



North Devon College

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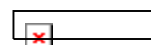
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Basic information about the college

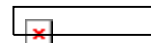


Name of college:	North Devon College
Type of college:	Tertiary
Principal:	David Trueman
Address of college:	Old Sticklepath Hill Barnstaple Devon EX31 2BQ
Telephone number:	01271 345291
Fax number:	01271 338121
Chair of governors:	Keith Brown
Unique reference number:	130646
Name of reporting inspector:	Wilf Hudson HMI

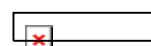
Dates of inspection:

18-22 March 2002

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



North Devon College is a medium-sized tertiary college with its main site in Barnstaple. It is the sixth form centre for the seven 11-16 schools in the area. The college serves a widely dispersed local community as well as the population of around 33,000 in Barnstaple. Many students have a long daily journey into the college by public transport.

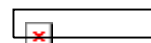
In addition to the work on the main site, the college has created many partnerships to help it to take its work out into the rural community. There are college centres in Bude, Bideford and in the town centre in Barnstaple. Articulated lorries fully equipped with computers and other technologies visit community centres, employers' premises and schools in the more isolated areas.

Unemployment in north Devon is higher than for the south-west region as a whole. In February 2002, unemployment stood at 3.5% compared to 2.3% for the region. The situation is slightly better in the Barnstaple travel to work area, where unemployment stood at 3% in February 2002. The college has effective partnerships with many employers and has created good opportunities for students to study on work-based training programmes while in employment.

In 2000/01, there were 7,484 enrolments on courses by students aged 16 to 18, and 11,099 enrolments by students aged over 19 years of age. Over half of the students aged 16 to 18 are enrolled on advanced courses such as General Certificate of Education Advanced level (GCE A-level) and General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) or Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) programmes. There are roughly equal numbers of male and female students. Approximately 1% of students were from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The purpose of the college, set out in its mission statement, is to be a centre of excellence in post-16 education for the communities of north Devon and to provide quality vocational training in the south-west region.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged the overall quality of provision to be good. The quality of teaching and the achievements of students was good in 12 of the 14 curriculum areas inspected and satisfactory in the other two areas. Work-based learning is good in construction, engineering and business. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below:

Key strengths

- much good teaching

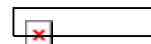
- good and improving retention and pass rates on many courses
- effectively meeting the needs of many of the local communities of North Devon
- well led and governed
- much effective partnership working
- wide range of courses offered in many locations
- work-based learning of high quality
- effective use of accurate student data to set targets and raise standards.

What should be improved

- some unsatisfactory aspects of students' support
- some accommodation and learning resources which adversely affect learning
- poor planning of schemes of work and lesson plans
- ineffective arrangements in some areas to cover for absent staff.

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

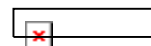


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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	Good. There is good provision with much effective teaching and learning, which makes good use of information technology (IT). Students are well supported by their teachers. There are very good pass rates in most subjects. There are some poor retention rates in biology and human biology and poor pass rates in human biology.
Mathematics	Satisfactory. The quality of teaching varies widely. Much of it is good, but students are insufficiently involved in some lessons. Pass rates on GCE A-level mathematics are high, but the pass rate in GCE Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) mathematics in 2001 was unsatisfactory. The pass rate on General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) mathematics for adults is better than that for younger students, where it is unsatisfactory.
Construction	Good. Teaching is effective, especially in practical lessons and for students on work-based learning programmes, but some theory lessons are dull. Generally, students' work is of a high standard and often well above the levels demanded by course requirements. Verbal feedback to students is helpful, although some written feedback is inadequate. Pass rates are good on many courses but there are declining and poor pass rates on wood occupations courses at level 2.
Engineering	Good. There are strong links with industry and a wide range of courses in engineering. Work-based learning programmes have been introduced well. Most retention and pass rates are good. Teaching is effective, although in some lessons, students needed to be set more demanding work.
Business	Good. Teaching is well planned and effective, though in small pockets, it is unimaginative and is insufficiently demanding for students. Pass rates are good across the majority of courses. There are very thorough assessment processes in work-based programmes. Some classrooms are of poor quality.
Computing and information technology	Good. Courses are well managed and well matched to students' needs. Good teaching and very good resources result in good retention rates and pass rates. There is excellent provision at community centres. In a small minority of lessons, the work lacked pace and challenge, and students were too dependent on teachers.
Hospitality, leisure and tourism	Good. There are high retention and pass rates on most courses. Students' written work is of a high standard. Most practical lessons are well taught, but a small minority of teaching is insufficiently demanding. There are strong links with employers. Some specialist facilities in the college are dated.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Good. Teaching is of a high standard. Students are enthusiastic and speak highly of their experiences at the college. They are supported

	very well and are generally successful in achieving their qualifications. Practical work is of good quality. There are excellent opportunities for students to extend their skills and knowledge by undertaking additional qualifications and trips within Europe.
Health and social care	Good. Retention and pass rates are above national averages. Teaching is good, with some examples of very good and excellent practice. Recent staffing problems have adversely affected some students' learning.
Visual and performing arts	Good. Students and staff are enthusiastic and highly committed to their work. Much of the teaching is good or very good. Pass rates on most courses are high and retention rates are generally good. Accommodation is good and much of the specialist equipment is of industrial standard.
Humanities	Good. Students' achievements in humanities are good. Pass rates in geography, history and critical thinking are well above national averages. Most of the teaching is good. Teachers provide comprehensive support to develop students' written and examination skills.
English and modern foreign languages	Good. Students are keen to learn and progress, and retention and pass rates are good on most courses. There is much effective teaching, but a minority of teaching fails to meet the needs of all students. A broad range of courses and curriculum enrichment opportunities is offered. There is insufficient use of IT in modern language teaching.
Foundation programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	Good. Students are very well supported and their achievements are good. Most teaching is good or very good. There is an extensive range of provision that responds well to the needs of a wide range of students. Accommodation is unsatisfactory but should be improved when the current building is completed later in the summer.
Foundation programmes in basic skills	Satisfactory. Many students benefit from the personal support of their teachers. In many lessons, students were making good progress. The college offers a wide range of basic skills provision that meets the needs of the local community well. The quality of the provision is not monitored well and there is no clear overview of how well students are achieving.

How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are good. The college provides good value for money. Most teaching is effective and achievement in almost all curriculum areas is above the average. Overall, the curriculum is well led and managed but there are a small number of curriculum areas that are less effectively managed and where quality assurance procedures are not applied firmly enough. Governors have established a clear mission and strategic direction. They are knowledgeable about the college and its performance. The college has developed a good management information system that is able to provide accurate student retention and achievement data. The quality assurance system is based on setting realistic targets for each course and then reviewing students' performance against them. The system relies on the accurate data provided by its management information system. The college has a good lesson observation scheme. A staff development programme for teachers based on weaknesses identified during lesson observation has been planned. The college's self-assessment provided a generally accurate picture of the work of the college.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. It has developed an extensive range of programmes to meet the needs of a wide range of students both in college and in the communities that it serves. Provision is made at locations that are convenient for local people wherever possible. Provision and support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. Students can follow full-time and part-time programmes with specific courses for 14-16 year olds, 16-19 year olds and adults. The college is responsive to the emerging needs of students and has recently introduced programmes to promote access to the college for young students who are undecided about the benefits of study. Programmes for people recovering from mental illness and for the rehabilitation of young men being released from custodial sentence have been developed, mainly in centres in the community.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

For many students the support and guidance arrangements are good. For students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities guidance and support are very good. There is good, comprehensive pre-entry information, advice and guidance for prospective students. Effective induction procedures are appreciated by students and supported by subject-specific induction packs. The tutorial system, for which there is a comprehensive tutorial pack with procedures and worksheets to guide activities, is valued by most students who are clear about their progress and the action needed to improve. However, tutorial activity, including action to address poor attendance, is not implemented effectively by all tutors. Tutorial arrangements for part-time students are not as uniformly good as they are for full-time students. Good, impartial and up-to-date careers guidance on higher education (HE) and job opportunities, provided by Connexions and facilitated by the college, is well used by students. The guidance centre is effective in providing practical support and indicating to students where they may find sources of additional help. Although there is a variety of help available for students with learning support needs, there is no college policy or systematic arrangement for the assessment of students to ascertain their support needs, for the provision of additional learning support, or for monitoring its effectiveness.

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

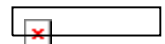
- helpful and friendly staff
- high quality of much of the teaching

- choice and range of courses and opportunities
- being treated as adults
- advice and guidance on careers, including employment and HE.

What they feel could be improved

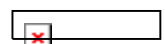
- number of social areas and the overcrowded canteen at peak times
- quality and range of books in some sections of the library
- arrangements to cover their lessons when their usual teacher is absent
- sports facilities.

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. The governors must agree the plan and send copies of it to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) 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	71	23	6
19+ and WBL*	68	25	7
Learning 16-18	65	28	7
19+ and WBL*	69	24	7

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

* work-based learning

Achievement and standards

1. The college has improved the standards and achievements of its students over the last four years. It now meets or exceeds the national averages for retention and achievement in all except two of the eighteen available comparisons. More students enrol on science and humanities courses than in any other area. Introductory courses in computing and information and communications technology (ICT) are attended by young people and adults in almost equal numbers. The college offers a wide range of science subjects and mathematics at GCE AS and A level. The most popular of these are mathematics and biology. These are attended mostly by school leavers aged between 16 and 18. In humanities, a large number of students are enrolled on GCE A-level and GCE AS subjects. The most popular of these are general studies and psychology, and are attended mainly by students aged 16 to 18. Business, health and community care and art and design courses also attract large numbers of students. Most of the students on business and health and community care courses are adults, whereas those on art and design courses are aged 16 to 18.

2. The pass rate for level 3 (advanced) courses has improved to 86% over the last three years. The number of students taking GCE A-level courses has increased slightly in each of the last three years. The proportion of these students who complete their course has risen to 80%. The proportion of GCSE students who have completed their course has increased significantly in each of the last three years and the proportion who achieve grade A-C passes has varied in the last few years, but was at its highest in 2000 at 57%.

16-18 year olds

3. Retention rates of students aged 16 to 18 attending GCE A-level and AS courses, advanced GNVQ and equivalent courses, have been above the average for colleges of the same type in the last four years and pass rates have been consistently in the upper quartile. Student retention and pass rates on level 2 courses, GCSE and GNVQ intermediate and equivalent, have both improved. Retention rates are above the national average and pass rates are in the upper quartile. Retention and pass rates on level 1 courses have also similarly improved, with retention rates above the average and pass rates in the upper quartile.

4. Pass rates for GCE A-level and AS subjects in 2000/01 were mostly good. Students at the college achieved good pass rates in mathematics, physics, and chemistry. The proportion of high grade passes was also above the national average in 1999/2000 and was also good in 2001. Pass rates are also good in biology, but retention rates for both biology and human biology have been below the national average and have been declining. The pass rate in GCE AS mathematics in 2001 was

below the national average. Pass rates are also good in most GCE A-level humanities subjects and are well above the national averages in English, history, geography and in most modern foreign languages. Pass rates have also improved in GCE A-level psychology but have been declining in law. Pass rates have been below the national average for GCE A-level German, and ICT and for GCE AS French.

5. The college does not offer a GCSE repeat programme for school leavers but it does offer a range of GCSE subjects. Of these, only English and mathematics are taken in significant numbers by school leavers. Pass rates are good in English but poor in mathematics.

6. Students taking vocational subjects are successful. Students' retention and pass rates are particularly good in hairdressing at levels 1 and 2, hospitality, sport leisure and tourism courses, construction courses at level 1 and the GNVQ advanced programme. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in achieving individual targets. There are low and declining pass rates on the NVQ level 2 in wood occupation trades.

Adult learners

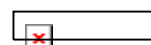
7. The retention and pass rates of adults on courses at all levels have varied considerably in each of the last three years. At levels 2 and 3, retention and pass rates were lower in 2000 than in the previous year. Retention rates at both levels improved significantly in 2001 but pass rates were the same as in the previous year. At level 1, retention rates fell below the national average.

8. The number of adults enrolled onto level 1 courses has fallen in each of the last three years. Retention rates on these courses have been close to the national average, but the number of successful students has gradually improved in each of the last three years to almost reach the national average in 2000. A large number of adults enrol on level 1 courses in ICT. Retention rates of adults on these courses are close to the national average, but the numbers achieving the qualification fell last year. In 2001, the college enrolled a large number of adults onto the basic lift-truck operator certificate course. All enrolled students on this course were retained and 93% achieved the certificate.

9. Adult students have a good record of success in GCSE subjects. Retention and pass rates for GCSE mathematics, English, French, Spanish and psychology have been good and well above the national averages in recent years. Large numbers of students enrol on short courses, such as the certificate in basic food hygiene, on which almost all of those who attend achieve the qualification. Retention and pass rates of students on longer courses, such as the certificate in care practices and certificate in counselling skills, are good.

10. The retention rates of students on access HE courses in science and humanities are below the national average, but the pass rate of those who stay the course is good. The number of adults taking GCE A-level subjects is small, with biology, business studies, general studies and psychology attracting the largest numbers. Retention rates and pass rates are at, or below, the national averages for these subjects. Large numbers of adult students attend college to study for a vocational qualification. Most of these students work towards qualifications in business, health and care and catering courses. Retention and pass rates on many of these courses are similar to, or above, the national average for the course.

Quality of education and training



11. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 296 sessions. Much of the teaching is effective. Some was inspiring and about one third of all lessons were graded as either

was inspected by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in 1997. Some 70% of lessons were graded as good or better in 2002, compared with 60% in 1997. Teaching is good on intermediate and advanced courses (levels 2 and 3), but it is less effective on many foundation courses (level 1). Too much of the teaching observed on foundation programmes was unsatisfactory. Teaching on work-based learning programmes was particularly good: 79% of sessions were graded as good or better. There has been a significant improvement in the standard of teaching on GCE A-level and AS programmes since the last inspection. In 1997, 54% of GCE A-level lessons were graded as good or better; in 2002 this has risen to 68%.

12. Most lessons were well planned and teachers ensured that all students worked hard and were set demanding work. Teaching was particularly strong in health and care; ICT; hairdressing and beauty therapy; visual and performing arts; and work with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In many lessons, teachers were ensuring that students concentrated on improving their examination techniques. Working relationships between teachers and students were good across the college. Practical work was generally very well organised. Many teachers skilfully linked the practical work that students were undertaking to the theory lessons that had gone before. Teaching was often enhanced by the use of visits, trips and other experiences outside the classroom or workshop. These are a notable feature of the teaching programmes in several areas of the college such as English, foreign languages and hairdressing.

13. Teaching was less effective to varying degrees in many areas of the college, although it was generally restricted to a single unsatisfactory lesson in most areas. Teaching was weakest in mathematics and in basic skills. Weaker lessons were often poorly planned and implemented. The content of the lesson and the way in which teachers presented the material to students was not sufficiently demanding. The pace of work in some lessons was much too slow: the students could have grasped the concepts being explained much more quickly and moved on faster. In some vocational areas, theory lessons were dull and uninspiring. In some lessons, poor handouts or other teaching aids impeded students' learning.

14. Students' attendance at lessons was generally good. Attendance at ICT and lessons for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was particularly high, while attendance at basic skills and hairdressing lessons was only 70%.

15. Standards on vocational courses are monitored well through effective internal verification. However, this process is insufficiently thorough on basic skills programmes and has not identified some key weaknesses in this area of work. Reports from external verifiers and examiners are monitored closely by senior managers to ensure that responses to such reports are implemented.

16. Teachers usually mark students' work carefully and fairly. In most departments, the work is annotated to ensure that students know where they have made mistakes and what they need to do to improve their work. English teachers moderate each other's work to ensure a common approach and standard. Generally, students are set frequent and regular assignments to complete in their own time. In a few areas of the college, practice in this respect is poor. For example, students of modern foreign languages, sociology and law do not have sufficient homework set. In GCE AS languages, teachers do not provide sufficiently clear and detailed comments on students' work.

17. A good range of assessment methods is used. Assessment of practical work is good. Trainees on work-based learning programmes in engineering, for example, have clear assessment schedules and receive good feedback from their assessor regarding their progress. Photographs and video are used well to record students' progress in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and construction.

18. Students are generally kept well informed about their progress. Where individual learning plans are the basis for measuring their progress, their use is not uniformly effective. In provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, such plans are closely monitored and a variety of assessment records are used which the individual student can understand and complete. In contrast, basic skills students often had action plans that were too general and in which the students had not been closely involved.

19. Students' qualifications on entry to the college are used effectively to set targets for students in their GCE A-level examinations. Departments compare the performance of students in different teaching groups. The performance of the top 25% and the lowest 25% of students, based on their GCSE scores on entry, is used to monitor how well teaching methods meet the whole range of students' needs in different teaching groups.

20. Staff work well together to improve teaching and learning and to support students. Teachers are well qualified and have appropriate current relevant vocational experience. They have a sound knowledge of their subject or vocational area and draw on this effectively in lessons. There are sufficient qualified technical support staff to help students and teachers and to maintain resources and learning materials. Effective staff development for all staff helps to improve the quality of the students' learning experience. Training needs for each curriculum area are analysed and implemented. Individual training needs are initially identified at induction and then through staff appraisal. Staff are required to identify how staff development activities will benefit students. Staff development activities are closely evaluated.

21. The college's accommodation varies from very good to poor. Many teaching rooms have good displays of students' work and relevant materials, and are stimulating places in which to learn. A few rooms are not big enough for the size of the classes using them. A few lessons take place in inappropriate accommodation which has an adverse effect on students' learning. Specialist facilities are good in areas such as performing arts, media studies, music technology and motor vehicle, and enable students to apply theory in a realistic practical setting. Some accommodation for catering, sports and leisure and business studies needs updating. As identified in the last inspection report there is unsatisfactory accommodation in some huts, insufficient recreational space for students and inadequate canteen facilities. The college is in the process of building additional accommodation to address this. The college has improved access for students with restricted mobility by installing a number of lifts. Nearly all of the college is now available to all students.

22. Students have good access to computers. Excellent ICT supports learning in the college and the wider community. The college has invested significantly in IT facilities. Three well-equipped learning centres have been established in the college. Specialist facilities are used extensively in creative and performing arts, media studies and music technology. ICT is effectively integrated with lessons or the students have access to a computer room in most of the vocational areas. Particularly good use is made of network and intranet resources in learning. Students and staff can log into the college network from home. There are over one hundred laptops that can be linked to the network. This facility enables a flexible use of ICT in a range of locations. Participation in learning is increased through the provision of good ICT and accommodation in the community. The college has two well-equipped trailers for the teaching of IT in rural locations.

23. There are effective links between the learning centre and departments. Learning resource co-ordinators attend departmental meetings, promote the learning centre facilities and gain information about the students' assignments. Materials and references are prepared for the students by the co-ordinators and they act as a resource to the students in the learning centres. Both staff and students value this. The learning centre provides a good place to work and is well used by students. There is inadequate book stock in the library for engineering and humanities and many of the books for science, hospitality, leisure and tourism, and visual and performing arts are dated.

24. Resources are used effectively in some areas of the college to promote learning. For example, there are very good student handouts and study guides in ICT, especially in the centres used in the community. In hairdressing, tutors have produced good resources to assess and monitor work-based learners. However, materials are not produced to meet the needs of individual students in languages or for independent study in humanities. Resources to meet the specific individual requirements of students with learning disabilities and/or difficulties are good.

25. For many students, the support and guidance arrangements in the college are good. All full-time students have a minimum entitlement of one hour of dedicated pastoral time each week. Tutorials for part-time students are less regular and tutorial work is provided informally by subject teachers during lesson time. All students are entitled to one-to-one sessions with their tutor where their progress, attendance and punctuality are discussed. Students value the emphasis on attainment

and the individual support they receive within the tutorial programme. Students' reviews and action plans are well used across all subjects to identify students who are underachieving. This will help them to actively improve their performance. Although there are well-understood procedures in place for dealing with problems such as poor attendance, there is too much flexibility for tutors to decide at which point the procedures come into play. As a result, the implementation of procedures for some students who miss too many lessons or who are regularly late with work is too lax. In some cases, parents had not been informed of poor attendance until meeting with teachers at the parents evening.

26. Tutors have a comprehensive tutor pack including a programme of work, procedures and worksheets to guide activities. The adequacy of the pack, and its implementation, is the subject of discussion within the college and there is still some way to go to achieve sufficient consistency in implementing procedures and in overall effectiveness. For example, not all groups follow the tutor programme in its entirety, some courses offer only a few one-to-one sessions and, in some cases, there is a lack of conviction among staff about the value and necessity of planned tutorial work. A system of monitoring tutorial work through tutors observing each other is in place, but has not yet provided senior staff with sufficient information to evaluate the implementation of the tutorial programme adequately.

27. Students and parents receive good information about the college through a comprehensive programme of 'taster' days, when prospective students can experience life in the college on the course they are interested in, open days, and presentations. Induction for new students is thorough and supported by subject specific induction. Students are consulted about how effective their induction proved to be. Generally, induction is seen as helpful, but induction for some part-time students was not always appropriate or supportive, and some aspects, such as induction to the library, were left out.

28. Devon and Cornwall Connexions provides good, impartial advice linked to the induction programme and tutorial system. Connexions careers staff work in the guidance centre for three days each week. Whilst space is small and there is no confidential discussion area, the facilities are well located and students make good use of the resources available. The range and quality of materials is good for students seeking guidance on HE and work. Lists of job opportunities are regularly updated.

29. The guidance centre provides very effective support for students. Staff respond to information requests, help students who receive financial support, supply information on courses and enrolment, and direct students to additional sources of help. The advice and welfare team includes qualified counsellors who are available for students to 'drop-in' or visit by appointment, a nurse who attends the college every day, and youth work and Connexions workers who undertake generic youth work and support students on a wide range of issues throughout the college. In particular, the latter group have supported and worked to improve the retention of vulnerable young people, including students on the Gateway programme; facilitated tutorials on drugs and sexual health issues; promoted community projects; and acted as responsible adults in a variety of situations involving other agencies.

30. Most students are well supported in lessons by teachers who give freely of their time. However, there is no clear policy or pattern in the college for initial assessment and there is no college-wide system for evaluating the impact of learning support. The personal tutor is central to the initial assessment process, co-ordinating the various strands including the use of key skills tests, subject-specific assessment, self-reporting on entry questionnaires and information drawn from previous education establishments. The procedure for the initial assessment of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is thorough and individual learning plans are drawn up and reviewed regularly. However, some students are unsure about what tests they have had. Others claim not to have had feedback on the results of their assessment. Where the system has worked well, students have received feedback, staff use key skills results in tutorials and action planning and course co-ordinators have lists of students requiring extra support. Additional learning support ranges from basic literacy and numeracy to dyslexia support, and there is a breadth and depth of help available at the college with many well-qualified, experienced and willing teachers. However, for a significant minority of students, there have been delays in identifying their additional learning needs and in the

second term of their course, some students had only just been offered additional help.

31. There is a good breadth of full-time and substantial part-time provision in most areas of learning, with good internal progression routes in many cases. This is the case particularly in engineering, ICT, English and languages and hospitality and catering. A good range of work-based learning opportunities is available, both through NVQ courses and through the modern apprenticeship programme. The standard of work-based learning is good, and programmes and courses have been designed to meet employer and industry needs. The college offers an access to HE programme with humanities and social sciences and life sciences pathways. There is also HE provision to meet local demands.

32. The college offers a good range of part-time, daytime and evening courses for adults at its main site. Most of these are accredited courses leading to qualifications, including GCE AS and A level, GCSEs and NVQs, although there are also some leisure activities. Other, non-accredited provision is made by the Local Education Authority. The college has franchise arrangements with three community colleges. This enables it to offer some science GCSEs in Pilton, Ilfracombe and Budehaven. The collaborative arrangement means that courses which recruit low numbers are still financially viable.

33. The college effectively meets the needs of many local employers, often through imaginative initiatives. These include the 'Face to Face' project and the office and Internet technologies project. The 'Face to Face' project involves taking four customised trailers out to employers' premises where they are used as training rooms. Two trailers are equipped with IT facilities, one has engineering resources and the fourth can be customised according to demand. The office and Internet technologies project specifically aims to help small to medium enterprises that find it difficult to mount a viable training programme for staff. To help businesses overcome this problem, the college offers training in office and Internet technologies at its Flex-IT centre in Barnstaple and in five franchise centres across the area. Well over 100 businesses have benefited in this way.

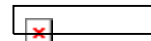
34. The college has many successful projects to engage or re-engage in learning, people who are disadvantaged by rural isolation, low income, personal circumstances or poor previous experiences of education. For example, the women returners' project, which was established in 1997, enables women who are interested in, but not confident about re-entering, the labour market to acquire Internet technology skills. Training takes place at the Flex-IT centre and at two franchise centres in North Devon. Hours are flexible and support with childcare and travel costs is available. The college also runs a project aimed at developing the IT skills of people living in rural communities. In this case, a set of networked laptops is taken out to villages for use in community venues. Other projects are focused specifically on the needs of people with mental health difficulties, the unemployed, older people, and young offenders. Many learners make good progress as a result of being involved with these projects.

35. The college plans to increase the number of young people studying on foundation level courses and is making good progress in this area. It has established a 'Gateway' programme, designed to meet the needs of young people with low GCSE grades and/or who have not decided upon an occupation. Apart from a core curriculum of key skills, students can sample a number of vocational options, drawn from most areas of the college curriculum, and leading to appropriate qualifications. The programme is very popular, and the number of students almost doubled in 2002 to 57. Some 26 of these students receive additional learning support. They also have the support of youth workers. In addition to this, the college, in partnership with local schools, has submitted a bid for the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the LSC funding, which will enable it to offer 150 young people aged 14, a place in college for one day a week for two years, starting in September 2002.

36. There are many examples of the college's effective partnership work with schools, employers and community-based organisations. For example, the 'Stepping Stones' project for unemployed people emerged from a multi-agency partnership that included the Employment Service, the Health Authority, Social Services and the voluntary sector. The North Devon Academic Board includes senior college managers and the head teachers of all the college's partner schools, as well as local authority officers. This group is responsible for the development of the bid for the school to develop

a college transition programme for 14-year olds. The North Devon Marketing Bureau has been active in identifying training needs in the area in the aftermath of foot and mouth disease, and this has led the college to provide specifically designed hotel and catering courses for its rural community.

Leadership and management



37. Leadership and management are good. The college is well led and well managed. Senior managers and governors are committed to the college mission 'to be a centre of excellence for post-16 education for the communities of North Devon and to provide quality vocational training in the South West regions'. The college has addressed the main weaknesses identified in its last inspection report, although it has made slow progress in improving some areas, such as student support, and in improving the hatted accommodation which is still used to teach students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The action plan written following the last report is included in the college's self-assessment report. Some actions, such as the development of teaching strategies to improve students' learning are shown as ongoing actions. The college has improved overall student retention and pass rates since the last inspection, although it has made greater progress with students aged 16 to 18 than with adult students. Curriculum management is generally good although there are a small number of areas where there are weaknesses in aspects of management, such as mathematics, humanities and foundation programmes in basic skills. The quality of the college's management information system is good.

38. The college has effective and committed governors. A governors' committee, the management committee, meets each month. More than half the governors are members of this committee but all governors receive the committee's papers and are invited to attend the meetings. This committee is responsible for a range of issues, including finance and standards. Governors know about how well students are retained and achieve and are involved in the target-setting process. Some governors are linked to departments and make regular visits to them. Three governors attended induction events at the start of the current session unknown to the teachers who were running them. They also know about the financial health of the college and its link to the mission of the college.

39. College managers set demanding targets for retention and achievement for all its courses and those run by its franchised partners. It uses data from its management information system as the basis for the target setting process. Targets are set by managers and shared with teachers. Target setting is an important part of the college's strategy to improve student retention and achievement. The college does not set retention and achievement targets for work-based apprentices to achieve the apprenticeship framework. Targets are set for the college learning programmes that apprentices attend but not for completion and achievement of the apprenticeship.

40. The college has a clear and well-understood quality assurance policy and system. The policy and implementation procedures are clearly explained in a booklet given to all staff. The policy covers all work for which the college is responsible, including franchised provision. Quality assurance is based on a cyclical process that includes strategic planning and self-assessment. It involves setting objectives and targets and monitoring the progress made toward their achievement. The quality assurance process relies on having a management information system that provides reliable student data so that realistic targets can be set. The college conducts a series of reviews throughout the year as part of the quality assurance strategy. These include reviews of students' retention and achievement, students' induction, parents' views, the quality of teaching and early leavers' views. The quality assurance process has been responsible for the college's gradually improving student retention and achievement for many areas of its work over the last four years. In a small number of areas, the processes are not implemented thoroughly enough.

41. The college has had a lesson observation scheme in place for four years. This year the college has appointed advanced practitioners to carry out all lesson observations. Advanced practitioners

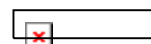
are qualified teachers and the criteria used in their selection included the grades they achieved in the previous lesson observation system and their success in helping students to make good progress. The lesson observation system has clear guidelines that are available to all staff. After each observation, teachers are required to receive constructive feedback. All lessons are graded for teaching, learning and attainment.

42. The college has an annual appraisal scheme that is part of its strategy to improve the quality of the service it provides. All college staff and teachers of franchised courses are included in the scheme. Information from classroom observation is included in teacher appraisals. All staff have received appraisal training.

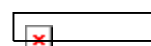
43. The college has an equal opportunities policy but it does not take steps to ensure that all students are made aware of equal opportunities issues during their course. The college has an equal opportunities committee with staff and student representation, although it is difficult to attract students onto the committee. Students are given a general introduction to equal opportunities at their induction. It is then the responsibility of tutors or class teachers to raise students' awareness of equal opportunities issues during tutorials or as part of their course. The college has not produced an equal opportunities pack for teachers to use and does not routinely monitor the teaching of the curriculum to determine what, if anything, is taught in relation to equal opportunities. Two equal opportunities co-ordinators have visited some lessons in the college and at providers' premises. The college has provided equal opportunities staff development for staff as part of its attempt to improve staff awareness of the equal opportunities issues.

44. The quality of curriculum management is generally good although the management of some sections is less effective. In most sections, teachers work closely together and have regular team meetings, but in some, insufficient attention is given to improving the quality of teaching. Some course management is not consistently effective. For example, some teachers produce good schemes of work and lesson plans but others have poor schemes and plans. Too many schemes of work are lists of topics and lessons plans are not sufficiently detailed, often making no reference to aims and objectives or the desired learning outcomes of the lesson. In some lessons teachers did not have a lesson plan. One section is well managed despite constraints imposed by staffing difficulties, but in another, long-term staffing difficulties and sickness have had a noticeable effect on students' learning. One group of students has already had four different teachers for one subject. Students on a number of courses have sometimes arrived for a lesson to find no teacher present, or a teacher who did not know what the students had already covered. Better communication and recording of what teachers have taught would have helped stand-in teachers to know what students had covered and enabled them to plan more effective lessons.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science



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

Strengths

- very good pass rates

- much effective teaching and learning
- good individual support for students
- good use of IT by students and teachers to help learning.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates in GCE A-level biology
- poor retention and pass rates in GCE A-level human biology.

Scope of provision

45. The college offers a good range of courses in science to full-time students mainly between the ages of 16 and 18 and to part-time students in dental nursing. Over 180 students study for one year for GCE AS qualifications in biology, human biology, chemistry, physics and electronics. Approximately 100 students study for the full GCE A levels in the same range of subjects, along with about 20 mature students taking an access to life sciences course leading to HE after one year of study. Around 30 students progress each year from the college's Gateway programme to study GCSE biology. Twenty part-time students study the one-year national certificate in dental nursing, most of whom are employed locally. The college has partnership agreements with a local community college to offer evening classes in GCSE chemistry, astronomy and human physiology.

Achievement and standards

46. Students' achievements in science are very good, with examination pass rates at GCE AS and A level regularly over 90%. Over 60% of students gain grades A-C at advanced level, with many subjects showing pass rates at high grades significantly above the national average. Approximately 70% of students studying GCE AS sciences continue to study for GCE A-level qualifications. In most subjects, retention rates are around the national average but in GCE A-level human biology, pass and retention rates were poor in 2001, and less than 20% of successful students gained high grades. In 2001, the retention rate in GCE A-level biology was below the national average, but there was a significant improvement in the retention rates of GCE AS biology students.

47. In practical lessons, most students demonstrate competency in using apparatus safely, taking accurate measurements and in recording and calculating data. The more able students make relevant links between theory and practical work and, in one GCE A-level chemistry lesson, one student explained to other students aspects of electrochemical cells using knowledge from his GCSE studies. Students develop good skills in reasoning, use appropriate terminology in answering questions, and make good use of well-kept files for their revision for modular tests.

48. Analysis of data for GCE A-level sciences shows that student performance has improved over

the last three years, with all subjects showing that most students perform better than might have been predicted from their GCSE qualifications at entry. A small number of girls in physics are performing below expectations.

49. Each year, approximately 80% of successful GCE A-level students progress to HE in a range of science related degree courses and also in marketing, architecture and sports science. A small number take up employment in retail, laboratories and tourism.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE biology	2	No. of starts	38	22	46
		% retention	73	81	87
		% pass rate	50	67	55
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	100	97	81
		% retention	62	72	65
		% pass rate	90	99	96
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	48	56	44
		% retention	71	84	77
		% pass rate	85	93	97
GCE A-level human biology	3	No. of starts	17	28	18
		% retention	76	71	61
		% pass rate	54	30	36
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	35	51	37
		% retention	60	71	73
		% pass rate	71	83	89
Access science	3	No. of starts	13	18	19
		% retention	85	67	79
		% pass rate	100	100	93
GCE A-level electronics	3	No. of starts	10	10	12
		% retention	70	50	75
		% pass rate	86	80	100
AVCE science	3	No. of starts	7	13	8
		% retention	71	62	88
		% pass rate	100	88	100

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

Quality of education and training

50. Teaching and learning are good. Almost three-quarters of lessons were graded good or very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Teachers use a variety of appropriate methods which inspire students. They use practical demonstrations effectively and make appropriate use of computers, video and microscopes, linked to television monitors, for whole-class demonstrations. Students are taught good examination techniques. Handouts are good and past examination papers

are used regularly to test students' knowledge and understanding. In some lessons, however, teachers make little attempt to provide more demanding work for the more able students or encourage them to think more for themselves.

51. Physics students use laptop computers to access the Internet for research. For example, a student on a GCE A-level electronics course used a computer to analyse the operation of a circuit he was building as part of a coursework project. Students in an access to HE science lesson took part in a lively debate on genetics, which helped improve the understanding of the topic. Students in an evening GCSE human physiology lesson at one of the community centres effectively developed their problem solving skills through a realistic practical exercise to determine the characteristics of urine samples that indicate diabetes. They designed their own tests using their previous knowledge and needed little intervention from their teacher.

52. All courses have detailed schemes of work. Homework is regularly set and carefully marked, but the written feedback is sometimes poor. Teachers keep accurate records of students' progress and review progress with individual students at least once a term. At these review sessions, students agree action plans for improvement, but some of the objectives set are not clear enough. Students are regularly given extra help by teachers outside lessons. At appropriate times of the year there are lunchtime revision groups.

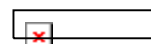
53. External visits are used well to help students further their understanding of science. These include trips in physics to study a local railway, biology students visiting a maritime museum and chemistry students listening to examiners speak at a conference on improving examination techniques. However, no use is made of work experience and there are few visiting speakers from industry.

54. The teachers are well qualified and experienced. A number use their experience as external examiners to give clear advice to students as to how to gain maximum marks in external examinations. Most of the laboratories are adequate and students make good use of IT and other facilities in the laboratories, the library and study centre. Equipment is well maintained and the science teaching is well supported by technical staff. The stock of library books is adequate but many are old.

Leadership and management

55. Leadership and management are effective. Science staff work well together, sharing teaching material and some documentation for recording students' progress. However, there is little sharing of good teaching practice across subjects. Teachers regularly seek the views of students and these surveys result in appropriate changes to the way in which lessons are taught. Teachers keep senior managers and governors aware of problems and successes. All teachers use performance indicators during the annual review of their courses for the preparation of their self-assessment report and in producing action plans for improvements. Strategies have been developed to improve retention rates in biology and there are some signs of improvement this year.

Mathematics



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

Strengths

- consistently high pass rate on GCE A-level mathematics

- good use of IT to support teaching and learning
- wide range of courses to meet the ability range of students in the college.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates in GCSE mathematics over the last three years for students aged 16 to 18
- low pass rate in GCE AS mathematics in 2001
- insufficient involvement of students in some lessons.

Scope of provision

56. There is a wide range of courses in mathematics for full-time students that recruit a large number of students. Around 80 students take GCE A-level mathematics each year and about 150 are recruited to GCSE mathematics. There are three main GCE AS courses including mechanics and statistics. GCE A-level students take pure mathematics with either statistics or mechanics. A further four modules are provided using a videoconference link with another college for small numbers of students. Students can also take further modules to gain GCE AS further mathematics. Students have an induction programme to assess whether a GCSE mathematics course or an Open College Network (OCN) gateway to mathematics course will suit them best. There are three GCSE evening courses, which recruit mainly adults, two of them at centres in the community. There are two foundation programmes, a City and Guilds numeracy course and an OCN course, which are designed to help students move successfully to GCSE courses.

Achievement and standards

57. The pass rate in GCE A-level mathematics has been well above the national average for some years. However, the first set of GCE AS examination results in 2001 was well below the national average at 51%. Examination pass rates at GCSE show a contrasting picture for younger and older students. For students aged over 19 years, pass rates have improved over the last three years from well below to slightly above the national average. For students aged 16 to 18 years, GCSE pass rates are poor. The increasing use of OCN modules is encouraging some students who would struggle with GCSE mathematics to succeed in mathematics. Pass rates in these courses have improved significantly in 2001. Retention rates are good on GCSE and OCN courses, and around the national average for GCE A level.

58. The standard of most students' work is appropriate for the level of their course of study. At level 1, students were confident when calculating the area of rectangular bodies but they found the calculation of volumes and simple algebra more difficult. GCSE students were confident with factorising, prime numbers and simple statistics, but found distance/time graphs and devising statistical correlation graphs more difficult. GCE AS and A-level students were generally confident in most aspects of algebra, calculus, mechanics and statistics.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
OCN gateway to mathematics	2	No. of starts	*	43	46
		% retention	*	95	81
		% pass rate	*	59	85
GCSE mathematics (16-18)	2	No. of starts	192	207	158
		% retention	73	79	80
		% pass rate	25	22	28
GCSE mathematics (19+)	2	No. of starts	98	67	75
		% retention	76	88	79
		% pass rate	45	38	56
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	63	70	79
		% retention	63	84	75
		% pass rate	97	90	94

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

59. Some teaching is good; some is unsatisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers set students appropriately demanding work which is well matched to their abilities. Teachers have good working relationships with their students. No excellent lessons were observed, but 56% of lessons were judged to be good or very good. In unsatisfactory lessons, students were insufficiently involved in the work, either because it was too difficult for them or because the teacher did not check that they were understanding it. In a small number of foundation and intermediate lessons, the work was taught in too complex a way for the students to be able to follow it. Computers are used well in lessons and in students' work, for example, to assist with curve sketching and in the teaching of statistics.

60. Course materials are comprehensive and well presented in a variety of formats. A series of 27 booklets of examples and worked examples helps students make the transition from GCSE to advanced work. These ensure that students progress through manageable steps. There is similar support for students taking numeracy courses. Further book resources, including copies of current textbooks, are available from the main library. Full information on current courses, past papers and some past paper answers are provided on the college's intranet.

61. Students' work is set and marked regularly and accurately. Students are set sufficient homework to complete. This is returned to them within a week, with comments showing them how to improve their work. Homework and test grades are used to monitor students' progress, to refer them to workshops for further support when needed, and to inform their parents of progress through reports and parents' evenings.

62. The small number of students who are studying other minority interest modules in mathematics receive comprehensive information from the MEI website and further support through a regular video conference link with a tutor at another college.

63. Their homework is marked by post and discussed over the video link. This scheme is part of a

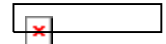
development project run by the examination board. There have been some difficulties with the scheme: the board has not met its own deadlines for introducing some of its web pages, and on occasions, the video link with the other college has been unreliable.

64. Mathematics teachers are suitably qualified and experienced; all have a degree in mathematics or a related discipline and a teaching qualification. Most of the accommodation is in purpose-built classrooms but some lessons take place in a former science laboratory. The computer rooms are regularly used for mathematics teaching.

Leadership and management

65. Mathematics is well managed at an operational level. Teaching is well organised though detailed schemes of work. Paper-based resources for learning are well organised and accessible. The development of IT, including innovative links with other institutions, has been successful. However, the strategic management of some courses has been weak. For example, despite several attempts to modify the GCSE programme over the years, acceptable pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 have still not been attained over the period 1999 to 2001. Students taking the GCE AS course were guided to an unsuitable sequence of modules and a low GCE AS pass rate resulted. The department has introduced corrective actions which it is hoped will rectify these weaknesses.

Construction



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

Strengths

- particularly high pass and retention rates on level 1 courses
- high pass rates on both GNVQ advanced and plumbing level 2 courses
- good students' work
- much good teaching and learning in practical lessons
- good work-based opportunities.

Weaknesses

- declining and low pass rates on wood occupations

- some dull teaching in theory lessons
- poor written feedback to students in many cases.

Scope of provision

66. The college provides a range of full-time and part-time courses in construction at foundation, intermediate and advanced level for both day and evening attendance. Awards offered include NVQs in bricklaying, wood occupations, electrical installation and plumbing, the GNVQ foundation and the AVCE in construction and the built environment. The college also offers specialist courses, such as the industrial recognised gas accreditation course, and through collaborative working, a range of short courses for construction plant operators. There are currently 141 students aged 16 to 18 on full-time and part-time courses, 270 adult learners on part-time courses and a total of 102 students on a foundation or advanced modern apprenticeship.

Achievement and standards

67. There are high pass and retention rates on all level 1 courses. In 2001, the foundation GNVQ course in construction and the built environment and NVQ level 1 courses in bricklaying and wood occupations, had retention rates above 85% and pass rates at, or close to, 100%. Students on these courses are interested and attentive and produce practical work of a high standard. For example, students on the carpentry course are able to measure, cut, saw and fix to industrial standards much sooner than many students. Pass rates on the advanced GNVQ in construction and the built environment are well above national averages. Retention rates for most other courses are generally at, or above, national averages. The quality of students' work on the new AVCE in construction is at least satisfactory and much of it is good. The better students are able to analyse and interpret information and present it as part of a coherent argument.

68. Attendance during the inspection week was high at 83%, although in the evening carpentry course, the average attendance is low at 53%. The number of students who have enrolled on the NVQ level 2 wood occupations programme has increased over the past three years, but pass rates have declined and were well below the national average in 2001. The college has identified the falling pass rate as an issue and is implementing measures to improve it, but it is too soon to judge the effectiveness of these.

A sample of retention and pass rates in construction, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ foundation construction and the built environment	1	No. of starts	30	18	26
		% retention	83	72	85
		% pass rate	100	92	95
City and Guilds 236 Part 2 competencies	2	No. of starts	7	25	*
		% retention	71	96	*
		% pass rate	100	71	*
NVQ wood occupations	2	No. of starts	32	54	65

		% retention	66	59	68
		% pass rate	74	67	50
NVQ bricklaying	2	No. of starts	13	24	14
		% retention	58	78	86
		% pass rate	100	82	100
NVQ mechanical engineering services (plumbing)	2	No. of starts	23	344	31
		% retention	50	62	68
		% pass rate	100	100	95
NVQ electrical installation	3	No. of starts	*	*	7
		% retention	*	*	86
		% pass rate	*	*	50
GNVQ advanced construction and the built environment	3	No. of starts	14	10	14
		% retention	69	80	85
		% pass rate	100	88	91

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

69. Practical teaching in construction is good and most classroom teaching is satisfactory or better. Students learn practical skills by working on projects under the supervision of teachers. Teachers prepare well for these practical sessions. They have good lesson plans that clearly show the aims and objectives and learning outcomes of the lesson. Teachers make good use of students' knowledge and skills gained in the workplace. For example in bricklaying, students had built two single-storey dwellings over a four-week period. They each worked on specific parts of the buildings with cavity walls and also included decorative brickwork features. The teacher assisted the students by demonstrating various bricklaying techniques needed for the project and assessed their knowledge by good questioning. In another example, first-year plumbing students were required to braze a copper pipe on the side of a hot water cylinder. The teacher demonstrated the required skills to the group, clearly explaining each stage of the process. The students were highly motivated and keen to try their skills under the supervision of the teacher. In both the above examples, students produced good work. In contrast, some theory teaching is dull and unexciting. The pace of work is often slow and teachers do not sufficiently check that students are understanding the work and are learning. Students quickly become bored in these lessons. When theory lessons include examples of the teachers' or students' industrial experiences, students become interested and good learning takes place.

70. Teachers are suitably qualified and are provided with opportunities to update their industrial technical knowledge. All teachers have recently gained a supervisory qualification in health and safety to enable them to visit students on construction sites. Teachers make good use of visual aids and there are displays of students' work in classrooms. Construction workshops are bright and airy, and outside construction areas provided a realistic working environment. Students have access to the college intranet site that holds up-to-date subject literature. The college library has a small range of construction books and many of these are out of date. The college does not have up-to-date specialist computer-aided design software and the computer monitors used for these lessons are too small for the purpose.

71. In most cases, students are given helpful verbal feedback on their own work. Some teachers set work regularly, and in marking, make careful and constructive written comments on the work that

helps students to learn and develop their understanding of the subject. Too many teachers, however, do not provide good written feedback which gives adequate guidance to students about how they can improve their work. Plumbing portfolios contained no written feedback on students' work and in brickwork, comments on action plans were not always specific or helpful.

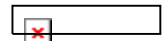
72. Work-based learning is well organised and effective. Work placements for students on full-time and part-time courses are good. It provides students with the breadth and depth of experience needed for them to complete their studies. In one example, a student had recently worked on a hot water system in a customer's home. During a theory lesson, that student was able to relate the working practices he experienced to the group. The collection of work-based evidence by work-based students is good. A member of college staff regularly visits these students in the workplace and uses a video camera to record their work. After editing, this evidence is transferred to a CD-ROM and included in the student's portfolio.

73. Support for students is satisfactory. Students value the amount of personal support and subject guidance provided by teachers. Additional workshop and portfolio building lessons are provided each week to help students with their studies. Tutorials focus mainly on the vocational aspect of the course providing students with an additional opportunity to learn topics they have not properly understood. Students are not always provided with clear targets for improvement in tutorial sessions. Students' absences from college are reported to employers on a weekly basis and absence of full-time students is reported to parents when a pattern of no attendance begins to occur.

Leadership and management

74. There is effective course team management. Teachers are included in the target setting and self-assessment process. Targets are set for each course but not for completion of the foundation or advanced modern apprenticeship. The construction self-assessment report is thorough and contains regularly up-dated action reviews, but little use is made of action planning to bring about improvement of unsatisfactory teaching. Formal staff and team meetings have agendas and are well recorded. Teachers' concerns about students' progress and courses are discussed and strategies are agreed for dealing with them. The management of franchised construction plant provision is good. Regular meetings are held with franchise partners and regular monitoring visits are made by college staff to ensure that standards are being maintained.

Engineering



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

Strengths

- good retention rates
- productive links with industry
- wide range of engineering provision

- good practice in work-based learning, review and monitoring
- outstanding specialist resources for motor vehicle
- effective teaching to meet individual students' needs.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on some courses
- failure of some apprentices to complete their apprenticeship in the planned time
- insufficient challenge for students on some programmes.

Scope of provision

75. The college offers a range of full-time and part-time motor vehicle, electrical and electronics and mechanical engineering courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced level to serve the needs of school leavers and local industry. In 2000/01, the college enrolled 323 students aged 16 to 18 and 373 adult students. The college has good links with the local engineering industry. Local companies provide good work-based learning experience for motor vehicle students on full-time courses. The college also provides modern apprenticeship programmes at foundation and advanced levels in all engineering disciplines. At the time of the inspection there were 84 advanced modern apprentices, and 20 foundation modern apprentices. The college is responsive to employer requests for courses. It has recently started a vehicle body paint operations course in response to a request from local employers after the previous provider had stopped training.

Achievement and standards

76. Student retention on engineering courses is good. Retention rates have improved in each of the last three years and are above the national average for most courses. On level 1 motor vehicle programmes, retention rates were 90% in 2000/01, well above the national average of 74%. The pass rates for motor vehicle courses at level 1 and engineering NVQs at levels 1 and 2 are well above the national average. In contrast, less than a third of those students who completed the level 2 motor vehicle course in each of the last two years achieved the qualification. Pass rates for work-based trainees on the modern apprenticeship framework are good and above the national average, but a significant number take longer to achieve than planned.

77. Students on the majority of courses demonstrate good engineering skills and competences. Students work competently and safely in workshops. The engineering students prefer practical work to being taught theory in classrooms and many produce much better practical than theory work. In theory lessons, teachers make appropriate allowance for students of differing abilities, but the work

set for some was not sufficiently demanding and they became disinterested. In a good motor vehicle practical lesson, students were set tasks on a number of different motor vehicle systems. The students, of widely differing ability, worked well under the supervision of the teacher and were gaining a good understanding of motor vehicle systems.

A sample of retention and pass rates in engineering, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
City and Guilds 2010 basic engineering competences	1	No. of starts	33	19	14
		% retention	88	100	93
		% pass rate	83	79	62
City and Guilds 3830 repair and servicing of road vehicles	1	No. of starts	53	56	63
		% retention	81	73	90
		% pass rate	75	98	81
NVQ engineering	1&2	No. of starts	*	99	81
		% retention	*	66	89
		% pass rate	*	80	86
City and Guilds 3830 repair and servicing of road vehicles	2	No. of starts	52	50	31
		% retention	71	80	84
		% pass rate	**	33	27
National certificate in engineering	3	No. of starts	37	26	18
		% retention	68	81	94
		% pass rate	84	86	75

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

* course did not run

** unreliable data

Quality of education and training

78. Students are given good information about the range and content of courses before they enrol. They are also assessed to determine whether they have additional learning needs that may need to be addressed when the course starts. After enrolment, students are given a well-planned induction programme that introduces them to their course.

79. The standard of teaching was good in two thirds of the lessons observed and satisfactory in most of the rest. The quality of teaching and learning in laboratories and workshops is good and students' practical work is good. In a very good welding lesson, the teacher appropriately combined theory and practice, made regular checks on students' learning through the use of directed questions, gave clear instructions, demonstrated techniques well and gave the students positive feedback. All students were able to perform the tasks required and key aspects of health and safety were reinforced throughout the lesson, and the work was made relevant to the students by reference to industrial practices.

80. In the best theory lessons, teachers planned their work well and used a range of appropriate teaching methods to maintain the interest of the students. In one good lesson on electrical auxiliary systems, the teacher used formal teaching and demonstrations to illustrate the theory being taught.

Good use was made of directed questions to check the students' learning. In a minority of lessons teachers did not plan their work well. In some lessons students became bored, lost interest and their learning suffered.

81. Assessment is fair and well managed although the quality of written feedback given to students varies considerably. Some teachers provide detailed written notes to give students clear advice on how they could improve their work. Such good practice is not consistently followed throughout the department, where a few teachers are providing little or no written feedback to help students. Students have regular tutorials during which their progress is reviewed and targets are set for improvement. In a few cases the review process is poorly managed.

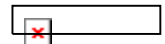
82. Work-based learning is well managed. Apprentices' progress is reviewed every 12 weeks and assessment is carried out at regular intervals to a programme agreed between the assessor and apprentice. Assessment is good and apprentices are given detailed and helpful feedback afterwards. The college has developed good systems to record apprentices' progress. Despite these systems too many apprentices take longer than the planned duration of their programme to achieve all elements of the apprenticeship programme. Internal verification of all engineering programmes is good.

83. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. There are good levels of technician and administrative support for engineering. The college has good engineering resources for all the courses it offers, including a new and well-equipped purpose-built motor vehicle workshop. There are a good number of computers for students' use. The range and quality of engineering books in the library is poor and they are not well used by students. Students do have access in the engineering area to good resources, including good computer-based learning materials.

Leadership and management

84. Engineering provision is well organised and effectively managed. Course teams monitor students' progress and realistic targets are set for improving course performance. These targets are discussed and monitored regularly and remedial action is taken, if necessary. The management team has recently been strengthened by the appointment of a student services and key skills co-ordinator. Good attention is paid to equal opportunities and is a feature of work-based learning. There are regular engineering team and departmental meetings. These have a clear agenda and are well recorded. There is good communication between managers and all engineering teachers. An engineering advisory committee with good representation from local industry meets each term.

Business



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

Strengths

- pass rates and retention rates above national averages on most courses
- much good and very good teaching
- thorough assessment and review processes on work-based programmes

- good access to, and uptake of, additional qualifications
- thorough quality assurance procedures.

Weaknesses

- some unimaginative and undemanding teaching
- some poor teaching accommodation and restricted access to office equipment on the main site
- ineffective action planning for some students.

Scope of provision

85. There is a wide range of programmes in business, located at many centres across north Devon and north Cornwall. Full-time programmes include NVQs in administration, intermediate GNVQ in business, AVCE in business, first and national diplomas in public services, and GCE AS and A-level economics and business studies. Part-time administration, office skills, professional and business courses are offered on the main campus and there is growing provision of NVQs and management courses on employer premises. Modern apprenticeship programmes in administration and accounting are offered at the main site and in Bude, Cornwall. New Deal provision is offered through the self-employment, full-time education and training and employment routes. The business development centre offers the preparation for business programme to those interested in developing small businesses. Partnership provision is based mainly on NVQs and the preparation for business certificate.

Achievement and standards

86. Pass rates and retention rates are good on many business courses. For example, all the students who completed the first and national diploma in public services over the last two years have successfully gained their qualifications. Pass rates on the intermediate and advanced GNVQ courses in business have been well above the national average for the last two years. High grade passes on GNVQ courses were particularly good in 2000/01.

87. Pass rates, and the proportion of high grades gained, are generally good on the GCE A-level programmes. However, the pass rate on the one-year part-time GCE A-level business programme declined to well below the national average in 2001.

88. There is more variation in the pass rates for NVQ programmes. Pass rates on NVQ level 2 in accounting are very good, but performance at level 3 is below the national average. There was a significant drop in the pass rate on NVQ level 2 administration programmes in 2000/01, though it was still above the national average. There is a good rate of successful completion for modern

apprenticeship programmes. Pass rates are good and improving on most office skills courses. Passes on Oxford, Cambridge and RSA (OCR) office technology courses in 2001/02 show a very high proportion at distinction level. However, the progress made by some full-time students on NVQ programmes is too slow. Work-based learners advance much more quickly.

89. Most students' work is good and students on office technology programmes produced some particularly good work. Students could explain their work well. Many students were adept at asking pertinent questions in lessons that showed that they understood the topic and wanted to extend their knowledge further.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ intermediate	2	No. of starts	14	28	17
		% retention	71	75	76
		% pass rate	100	100	92
NVQ administration	2	No. of starts	54	37	49
		% retention	89	89	96
		% pass rate	94	100	68
GCE A-level business studies	3	No. of starts	27	23	22
		% retention	81	91	82
		% pass rate	59	76	39
National diploma public services	3	No. of starts	35	26	26
		% retention	69	69	69
		% pass rate	79	100	100
GNVQ advanced	3	No. of starts	35	32	40
		% retention	59	59	88
		% pass rate	70	100	97
NVQ accounting	3	No. of starts	37	29	48
		% retention	84	69	85
		% pass rate	63	40	49
Certificate in management	4	No. of starts	12	7	8
		% retention	92	86	100
		% pass rate	64	83	75

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

Quality of education and training

90. Most teaching is good and it was very good in one third of the lessons observed. In some of the best lessons, teachers set a variety of short activities to help students to learn quickly. For example, in a level 1 administration class, the teacher effectively mixed discussion, short periods of reading from well-prepared learning materials, with brief tasks to check and assess students' learning. Students' learning was effectively monitored in office technology and computerised accounts lessons. The teacher discussed and checked progress with each student while other students continued to work independently with well-structured learning materials. Teachers cleverly drew on

students' experience in workplaces to show the application of principles and systems discussed in lessons. For example, students described mailroom practice in their organisations. From this, the teacher drew out general principles but also helped the class to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the systems. Teachers offered very good help on examination and revision techniques. However, in some lessons, the teaching made little demand on students' initiative or ability to think for themselves. In other lessons, while the teacher worked with an individual student, other students worked slowly or did not concentrate on their work.

91. In the best lessons, students were thoughtful and imaginative. Their interest was held and they produced effective work. First diploma public services students contributed enthusiastically and creatively, in whole class and group discussion, on the work of the emergency services in a disaster. Other students had planned fund-raising schemes for a Romanian orphanage in lessons and then implemented their plans. Students worked quickly and accurately on computerised bookkeeping, document presentation and mailmerge. A work-based student designed office systems for an awards event in her workplace. She had very effectively applied principles learned on her administration course. Supervisory students linked the application of statistical sampling methods to the process of monitoring quality in their job roles. They now clearly understood the basis of that area of their work.

92. There are good systems for recording and monitoring students' progress on programmes. Assessment and review on NVQ administration programmes are particularly good. Staff have very good knowledge of the students' work in their placement or job and use this very effectively to identify NVQ assessment and evidence opportunities. Internal verification is thorough and consistently meets awarding body requirements. The quality of individual action plans for students varies and in some cases, these plans have little effect on how well students progress. Students were well supported by course tutors.

93. Learner support is readily available for students though take-up by students is small. The student support process for full-time students included links with parents and carers, where appropriate. Modern apprenticeship students undergo regular and thorough reviews of progress, incorporating consideration of support needs and an update of their individual learning plan.

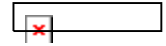
94. Curriculum 2000 has extended students' choice. For example, many administration students now take a GCE AS qualification. Many full-time students take additional qualifications. For example, students taking public service courses follow leadership award schemes, coaching awards, first aid at work certificates and have opportunities to join the Army cadets.

95. Some of the classrooms on the main site used for business and professional courses are poor and lack visual stimulation. Some rooms are unpleasant and uncomfortable. They are not conducive to good learning. For example, several lessons were badly disrupted by windows that rattled in the wind. Training facilities on company premises and at the Business Development Centre are of a high standard. Students had good access to IT, but administration students did not have immediate access to office equipment for training. Lessons on filing systems and mail took place in standard classrooms. The library and the study centre are pleasant working places with good resources for learning. However, some part-time students had not received an induction to the library and had not been issued with library cards. Teachers are well qualified in the subjects they teach, but there is a need for professional and commercial updating for some staff.

Leadership and management

96. Business is well led and managed. There is effective teamwork and a clear focus on target setting for retention and achievement. There are positive moves to share good practice within the department with particular emphasis on improving teaching and learning. Quality assurance procedures are applied rigorously by course teams and course tutors. Internal verification is regular and thorough, and issues arising from external verifiers' reports are acted upon promptly. However, the monitoring of partnership provision is too informal and inadequately recorded.

Computing and information technology



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

Strengths

- wide range of well-managed courses with good progression routes
- good retention rates and pass rates on most courses
- well-planned, confident and effective teaching
- high-quality ICT resources and study aids at all centres
- good action planning and monitoring of students' achievement and progress.

Weaknesses

- below average retention rates on some level 3 courses
- students' over dependence on the teacher in some lessons
- lack of pace and challenge in some practical work.

Scope of provision

97. The college offers a wide range of provision and qualifications for full-time and part-time students from basic computer literacy, through NVQ, GNVQ intermediate to AVCE, national diploma and GCE A-level and AS computing and ICT. In addition to the full-time courses, there is a wide range of general and specialist short courses in areas such as word processing, computer literacy, IT, Internet technologies, and web publishing. Flexible programmes of study provide training and re-training that lead to recognised qualifications at a range of levels. As a relatively isolated rural college, providing access to ICT is seen as a major contribution to the local community. There is a mobile IT unit which brings training into village halls and other venues. Courses and training are

offered at 14 remote centres. They are very popular, recruiting some 4,000 students last year. There are good routes for progression within this provision. A significant number of students currently on courses have already successfully completed a course.

Achievement and standards

98. The college has taken advantage of the Curriculum 2000 initiatives to develop a broader range of courses better matched to student needs and to provide a variety of routes for progression. Pass rates have been at, or above, national averages for all courses over the past three years. On some courses, retention rates and pass rates have been well above average over this period. For example, on the CLAIT and the City and Guilds 4242 courses, they have been very high for the past three years. Specialist short courses also have good retention and pass rates. The web publishing expert course had a retention rate of 80% and a 100% pass rate in 2001. Retention rates on the national diploma and GCE A-level courses have been consistently below average. Data for the current year show improved retention rates on the new AVCE and GCE A-level courses which meet students' needs.

99. Most students have a good understanding of basic concepts, and in practical lessons, they use computer systems with confidence. Work seen in lessons and in students' files shows attainment that is good or better by most students. Students make very good progress and learn well in lessons, often demonstrating knowledge and understanding beyond the demands of their course. They are confident in discussing their work and in contributing to lessons. In a national diploma class, students contributed readily to a discussion of previous work on assemble language coding. Their retention of knowledge of previous practical work was good and they could transfer this knowledge into new situations, extending their understanding as they did so. Good discussion between students in practical lessons enabled the more able students to support the less able.

A sample of retention and pass rates in computing and IT, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
City and Guilds 4242 short	1	No. of starts	428	521	156
		% retention	94	96	93
		% pass rate	86	78	79
CLAIT short	1	No. of starts	900	629	628
		% retention	94	85	89
		% pass rate	80	71	60
NVQ using IT short	1/2	No. of starts	86	7	*
		% retention	87	71	*
		% pass rate	90	100	*
GNVQ intermediate ICT (1 year)	2	No. of starts	37	34	41
		% retention	72	65	75
		% pass rate	52	73	60
National diploma in IT (2 year)	3	No. of starts	32	52	73
		% retention	73	75	71
		% pass rate	100	82	88
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	37	43	26
		% retention	61	61	64
		% pass rate	86	72	100

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

100. Teaching and learning are good at all centres. They were satisfactory or better in all lessons observed. In the best lessons, teachers have a lively and enthusiastic approach. They plan well and use a variety of appropriate activities and materials to sustain students' interest. Teachers regularly check that students understand the work and provide effective support to students. Teachers use questions well to draw on students' previous knowledge and to maintain their interest. Teachers also give students detailed explanations of concepts and terminology to help them understand. In one lesson, the teacher provided detailed explanations of databases and their uses with examples which students would be familiar with. In lessons in which students had to produce a major project, they were encouraged to think deeply about their task. Projects produced related to students' experiences such as 'the sea cadets', 'surfing', 'hotel and catering', and 'library logs'. In these lessons, students were attentive, asked questions and sought clarification. In one visual basics lesson, students produced a program with several menus including a calculator function and a game and made the joins between different menus seamless. Students had to write a 'Help' menu to explain how to use the package. In two very good lessons, as a result of the excellent guidelines given by the teacher, students were able to produce websites on the dangers of drugs, to a very high standard that included animation and video clips. Teachers use their experiences to relate theory to practice well. In a very good lesson, students took computers apart and put them back together again. They then produced excellent guidance notes on this activity to be used by other classes. In some of the less effective lessons, students were over-reliant on advice from the teacher rather than investigating and finding out solutions for themselves. They tended to sit and wait without purpose until the teacher became free, and when they were given advice, they did not take notes for future reference. In other practical lessons, the pace of work was slow and it was not sufficiently demanding. Teachers failed to notice that students were not making significant progress.

101. There are teams of staff at the main site and in the centres in the community. Staff are well qualified for the courses they teach. There is a good programme of staff development and teachers attend a wide range of external courses and conferences during the year. Communication within the department is good with information from meetings and conferences cascaded to other staff members. Students reported that they had as much access to IT as they needed with up-to-date industrial standard software and the Internet. Many students make good use of the college intranet for information on their courses and for general research. E-mail is frequently used for communicating with the students. There is a good stock of computing books, journals, magazines, CD-ROMs and videos, for students to use.

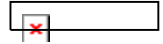
102. The department is evaluating interactive whiteboards. In a computer literacy evening class, on special features of spreadsheet software, the teacher used a portable interactive whiteboard to demonstrate the theory in practice. This allowed the students to raise problems and see the various options in action. It was a useful lesson for the students who had a wide range of experience and ability. Good use is made of college systems for monitoring students' achievement and progress, and very good feedback is given to students on how to improve their work. Action planning, target setting and self-evaluation are successful components of this process.

Leadership and management

103. Course provision is located in three sections in the department of business and IT. Working relationships and co-operation between the section heads and their staff have led to a well-integrated and coherent provision. There are courses at all levels to meet students' needs and the uniform high quality of teaching and facilities for learning for students at all the centres is a reflection of the attention to detail and good leadership in this area. Courses are managed effectively and teachers work well in teams to share ideas and resources. There is a high commitment to quality assurance through course review and evaluation. There are excellent

resources for teaching and learning in computing and ICT across the different centres. These resources are very well managed and supported centrally by the technical staff. There are very good relationships between the support staff and the teaching staff at all levels, which makes a significant contribution to the quality of work in this area.

Hospitality, leisure and tourism



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

Strengths

- retention and pass rates above national averages on most courses
- good teaching in practical lessons
- high standard of students' written work
- thorough marking of students' work
- wide range of courses with good progression opportunities
- good range of additional qualifications and enrichment activities
- good links with employers.

Weaknesses

- some insufficiently demanding teaching
- some poor schemes of work and lesson plans

- out-dated specialist facilities.

Scope of provision

104. The college offers a broad range of hospitality, sport, leisure and tourism courses for full-time and part-time students, leading to GCSE, GCE A-level and GCE AS, NVQ, AVCE, intermediate GNVQ, and first and national diploma qualifications. In 2000/01, there were 398 full-time and 823 part-time enrolments. Full-time students can select from a wide range of additional qualifications which meet their career aspirations. There is a wide range of enrichment activities, including sports coaching in schools, study trips to Finland, Sweden and Spain, and visits to tourist attractions. Nearly 100 work-based learners study for NVQ awards and modern apprenticeships. Short courses such as the National Licensee's certificate, door supervisor's certificate and food hygiene and safety are offered to meet the needs of industry.

Achievement and standards

105. Retention rates and pass rates on most courses are above the national averages. On the GNVQ intermediate and advanced leisure and tourism courses, the retention and pass rates have been consistently above the national averages over the last three years and many students attain high grades. Pass rates on the first and national diplomas in sports studies are consistently very high, but the retention rate on the diploma fell to below the national average in 2001. The pass rate on GCE A-level sports studies is well above the national average and a high percentage of students gain high grades (A-C). In 2001, on GCE AS sports and physical education, the pass rate was very high but retention rates were low. Overall, students' achievements are high on NVQ programmes in catering and hospitality, the National Licensee's certificate and on food hygiene courses. The majority of work-based learners who complete their NVQ course achieve the award. Learners on foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships are less successful, with about 50% of students who complete the course achieving the framework. Many students progress from level 2 to level 3 courses. A high proportion of students progress to HE or gain employment related to their vocational course.

106. Overall, the standard of students' written work is high. Most students have good research skills and use the Internet effectively. Nearly all assignments are word-processed and often include graphics to illustrate the text. Many students attain a high skill level in their chosen sport. Catering students develop good kitchen and restaurant skills that prepare them well for employment. Work-based learners demonstrate a very good understanding of theoretical knowledge that they are able to use effectively in their job.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hospitality, leisure and tourism, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ food preparation and cooking	2	No. of starts	42	41	49
		% retention	67	59	76
		% pass rate	95	83	84
NVQ serving food and drink	2	No. of starts	34	16	23
		% retention	68	50	74
		% pass rate	94	100	81
First diploma science (sports studies)	2	No. of starts	21	24	15
		% retention	81	74	93

		% pass rate	100	100	86
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	10	21	21
		% retention	90	76	86
		% pass rate	100	81	83
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism	3	No. of starts	22	16	17
		% retention	68	69	88
		% pass rate	100	82	100
National diploma applied science (sport studies)	3	No. of starts	30	31	63
		% retention	77	97	75
		% pass rate	100	97	96
National Licensee's Certificate (short)	3	No. of starts	134	184	167
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	96	89	86
GCE A-level sports studies	3	No. of starts	42	32	46
		% retention	86	81	74
		% pass rate	86	96	97

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

Quality of education and training

107. Most teaching is good or better and is clearly set in a vocational context. There are frequent references and good links between the different subjects studied by students. Most teachers made effective use of questions to check students' learning. In many lessons, students' communication skills are effectively developed through presentations to other students and group work. In lessons where the teaching was stimulating and the work demanding, students were enthusiastic and attained good standards of work. In a few lessons, some teachers' plans did not include clear aims and learning outcomes, tasks were insufficiently demanding, students' interest was not maintained and they made slow progress. A small number of lessons were disrupted by the late arrival of students.

108. Catering students gain realistic work experience by preparing, cooking and serving food and beverages in the college restaurant and the student refectory. They work effectively in teams and display good social skills, especially when dealing with customers. Travel and tourism students gain useful experience in the college travel centre, using commercial software and handling enquiries for holidays and travel information. Most sport, leisure and recreation students apply and improve their practical skills, and gain in confidence, through working on a range of projects through the Community Volunteer scheme. Students value the careers advice that they receive on HE and job opportunities. There are good links with industry and employers regularly give presentations to students and host student visits.

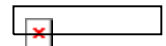
109. Assignments are well planned, vocationally relevant and students find them interesting. Students' work is marked thoroughly. Many teachers correct poor grammar and spelling and provide constructive comments on how students can improve their grade. Students' progress is carefully monitored. There are regular reports to parents and these are followed by consultation evenings. Poor student behaviour is appropriately challenged and absences are routinely followed-up. Good arrangements are in place to help students with a specific learning difficulty or those who need extra help with their course work. Students appreciate the good individual support that they receive from their teachers. Work-based learners receive appropriate support from college staff.

110. Most teachers have relevant qualifications and some have training and assessor awards. Many have recent experience of the hospitality, sport, leisure and tourism industries. There is a very wide range of specialist periodicals, magazines and journals. However, some of the books are out of date. Students have good access to computers and the Internet. Some specialist facilities and equipment for sport and catering are out-dated and in need of upgrading. Most teaching takes place in huts that are inaccessible to wheelchair users. Noise often affects lessons in the teaching rooms above the sports hall.

Leadership and management

111. Curriculum management is generally good. Work-based learning is well managed. The curriculum is reviewed frequently and changed to match the needs of students. Quality assurance procedures are effective. Targets are set for retention, achievement and attendance, and action is taken to raise standards and improve under-performance. Communications are good. Lesson observations are undertaken regularly, but in some cases, not enough attention is given to addressing the weaknesses identified in lessons.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy



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

Strengths

- good teaching and learning
- good retention and pass rates on most courses
- commercial standards achieved by students in many practical sessions
- good achievement of additional qualifications by many students
- effective monitoring of students' progress.

Weaknesses

- some weak teaching of key skills
- some inadequate correction of students' work

- too few clients in some sessions and some poor library resources.

Scope of provision

112. There is a good range of full-time and part-time courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy. This includes NVQ levels 1 to 3 in hairdressing, NVQ levels 2 and 3 in beauty therapy, and holistic therapies diploma. The college also offers a Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma in science (beauty therapy) for full-time students. There is also a comprehensive range of short courses.

Achievement and standards

113. Pass rates and retention rates on most courses are good. A few short courses have poor retention rates.

114. Practical work is of high quality. Students generally make rapid progress and their work in salons is often of a commercial standard. They are competent and confident in their dealings with clients. Many students have developed practical skills which are more advanced than the stage of their course would require. For example, in a barbering class, students displayed commercial competence in effective shaving, hot towel steaming and facial massage on a male client. Beauty therapy students reached high commercial standards in their salon work. Many of them are relaxed when dealing with clients and consequently help clients to be at ease. They are articulate and can often explain their work well. A high degree of customer satisfaction from treatments and services was evident.

115. A nurturing and caring environment was evident within salons where holistic therapies were taught. Effective commercial salons are operated where clients experienced commercially competent treatments in Indian head massage, aromatherapy and reflexology.

116. Students' portfolios and other written work are well presented and make good use of IT. An excellent example of IT application was in a hairdressing portfolio by a student studying for an advanced modern apprenticeship. Students are enthusiastic about their work.

117. Full-time students often achieve a wide range of additional qualifications as part of their programme. These include modern foreign languages and one beauty therapy student is currently studying Japanese. Students have good opportunities to participate in a range of trips and visits. These are popular and help students to develop their confidence. In addition to visits to Sweden, one student updated her product and treatment knowledge with a cosmetics company in Germany.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ hairdressing (1 year)	1	No. of starts	13	16	17
		% retention	92	81	76
		% pass rate	100	85	85
NVQ hairdressing (2 year)	2	No. of starts	32	19	31
		% retention	44	72	77
		% pass rate	100	77	83

NVQ beauty therapy (2 year)	2	No. of starts	9	21	28
		% retention	56	80	86
		% pass rate	100	100	90
Indian head massage short course	2	No. of starts	*	25	45
		% retention	*	92	98
		% pass rate	*	100	98
NVQ hairdressing 2 year)	3	No. of starts	19	9	5
		% retention	53	44	80
		% pass rate	100	100	100
Diploma in aromatherapy	3	No. of starts	24	15	17
		% retention	75	75	76
		% pass rate	100	100	82
Reflexology diploma (1 year)	3	No. of starts	*	18	18
		% retention	*	83	61
		% pass rate	*	100	82

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

* course not running

Quality of education and training

118. Most teaching is very good. Teachers are enthusiastic about their work. Lessons are well planned and students learn effectively. Teaching is demanding, although in some lessons, there is over-reliance on students working from module books. Teachers make frequent reference to professional, commercial practice and effectively monitor students' progress in lessons. They ensure that students concentrate on their work and that they successfully gain their modules and qualifications. Students have regular reviews to monitor progress and enable them to plan assessments effectively. This is reinforced by the effective tutorial system, which ensures that students are kept on track regarding their learning programme. Personal tutors know their students well. They follow up absences quickly and effectively. Additional learning support is carefully used to good effect. Students who need extra help to succeed in their studies receive it. The quality of some of this support work was very good.

119. Assignments are marked promptly and the feedback given to students on written work is supportive and constructive. Students receive good oral feedback in practical assessments, which is reinforced on feedback sheets. Not all spelling, punctuation and grammar was corrected. A rigorous internal verification system ensures consistency, validity and authenticity of the assessment process.

120. Students are actively involved in the community. They organise and stage hairdressing and fashion shows. Beauty therapy students provide treatments for residents in local care homes. Students on the theatrical and media make-up course are involved in local theatre production. Guest speakers give demonstrations and training on leading manufacturers products and professional techniques.

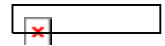
121. Students identified that the thorough induction they received enabled them to settle quickly into their course. Key skills are fully integrated with courses, but there is some weak teaching of key skills. Work-based training is well organised and effective. Trainees' progress is thoroughly monitored and there are regular assessments in the workplace.

122. There are high quality facilities to support the work of the section. Both hairdressing and beauty therapy have reception areas, dispensaries and a high standard of salon equipment. Storage space is short. In some sessions, there were too few external clients. The section is actively working to redress this situation with special promotions and offers. More clients are now booking repeat appointments and the situation is improving.

Leadership and management

123. Management of the area is good. Communication is effective. The staff work well as a team. Staff development is accessible and well used by teachers to maintain their own commercial skills and the currency of their expertise. Some schemes of work lacked sufficient detail. Work-based learning is well managed. Internal verification processes work effectively to maintain standards. Resources are deployed effectively to provide good value for money. While students have good access to computers and the Internet, there are too few modern books in the library for them to use.

Health and social care



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on most courses
- all retention rates above national averages in 2001
- good teaching
- purposeful community links
- effective enrichment programme.

Weaknesses

- below national average pass rates on the BTEC national certificate in social care
- late identification of students' additional learning support needs

- no provision for application of number key skills
- adverse effect of staffing changes on some students' learning.

Scope of provision

124. The college offers a good range of intermediate and advanced level provision in child, health and social care and counselling. Students are able to work towards NVQ, GNVQ, AVCE and BTEC awards. Full-time and part-time courses are offered in the college and in community-based locations. There are currently 135 students aged 16 to 18 and 71 adults enrolled on full-time courses and 272 part-time students. The college provides care courses in Bude, Camelford and Torquay. There are currently 402 students on franchised courses. Of these, 49 learners are on government-funded, work-based training programmes. The inspection covered full-time courses, part-time courses, a sample of the college's franchised provision, and work-based training.

Achievement and standards

125. Pass rates on most courses are good. Since 1999/2000 students' pass rates on advanced level childcare courses have been outstanding. All the students have achieved their qualifications. During the same period, students' pass rates on intermediate and advanced level GNVQ courses have been well above national averages. Learners on modern apprenticeship schemes make satisfactory progress with their NVQs, but are slow to achieve their key skills qualifications and therefore their full qualification framework. Pass rates on part-time courses are good, but on the counselling level 2 certificate and the 'Take 10 for Play' course, they were below national averages in 2001.

126. Retention rates on full-time and substantial part-time courses are above national averages. Retention rates on the diploma in nursery nursing improved significantly from 75% in 2000 to 100% in 2001. On the BTEC national certificate in nursery nursing, the retention rate improved from 67% to 82% during this period. The retention rate on the BTEC national certificate in social care improved from 63% to 88%, but the pass rate has declined to below national average in the last two years. Retention and pass rates on NVQ courses are generally good.

127. In lessons and training sessions, most students demonstrate knowledge, understanding and skills at an appropriate level. In an advanced level health and social care course, the students were able to identify discriminatory practice in different care settings and advise on actions to address problems.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health and social care, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	26	27	37
		% retention	85	81	84
		% pass rate	73	82	97
Certificate in counselling skills	2	No. of starts	19	15	18
		% retention	68	87	94

		% pass rate	100	92	88
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	No. of starts	37	36	31
		% retention	69	89	72
		% pass rate	100	88	86
BTEC national certificate in social care	3	No. of starts	29	16	17
		% retention	62	63	88
		% pass rate	100	80	82
CACHE diploma in nursery nursing	3	No. of starts	18	17	19
		% retention	82	75	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100
BTEC national certificate in nursery nursing	3	No. of starts	*	12	11
		% retention	*	67	82
		% pass rate	*	100	100

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

* data not available

Quality of education and training

128. The quality of teaching in lessons and training sessions observed during inspection was good, with examples of very good and excellent practice. In the most effective lessons, teachers followed a clear plan, shared learning objectives with their students, monitored their progress throughout the lesson and provided effective feedback. In one lesson, the teacher briefed students on good debating practice. The students then entered into a debate about euthanasia with enthusiasm. The debate was recorded on video and the recording was used for students to carry out an effective self-evaluation of their debating skills. Work-based trainers make full use of learners' experiences to link theory to current work practices. In one training session, learners used case studies of clients to identify the importance of communication when assessing a client's care needs. Learners were able to clearly explain the roles of communication specialists in care planning. There is no development of students' key skills in some lessons. In a small number of lessons, the work was not sufficiently demanding for some students. Students do not have the opportunity to develop their skills of working with numbers as part of their programmes.

129. Enrichment activities are well organised and effective. All students are able to develop skills in problem solving and working with others through their work with pupils who have severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Their skills are assessed and accredited through this scheme. They also develop basic skills in communicating through signing.

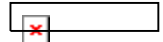
130. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are thorough and feedback to students helps them to improve their work. Support and guidance within the department are good, but for some students, the identification of their additional support needs comes too late in their course. For some, this occurs in their second term of study. There is good progression to FE/HE and employment.

131. Staffing changes have had an adverse effect on some students' learning. Essential changes in staffing have resulted in students on one course having to complete an additional two assignments in their final year. Students on one course are not visited frequently when on work placement. Resources are generally satisfactory. Teachers have developed clear and useful handouts and overhead transparencies. NVQ workbooks are also good. However, some resources are inadequate. In one lesson, the video monitor was too small to be seen clearly. Some classrooms were untidy and displays of students' work were sparse. Some books in the library are outdated.

Leadership and management

132. Leadership and management of the department are good. There is a clear concentration on improving the quality of students' learning. Courses are well managed. There are effective systems in place to monitor the quality of teaching and learning that include setting realistic targets at course level. Self-assessment is effective in identifying the strengths and weaknesses in the department.

Visual and performing arts



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

Strengths

- mostly good or very good teaching
- high pass rates on many courses
- frequent and effective tutorial support
- regular, fair and effective assessment with constructive feedback to students
- good specialist accommodation and resources.

Weaknesses

- declining or below average retention rates on a few courses
- low attendance adversely affecting learning in some classes
- some aspects of curriculum management.

Scope of provision

133. The visual and performing arts section offers a good range of full-time and part-time courses from intermediate to HE, including GCE A levels, AVCE, national diploma and part-time courses in art and design. A series of short courses have been started this academic year. The section is pursuing a series of innovative projects designed to widen participation. There is little foundation level (level 1) work in art and design.

Achievement and standards

134. Students' achievement is good or very good on most courses. Examination pass rates are regularly above national averages in foundation art and design, art and design access, GNVQ and AVCE art, and in several GCE A-level subjects such as theatre studies. Pass rates on the national diploma in performing arts course have been well above the national average for the last two years. However, on some courses, not many high grades are achieved. Retention rates are above national averages for many courses, but on some, for example theatre studies, they are declining. Attendance varied widely from good to unsatisfactory across the provision. Average attendance at the lessons observed was 77%.

135. Students are able to discuss their work with confidence. They are well motivated and enthusiastic about their work. They work well on their own and do not waste time when they should be working. This high level of students' commitment leads to a large amount of good work and performance. Art and design work is creative and shows good mastery and integration of key technical skills. Some students lack analytical awareness and this impedes their progress. Practical work in the performing arts was good. Drama and dance students in particular are talented performers.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	9	12	11
		% retention	89	83	82
		% pass rate	100	70	89
Foundation art and design	3	No. of starts	58	51	42
		% retention	95	92	93
		% pass rate	98	96	97
GNVQ art and design	3	No. of starts	55	53	57
		% retention	65	77	77
		% pass rate	97	98	98
National diploma in performing arts	3	No. of starts	36	44	38
		% retention	56	65	63
		% pass rate	100	87	87
GCE A-level art studies/art and design	3	No. of starts	33	48	65
		% retention	70	90	82
		% pass rate	100	100	98
Art and design access to HE course	3	No. of starts	21	18	16
		% retention	90	89	100
		% pass rate	89	88	81

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

Quality of education and training

136. Teaching and learning are good. Students are well informed about what is required of them. Examination units and criteria have been simplified for students. Most schemes of work are carefully planned to progressively incorporate examination requirements in the process of creative development, but this is not the case for all courses taught in the department. Some work schemes and lesson plans contained insufficient detail. Teachers use a variety of appropriate methods and lessons are well organised. Performing arts students are involved in all technical and practical aspects of production. Intensive teaching and support in the early stages of courses means that in the later stages, students have the confidence to develop their own portfolios and performances with teachers' advice. Some students' weak development of analytical skills inhibits their development. Teachers make a real effort to ensure that adult students acquire the same commitment and skills as students aged 16 to 19.

137. In a few lessons where learning is poor, it is often where attendance was lower, or where students arrived late and disrupted the learning of other students. In a small number of lessons, there was inadequate direction from the teacher and some students did not concentrate fully on their work.

138. Assignment briefs are well designed and meet examination board requirements. Students are clear about how they are assessed. They receive detailed and thorough feedback from teachers, which shows them how they can improve their work. Students indicated in discussions with inspectors that feedback enabled them to improve their work. Students have regular individual academic tutorials where their progress is reviewed.

139. The curriculum offer is particularly strong at advanced level in both performing arts and art and design. There is also good part-time and full-time intermediate provision in art and design and a growing part-time provision in performing arts. There is little foundation level provision. There are arrangements for work experience for performing arts students, for example, at the Landmark Theatre in Ilfracombe, but not for art and design students. Some GCE A-level music students receive free instrumental tuition, but others do not. This anomaly is being resolved. A wide range of enrichment activities includes educational visits abroad.

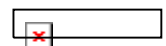
140. Students are strongly supported by teachers and there is good communication with parents. There is very good additional learning support in all areas, although screening to assess students' needs is not uniformly effective. Productive, supportive, staff/student relationships are based on informed knowledge of students. Students are clear about how to obtain support within the section and in the main college. However, in spite of this good practice the college tutorial programme is not always fully implemented.

141. Resources are generally of suitable quality and well used. Students make good use of the nearby computers in their work. Teachers show a high degree of competence and have appropriate and up-to-date knowledge and skills. However, many books in the library are outdated.

Leadership and management

142. Courses in art and design are well managed. The quality of teaching is high and course managers closely monitor students' progress. The actions planned to raise retention rates on some courses have not been successfully implemented.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on most courses
- substantial proportion of students achieving high grades on new GCE AS courses
- good teaching and learning in geography
- effective development of students' study and examination skills.

Weaknesses

- inadequate resources adversely affect learning
- slow pace of learning in some lessons
- some courses not well planned.

Scope of provision

143. The provision includes GCE A-level and AS courses in history, geography, religious studies, archeology, law, sociology, psychology, critical thinking, citizenship, government and politics, and general studies. Most students are aged 16 to 18. There is a small number of adults studying on a one-year access to HE course. In response to declining recruitment, the college has reduced the range of humanities provision at GCSE while maintaining it at level 3. There is very little humanities provision in the evenings.

Achievement and standards

144. Students' achievements are good. Pass rates in most advanced GCE subjects are above national averages, and are consistently high in geography and history. In psychology, there has been a significant improvement in pass rates over the last year. In law, pass rates are high but have declined over the last three years. In sociology, however, too many students fail to complete their course. In most subjects, students are meeting or exceeding the GCE A-level grades that would be predicted by their GCSE grades on entry. Pass rates in the first year of the new GCE AS course were also good. Well over half of all students achieved high grades in history, geography, critical thinking and psychology. Most students who complete the access to HE course gain places at university. However, retention rates on this course have declined in recent years.

145. The standard of most students' work is good. In geography and critical thinking, it is very good.

In lessons, students clearly articulate a good understanding of the subject matter, and frequently ask perceptive questions. Students' written work is competent, but some of it lacks sufficient detail and depth. Students are not always encouraged to develop their critical and evaluative skills sufficiently quickly. Attendance and punctuality were very good.

A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level geography (2 years)	3	No. of starts	73	74	58
		% retention	88	78	76
		% pass rate	98	93	100
GCE A-level psychology (2 years)	3	No. of starts	87	87	89
		% retention	70	80	73
		% pass rate	76	67	94
GCE A-level sociology (2 years)	3	No. of starts	32	26	32
		% retention	81	54	56
		% pass rate	81	64	72
GCE A-level history (2 years)	3	No. of starts	31	39	43
		% retention	74	82	77
		% pass rate	96	97	97
GCE A-level law (2 years)	3	No. of starts	33	18	45
		% retention	70	83	78
		% pass rate	100	87	79
Access to HE	3	No. of starts	21	21	15
		% retention	100	81	53
		% pass rate	90	71	88

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

Quality of education and training

146. Teaching in humanities is good overall, with only one lesson judged to be unsatisfactory. Teachers are firmly committed to ensuring that students succeed, and students are very keen to learn.

147. In the best lessons, students were encouraged to articulate their ideas, absorb new concepts and adopt a critical stance towards the material. In geography, teaching is impressive. The range of activities undertaken in lessons and demanding homework assignments made students work to the best of their ability and to ask perceptive questions in lessons which stimulated a high level of teaching and learning. In a lesson on the importance and conservation of salt marshes and mud flats, the teacher used a wide range of resources to enthuse and engage students. In an imaginative critical thinking lesson on the application of principles in argument, the lesson ended with students being asked to create an ethical principle for the distribution of a bar of chocolate. In a history lesson, role-play was used effectively to encourage students to consider the outcomes of the Civil War in England.

148. Teachers concentrate very clearly on developing in students the skills they need to succeed in examinations. In most lessons, teachers spent some time linking the content of the lessons to the

need to apply their knowledge in specific assessment contexts. For example, in a sociology lesson, students learned effectively how to improve the design of their coursework research proposals by assessing the quality of exemplars from the examination board using a marking scheme. In a law lesson, students demonstrated a good knowledge of legal principles and case law, and were developing their ability to apply their skills to examination questions.

149. Some lessons were less successful. The pace of learning was slow and insufficient material was covered in the time available. For example, in a sociology lesson, far too long was spent illustrating a simple point through a detailed analysis of media content. In lessons in psychology, history and religious studies, too much time was spent reading textbooks or copying from the board. In such lessons, valuable time was wasted on tasks that could have been done in students' own time.

150. Students are set work regularly in most subjects. Feedback on marked work is prompt and accurate, and usually indicates what students need to do to improve. Externally-marked coursework is well organised, and students are given very clear guidance on what they need to do to achieve high marks. In a minority of subjects, for example sociology and law, insufficient work is set and marked.

151. Most schemes of work consist of lists of topics, with no detail of learning activities or resources, assessment strategies or learning outcomes. Good practice in planning is not shared between subjects.

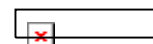
152. The resources for teaching humanities are often poor. In geography and history, classrooms are overcrowded, and accommodation for access course students is inappropriate. The library stock is inadequate in some subjects, with too many obsolete texts and insufficient contemporary materials. Students are given textbooks in some subjects but not in others. Some teaching handouts are poor. The use of information and learning technology is not well established in most subjects.

153. Students' progress and attendance are closely monitored, and students know how well they are doing. Intervention is swift if attendance or progress becomes unacceptable. Students are well supported inside and outside the classroom. Teachers give up their time freely to help students with difficulties. Pastoral tutors give good advice on progression opportunities and are particularly helpful to students applying to HE.

Leadership and management

154. Teachers work very well together in subject teams to share resources and improve teaching and learning. A clear strategic direction to improve the students' experience is subscribed to by staff. At course level, the process of setting targets to raise achievement is thorough. However, some aspects of course management are weak. In particular, arrangements to cover for absent staff are inadequate. Lessons are sometimes cancelled with inadequate notice given to students. Not all courses are planned effectively and there is little sharing of good practice between subjects.

English and modern foreign languages



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

Strengths

- much effective teaching

- good retention rates and pass rates on most courses
- enthusiastic and motivated students
- good provision of curriculum enrichment opportunities
- broad range of courses.

Weaknesses

- insufficient rigour in course and lesson planning
- failure of teachers in using modern language courses to meet the needs of individual students
- insufficient use of ICT in modern languages.

Scope of provision

155. There is a broad range of provision in English and modern foreign languages. English is offered at GCSE and GCE AS and A level, and as an option within the humanities and social science pathway of the college's access to HE programme. An excellent range of foreign languages is taught, including Japanese, Arabic, Greek and Russian, in addition to French, German, Spanish and Italian. All language courses are offered at beginners' level and students are able to progress to level 2 and 3 courses in many of them. These courses lead to various qualifications including GCSE and GCE AS and A level. Most of the English and language courses are available during the day or the evening. The college also offers provision at two local community colleges, and English courses are available on a distance learning basis with tutor support.

156. At the time of the inspection, there were 414 students enrolled on the English courses, and 402 students enrolled on the language courses. Just over half the students are studying the courses on a full-time basis, and most of these are aged 16 to 18. Most of the part-time students are aged over 19.

Achievement and standards

157. Pass rates are above the national averages for most courses. In 2001, a 100% pass rate was achieved in GCE A-level and AS English language, GCE A-level English literature, and GCE A-level

French. However, the pass rates in GCE A-level German and GCSE Spanish fell to below the national average. Good pass rates were achieved in 2001 in all the new GCE AS courses, apart from French. Retention rates for most courses are at, or above, the national average, although in GCE A-level German and English language and literature, retention rates are often lower than national averages.

158. Most students are very enthusiastic about their courses, and are keen to learn and progress. In English lessons they contribute to discussion with confidence and enjoyment, and express themselves well. However, in some language lessons, students lack the confidence to engage readily in conversation and their accuracy when speaking is often unsatisfactory. In advanced level language lessons, students have a good knowledge of grammar and are eager to learn new vocabulary. Standards of written work on all the courses are good. Course work is of a high standard and frequently word-processed. Students are usually punctual and, with the exception of a small number of GCSE English lessons, attendance at lessons is very good.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English and modern foreign languages, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE Spanish	2	No. of starts	41	33	28
		% retention	78	94	79
		% pass rate	72	87	50
GCSE English Language	2	No. of starts	114	103	99
		% retention	80	75	73
		% pass rate	63	52	59
GCE A-level English literature (2 year)	3	No. of starts	62	46	58
		% retention	89	98	91
		% pass rate	83	100	100
GCE A-level French	3	No. of starts	33	28	34
		% retention	71	86	82
		% pass rate	68	83	100
GCE A-level German	3	No. of starts	20	10	18
		% retention	55	70	59
		% pass rate	64	86	70
GCE A-level Spanish	3	No. of starts	14	10	12
		% retention	100	80	92
		% pass rate	86	100	82
GCE A-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	25	34	16
		% retention	56	73	50
		% pass rate	100	83	88
GCE A-level English language (2 year)	3	No. of starts	41	30	69
		% retention	80	72	72
		% pass rate	91	95	100

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

Quality of education and training

159. Most teaching is good or better, although a small number of unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Most teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subjects. The best lessons were well managed and lively, and teachers made effective use of a range of appropriate methods and well-chosen handout materials. Some lessons are insufficiently demanding of the students. Some schemes of work and lesson plans have insufficient detail. A language laboratory is used to help language students develop their knowledge and skills, but specialist resources, such as video and satellite television, are not used effectively in some language lessons.

160. English teachers are sensitive to the different needs and abilities of their students, and take these into account in their management of group work, the setting of tasks, and the support they provide. However, this does not happen in most language lessons. As a result, some students are not given sufficiently demanding work or the opportunity to work independently of their teacher. Many language lessons also provide insufficient opportunities for students to engage in discussions with one another, or to apply their knowledge of grammar in writing.

161. Written work is marked carefully with encouraging and constructive comments to help the students improve their performance. Internal moderation arrangements are thorough and effective, and meet the requirements of the awarding bodies.

162. A good range of curriculum enrichment opportunities is available. For students on English courses, these include frequent theatre visits, visiting speakers, and the production of an annual poetry anthology, and for language students these include visits and exchanges. Language students also benefit from the opportunity for weekly appointments with the foreign language assistants.

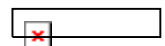
163. Tutorial support for full-time students is effective. Their progress is carefully monitored, and they have regular one-to-one progress reviews when targets are set. Extra support, when necessary, is provided on a referral basis through the key skills workshop, and sometimes lessons are provided by teachers in their own time.

164. Most of the teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced, though some teachers of minority languages lack a teaching qualification. The library book stock for English is good. Students have good access to computers, but little use is made of IT in lessons. The college intranet provides access to useful resources for English. Most classrooms are good, although the rooms in the huts on the main site are affected by external noise.

Leadership and management

165. Teachers work well together and feel their work is valued and supported by managers. Staff development is given a high priority, and teachers regularly attend external and in-house training events. Course reviews and self-assessment reports are thorough and accurate. Action plans are realistic and have led to improvements. Targets for attendance, retention and achievement are set and closely monitored. There is insufficient sharing of good practice in modern languages.

Foundation programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities



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

Strengths

- good teaching and management of students' learning

- students' significant progress towards achieving realistic goals
- extensive and responsive provision
- consistently good student progression to education, training and employment
- very good support and care for students.

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory classroom accommodation
- poor planning of some individual learning plans.

Scope of provision

166. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time programmes for 16 to 19 year-old students and adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In addition, provision is made for disaffected 14-16 year-old school pupils in partnership with the LEA. Eleven different programmes at mainly entry level or pre-entry level have recruited over 240 students. Some students undertake individually designed programmes of study at a higher level. A further 80 part-time adult students benefit from provision in a variety of venues throughout North Devon and nearby areas. Programmes are designed for a wide-range of student needs, including those of students with difficult behaviour, moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, profound, multiple and complex learning difficulties, as well as a programme for students recovering from mental illness. Courses are designed to offer a number of progression routes, including FE, training and employment where appropriate. The college also works with a voluntary organisation to provide a programme for the rehabilitation of young offenders. Students acquire a good range of vocational, pre-vocational and personal development qualifications within their programmes. Enrichment activities are integrated with programmes and include residential experiences, community activities and visits.

Achievement and standards

167. Students achieve well both in acquiring externally accredited qualifications and in making progress in their individual learning plans. The best learning plans are based on comprehensive initial assessment and an induction programme that often begins before students enter the college. These plans set clear, challenging but achievable targets and describe strategies for staff to work with to enable the student to achieve their goals successfully. However, the planning of individual learning plans across the whole range of provision is not uniformly good. While all students have a learning plan, the process of target setting and review is poor for some because their plans are

inadequate. Students' progress and achievement is recorded on a daily basis through a combination of well-maintained course files, digital photographs, witnessed records and daily diaries. There are regular reviews of individual learning plans leading to an annual review that includes plans for progression. Students are attentive and diligent, and display an enthusiasm and commitment to learning. Many students demonstrate significant transformation in behaviour and interpersonal skills from the beginning of their programmes. In a dance performance, students who had entered college six months previously with very difficult behaviour, including poor social and interpersonal skills, choreographed an end of unit performance for their fellow students. The performance required planning, discipline, teamwork, co-operation, creativity, structure, commitment and dedication. The performance was enthusiastically received and well performed. Students study for a wide range of externally accredited qualifications.

Quality of education and training

168. The teaching and management of student learning programmes are good. Some 85% of lessons observed were good or better and none were less than satisfactory. All lessons had been planned in detail. The best plans linked the outcomes of the lesson to students' learning plans and to their individual learning styles and indicated how the learning and teaching activities would address both. In all lessons, students were actively engaged. Purposeful and demanding activities extended students' knowledge, reinforced learning and motivated the students. In one lesson, students with moderate learning difficulties, including emotional and behavioural difficulties, were exploring for the second session the topic of Aids. The teacher wanted the group to share their knowledge and understanding of the issue. The teacher started the session by stepping into the classroom store and returning speedily with a 'cut' right hand. After stemming the 'blood' and gaining the sympathy of the group the teacher attempted to thank individuals for their kindness by shaking their hands. After some resistance from individual students the teacher re-assured the group that they could trust their teacher because someone like that, old, educated, responsible, would never have a problem. A lively debate and exchange ensued which enabled the teacher to assess individual students' understanding, memory and knowledge. Having ensured that the learning points had been understood by each student, the teacher wiped the red ink from their hand. An engaging, informative and participative session ensued with students assimilating the powerful learning. In another lesson, students' with severe learning difficulties mirrored the work of Henry Moore through stones, pebbles, wet clay, charcoal crayon and paper to create and draw their own sculptures. Students enjoyed the sensory experience of handling the materials and displayed pleasure in charcoal drawing. Some students were able to recall the name of the artist some four weeks after being introduced to his work.

169. In some less effective lessons, the pace of work was slow, learning activities lacked variety and students were not fully involved in the learning activities throughout the session. In a minority of lessons, students became confused by verbal explanations and teachers were slow to use other methods to clarify their understanding. Students make brisk progress in learning, especially in practical activities. Few students were able to access IT to assist their learning in classrooms located in outdated hut accommodation. The standard of the present accommodation is poor and does little to assist either teachers or students to achieve their high aspirations. There is restricted space for wheelchair users.

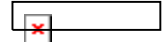
170. Students benefit from some very experienced, caring, but firm teaching and support. Teachers and support assistants work well as teams to create a supportive, safe and purposeful learning environment. Staff give freely of their time to students and establish clear standards of behaviour. Students respond well to this high level of support as well as the continuous feedback and reinforcement of appropriate behaviour and achievements.

Leadership and management

171. There is effective course team management and a clear understanding of what needs to be addressed. Effective quality assurance procedures produce a climate for continuous improvement with clear targets for student achievement and thorough classroom observation processes. There is a strong support for, and uptake of, staff development. An innovative programme for staff working with students with difficult behaviour has been developed by exploring behaviour through drama.

There is an over-reliance on part-time staffing in this area of the college's work.

Foundation programmes in basic skills



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

Strengths

- wide ranging provision responsive to the needs of a rural community
- effective personal support for many students
- good progress of students in lessons.

Weaknesses

- poor overview and management of the provision
- inadequate attention to the development of transferable skills
- little effective use of individual learning plans.

Scope of provision

172. The college provides a wide range of provision that has been developed in response to the needs of local communities. The college is successfully widening participation in education and training in many rural areas. The programmes available include Stepping Stones to Employment, First Steps (a programme to encourage people to return to learning), Family Education programmes, Basic Employability Skills, and Gateway (a full-time programme). Literacy and numeracy programmes are also taught in the college and out in the community, often on a part-time basis. There are 802 students enrolled on separate specialist basic skills programmes. Additional basic skills support is also offered to individual students and small groups to help them succeed on their main college course. This work supports 405 students.

Achievement and standards

173. Students are hard working and keen to progress. In most lessons, they were making good

progress and achieving good standards of work. Many of them were making rapid progress to improve their skills. For example, hairdressing students gained a lot of confidence during a session to help them cope more effectively with the written tests they need to pass to achieve their NVQ awards. Automotive engineering students displayed good written skills in a lesson to help them complete their portfolios.

174. Most of the students were gaining confidence during the lessons observed. A group of women from a farming background had made significant improvements in their written skills. These were important to them as they had now to complete much of the paperwork on the farms they lived and worked on. Many of them felt that they had lost these skills due to the fact that they had not been regularly using them, sometimes for many years.

175. In most lessons, students could explain their work and understood the aims of the lesson. In some lessons, students developed their use of IT as well as their written and numerical skills. One student was editing a piece of written work on the computer and making many improvements to the text.

176. Small numbers of students have worked towards gaining a qualification. Generally, retention and pass rates on accredited courses were good. For example, 87% of students who began their basic numeracy qualification in 2001 completed the course, and 90% of them were successful.

177. Some students are not developing the skills required to transfer learning from one task to another. When they have been shown how to tackle a specific task, they do not recognise how to use the same skills to solve a similar problem. Some teachers do not effectively encourage students to see the links between tasks and help them to develop strategies to think these solutions through for themselves.

Quality of education and training

178. Teachers are friendly and establish good working relationships with students. Much of the teaching was supportive and teachers gave explanations to individual students in a patient and sensitive manner. Teachers were effective at encouraging students who were stuck on a task and helping them to see their way through. In the best lessons, teachers gave clear explanations at a pace that the student could cope with and teaching was made more effective by the use of IT. In some poorer lessons, teachers did not use activities that were relevant to real life situations.

179. Support staff give effective support to individual students who have a range of difficulties or disabilities. A student with hearing difficulties and one who was recovering from a mental illness were given a lot of support to enable them to follow fully a basic skills lesson.

180. In most lessons, materials were paper based and there was little use of computers. Some of the accommodation used was inappropriate. For example, one student was receiving additional learning support for basic skills in a science laboratory and both the teacher and student had to sit on uncomfortable high chairs and use a workbench as a desk.

181. Staff are appropriately qualified to support individuals or to teach basic skills. Many of them have received training on the new basic skills standards and curriculum. In addition, many vocational teachers from other departments have successfully completed the City and Guilds certificate in basic skills.

182. Students' achievements are sometimes adversely affected by inadequacies in initial assessment processes and some poor use of individual learning plans. Some initial assessments have been late. In some cases, the results from initial assessments have not been used effectively to provide students with the most effective support. Most individual learning plans do not have specific relevant targets that the student has negotiated with the teacher. Students are not always aware of their own learning plan and some are not always involved in reviewing their progress through the plan. The exception to this is the Gateway course, where individual learning plans were based on a good initial assessment and were used effectively.

Leadership and management

183. Management does not have a clear overview of the scope and teaching of basic skills provision. The college has introduced a number of accredited courses to support the introduction of the new basic skills curriculum but was unable to give a clear account of which students were working towards which awards. The wide range of provision offered by the college has been developed well. It offers people a good range of opportunities to develop skills, confidence and self-esteem.

184. There are regular team meetings to discuss retention and achievement targets, students' progress and curriculum review. Action plans contain strategies for development and improvement and set targets for completion, but there is little monitoring of the progress made towards achieving these targets and often they are not being met.

Part D: College data

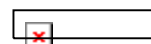
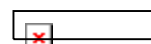


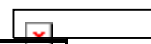
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	15	23
2	21	19
3	56	17
4/5	0	1
Other	8	40
Total	100	100

Source: Provided by the college in January 2002

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments%
Science	1,460	4,201	30
Agriculture	9	31	0
Construction	209	379	3
Engineering	323	373	4
Business	669	1,439	12

Hotel and catering	398	823	7
Health and community care	769	1,333	11
Art and design	689	133	4
Humanities	2,604	953	19
Basic education	354	1,434	10
Total	7,484	11,099	100

Source: Provided by the college in January 2002

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	1,632	1,783	1,942	1,237	1,148	981
	Retention rate (%)	78	83	83	80	79	75
	National average (%)	81	80	80	80	78	79
	Pass rate (%)	61	72	77	54	62	67
	National average (%)	59	62	66	62	63	69
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,421	1,502	1,690	980	989	1,265
	Retention rate (%)	71	78	79	76	77	72
	National average (%)	76	76	77	79	78	78
	Pass rate (%)	63	76	83	65	82	69
	National average (%)	63	67	68	66	65	68
3	Starters excluding transfers	2,136	2,109	2,801	933	1,073	1,079
	Retention rate (%)	79	79	80	74	80	7
	National average (%)	77	77	77	79	79	79
	Pass rate (%)	84	79	86	71	62	68
	National average (%)	71	72	73	64	65	69
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	0	0	0	162	149	108
	Retention rate (%)	*	*	*	89	87	82
	National average (%)	83	84	80	84	84	81
	Pass rate (%)	*	*	*	78	70	60

	National average (%)	64	65	70	58	61	60
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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 or Sixth Form colleges).

* numbers too low to provide a valid calculation

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

3. College rates for (1999/00) provided by the college in spring 2001.

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)	72	24	4	156
Level 2 (intermediate)	73	20	7	66
Level 1 (foundation)	60	24	16	42
Other sessions	72	25	3	32
Totals	70	24	6	296

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