaries. Others make insufficient use of primary source material to develop their ideas. An appropriate emphasis is placed on core skills such as drawing for art and design students, and voice and movement for performing arts students. Mastery of basic drawing techniques featured strongly in an art lesson on self-portraiture.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts, 1999 to 2001**

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ intermediate media	2	No. of starts	22	21	21
		% retention	86	86	90
		% pass rate	32	100	79
GCE A-level performing	3	No. of starts	29	28	33

arts		% retention	66	79	85
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GNVQ advanced art and design	3	No. of starts	19	24	28
		% retention	63	91	82
		% pass rate	50	61	91
GCE A-level music performance	3	No. of starts	9	4	9
		% retention	78	75	89
		% pass rate	86	100	88
GCE A-level media studies	3	No. of starts	63	70	75
		% retention	59	76	72
		% pass rate	95	94	94
GCE A-level photography	3	No. of starts	13	20	18
		% retention	62	70	78
		% pass rate	100	93	100

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

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

83. Most of the teaching is good. Some of it is very good in media, music and performing arts. In art and design, two thirds of lessons seen were good and one third satisfactory. In around 40% of lessons in music, media and performing arts the teaching was very good. A further 30% of lessons were good and the remaining 30% satisfactory.

84. In art and design, teachers demonstrate basic techniques authoritatively and use their knowledge of the history of art to extend students' understanding of the traditions in which their own work is located. Teachers plan courses and lessons carefully, though in art and design some lesson plans did not take account of the specific needs of individual students. Students are given stimulating assignments that encourage them to develop new skills and understanding. For example, in art and design, there are projects on the theme of the urban environment, stimulated by a bank of evocative images chosen by the teacher. In media lessons, video, overhead projectors, the whiteboard and well-designed handouts are all used effectively.

85. Most students are fully committed to their work, though a few find it difficult to sustain concentration over long periods. Learning is at times disrupted by students' lateness and, on one of the art and design courses, poor attendance is inhibiting effective planning. Many students are articulate and show pride and critical awareness when describing their work. Several choose to continue working in classrooms and studios outside of class hours, and many teachers are willing to work with them. This open access to facilities and staff expertise encourages students to learn to work on their own.

86. Teachers make good use of educational visits and links with local businesses and practitioners. In art and design, visits are made to London galleries, and, in performing arts, students have opportunities to work with leading practitioners.

87. There is a satisfactory range of specialist equipment in the visual arts, including an ICT suite. Music and media students have good specialist ICT equipment and software, but in media there is insufficient equipment to meet all the needs of the increasing numbers of students. The learning resources centre has a useful collection of books on the visual and performing arts and media. The rooms in which art and design is taught are too small for the groups using them. Performing arts students are based in a building some 20 minutes from the main campus, travel to which is not

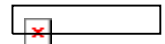
timetabled. These arrangements, though unsatisfactory, are temporary. A substantial new building programme is underway and on target for completion in July 2002. Staff are well qualified. Some have recent industrial experience, which is used to good effect in their teaching.

88. Students know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve. Close in-class monitoring of students' progress is a strong feature of most teaching. The assessment and recording systems in each of the arts have particular strengths, but good practice is not shared between departments. In art and design, opportunities to engage in peer and group assessment are too infrequent.

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

89. Course management is good, but there is insufficient sharing of good practice and too few opportunities to collaborate professionally across the arts. Students' progress and performance at course level and across the programme area is monitored effectively. Regular team meetings ensure key issues are addressed. There is a well-developed self-assessment procedure, leading to realistic action plans.

### **Psychology, sociology, law, philosophy, politics**



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

### ***Strengths***

- well-planned courses
- thorough assessment of students' work on most courses
- good handouts
- effective learning support in workshops.

### ***Weaknesses***

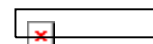
- poor pass rates in law
- ineffective use of questions in lessons

- poor management of discussions in lessons
- some poor accommodation.

### **Scope of provision**

90. The college provides a full range of GCE A level courses in the social sciences, including psychology, sociology, politics, philosophy and law. Demand for the courses has been stable for the past three years, with the exception of psychology and philosophy whose numbers have steadily risen.

### **Achievement and standards**



91. Most of the courses have pass rates close to the national average, but law results are poor. In 2001, philosophy students performed well above average, with 70% of them achieving grades A to C. Philosophy, along with politics and sociology, all achieved high pass rates of over 90% in the new GCE AS exams. The GCE A-level law pass rates have been consistently low. Students on this course achieve grades significantly lower than would be predicted on the basis of their previous GCSE results. The pass rate on the AS course in law was also low in 2001, at 68%. In 2001, in psychology, only 66% of students completed their course, although those who completed did well.

92. Some of the students produce work of a high standard, particularly in the second year of their course. Many of their essays contain well-written analysis and effectively evaluated evidence. Psychology and sociology students can assess the comparative strength and weaknesses of different theoretical perspectives, and are able to cite examples from their own experience to support their arguments. For example, sociology essays used examples from rap music and cartoons to demonstrate how popular culture can challenge traditional authority. The best philosophy essays contained sophisticated critical arguments in discussing the nature of reality. However, some of the weaker students lack the basic knowledge and understanding required at advanced level, and too few students undertake independent research when tackling assignments. Progression rates to HE are good. Depending on the course, 65% to 75% of students went onto a degree course in 2000/01, with approximately 25% of students from each course choosing that subject at university.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in psychology, sociology, law, philosophy, politics, 1999 to 2001***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	46	48	62
		% retention	65	73	77
		% pass rate	77	54	54
GCE A-level philosophy	3	No. of starts	12	23	28
		% retention	33	78	71

		% pass rate	100	61	85
GCE A-level politics	3	No. of starts	21	23	21
		% retention	76	65	86
		% pass rate	94	67	78
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	43	48	44
		% retention	74	77	66
		% pass rate	84	78	90
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	67	60	61
		% retention	66	60	82
		% pass rate	63	81	81

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

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

93. Courses are well planned. Schemes of work give a clear indication of the teaching and learning activities and the resources needed. Key skills are fully integrated into the schemes of work. Teachers have a strong grasp of their subjects and most convey their enthusiasm for their subjects during lessons. In a GCE A-level philosophy lesson, for example, the teachers' enjoyment of Aristotle was clearly apparent and helped to enthuse the students.

94. Students are provided with well-designed handouts and worksheets, which support the teaching. The best worksheets include demanding tasks for the students. For example, a psychology worksheet required students to assess which, if any, psychiatric illnesses are unique to particular societies. Law teachers make good use of up-to-date examples of legal judgements extracted from web sites and newspapers. A sociology lesson on girl gangs was effectively illustrated by video extracts from a television interview with gang members. The students had to evaluate the problems associated with questioning gang members and the possible effects of interviewer bias. There is a strong emphasis on relating theory to personal experience and observation. This was particularly effective in a psychology lesson in which students discussed their own perceptions and experiences of stress before moving on to analyse the academic theories and research evidence.

95. Many lessons contain lively discussion. However, these discussions do not always help to develop students' understanding of the subject. Too many discussions are anecdotal and are dominated by a few students, keen to impress their opinions on the rest of the class. In the best lessons, students are required to respond to challenging questions, which can lead to perceptive insights and understanding. For example, in a philosophy lesson on the distinction between belief and knowledge, students raised and discussed the example of the denial of death. In many social science lessons, however, teachers' questions are superficial and students' responses are not probed or developed by the teacher. Punctuality is poor in many lessons.

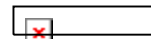
96. Much of the accommodation is poor. Although the rooms are adequately furnished, many of them suffer from poor soundproofing which causes significant noise distractions. Some of the rooms are too small for the groups using them.

97. There is very good support for the students through the provision of timetabled subject workshops. These are targeted at the less able students and enable them to focus on developing the skills needed for exam success. Students' progress is monitored closely. Teachers generally mark students' work in a thorough manner. They provide constructive feedback on how to improve. Sometimes, it takes staff too long to mark and return students' work, and in politics not enough work is set.

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

98. Psychology is based in the science department and is effectively managed. Management of other courses in the social science department is less effective. Self-assessment lacks rigour and the resulting action plan provides insufficient detail on how standards will be raised. For example, there is no clear strategy to improve pass rates in law. There are few links between psychology and the social science department, such as the sharing of resources or good practice.

### **History, geography and economics**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- pass rates at, or above, national averages for sixth form colleges
- good teaching
- effective assessment and monitoring of students' progress
- high proportion of students progressing to HE.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- low retention rate in geography
- insufficient sharing of good practice within the department.

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

99. The college offers GCE AS and A-level courses in economics, history and geography within the department of humanities and languages. Currently there are 116 students following GCE AS and A-level courses in economics, 77 in history and 22 in geography. Most students are in the 16 to 19 age-range and all are studying full time.

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

100. Pass rates have been consistently very good in GCE A-level economics and students have achieved significantly higher grades than would have been predicted on the basis of their achievement at GCSE. Pass rates on GCE A-level history and geography courses are in line with national averages. Retention rates are similar to national averages in economics and history, but significantly below average in geography. Results indicate a successful introduction of Curriculum 2000. In GCE AS economics, the overall pass rate was 91%, with nearly half of students achieving grades A or B. History achieved an 88% pass rate, with nearly half the students gaining grades A or B. While numbers were low in geography, the overall pass rate was 82%. Attendance in all subjects is good.

101. Standards achieved in the lessons observed, in students' files and in their marked work are generally satisfactory or better. Students are well motivated and the majority make useful contributions during lessons. The most able students have sound background knowledge and can apply an appropriate historical, geographical or economic perspective to the analysis of data and source material.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in history, geography and economics, 1999 to 2001***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level economics	3	No. of starts	40	34	44
		% retention	73	79	80
		% pass rate	96	96	94
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	12	11	15
		% retention	67	91	67
		% pass rate	88	80	90
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	35	44	42
		% retention	77	82	83
		% pass rate	62	86	89

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

***Quality of education and training***

102. Teaching is good or better in the vast majority of lessons. Teachers are well qualified and have regularly updated their subject knowledge. They have an enthusiasm for their subjects, which they communicate to their students. Lessons are well planned and maintain the interest of the students. Good handouts, which contain source materials, and case studies directly related to the syllabus help students to learn. Detailed schemes of work identify assessment opportunities and appropriate resources. Individual needs are met by the use of graded materials. For example, in economics, one group of students was carrying out a cost benefit analysis of building a superstore, while another group was set the task of analysing the costs and benefits of a 10% increase in the duty on cigarettes. Both groups understood the underlying principles and could apply them, but the second task involved more complex analysis.

103. In a small proportion of lessons the teaching is over directed and there are too few opportunities for students to acquire the higher-level skills necessary for advanced level work. The majority of students, however, are making good progress and is developing the skills of analysis and evaluation. History students can critically interrogate source material, draw conclusions and support their judgement with evidence from texts. They were articulate in their discussion of the key events and key personalities in the history of Germany from 1870 and could present a reasoned argument for the reinvention of Germany after 1945. Geography students demonstrated their powers of analysis and decision making in a lesson where they were required to argue for and



against the building of a dam in Ghana. They successfully identified the key social, economic and environmental issues involved.

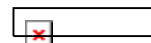
104. Many students undertake too little independent research and do not use the learning resources centre on a regular basis. Teachers do not monitor the use of the centre. There is also too little use of ICT by students. There is an uneven distribution of resources in the department. History has a wide range of resources and these are used to good effect. There are relatively few resources for the teaching of geography.

105. Teachers know their students' strengths and weaknesses and monitor their progress effectively. Targets are set to motivate students and to raise standards of achievement. Students enjoy life at the college and express satisfaction with their courses. They have positive, purposeful relationships with their teachers and value the help and support that they receive.

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

106. The department is effectively led and well managed. There are rigorous quality assurance arrangements to monitor teaching and learning. Course management is collaborative and consultative. Teachers work closely together and share their expertise. The departmental development plan identifies key tasks derived from the college strategic plan. There is a realistic time-scale for completion of the tasks and the people responsible are identified. The department engages in effective self-assessment, which has identified strengths and areas for development. Strategies have been developed to improve teaching and learning in specific areas and these have begun to have a beneficial impact on achievements.

## **English**



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

### ***Strengths***

- lively and effective teaching
- good pass rates on GCE A-level language and literature and GCE A-level literature
- good written and oral work
- very good lesson planning
- effective course leadership.

### **Weaknesses**

- poor GCSE results
- failure to encourage students to work on their own.

### **Scope of provision**

107. There are approximately 500 full-time students aged 16 to 18 studying English, of whom about 60% are on GCE A level courses. GCE AS courses are provided in English language with around 20 students, English language and literature with 70 students and English literature with 84 students. GCE A-level courses are running this year in English literature with 83 students, and English literature and language with 57 students. The progression rate from GCE AS to A-level is 91% in literature and 85% in literature and language. Some 176 students are taking GCSE English, most of whom are on GNVQ courses.

### **Achievement and standards**

108. Pass rates are above average on GCE A-level English literature and GCE A-level literature and language courses. In 2001, the pass rate was particularly good in GCE A-level English literature, at 94%. Students on this course did significantly better than would have been predicted on the basis of their GCSE results, and 70% achieved the higher A to C grades. The retention rate on the GCSE course is significantly higher than the national average. In 2001, the retention rate was 88%, and it has been good for the last three years, but pass rates on the GCSE English course are poor.

109. The retention rate on the GCE A-level English language course was very poor in 2001, with only 47% of students completing the course. This course has now been replaced by an alternative GCE A-level language syllabus.

110. Students take their lessons seriously and participate well in lively discussions. One oral presentation involved an exciting reading and critique of a poem by the Guyanese poet, Grace Nichols. The student drew on her own knowledge of the cultural context of the Caribbean. A lively discussion in another lesson made appropriate reference to different readings of 'Frankenstein', including Freud's theories. Many GCE AS students show a firm grasp of literary and linguistic concepts and use the appropriate terminology with confidence. Some very imaginative coursework includes well-crafted poetry stimulated by a creative writing course. Creative writing is well established. One short story read in a lesson brilliantly evoked a journey of a country teenager to London. The standard of written work on GCSE courses indicates that there are many students with weak literacy and language skills. Nevertheless, some oral work is impressive, for example, one student gave a superb critique of a 'Bollywood' film, while his friends discussed the pleasures of traditional Hollywood movies. Another group discussed, with a firm grasp of media concepts, the techniques advertisers use to sell to audiences.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in English, 1999 to 2001**

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	174	208	220
		% retention	85	82	88

		% pass rate	47	43	42
GCE A-level English literature and language	3	No. of starts	38	64	67
		% retention	76	75	81
		% pass rate	97	96	96
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	66	65	76
		% retention	88	90	83
		% pass rate	91	98	94
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	38	24	17
		% retention	70	71	47
		% pass rate	54	67	88

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

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

111. In 87% of English lessons the teaching was good or better. Teachers are well qualified and update their subject knowledge through professional development. Teachers plan imaginative lessons incorporating a range of teaching and learning strategies. For example, video clips were used to compare interpretations of 'Hamlet' and extracts from advertisements were used to aid language analysis. Dramatic readings were used to emphasise the use of dialect in Caribbean poetry, and Emilia's treachery in 'Othello'. The use of an adaptation of 'Frankenstein' for children was particularly successful in encouraging students to focus on stylistic comparisons with the original. They were familiar with the concepts of genre and 'the gothic' as well as literary techniques.

112. In some lessons, teachers failed to draw all students into discussions and other learning activities. Not all students handed in completed homework. Insufficient use is made of the learning resources centre and ICT facilities to encourage students to work on their own. Timetabled learning support is not effectively monitored. Some students' literacy and language skills are weak.

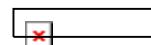
113. Students' work is generally carefully annotated and marked with helpful feedback on cover sheets, using the same assessment criteria as external examinations. Creative work is less rigorously marked than analytical work. Assessment of some GCSE coursework assignments did not use the full range of marks at the higher level. The monitoring of students' progress by checking their performance against target minimum grades is very effective.

114. An exciting enrichment programme offers English students opportunities to visit the theatre, conferences, and the Arvon Foundation, and brings visiting writers into the college. The 'Garden Players' is a theatre company run by a member of the English department for the students. A play in verse is performed annually.

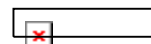
### **Leadership and management**

115. The department is well led. Course teams are appropriately self-critical and strive for improvement by examining teaching and learning styles. This approach is well supported through a research project with Middlesex University. Lesson planning encourages collaborative teaching. Curriculum changes have been successfully implemented. Regular team meetings and peer observations encourage the sharing of good practice. There is an effective induction programme for new members of staff and new post holders. Links across departments to identify and help students with problems in literacy and language are not effective enough. Many of these students are studying GCSE English. The department is currently devising strategies to address weaknesses in achievement on the GCSE course. It is also reviewing arrangements for the moderation of GCSE orals and coursework.

## Part D: College data



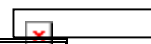
**Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age**



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	1	2
2	17	11
3	80	85
4/5	0	0
Other	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Provided by the college in autumn 2001.

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



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments %
Science	969	26	34
Agriculture	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering	0	0	0
Business	320	10	11
Hotel and catering	70	1	2
Health and community care	15	0	1
Art and design	434	5	15
Humanities	1,035	15	35
Basic education	57	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,900</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Provided by the college in autumn 2001.

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00
1	Starters excluding transfers	27	25	26	69	6	0
	Retention rate (%)	67	88	96	45	17	*
	National average (%)	78	81	82	72	69	74
	Pass rate (%)	17	100	0	89	100	*
	National average (%)	69	71	77	67	75	76
2	Starters excluding transfers	492	459	608	31	8	17
	Retention rate (%)	76	84	84	55	75	76
	National average (%)	79	80	82	71	71	75
	Pass rate (%)	57	83	56	80	83	50
	National average (%)	84	85	82	75	77	77
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,393	1,294	1,202	22	12	34
	Retention rate (%)	81	73	79	55	58	62
	National average (%)	77	78	80	62	65	69
	Pass rate (%)	81	77	83	67	86	88
	National average (%)	86	85	85	69	71	74

*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 (1997/98) to (1999/2000): Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, The Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.*

*2. College rates for 1997/98 - 1998/99: Benchmarking Data (1997/98) to (1999/2000): Retention and Achievement Rates, produced by the Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.*

*3. College rates for (1999/2000): provided by the college in autumn 2001.*

*\* too few students to provide a valid calculation*

**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)	75	22	3	100
Level 2 (intermediate)	65	35	0	20
Level 1 (foundation)	100	0	0	2
Other sessions	100	0	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>23.6</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>123</b>

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