



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Myerscough College

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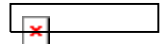
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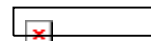
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Basic information about the college

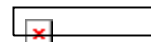


Name of college:	Myerscough College
Type of college:	Specialist Land-Based Further Education College
Principal:	John Moverley
Address of college:	Myerscough Hall Bilsborrow Preston PR3 0RY
Telephone number:	01995 642 222
Fax number:	01995 642 333
Chair of governors:	Eric F Wilkinson
Unique reference number:	130743
Name of reporting inspector:	Jane Robinson
Dates of inspection:	27-31 January 2003

Part A: Summary



Information about the college

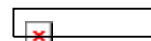


Myerscough College is one of the largest land-based colleges in the further education (FE) sector in England. The college was originally established in 1894 at Hutton in Lancashire to provide agricultural training, particularly in dairy husbandry and processing. The college moved the centre of activities to Myerscough in 1969. It has diversified its activities since then and currently provides full-time and part-time courses and workplace training for apprentices and adults for industries that are mainly rural or land-based. The adult workplace learning is mainly in sportsturf, horticulture and landscape. The college offers a range of courses at foundation level, and at levels 1, 2 and 3 and higher education (HE), including Higher National Certificates (HNC), Higher National Diplomas (HND), foundation and bachelor of science and arts degrees. Courses are provided at most levels in agriculture and countryside, animal care, equine studies, horticulture including landscape and creative design, sportsturf, arboriculture, mechanisation and motor sports, sports studies, business management and information and communication technology (ICT), and foundation programmes.

The college defines its mission as to provide high-quality education and training together with research and advisory facilities for the rural land-based and related industries in the communities that it serves. The college aims to offer a welcoming and friendly environment which is healthy and safe, which promotes freedom of access and equality of opportunity, and which encourages individuals to develop to their full potential.

The college is the focus for land-based education and training in Lancashire, but students are also recruited, nationally and from overseas. In the current year, there are representatives of 11 different countries in the students' population. In 2000/01, the college enrolled 9,726 FE students. Of these, 42% of the students were aged 16 to 18 and 58% were aged 19 and above. A further 630 students were on HE programmes. An additional 330 students were on work-based learning programmes for young people. The college has a further 566 adults on National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) programmes in the workplace in subjects such as sportsturf, caravan park operation and veterinary nursing. Some 12% of students were at level 1, 25% at level 2 and 23% at level 3; 40% were enrolled on short and other courses. In 2000/01, fewer than 1% of students were from a minority ethnic background. Some 57% of the students were male and 43% female. Some 40% of the full-time FE students are resident on the college campus.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged that the quality of provision was good in three curriculum areas, equine studies, animal care and sport studies; and satisfactory in seven areas, horticulture, landscape and creative design, arboriculture, agriculture and countryside, engineering (mechanisation and motor sports), foundation programmes, and sportsturf.

Key strengths

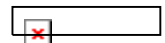
- good physical resources on the college estate and campus

- wide range of curriculum including additional qualifications
- high-quality practical teaching
- effective collaboration with industry
- good vocational expertise of staff.

What should be improved

- effectiveness of the skills of teaching, particularly in theory lessons
- achievement on part-time courses, additional qualifications and workplace learning frameworks
- expertise of learning support staff, along with the assessment of learning needs and the implementation of learning support
- analysis of data
- setting and recording of specific targets in tutorials.

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

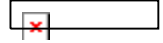


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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
Agriculture and countryside	Satisfactory. Some good achievement. A wide range of additional qualifications in practical, industrially relevant subjects offered. Good support given to students disadvantaged because of the outbreak of foot and mouth disease. Some uninspiring theory teaching. Weak assessment and internal verification practice in a minority of provision. Key skills lack links with occupational area. Significant weaknesses in the management of aspects of work-based learning.
Animal care	Good. Good resources. High pass rates in first diploma, national diploma, advanced national certificate and veterinary nursing. Clear and well-utilised opportunities for progression to other courses, HE and employment. Very good teaching of practical sessions. Lack of recognition of diversity of learning styles in teaching of theory.
Arboriculture	Satisfactory. Good practical resources. Students achieve practical certificates that improve their chances of employment in the industry. Good progression routes from first diploma to degree level. Poor classroom management and some dull teaching sessions.
Equine studies	Good. Good achievement on the full-time courses. Good teaching of practical skills including riding. Students achieve a high standard of practical work. Good resources for the equitation course, although there are currently insufficient specialist stud resources.
Horticulture	Satisfactory. Good pass rate on full-time NVQ level 1, first and national diploma. Poor achievement of modern apprenticeship framework, but satisfactory NVQ pass rates. Good resources for learning. Effective integration of information technology (IT) at levels 1 and 2. Some theory teaching fails to extend students. Lack of rigour in assessment of full-time NVQ level 2.
Landscape and creative design	Satisfactory. Good landscape and creative design resources. Good practical teaching in key vocational subjects. Weaknesses in theory teaching and learning. Poor completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks.
Sportsturf	Satisfactory. There are good retention and pass rates on first and national diploma courses, but low pass rates on National Certificate, key skills and NVQ level 2 courses, together with poor achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks. There is good one-to-one teaching and support in the workplace, but poor use of demonstrations in teaching on full-time courses. The very good specialist resources and industrial partnerships, together with well-produced information learning technology (ILT) resources, enhance learning. There is good use of assessments for short-term planning in the workplace, but there is a lack of monitoring of students progress towards long-term targets and the self-assessment report is insufficiently critical.
Engineering (mechanisation and motor sports)	Satisfactory. Good range of college-based programmes. Good achievement in first diplomas. Provision for learners in the workplace is satisfactory. Learners are well supported and make good progress. However, some poorly planned lessons are not adapted to different learning styles.
Sports studies	Good. A well-run department. Enthusiastic students with good teaching and learning across an appropriate range of specialist courses. Outstanding accommodation and resources for learning.
Foundation	Satisfactory. High and improving pass rates on the limited range of vocational courses. Some good teaching. Good collaboration with other organisations to widen participation. Poor achievement and

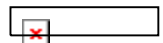
	tracking of basic skills and individual learning. Insufficient use of IT and a lack of rigour in quality assurance implementation.
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How well is the college led and managed?



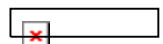
Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governors and managers set a clear strategic direction for the college. Student numbers have grown and there has been substantial investment in resources on the main college site. Financial management is sound and the college has exceeded its funding target for the three years to 2002. The performance of full-time courses is monitored carefully, but insufficient attention is paid to part-time and short courses and to the quality of teaching and learning. There is a comprehensive staff development programme linked to the college objectives. Quality assurance arrangements are clear, but the self-assessment process is not sufficiently rigorous. Policies on equality and diversity, racial equality and disability are in place, but are not yet fully embedded in the culture of the college.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



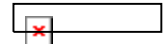
The college's response to education and social inclusion is satisfactory. The college has an extensive range of partners in rural and urban areas within the local community. The proportion of students from ethnic minority backgrounds remains lower than that in the local community. There is little staff awareness of the potential barriers faced by minority groups and the need for additional monitoring and support. Off-site centres have been established for adults and young people, which have successfully encouraged the participation of disadvantaged groups including disaffected young people and adults with mental health problems. There are good opportunities for students with learning difficulties. The curriculum offer on the main site has been expanded and includes a range of courses at level 1 and entry level. An equality and diversity committee meets monthly and an equality and diversity officer has recently been appointed. Although the college has appropriate policies on equality and diversity, racial equality and disability, there is no formal monitoring of the effectiveness of their implementation. The college has a high widening participation factor when compared to other land-based colleges.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Guidance and support for students are satisfactory. Clear and impartial advice and information are provided for prospective students. There is a comprehensive induction programme. Induction is particularly effective for residential students. Residential wardens provide good support. All students are allocated a learning adviser who carries out tutorials. Tutorials do not result in targets for the improvement of learning. The college provides a range of support services, including advice and guidance on welfare matters such as finance and accommodation. Additional learning support is provided for students through a number of tutors, but there is a lack of diagnostic testing to identify students' particular learning needs. Learning support staff lack appropriate qualifications. Numeracy and literacy progress is slow. Reliable careers advice is provided by Connexions staff, who are due to be based at the college, and by teaching staff.

Students' views of the college



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

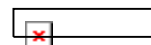
What students like about the college

- helpful and friendly staff
- good facilities
- practical content of courses
- friendly atmosphere
- knowledge of subjects by teachers
- broad range of social life.

What they feel could be improved

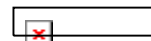
- quality and price of food
- organisation of timetables
- car parking
- key skills, much are seen to be boring and irrelevant and pointless.

Other information

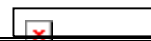


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the local LSC. The local LSC is responsible for ensuring that, where inspectors have judged there to be unsatisfactory or poor provision in a curriculum area or in leadership and management, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) receives the college's post-inspection action plan within the stipulated two months.

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

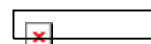


Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	54	38	8
19+	58	38	4
WBL*	67	33	0
Learning 16-18	53	37	10
19+	54	42	4
WBL*	67	33	0

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

**work-based learning*

Achievement and standards



1. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses and work-based learning in land-based provision. Full-time courses offered include NVQs, first and national diplomas and

College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS). Courses are also offered that lead to technical skills certificates in subjects including chain saw operation and pesticide application. Work-based training is also provided, with the largest number of students in agriculture, horticulture including sportsturf, and mechanisation.

2. Data on students' achievements, drawn from the individualised student records (ISR) for 2000 and 2001 were provided by the LSC. Data provided by the college were used for 2002. Inspectors have also used data held by the college in relation to work-based learning in making their judgements. There were some discrepancies in the data provided, mainly in the national diploma figures for 1999/2000, as they were unreliable. Consequently, curriculum inspectors have been unable to use them.

3. On full-time programmes, the retention rate has been in general around the national average for the last three years. Pass rates on full-time courses at levels 1 and 2 are improving overall, and were around or above the national average in 2002. At level 3, pass rates are around the national average for students aged 16 to 18, but are below the national average for adult students. The retention rate on part-time courses is generally good, but achievement is well below the national average. Few modern apprentices achieve the full qualification within the expected time. Students' attainment is satisfactory and the standard of practical work is good in equine, creative design and agriculture. In equine, in particular, students are able to work to a high standard and at a commercial speed.

4. The overall attendance in lessons observed by the inspectors was 81%, which is around the average for similar colleges inspected last year. The attendance rate varies between the curriculum areas, from 74% in horticulture to 95% on foundation courses. There was no significant difference between the attendance rate of students aged 16 to 18 and adults. Lessons at level 3 were the least well attended (attendance rate 79%) and lessons at entry level were the best attended (attendance rate 95%).

16 to 18 year olds

5. The number of students aged 16 to 18 studying at level 1 or below has increased considerably since the last inspection, from 11 students in 1998/99 to 598 in 2001/02. Many students enter the college with low levels of prior achievement and a range of learning difficulties. They are encouraged and supported to gain qualifications that are appropriate to their ability. Parents report that the students have gained in self-confidence and self-esteem, have raised aspirations, and have acquired many new social skills. The retention and pass rates are around the national average.

6. There has been a significant increase in the number of students studying at level 2, from 275 in 1998/99 to 870 in 2001/02, an increase of over 200%. The retention rate on level 2 courses is just above the national average. Pass rates fell to below the national average in both 1999/2000 and 2000/01, but have risen to 77% in 2001/02, which is just above the national average. The standards achieved in practical lessons are generally good and extensive use is made of the college estate and resources to support learning. Retention and pass rates are particularly good on the first diplomas in animal care and horticulture (including landscape).

7. The number of students studying at level 3 has increased from 252 in 1998/99 to 454 in 2001/02, an increase of around 80%. Pass rates have remained around the national average, but the retention rate fell by 10% overall last year and is now below the national average. The retention rate at level 3 was affected by the college's decision to enrol all full-time level 3 students on to an Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) in business in addition to their main programme. Many students were unable to cope with the workload and left the AVCE course early. The retention and pass rates on the national diplomas in horse studies and animal care are particularly good. The retention rate on key skills programmes is around the national average and pass rates have improved considerably; the pass rate in 2001/02 was 58%, 22% above the national average.

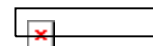
Adult learners

8. The majority of the full-time adult students follow the same courses as the students aged 16 to 18 and there has been a similar expansion in the number of adult students since the last inspection in 1999. At level 1, the pass rate for adult students rose by 26% in 2001/02 from 49% in 2000/01 and is now above the national average. At level 2, the retention rate has been just above the national average for the last three years and the pass rate has been around the national average. At level 3, the retention rate has fallen, but remains above the national average, whereas the pass rate is improving, but is still just below the national average. The retention rate on key skills is above the national average, but the pass rates are well below the national average.

9. Many adults attend part-time and short courses to gain technical certificates such as pesticide and chain saw operation certificates and veterinary nursing qualifications. The retention rate on these courses is high, but the college does not have an effective system for collecting achievement data for a number of the courses and so some pass rates are low. There are 220 adults participating in work-based learning solely in the workplace. The training is good, assisted by good online workbooks and specialist training sessions in the workplace. Many adults attend part-time courses such as the RHS general certificate course and the BHS stage 2 for leisure purposes and do not want to take examinations or gain accreditation. Pass rates on such courses are therefore very low.

Work-based learning

Quality of education and training



11. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 145 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 55% of these, satisfactory in 38% and less than satisfactory in 7%. It was excellent or very good in 22%, a lower than average figure for colleges of the same type. The quality of teaching varies considerably across the curriculum areas. The highest proportion of good or very good teaching was on animal care and sports studies. The highest proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was in sportsturf. Learning was good or better in 52% of lessons, satisfactory in 37% and unsatisfactory in 11%. The highest proportion of good or very good learning was in animal care and agriculture and countryside; the lowest proportion was on sportsturf.

12. Practical lessons are better taught than theory lessons, and the learning is more effective in practical sessions. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching in lessons for students aged 16 to 18 and those for adults. The highest proportion of good or better teaching and learning was observed in level 1 lessons and the lowest proportion was in level 2 lessons. The highest proportion of ineffective learning was observed on entry level programmes. In the better lessons, teaching is well planned and a variety of activities are used to reinforce learning and to stimulate interest. In one particularly effective lesson, a group of students with severe learning difficulties used taste, smell, sight and touch to discover and learn about bacteria and food hygiene. They went on to collate some simple data that they were able to display using IT. The better lessons progress at an appropriate pace, students are attentive and enthusiastic, and teachers involve the whole class in discussions and use question and answer techniques effectively. The best teachers relate the theory to their industrial experience. In a motor sport lesson on adjusting tappets, for example, the teacher was able to talk about a wide range of current vehicle engines and the specific issues associated with them. In the best practical lessons, teachers give students useful and encouraging feedback, intervene when necessary, and skilfully support the students as they learn at their own pace. Health and safety issues are carefully and unobtrusively addressed. The college has engaged external consultants to carry out observation of teaching across the curriculum areas but in some cases the grade awarded by the inspectorate did not reflect those that had been awarded through this process.

13. In the weaker lessons, the teacher presented information in a dull and unimaginative way and there is very little interaction with the students. In one national diploma class, the teacher had copied pages of a textbook on to overhead projector slides and read through them. Some students attempted to make notes, but were unable to read the print on the slides as the font size was too

small. Too many teachers have poor classroom management skills and rely heavily on the use of handouts, some of which are of poor quality. Some teachers, however, prepare good teaching materials, but do not have sufficient expertise to get maximum benefit from them. In an equine lesson, the teacher had devised some good learning activities, but failed to prepare the students adequately, and so the learning was limited. In the least effective lessons, the students pay little attention to the teacher and they arrive late and leave early. In the weakest practical sessions, poor planning and a lack discipline resulted in students learning very little; insufficient attention was paid to health and safety.

14. There is a wide variation in the quality of the teaching of key skills. Opportunities to link key skills to occupational skills are missed in several curriculum areas and the generic workbooks that are used fail to stimulate students' interest. In some areas, key skills development is successfully integrated into vocational teaching. In a golf studies lesson, for example, students successfully converted golf course yardage into metric units as part of an application of number assignment.

15. There are good systems in place for recording students' progress, and assessment practice is informed by a clearly documented assessment policy. Students understand the demands of assessment through induction and course handbooks that include the assessment schedule for the year. All assignment briefs include a date by which the marked assignment will be returned to the student. A centralised computer system is used to record all assignment results and to generate individual assessment records for discussion at the assessment boards that are held at the end of each term. Reports are issued for full-time students following the assessment board and parents' evenings are held twice a year. Every full-time student has an individual interview with his or her learning advisor at least once a term during which progress is reviewed. All full-time students are screened as part of initial assessment and most students make use of the learning support that is offered.

16. Action planning and target setting are underdeveloped, however, and reviews lack rigour. Targets are not specific, there are no target grades against which progress can be monitored and action plans lack detail. In some areas, including animal care and landscape, weak grading criteria do not give sufficient information to the students about what they need to do in order to achieve the grade. Teachers' written comments on students' work vary significantly; some are detailed and constructive, but others are very general and do not provide guidance for improvement. Some teachers are not checking spelling and both grammar and punctuation and errors remain uncorrected. Work-based learning placement providers are not involved in the assessment of learners in agriculture and countryside and in mechanisation. They have not received information on either the NVQ or the key skills that their trainees are undertaking.

17. External verification reports confirm that assessment is fair and follows awarding body requirements. The internal verification policy is published on the college intranet. At the start of the academic year, each course team produces an internal verification matrix, together with a sampling plan. There is a lack of rigour in the internal verification process in some curriculum areas, however, and not all verifiers have been trained. Written feedback on assessment practice to the assessor is sometimes insufficiently critical and is not leading to improvements in assessment practice.

18. The college offers a good range of full-time and part-time courses in all areas, some in collaboration with other organisations. Most programme areas offer courses from first diplomas through to degree programmes. The majority of these programmes are available within the college. The total number of work-based learning trainees has increased in recent years and in some areas is now a significant part of the curriculum. In some areas, however, there is no work-based learning route for students and in some programme areas there is very little work-based training. Students have access to a good range of additional qualifications which they value and which have credibility in the workplace. Many of these qualifications are certificated and increase the employability of the students. They are offered to students at no extra cost.

19. Good links exist with local and national employers in all areas. In some cases, staff sit on committees of professional bodies and are active in the design of training programmes. The college has developed a number of strategies to deliver its programmes in the industry and in one case has set up a training facility in the premises of one stakeholder. Delivery is designed to suit the company,

and staff from the college attend at a time convenient to the business. The college has designed a suite of short programmes through its Rural Business Centre; they are aimed at industry and intended to be delivered to suit the convenience of the industry.

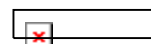
20. The college has widened participation amongst disadvantaged groups by collaborating with other agencies to increase the range of part-time courses it offers and the number of venues where they are taught. The success of the bridging course with some 400 students recovering from mental illness is one such initiative. The vocational foundation programme in horticulture at venues across Lancashire has also enabled those with learning difficulties to re-enter education. Although the majority of programme areas operate first and national diploma courses with work experience, some offer no work experience periods. The majority of the college students progress to practically based employment and students who have not had a work experience period are disadvantaged when seeking employment. A wide variety of enrichment activities are available to students. On Wednesday afternoons all the facilities of the college are available to students at a reduced rate.

21. The college has a good property strategy. Detailed plans are available for the next four years along with a strategic plan for improvements in physical resources to 2016. Space utilisation is well managed. The college has provided a wide range of physical resources to meet the developing curriculum. Most classrooms are well lit and spacious and modern technology such as powerpoint is available via eight fixed machines and five mobile machines. The specialist accommodation is good. The college has developed effective links with industry which help to provide up-to-date resources and equipment for students' use. A number of programme areas include commercial enterprises such as the golf course, fitness centre, pet shop and grooming parlour. Where commercial activities are established, they enhance the students' learning. Where the college has expanded to other centres, there are good strategies to ensure that the physical resources available to students match those of the main site. The college library has an extensive range of books and learning resources. These are available for those that are reluctant readers to those who regularly read scientific journals. The library is open seven days a week including holidays. Students appreciate this facility. Good IT equipment is also available in the library. All students have access to the college intranet and Internet. The college has maintained a ratio of one computer to five students.

22. The college has a very young profile of teaching staff. Some 39% of teaching staff are aged between 21 and 40. Only 30% of the full-time teaching staff and 12% of the part-time teaching staff have a complete teaching qualification. All new teaching staff commence a teaching qualification within the first two years of their appointment. Currently, 50% of the full-time staff and 18% of the part-time staff are undertaking teacher training qualifications. There is no formal mechanism to guide and support new teachers, particularly in the classroom. All teaching staff and some instructors are well qualified in the vocational areas in which they are working or teaching. There is a strong ethos throughout the college to maintain vocational skills and technical updating. Staff awareness of health and safety issues is good. This is reflected in their teaching, particularly in animal care and equine.

23. The college has good links with schools throughout the region. Over 1,000 schools are mailed annually. Visits to schools include college staff making talks and presentations to individual classes, small, specialised groups, parents' evenings and careers conventions. School students visit the college, from reception classes to sixth forms. The college operates residential two-day and one-day taster programmes with approximately 120 pupils attending each event. Over 50% submit applications. A range of related organisations and agencies form working partnerships with Myerscough, including, Connexions, Education Action Zones and Education Business Partnerships. The college has a partner university agreement with a local university. Work with pupils aged 14 to 16 takes place, at Myerscough, Merseyside out-centre, Croxteth Park, and at other locations. Extensive development work is in hand to introduce a full range of 14 to 16 level 1 awards for schools to start in September 2003.

Leadership and management



24. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Retention rates for most levels and types of course were similar to or above national averages between 2000 and 2002. Achievement patterns were more varied. The pass rates for full-time courses were better than for additional qualifications and part-time courses. The overall teaching profile resulting from the inspection showed that the proportion of good or better teaching was about 10% below the sector average.

25. Managers and governors have set a clear strategic direction for the college, detailed in the new comprehensive strategic plan developed for the period 2001 to 2005. The plan includes specific, measurable strategic objectives focused on growth in both FE and HE, quality and standards, financial stability, partnerships and rural business development. Planning is well informed by a good understanding of the area and a detailed needs analysis of the national and local land-based industry. A summary version of the plan is circulated to all staff. Annual objectives are set each year and a development plan is produced to address the issues raised through the self-assessment process. Specific targets are set for retention and pass rates. The retention rate target was met in 2002, but the pass rate target was only met for full-time courses.

26. Governors are committed to the work of the college and offer a wide range of experience and expertise. An initiative to link individual governors with different curriculum areas has enabled many to gain a greater insight into the operation of the college. An annual residential is held, which enables governors to contribute to the planning process and the setting of annual objectives. The corporation is currently overseeing major capital investment in the main college site to support the growth in student numbers and this has been the focus of much of the governors' recent work. The newly established standards committee has met once and receives information on the academic performance of the college. Previously this role was carried out by the whole corporation. Governors have sought explanations for the lower pass rates for additional qualifications and part-time courses, but have not set a specific target for improvement.

27. The senior management team includes the principal and four directors responsible for curriculum, enterprise and business development, finance and resources. The curriculum is managed through programme leaders, and two training managers are responsible for work-based learning. Communications from senior staff are effective and include formal briefings, a weekly newsletter, 'Down to earth', and the college intranet. A meetings calendar ensures that information from senior staff can be communicated quickly. For example, decisions made by the cross-college curriculum management and quality group can be communicated to programme leaders at their regular weekly meeting the following day. Upward communication is mainly through line managers. There is good access to the management information system. Staff have access to live data relating to recruitment and retention rates as well as student personal information including photographs and attendance data. A staff survey was undertaken for the first time in 2002. An action plan to address the issues raised is currently being developed.

28. Curriculum management is good in sport and equine studies and satisfactory in other areas with the exception of sportsturf, where it is weak. Course teams meet at least twice a term according to the formal meetings calendar and minutes are produced which identify action, the person responsible and the deadline. Part-time staff are invited to these meetings. They are not required to attend and many do not. They receive copies of minutes. Where curriculum management is good communications are effective, all staff are involved in decision making and new teachers are mentored effectively. Health and safety are given an appropriate emphasis. There are standardised approaches to the production of schemes of work, the assessment of students' work, and the monitoring of progress. Where management is unsatisfactory, there is little or no action to address specific weaknesses such as retention rates, inadequate monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning and ineffective communications.

29. Financial management is sound. The college has exceeded its unit funding target for the three years to 2002 and has an operating surplus. The sale of land elsewhere has enabled the college to invest in new resources on the main site to support the growth in student numbers. Individual business plans are produced by programme leaders. These are not explicitly linked with the strategic plan, but programme area reviews involving senior managers are used to establish priorities in each area. Decisions about budgets are made by the principal, finance director and director of resources.

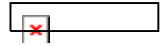
Budgets are based on assumptions about student numbers and are subject to adjustment if students leave and if there is poor achievement. The college has begun to benchmark its financial performance against a group of other land-based colleges. Taking into account class size and outcomes, the college provides satisfactory value for money.

30. The college has an extensive range of partners in rural and urban areas within the local community. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is lower than that in the local community. A small number of males are studying subjects more traditionally associated with females, and visa versa. There is little staff awareness of the potential barriers faced by minority groups and the need for additional monitoring and support. Centres have been established for adults and young people, particularly in Burnley, Blackburn and Croxteth in Liverpool to encourage the participation of disadvantaged groups, including disaffected young people. There are other centres throughout the area specifically for adults including those with mental health problems. There are good opportunities for students with learning difficulties. The curriculum on the main site has been expanded to include a range of courses at level 1 and entry level. An equality and diversity committee meets monthly. An equality and diversity officer has recently been appointed and is currently working towards increasing awareness amongst college staff and prospective students. Governors and most teaching staff have participated in training events on equality and diversity. The college has appropriate policies on equality and diversity, racial equality and disability, but these are not yet fully embedded in the culture of the college and at present there is no formal monitoring of their effectiveness.

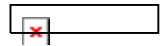
31. Staff development is planned to link training and development with the strategic aims of the college. There is a comprehensive internal programme of activities. Regular staff seminars are a part of the meetings calendar. The arrangements to support new teaching staff, many of whom hold no teaching qualifications, are not always adequate. There is a general college induction, but no formalised departmental induction. Some new teachers are well supported by line managers and are allocated mentors, but others receive insufficient support. All full-time staff and those on fractional appointments are appraised annually, but the quality of the targets set varies. Some are focused on specific objectives which link with strategic plan, others identify routine tasks rather than individual objectives. Recruitment, retention and pass rate targets are not always set as part of the appraisal process. Individual staff development needs are identified through the appraisal process, but are not always specifically linked with the college objectives. The increasing numbers of part-time staff are not always included in the appraisal system. Few hold teaching qualifications and it is often left to individuals and their line managers to determine any development needs. This process is not systematic and there is no formal requirement for part-time teachers to obtain a teaching qualification as there is for new full-time teachers.

32. There is a well-planned quality assurance cycle, with a calendar of activities and comprehensive procedures. Course teams hold formal self-assessment meetings three times a year and prepare a self-assessment report. These are collated to form programme area self-assessments which are subject to peer verification before being presented to a verification committee including external and governor representation. Governors approve the final report. Lesson observation grades and the results of student surveys are included in the evidence considered. There is a lack of rigour in the analysis of retention and pass rate data as part of the self-assessment process and the college has only recently begun to make comparisons with national averages. Insufficient attention is given to the pass rates of qualifications other than full-time courses. Lesson observation grades awarded during the inspection showed a lower proportion of good or better teaching and a higher proportion of unsatisfactory teaching than the college's own observations. The college had carried out some observation of training across the curriculum areas but in some cases the grade awarded by the inspectorate did not reflect those that had been awarded by the college. The curriculum area grades awarded by the college were sometimes too generous, and in four cases inspectors judged provision to be of lower quality than the self-assessment report. Action plans arising from the self-assessment report are not always focused on strategies for addressing weaknesses in retention and pass rates and teaching and learning. Targets for retention and pass rates are set, but these are recorded elsewhere so that reviews of progress recorded on action plans are often expressed only in very general terms and are not easily measurable.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Agriculture and countryside



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

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

Strengths

- good achievement on national diploma in agriculture courses
- good progression opportunities from entry level to higher level study
- effective use of good resources in agriculture
- wide range of additional qualifications
- good work placements.

Weaknesses

- some uninspiring teaching of theory work
- lack of integration of key skills into vocational teaching
- poor pass rates on some part-time courses
- poor achievement of advanced modern apprenticeship frameworks

- poor management of aspects of work-based learning.

Scope of provision

33. There is a wide range of full-time provision from foundation to advanced level in agriculture and countryside. First and national diplomas in countryside have options available in conservation and game management. NVQ level 1 provision provides opportunity for those not yet ready to join a first diploma course. There are 67 students on full-time courses in agriculture, and 29 in countryside. There are also two students on an agriculture programme at a college out centre. There are 40 modern apprentices working towards NVQ livestock production; of these, 31 are advanced and 9 are foundation modern apprentices. The college also provides HE courses in relevant subjects and a range of short courses mainly for people working in industry.

Achievement and standards

34. The pass rate on the national diploma in agriculture is good, and was 100% in 2001. Myerscough has retained a three-year course to include a middle year in industry. This helps give students a high level of practical skill. There is good achievement on some other courses, such as for pesticide application modules. There is a wide range of additional qualifications which students are encouraged to take. Many accredit occupational competence required for sustained employment, such as operation of forklift trucks, all terrain vehicles, or chainsaws. Students attain practical skills through good use of the college farms and estate, project work, and external work placements.

35. The pass rate on some part-time courses is poor. Some of these are undertaken by full-time students as additional qualifications. Foot and mouth disease has affected achievement on some courses. For example, the pass rate for the National Proficiency Test Council (NPTC) tractor driving test in 2001 was only 14%, compared to 62% in 2000. Students were entered for the qualification, but subsequently sent home because of the outbreak of the disease. Pass rates on advanced modern apprenticeship frameworks is poor. Of 65 learners who have started the programme since 1998, only 8 have so far completed all aspects of the framework, with 31 still following the course.

A sample of retention and pass rates in agriculture and countryside, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
ABC Environmental Skills Award	1	No. of starts	***	32	2
		% retention	***	81	100
		% pass rate	***	0	****
NVQ agriculture (livestock production) (2 year)	1	No. of starts	***	***	18
		% retention	***	***	83
		% pass rate	***	***	93
First diploma agriculture (1 year)	2	No. of starts	***	9	11
		% retention	***	89	73
		% pass rate	***	100	75
First diploma countryside and forestry (1 year)	2	No. of starts	9	9	7
		% retention	78	89	86
		% pass rate	100	88	83

National diploma agriculture (3 year)	3	No. of starts	***	20	24
		% retention	***	95	78
		% pass rate	***	100	100
City and Guilds 0280-01 agriculture/ horticulture phase 3 (1 year)	3	No. of starts	13	19	***
		% retention	69	89	***
		% pass rate	11	35	***
Nat diploma countryside management (2 year)	3	No. of starts	***	14	19
		% retention	***	79	63
		% pass rate	***	91	90
Pesticides foundation module (short)	3	No. of starts	***	130	***
		% retention	***	100	***
		% pass rate	***	86**	***
Pesticides foundation module (1 year)	3	No. of starts	***	102	***
		% retention	***	96	***
		% pass rate	8	67**	***

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

- includes students from other programmes/areas doing this as additional qualifications
- *** course not running
- **** data unavailable

Quality of education and training

36. Most teaching was good or satisfactory. Some theory teaching is uninspiring. Opportunities are missed to stimulate learning by student involvement. In a few lessons, there is poor management of students' timekeeping. Staff have relevant vocational qualifications and experience and some use these effectively to enhance lessons. Practical work makes good use of college facilities to undertake realistic projects. However, few staff have teaching qualifications. There is no formal, structured support available to staff beginning their teaching career.

37. Few links are made between vocational work and key skills. Students dislike this approach and fail to see the relevance of key skills when they are detached from their area of vocational study. Opportunities are missed to develop and provide evidence for key skills through participation in extra-curricular activities such as course committees. Resources are good. The college has a large commercial farm, and in particular, a good commercial dairy unit which enables the needs of the local farming community to be served. The unit is sponsored by a commercial company, and this arrangement allows students to benefit from feed trials conducted on the college farm. Countryside facilities include a three-hectare conservation area and facilities to hatch, rear and release gamebirds. Work placements are of good quality. Many placements offer a good range of work experience with up-to-date, commercial techniques. Students value the resources available to support their learning. Most classroom accommodation is at least satisfactory, but a few lessons take place in poor quality rooms. One key skills session was taught in an open-plan area, with noise from other areas intruding. The tractor driving area was muddy at the time of inspection, making it hard for tutors to intervene quickly if needed.

38. Assessment and internal verification on first and national diploma courses are satisfactory. Some feedback on assessment is clear and identifies items deserving praise together with improvements

which could be made. However, some feedback is too brief or vague to enable the student to identify how they can improve. There is a good system for generating reports from the college management information system, which are sent to all full-time students at the end of each term. Internal verification of NVQs in agriculture is well structured but has insufficient emphasis on observation of assessment performance. Written feedback on assessment practice identifies good practice, but few areas for further improvement. Internal verification of NVQ environmental conservation is weak. This course is an additional learning goal for a minority of full-time students. Records are inadequate, and monitoring of candidate progress is poor. The college is aware of these difficulties and is training a new internal verifier to improve the rigour of internal verification. However, this has not yet had a chance to have an impact on learners' achievement.

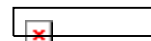
39. NVQ assessment for modern apprentices is conducted in college, supported by witness testimonies from the workplace. No direct assessment takes place in the workplace. Placement providers are not involved in assessment of learners. They have not received information on the NVQ or the key skills courses which their learners are undertaking, and college staff visit infrequently. Visits attend to pastoral issues, but not to the assessment of competence or setting of targets for future achievement of specific parts of the NVQ. Employers have a poor understanding of the qualifications. Some assessments of related knowledge carried out during college-based off-the-job sessions are insufficiently removed from the teaching and learning of that knowledge to guarantee robust assessment. Progress reviews for both full-time students and modern apprentices concentrate on issues such as timekeeping, attendance, and overall progress, but fail to set specific targets for achievement before the next review.

40. Good taster courses are available for students prior to entry. Progression data show that a high proportion of those attending go on to start a course at the college. Good progression opportunities are available for learners from entry level to HE programmes and students make good use of these opportunities. For example, of four students who completed NVQ level 1, three have progressed to a first diploma at Myerscough. The college makes every attempt to meet the needs of individuals. Effective support has been provided for students who otherwise would not have achieved their qualifications following the outbreak of foot and mouth disease.

Leadership and management

41. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The agriculture and countryside programme areas amalgamated in September 2001. Weekly programme area meetings have been introduced which farm staff now attend, and this helps keep all staff informed. Good external links have been developed which provide opportunities for student work placements, involvement in environmental projects and collaborative work. Staff are involved in college self-assessment. Some weaknesses identified during the inspection have been identified by the college, and progress is being made to address these. However, the management of aspects of work-based learning, such as the organisation of visits to the workplace, is unsatisfactory. Monitoring visits to the workplace are not frequent enough and there is insufficient use of workplace evidence in the assessment of learner competence.

Animal care



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

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

Strengths

- very good resources

- very good teaching of practicals
- high level of student satisfaction
- clear and well-utilised progression routes
- effective use of well-produced workbooks
- high pass rates in first diploma, national diploma, advanced national certificate and state veterinary nurse (SVN).

Weaknesses

- limited induction of new staff to teaching skills
- weak lesson plans
- poor monitoring of work placements
- lack of recognition of diversity of learning styles in teaching of theory.

Scope of provision

42. There is a good range of courses allowing students from a variety of backgrounds to attend an appropriate programme of study. Pass rates on most full-time and part-time courses are at or above national averages and are particularly high on first diploma, national diploma, advanced national certificate and veterinary nursing certificate courses. The provision falls into two main areas; animal care and veterinary nursing. Full-time courses in animal care comprise; NVQ 1, NVQ 2, first diploma, and national diploma, national certificate and advanced national certificate. Part-time courses are offered in pet store management, canine studies and animal care (small animals) levels 1 and 2. Work-based foundation modern apprenticeship (NVQ 2) and advanced modern apprenticeship (NVQ 3) are also offered. Part-time veterinary nursing courses are pre-veterinary nursing and veterinary nursing certificate, block and day release. Animal care courses are also provided at two outreach

centres, allowing wider participation in the range of provision by those who would not normally have access to training at a convenient location.

43. There are currently 190 students on animal care full-time courses, 50 on part-time courses and 32 on work-based learning. There are 14 attending college and 47 distance learning students on pre-veterinary nursing and 103 on veterinary nursing certificate courses attending either block or day release. All first diploma and national certificate students are enrolled on animal care (small animals) level 1 and all national diploma and advanced national certificate students are enrolled on animal care (small animals) level 2.

A sample of retention and pass rates in animal care, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Animal care (small animals)	1	No. of starts	132	147	121
		% retention	93	88	82
		% pass rate	66	83	94
NVQ animal care	1	No. of starts	8	25	18
		% retention	83	90	61
		% pass rate	100	100	82
First diploma in animal care	2	No. of starts	49	51	70
		% retention	82	88	84
		% pass rate	93	100	98
City and Guilds 0330 national certificate in animal care	3	No. of starts	15	24	13
		% retention	79	92	92
		% pass rate	100	91	92
Pre-veterinary nursing	2	No. of starts	21	38	19
		% retention	100	94	94
		% pass rate	74	61	71
NVQ caring for animals (one year)	2	No. of starts	18	25	14
		% retention	89	84	77
		% pass rate	88	75	50
Animal care (small animals)	2	No. of starts	22	62	81
		% retention	100	94	91
		% pass rate	45	97	97
NVQ caring for animals (two year)	2	No. of starts	10	9	7
		% retention	70	100	86
		% pass rate	86	57	100
City and Guilds 0330 advanced national certificate in animal care	3	No. of starts	*	*	17
		% retention	*	*	73
		% pass rate	*	*	82
National diploma in animal care	3	No. of starts	43	43	52
		% retention	70	81	86
		% pass rate	100	94	100

Veterinary nursing certificate	3	No. of starts	92	84	99
		% retention	93	90	93
		% pass rate	74	62	82
City and Guilds 7760 pet store management	4	No. of starts	54	18	89
		% retention	96	67	96
		% pass rate	42	92	49

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

44. There is good practical teaching, making use of very good facilities, on all courses. Some courses, especially veterinary nursing, make good use of well-produced workbooks. However, there is little sharing of good practice, for example, the excellent anatomy and physiology handbook used in SVN are not used by national diploma or advanced national certificate tutors.

45. In one session, students were making papier-mache models of animal body sections, that would be displayed at Open Day. Students used their theory notes to build and label their choice of organ or system, effectively re-inforcing learning. In another, students selected a model of an animal and then had to choose an appropriate means of transporting that animal. They then had to present to the class their reasons for their choices. Lesson plans are not sufficiently detailed and do not effectively link to previous and following sessions, outcomes, and assessment and identified learning styles.

46. Theory teaching is insufficiently challenging. Theory lessons do not sufficiently stimulate the students' interest in their work, and do not reinforce learning by using for example, relevant data, handouts, the whiteboard, powerpoint displays or student experience. The methods and styles of teaching are limited and rarely involve the student in analytical discussion, peer assessment or self-assessment.

47. There are very good, purpose-built animal care and veterinary nursing facilities at the college, including a commercial pet shop and dog grooming parlour. An advanced modern apprentice student manages the pet shop and all students are timetabled to work on the reception desk on a rota basis. There is a wide range of animals including vertebrates, invertebrates rodents and exotics. A high standard of attention is paid to the enrichment of the animals' environment. The students perform routine duties as part of their practical classes and the timetable is organised to avoid over-handling of the animals.

48. The out centres provide good facilities in easily accessed locations. Both centres are continuing to expand their range of small animal species and both provide access to other animal collections based at the centres. For example, one has a farm containing rare breeds of livestock, while another has excellent exhibits of wildlife found in the neighbouring habitat. One centre breeds rodents on a commercial basis. At one out centre a school pupil recovering from a stroke is attending a part-time course as part of her specialised timetable. Handling the animals is helping her confidence and dexterity.

49. The college has links with a wide range of work placements and students can move between placements to ensure that they cover the range of experience necessary. The formal links between the college and the work placement providers are weak. There is no tracking of the training received in the workplace and students are not credited with any skills they have gained while on work experience or given extra tuition for skills that have not been achieved on their return to college. Students on work experience are not routinely visited and there is no formal record of any health and safety or equal opportunity issues that have arisen. There are many missed assessment opportunities in the workplace and little sharing of good practice; for example the packs given to

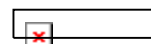
NVQ employers are not given to work experience providers. The marking of theory assignments is effectively verified, and helpful comments made and internal verification procedures are well documented. Internal verification of assignment briefs is less rigorous; assessment criteria are often generic and sometimes lacking altogether. Some marking lacks rigour; for example, checking of spelling, referencing, and Internet downloads.

50. Full-time students are given an assessment schedule at the beginning of the year. A wide range of assessment methods is used, including practical, posters, individual and group presentations, reports and in-course tests. Students are very supportive of the college and many have chosen to come to Myerscough because of the range of courses offered, facilities and opportunities for progression. These progression routes are clear and well utilised. In 2001/02, 43% national diploma learners moved on to HE and 47% of first diploma progressed to other courses. Students with identified learning needs are encouraged to seek learning support. There are timetabled individual and group tutorial sessions for all full-time students. Learning advisers who may be their course tutor are allocated to each student. Tutorials are generally good, but do not set specific goals and targets. Students receive adequate induction and a good course handbook. The information in the handbook is supplemented by a good module handbook that is given to students at the beginning of each module. Students have an understanding of basic equality of opportunity issues.

Leadership and management

51. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There has been rapid expansion of the facilities and development of courses with concurrent increase in staff numbers. There is insufficient induction of new staff who have no teaching qualifications. The programme team meet weekly and invite part-time and out-centre staff. Informal communication is good. Staff appreciate the informal management style. However, the lack of formal systems and protocols has created some problems in the absence of the programme manager. The self-assessment process was inclusive and effective, however, several identified strengths are considered to be norms. It ensured that action took place.

Arboriculture



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

Strengths

- good practical resources
- good progression opportunities
- wide range of additional qualifications undertaken.

Weaknesses

- poor classroom management in many lessons

- insufficient dedicated classrooms
- uninspiring lessons.

Scope of provision

52. There are 51 students on full-time and part-time courses. The majority of these are aged over 19, with only 13 of these being aged under 19. There are three full-time courses: the one-year first diploma in arboriculture, the one year national certificate in arboriculture and the two-year national diploma in arboriculture that is a two-year course with a middle year of work experience. Part-time courses are the national certificate in arboriculture and the combined certificate in arboriculture. Except for the first diploma and national certificate, which are at level 2, all of the courses are level 3. There are also a large number of short courses, mainly in the use of chainsaws, climbing and aerial rescue, and tree surgery. Other short courses in the safe use of chippers and stump grinders are arranged on demand.

Achievement and standards

53. Retention and pass rates are satisfactory. The first year of the first diploma course had 100% retention and pass rates, but this was run with only five students and there are no data over a period of time on which to base sound judgements. Retention and pass rates on the national certificate have improved steadily over the last three years. In 2000/01, the short courses in chainsaw operation changed from being internally assessed to external assessment. The college has not collected significant achievement data for these courses. The self-assessment report identified this problem and the college is now collecting this information. Students are currently working to a satisfactory level.

A sample of retention and pass rates in arboriculture, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
National certificate in arboriculture	2	No. of starts	24	20	7
		% retention	54	70	100
		% pass rate	77	79	86
First diploma in arboriculture	2	No. of starts	**	**	5
		% retention	**	**	100
		% pass rate	**	**	100
NPTC chain-saw certificate, cross cutting*	2	No. of starts	64	44	49
		% retention	100	100	98
		% pass rate	100	16	40
National diploma in arboriculture	3	No. of starts	8	12	24
		% retention	88	58	67
		% pass rate	100	80	85

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* *unreliable data*

** *course did not run*

Quality of education and training

54. Teaching is satisfactory overall, although there is little variation in teaching styles. There is an over reliance on the use of overhead projector slides and many handouts are poorly reproduced, some to the extent that it is difficult to read them or see the relevance of the picture reproduced. There is insufficient differentiation to meet students' learning needs. Students' progress is satisfactory, although higher-level students are not always sufficiently challenged and too much is at times demanded of lower-level students. Classroom management is poor, with lessons often starting late and finishing early.

55. Teaching staff are all occupationally qualified and have good levels of industrial experience. A high proportion of the staff have joined the college from industry in recent years and are up to date with industry practices. Only two of the staff have teaching qualifications, although five others are studying for a teaching qualification. Only three staff have any assessment qualifications and one is a qualified internal verifier. There are good practical teaching resources. The college has an arboretum and small woodland area on the campus and has access to many excellent sites close to the college, for example, the Duchy of Lancaster estate and the Lancaster canal. There is a wide range of tools and equipment to ensure all students are fully engaged during practical sessions. The workshops, although becoming too small for the number of students involved, are well equipped. Some of the classrooms used are unsuitable.

56. Assignment briefs and feedback are satisfactory, although some feedback lacks detail on what the student needs to do to improve grades. The assessment strategy relies on the staff to ensure assignments are set and returned on time. The internal verification procedures have been improved this year as a result of requests from the external verifier. Assessments are verified prior to their return and a matrix ensures all students are sampled for internal verification over the course of the academic year.

57. There are very good links with local industry. Many of the staff are newly out of industry and maintain their previous contacts. Many of the staff are active members of various professional bodies: for example, one is the United Kingdom (UK) representative of The European Arboriculture Council and another, president of the UK and Ireland chapter of The International Society of Arboriculture. There is a close liaison with the Technical Advisory Board to ensure the programme meets the needs of the industry. An action plan is produced following the Technical Advisory Board meeting and this feeds into course review and the section self-assessment. The programmes meet the needs of the students and the inclusion of a large number of additional qualifications improves their employment prospects. There is no work-based route in this area, but this route is anyway not well accepted by industry. Progression opportunities are good, with a complete range of full-time courses from first diploma through to degree available on the campus.

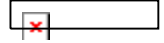
58. Initial assessment of basic skills is by evidence from application forms, interview and by key skills diagnostic test. There is no specific basic skills assessment. Basic skills needs are addressed through the learning support unit. At present, only three arboriculture students are receiving learning support. There is a satisfactory system of group and individual tutorials, although there are no rooms available for individual tutorials. Students may be referred to the college counselling service, although this service is rarely used in this programme area. There is good initial advice and guidance on courses and progression.

Leadership and management

59. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Team meetings are held regularly. Minutes and action plans are produced and reviewed at subsequent meetings. Staff attend a number of industrial bodies to ensure that the course programmes meet industry needs and the range of programmes is acceptable to the industry. The team work very closely together and communication within the team is good. There is a high proportion of new members of staff in this area, including the programme

leader, but the team has ensured that this has not affected the students' learning. The area self-assessment identified a number of areas for improvement and these are being addressed.

Equine studies



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

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates on national diploma course
- good pass rates on first diploma course
- good resources for teaching theory and practical equitation
- wide range of courses with good progression
- good practical and riding teaching
- particularly good awareness of health and safety by staff and students
- high standards of stable management on college practical facilities
- strong leadership and team working.

Weaknesses

- unimaginative theory teaching in many lessons
- insufficient opportunities for exposure to the horse industry

- poor, but improving retention rates on first diploma course
- insufficient practical resources for stud option.

Scope of provision

60. The college offers a range of equine courses including full-time provision at level 1. There is a first diploma in horse care, a national diploma in the management of horses and a national certificate in the management of horses, as well as foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships. The part-time and short courses on offer include BHS stages 1 to 3 and the BHS preliminary teaching test. These courses and others including NVQ level 2 are available as additional qualifications to students on full-time courses. Most of the 94 students on full-time courses are aged 16 to 18. There are 24 students on the first diploma course, 8 students on the national certificate course and 5 students on a full-time level 1 NVQ course. There are 13 students on work-based learning programmes leading to foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships. There are 27 students in the second year of a national diploma course and 30 on the first year, 18 of whom are following the equitation option and 12 the stud option. Courses offer students good opportunities to progress from work-based learning to diploma courses, and from diploma courses to HE.

Achievement and standards

61. Students achieve high standards of practical skills. They are effectively grouped for practical work according to their ability and they are able to progress at their own rate. They work at commercial speeds and develop the personal skills of good timekeeping, time management and responsibility. Pass rates for both the first and national diploma are good and have been consistently at or above the national average for the last four years. There are good retention rates on the national diploma, which have also been well above the national average for the same period. For 2001/02, the retention rate on this course was 13% above the national average. All national diploma students also take BHS stage 2 during the first year of their course and pass rates on this qualification are good. Students may choose to take either further BHS exams or work towards an NVQ at level 2 in their second year. On part-time courses, some students return later to take the course again or take the exam later or at this or another centre. The data do not include these variations. Retention rates on the first diploma course have been poor and were declining until 2001/02. The retention rates are now improving and, currently, 89% of students on this course are still attending.

A sample of retention and pass rates in equine studies, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
BHS stage 1 horse care and riding*	1	No. of starts	49	50	73
		% retention	94	79	88
		% pass rate	82	76	96
BHS stage 2 horse care and riding*	2	No. of starts	11	36	35
		% retention	80	89	89
		% pass rate	38	22	19
First diploma in horse	2	No. of starts	25	25	17

studies		% retention	76	68	76
		% pass rate	95	82	100
National diploma in horse studies	3	No. of starts	40	52	22
		% retention	90	80	86
		% pass rate	96	86	100
BHS stage 3 horse care and riding	3	No. of starts	**	5	12
		% retention	**	100	100
		% pass rate	**	25	38

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* data unreliable as they contain a mixture of adult part-time courses with full-time courses and it has not been possible to confirm part-time achievement accurately

** course did not run

Quality of education and training

62. There is good practical teaching. Riding tuition is particularly good. Teachers give helpful corrections and instructions and demonstrate good knowledge of equitation theory. Students receive excellent feedback from their teachers. In the best lessons, riders were actively encouraged to discuss their performance. They were encouraged to think about the quality of the horse's work and how it could be improved. Students enjoy their lessons and are well motivated and enthusiastic about their riding. Horses that require more improvement in their training are used effectively to help students develop the skills both when riding and when working horses from the ground. Teachers take care to ensure that the lessons build on previous work and that students have sufficient time to practise their skills. Extra lessons are timetabled for those students who require them, often in the teacher's own time. However, there is unimaginative teaching in many theory lessons. A narrow range of teaching methods is used and there is too little checking of students' knowledge and understanding. Often, the more confident students dominate discussions whilst others do not take part at all. The worst teaching is dull and relies heavily on simply reading through notes displayed on an overhead projector. Too often, students are neither challenged by, nor interested in, the subjects being taught. In these cases, attainment is correspondingly low.

63. Practical resources are good and include a new, purpose-built complex which houses an international-size indoor arena, heated viewing gallery, restaurant and a range of useful and well-designed teaching rooms. This is in addition to another large indoor school, two outdoor schools and a range of stabling. There are 50 horses, over half of which are owned by the college. Horses are well trained and there is a range to suit all abilities of rider. All horses are in extremely good condition and great care and attention is paid to their welfare and well being. There are insufficient resources for the stud option offered on the national diploma course. There are plans to invest in a small herd of native pony brood mares and a pony stallion. However, there are currently only two brood mares and two weaned foals. Students have insufficient experience of many routine stud activities such as teasing, covering, scanning, veterinary visits, foaling, weaning and handling of young stock.

64. Students receive good feedback after all assessments, including written assignments. Assignment briefs are clear with detailed grading criteria and they are often related to the college practical facilities. Although they indicate which key skills might be achieved they do not indicate what the student must do to achieve them.

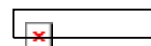
65. There is a wide range of courses available allowing progression from first diploma to HND or degree. The progression routes are promoted to students and they receive good career advice, both at recruitment and during their course. In 2001/02, 38% of students who completed a first diploma went on to a national diploma. In the same year, 30% of students gaining a national diploma went on

to a HND, and 18% went on to take a degree. Several students have progressed from first diploma to degree-level education. There are also high rates of progression into employment within the equine industries. None of the courses currently include a period of work experience, apart from yard duties on the college's own yard. It is planned that those students following the stud option of the national diploma will have work experience during the stud season, as the college has recognised that its own stud facilities are insufficient. Students are not able to develop skills related to a specific career aim and they are not directly exposed to some parts of the horse industry such as eventing, driving or racing. Students do not gain experience of handling fit competition horses.

Leadership and management

66. There is strong leadership of the equine unit and particularly good team working. All staff are fully involved in decision making. Staff are actively encouraged to undertake continuous professional development of both their academic knowledge and practical skills. There is constant monitoring of all practical teaching by informal observation and the manager walks around the equine unit every morning during yard duties. Prompt action is taken to remedy any deficiencies observed. Staff and managers set a particularly high standard of stable management. There is great attention to detail and regular monitoring to maintain standards. There is particularly good attention paid to health and safety by both staff and students. Teachers alter their lesson plans according to weather conditions, rider and horse combinations and rider's abilities. Teachers emphasise health and safety throughout their teaching in a natural, realistic and practical way.

Horticulture



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

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

Strengths

- good pass rates on full-time level 1 NVQ, first and national diploma programmes
- good learning resources
- effective integration of IT into courses at levels 1 and 2
- effective partnerships to widen participation.

Weaknesses

- some uninspiring theory teaching

- lack of rigour in full-time NVQ level 2 assessment
- low achievement of modern apprenticeship framework.

Scope of provision

67. There is a range of full-time horticultural courses from first diploma, national certificate to national diploma. There are 54 students, the majority being aged 16 to 18 with participating numbers in single figures. Some courses are taught jointly with students in other programme areas. Courses offer good progression opportunities from entry to level 4 equivalent. Recruitment of part-time students aged 19 or over has doubled, with 138 students on RHS general certificates. The college also has a number of adults on the RHS advanced certificate and diploma. This programme is offered at three centres. There are 42 foundation and advanced modern apprentices.

Achievement and standards

68. Retention rates are above the national average on most courses. Full-time level 1 NVQ achievement has been 100% for the last three years. Retention rates on the first diploma in horticulture have been good, with all students remaining on the programme in the last two years and, in 2001/02, 100% pass rates. Retention rates on the national diploma in horticulture are good with 100% pass rates in 2000/01, declining to 89% in 2001/02. The college offers foundation and modern apprenticeships in decorative horticulture and nursery stock production. Apprentices are employed by a variety of private and public sector organisations. Off-the-job training varies between programmes, some is carried out entirely in the workplace, while other programmes require students to attend college one day a week during term time. College teachers or work-based supervisors carry out assessment in the workplace. Although the achievement of NVQ qualifications is satisfactory on work-based learning programmes, framework achievement is poor, largely owing to poor key skill achievement. Of the 16 apprentices who have commenced since 1999, only one has achieved a full framework. Attendance at lessons is 74%. Students appear promptly at lesson time and non-attendance is followed up rigorously.

A sample of retention and pass rates in horticulture, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
First diploma in horticulture	1	No. of starts	8	14	6
		% retention	88	100	100
		% pass rate	100	86	100
NVQ (all centres and attendance modes)	1	No. of starts	16	36	49
		% retention	75	78	77
		% pass rate	100	79	70
City and Guilds national certificate in horticulture	2	No. of starts	14	10	9
		% retention	79	90	89
		% pass rate	82	67	67
National diploma horticulture - 3 year	3	No. of starts	15	12	10
		% retention	80	92	90

		% pass rate	27	100	89
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Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

Quality of education and training

69. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers use positive comments and praise to boost students' self-esteem. Teachers know their subject well and use up-to-date examples. In one session, a student was selecting a good range of "suitable desert apples" to plant in a commercial situation on the basis of frost and disease resistance, all-year-round availability, storage and flavour. There is some good practical teaching. The NVQ level 1 group is constructing a garden and woodland walk project and developing good practical skills at this level.

70. There is some unimaginative theory teaching. Teachers employ methods that do not wholly reflect students' needs and expectations. In the best lessons, teachers draw on students' own experience. In weaker lessons, teachers talk too much and answer their own questions without giving students the opportunity to reflect or answer. Individual learning is not regularly checked. Schemes of work and lesson plans are weak. They are not linked to outcomes and assessment opportunities and do not take account of varying student abilities. Poor use is made of visual aids and handouts in the classroom. The use of IT is well integrated into courses at levels 1 and 2. The college has produced highly effective workbooks to enable students to study at their own pace. These are available via the college interactive extranet and intranet. Good packages, such as plant identification, are updated on a monthly basis. Teachers are able to monitor when students use the programme and how successful they have been in their learning. This system is particularly effective for work-based learning students who do not attend college.

71. Assessment procedures meet the needs of awarding bodies. However, not all learning activities are linked with assessment opportunities. Students are often required to repeat the completion of the same task. Some written feedback on assessment is too generic and is insufficiently thorough in identifying how students can improve. In some cases, simple errors of technical understanding and spelling are uncorrected. There is insufficient work-based assessment in the full-time, college-based NVQ level 2 programme. The college is exploring alternatives to this qualification for next year. The standard of NVQ portfolios is generally satisfactory with effective use made of work projects. The assessment of practical performance lacks substance and detail. Students display vocational knowledge and skills at an appropriate level. In some cases, there is an over reliance on tick boxes for recording competence, and there is limited emphasis on critical evaluation at all levels.

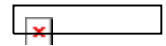
72. Resources for learning are good at Myerscough and out centres. Students and staff use a wide range of well-equipped specialist resources, for example, demonstration gardens and ornamental grounds, glasshouses, nursery stock unit, retail plant centre and 0.5 hectares of glass. Improved learning access is achieved through learning via the virtual learning environment Internet-based 'Mollnet' system, which has a good range of learning packages at all levels, or by using CDs and well-designed workbooks.

73. There is a small proportion of uninviting and poorly lit teaching accommodation. The tractor-driving arena is cluttered with implements. Some sessions disregard health and safety issues. For example, in one practical session, students were handling mortar containing lime without protection. This went unchallenged by the teacher. Staff know their students well. There is effective personal support in place to help students complete their course. Students have regular tutorials. The recording of teachers' comments shows supportive written comments, but there is a lack of specific targets to improve students' learning and achievement. All full-time students undertake work experience on the college commercial enterprises. The national diploma horticulture is a three-year programme with a sandwich year in the industry. The college has worked exceedingly hard to retain this year in industry. This development of practical skills has enhanced the employment opportunities of the students and is appreciated by employers. The level 1 NVQ programme effectively develops students' personal and social skills.

Leadership and management

74. Overall leadership and management are satisfactory, though there has been some slippage owing to staff shortages. The programme leader is on long-term sick leave. There has been a recent appointment of an acting programme leader with good subject knowledge. There is good communication at team and programme area level. Targets are set for recruitment. There are regular team meetings with action points linked to the organisational activities of the programme area. However, they often fail to link to the strategic objectives of the college. Course management is covered by quality systems, which are not always adhered to. There is uneven deployment of staff, with some teaching very small classes and others very large class sizes.

Landscape and creative design



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

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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on first diploma landscape
- very good landscape and creative design resources
- good practical teaching in landscape and creative design modules
- good links with industry.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on first diploma blacksmithing and metalwork
- unimaginative and poorly planned theory teaching
- poor individual target setting and individual learner reviews
- low framework achievements in work-based training.

Scope of provision

75. Landscape and creative design provision covers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses including floristry and flower arranging, blacksmithing, landscape design and landscape construction. Courses are offered at levels 2 and 3. There are no foundation or level 1 courses run by this section. However, the general horticulture programmes at Myerscough provide a suitable entry point before more advanced specialist courses in landscape, creative design or floristry. There are currently 74 full-time enrolments, with most students being aged 16 to 18. There are 33 modern apprentices on work-based training programmes in hard landscaping or floristry.

Achievement and standards

76. Pass rates on most courses have fluctuated over the last three years. On first diploma landscape, the retention and pass rates have been consistently above the national averages and for two years out of the last three; pass rates have been 100%. Pass rates on NVQ 2 amenity horticulture (hard landscape) and on the creative skills courses have also been good. Most recently, there have poor retention and pass rates on the national diploma in decorative metalwork and first diploma in blacksmithing and metalwork. There were no achievements on the first diploma in blacksmithing for 2001/02. In creative design classes, students produce good work in practical lessons and study for additional qualifications. First diploma in blacksmithing and metalwork students complete units from the NVQ agricultural service engineering. Landscape students take City and Guilds skills tests to complement their main qualification, and more advanced students take competent operator certificates under schemes operated by the landscape industry. During inspection, floristry students took part and won national competitions at the National Floristry Exhibition in Birmingham. Completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks is poor. Most work-based trainees complete the NVQ element of their framework, but not the key skills element.

A sample of retention and pass rates in landscape and creative design, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
First diploma landscape	2	No. of starts	8	16	6
		% retention	88	100	100
		% pass rate	100	86	100
First diploma blacksmithing and metalwork	2	No. of starts	6	5	4
		% retention	83	80	25
		% pass rate	100	100	0
National certificate floristry	2	No. of starts	9	6	10
		% retention	78	83	70
		% pass rate	71	100	50
NVQ 2 amenity horticulture (hard landscape)	2	No. of starts	22	26	24
		% retention	77	94	80
		% pass rate	91	100	93
City and Guilds 7802 creative skills - garden design	2	No. of starts	*	48	39
		% retention	*	92	87
		% pass rate	*	72	76
National diploma landscape practice	3	No. of starts	*	20	14
		% retention	*	79	86

		% pass rate	*	100	83
National diploma decorative metalwork	3	No. of starts	6	4	9
		% retention	50	100	71
		% pass rate	100	100	80

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

77. Teaching in the majority of practical lessons is good. Workshop activities are well planned and organised. There is good attention to health and safety. The creative design metalwork and blacksmithing teaching team is complemented by the presence of resident artists at the college one of whom has an engineering background and who took materials processing modules, adding a unique dimension to craft teaching. There is a wealth of good vocational expertise amongst the landscape and creative design staff, but some staff without teaching experience do not receive sufficient guidance and support to help them teach effectively.

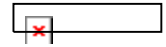
78. The teaching of theory often fails to maintain students' interest. In poor lessons, the teaching methods and resources selected did not involve the students in the learning. Teaching strategies and learning materials were not varied to meet students' differing needs. Lessons were poorly planned, and poor use was made of the available teaching time. Some lessons finished early and students were unclear about the tasks they had been set to work on in the learning resource centre. They often wasted their time. Students on full-time courses are set well-planned assignments that are appropriate to the course that they are following. Many students use IT to complete assignments and, in some cases, there are supporting materials available on the college intranet. Work is generally completed to an appropriate standard and is marked and returned to students promptly. Comments are constructive and provide guidance for improvements. There are good assessment procedures in place to support work-based trainees. Individual target setting for learners is weak. Individual action plans are completed soon after learners start their course, but they rarely include short-term targets for progress or challenging targets for achievement. The individual action plans are not followed up regularly in tutorials. Many of the tutorials do not result in clear short-term targets being set, and where these are in place they are not consistently followed up in subsequent tutorials. There are productive links with the landscape industry. The college helps learners on work experience find employment that matches their career aspirations, using a wide range of local, national and international contacts. Industry contacts are used to enhance the teaching provided at the college, for example, a specialist wrought iron manufacturer will be holding 'master classes' at the college.

79. Resources for landscape and creative design are very good. In the recently expanded IT centre, learners have dedicated access to up-to-date, computer-aided-design packages. There is a well-lit drawing office and a drop-in area, so that learners can work on their own project work as well as an area used for formal teaching. Landscape workshops are well maintained, with tools and equipment that reflect industry standards. Good heating and lighting make them a pleasant teaching environment. In addition to the workshops, there is a small all-weather out-door practical area, housed in a poly tunnel, used for brick-laying and landscape techniques.

Leadership and management

80. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communications are good. Part-time staff are encouraged to attend meetings and are kept informed of issues relating to the programme area's provision. The staff are aware of the contents of the college's strategic plan and particularly how they had contributed to it. There are regular programme area and team meetings. Whilst key issues such as retention rates are addressed in the end of course reviews and the self-assessment report, the targets set are often loose and are not followed up in subsequent course team meetings.

Sportsturf



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

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

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates on first and national diploma courses
- good one-to-one teaching and support in the workplace
- very good specialist resources used effectively
- well-produced print and IT learning resources
- effective use of the workplace to enhance learning
- very good employer and industrial partnerships
- good use of assessments for short-term planning in the workplace.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on National Certificate course and low pass rates on National Certificate and NVQ level 2 courses
- poor pass rates on key skills
- poor achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks

- poor use of demonstration in teaching on full-time courses
- insufficiently critical self-assessment
- ineffective monitoring of students' progress towards long-term goals in work-based learning.

Scope of provision

81. Following recent restructuring, work-based learning provision at the college is managed through Myerscough Training. Work-based learning includes foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in amenity horticulture (sportsturf). All training and assessment are delivered in the workplace. There are 167 students on these programmes, 94 foundation modern apprentices and 73 advanced modern apprentices. Students are employed in golf clubs, football clubs and other sports turf venues in England and Wales. A further 295 students are enrolled on NVQ sportsturf, with 134 at level 2, 137 at level 3 and 26 at level 4. These students are aged over 24 on an employer training pilot scheme funded by the national LSC.

82. Provision based at Myerscough College is managed through the programme area of sportsturf. Full-time programmes include a first and national diploma in sportsturf and a National Certificate including a part-time route. There are 50 full-time and 5 part-time students currently enrolled. Programmes are taught on campus using specialist sportsturf facilities. These include a nine-hole public golf course, a range of sports pitches, a driving range and a sportsturf trial area. Visits to other sportsturf venues such as football stadia, golf courses, tennis centres, racecourses and cricket pitches enhance and add value to the curriculum. Students study relevant additional industrial qualifications. These include National Proficiency Test Council Certificates in spraying, hand held applicator use, tractor and mower use.

Achievement and standards

83. There are high retention rates on modern apprenticeships, work-based NVQ courses and diploma courses. Pass rates on diploma courses are high and on NVQ 3 in amenity horticulture (sportsturf), pass rates are on or around the national average. In 2002/03, pass rates on NVQ level 2 programmes declined to well below the national average. Many students do not pass within the contracted time of their learning agreements. In part this is because most adult students are on a fast-track programme where the timescale of the agreement is relatively short. However, most students do go on to pass their qualification. In 2002/03, there was poor achievement of the full framework by modern apprentices with only eight students completing the full framework. In the four months since July 2003, eleven full frameworks have been achieved indicating that some progress is being made. There are poor pass rates on the National Certificate programme and declining retention rates to well below the national average in 2002/03. Very few full-time or work-based learning students achieved key skills awards in 2002/03. Improvements to the strategy for teaching and assessing key skills are beginning to show results with students producing suitable work for portfolios and preparing for tests effectively. The standard of students' work in the workplace and on full-time courses is good. Work-based students are employed in posts appropriate to the level of course being studied. Full-time students develop good employability skills through extensive use of work experience and realistic practical work on the college sportsturf facilities.

A sample of retention and pass rates in sportsturf, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
National practical certificate	1	No. of starts	23	35	21
		% retention	96	71	86
		% pass rate	95	92	100
First diploma in greenkeeping	2	No. of starts	*	12	5
		% retention	*	92	100
		% pass rate	*	91	100
National Certificate sportsturf	2	No. of starts	13	10	8
		% retention	92	90	75
		% pass rate	67	100	50
NVQ amenity horticulture (sportsturf)	2	No. of starts	36	61	80
		% retention	97	85	96
		% pass rate	52	59	39
National Diploma sportsturf	3	No. of starts	15	12	20
		% retention	100	92	80
		% pass rate	67	100	100
NVQ amenity horticulture (sportsturf)	3	No. of starts	44	100	40
		% retention	98	91	88
		% pass rate	51	42	50

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

84. All NVQ and modern apprenticeship training takes place in the workplace. There is very good integration between training delivered by the employers and training delivered in the workplace by the college staff. Training delivered by college tutors is on a one to one basis, or in small groups. Whilst at times this prevents interaction between students it enables teaching to meet individual needs. Training, assessment and support are provided to a good standard. Tutors they make good use of their industrial experience. Well-produced workbooks and the college Internet are used effectively by staff and students.

85. There is some good teaching on college-based programmes. The best lessons challenge students through effective questioning that checks and reinforces learning. Tasks are often realistic and require students to make links between their academic and vocational knowledge. Teachers include many references to industry practice that enhance learning. Students are motivated by the effective use of praise and teaching often includes clear explanations of difficult concepts. Weaker teaching is characterised by: lesson plans with little detail about student activity; unrealistic timings for activities; poor classroom management that limits students' opportunities to see demonstrations and poor questioning techniques. Most demonstrations lack detail, impact and student involvement. Attendance rates in the college's October report were at 91%, but during the inspection were poor, with an average attendance of 79% largely due to illness.

86. Teachers have appropriate vocational qualifications for their roles, with good relevant recent industrial experience. However, some work-based learning tutors do not hold full teaching or assessor qualifications. All college-based teachers hold or are working towards teaching qualifications. Effective staff development updates industrial expertise and enhances teaching and learning. The college has developed a set of high-quality workbooks, powerpoint demonstrations

and ILT materials. These are used effectively to underpin teaching and independent study. They also help to structure the students' work between visits from their tutor. All work-based learning tutors are equipped with lap top computers and printers. The Myerscough online learning network has been developed to extend the content of the workbooks with more interactive visual material. This enabled one student to continue with her NVQ level 3 qualification whilst undertaking work at the Augusta golf course in Georgia. However, some students do not have access to the Internet so are unable to benefit from this provision.

87. At the Myerscough campus, there are very good specialist sports turf facilities that are used effectively in teaching and to provide commercial updating on short courses. A good range of machinery from international distributors is available and well used. There are insufficient desks and chairs for briefing of groups over eight in the sportsturf unit. Private room provision for personal tutorials is also limited.

88. Student portfolio work is of a high standard. There is a diverse range of evidence that is well structured. Students' work clearly demonstrates a good level of competence. Tutors make good use of assessments to set targets between visits to the workplace. Targets are carefully monitored at the start of the following visit. Student progress is used less effectively for monitoring and reviewing longer-term targets such as those in the individual learning plans. Work-based assessors are used effectively in the workplace. Assessors have been trained by the Green keepers Training Committee or the college. There is regular contact with college tutors and internal verifiers, but no systematic standardisation of assessment decisions. There are particular problems with internal verification for students based in the south of the country.

89. Assessment practice on college-based programmes is satisfactory. Detailed plans for both assignment and practical work are included in handbooks with clear explanation of criteria used for marking. Planning of internal verification is good and sufficient internal verification takes place. The use of workbooks to record progress in practical skills is under developed and little formal evaluation of students' work takes place regularly.

90. The college has very good links with industry, especially with golf green keepers. For example, the college is a preferred supplier to a large group of hotels for their green keeper training. Employers are very supportive of training being entirely in the workplace. One outcome of this is that there is good recruitment of adult students who have no previous vocational qualifications on to NVQ courses. Recruitment of female students and those from ethnic minorities is low. There is good progression between NVQ programmes at levels 2 and 3. NVQ level 4 programmes are available for those in suitable positions of responsibility at work.

91. College-based provision is good at levels 2 and 3. There is no provision at level 1 and some students enrolled on level 2 courses find difficulty in coping with aspects of the course. The Turf Advisory Board brings together a wide range of industrial partners and ensures effective consultation about all aspects of sportsturf provision. Changes to the structure of the national diploma course are an example of the impact of this liaison. A good range of additional qualifications is offered and matches industry needs.

92. All work-based students are screened at their workplace to establish their levels of literacy and numeracy at the start of the course. The monthly placement visits allow regular tutorial reviews that identify individual needs. There is a learning support assistant at both the Myerscough and Croxteth training centres. These tutors offer help on a drop-in basis and can accompany tutors on their visits. Work-based learning students do not have easy access to the full range of Myerscough student support services. Students employed by large organisations have the support of a well-developed human resource team, but others working for smaller employers lack support.

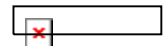
93. College-based students receive satisfactory support. Recent developments in the teaching and assessment of key skills are improving and helping vocational teachers to develop activities and materials relevant to their vocational area. The use of learning advisors and learning support tutors in key skills lessons is effective. Students receive much informal help from teachers with both programme-related and pastoral needs. There is effective use of initial assessment and good take-up of learning support. The timing of personal tutorials limits the monitoring of students' progress.

For example, some year 2 students are having their first tutorial of the year in November. There is some ineffective target setting in tutorials.

Leadership and management

94. Overall, the leadership and management of sportsturf provision are satisfactory. A recent restructuring of work-based and college-based provision creates clear management responsibilities. However, it is too soon to judge the effectiveness of the new arrangements. The delivery of the work-based learning is split between two teams, one based at Myerscough covering the north and one based at Croxteth covering the south. The two centres were managed independently, with some resulting inconsistencies in items such as internal verification. The recent reorganisation brings the two together under one manager. The work-based self-assessment report compares performance against profile targets agreed with the local LSC, but does not look at overall performance compared to national averages. There is a lack of monitoring of students' performance against longer-term targets to ensure the achievement of key skills and the completion of frameworks on time. There is ineffective promotion of equal opportunities in some workplaces. College-based course and programme area self-assessment are developing. At the time of inspection, self-assessment lacks critical analysis and fails to target actions towards improvement. Staff development, appraisal and teaching observations are well managed.

Engineering (mechanisation and motor sports)



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

Strengths

- good achievement in first diploma courses
- good linking of industrial practice with theory in lessons
- good links with schools and industry
- good assessment practice in work-based learning.

Weaknesses

- insufficient checks on student understanding and progress in lessons
- some poor lesson preparation

- some outdated practical resources
- insufficient planning of training in the work placements.

Scope of provision

95. The college offers full-time and part-time courses at levels 2 and 3. The part-time courses include level 2 agricultural service engineering. The full-time courses are first diplomas in engineering/motor sport and engineering/mechanisation at level 2 and national diplomas in land-based mechanisation and motor sport at level 3. There are currently 114 students on college-based courses. There are 57 learners on national diploma courses, 43 on motor sport and 14 on mechanisation. There are 32 foundation and advanced modern apprentices in agricultural engineering. Work-based learning is delivered in the workplace and in the college.

Achievement and standards

96. Retention rates in the national diploma in motor sport have generally been good or satisfactory, but fell below satisfactory in 2001/02. They were unsatisfactory in 2000/01 in first diploma in mechanisation, but improved in 2001/02. Pass rates were good in first diplomas in motor sport and mechanisation in 2000/01 and in 2001/02. There were 100% pass rates in mechanisation in 2000/01 and in 2001/02. Achievement fell below the national average in the national diploma for both motor sport and mechanisation in 2001/02.

A sample of retention and pass rates in engineering (mechanisation and motor sports), 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
First diploma in motor sports	2	No. of starts	*	7	8
		% retention	*	86	75
		% pass rate	*	83	83
First diploma in mechanisation	2	No. of starts	12	4	5
		% retention	80	67	80
		% pass rate	88	100	100
National diploma in motor sports (2 year)	3	No. of starts	*	5	16
		% retention	*	80	62
		% pass rate	*	75	70
National diploma in mechanisation (2 year)	3	No. of starts	13	14	11
		% retention	92	79	91
		% pass rate	83	91	75

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

97. Teachers make effective links between theory and practical skills training. In a lesson on adjusting tappets, the tutor was able to talk effectively about a wide range of current vehicle engines and the specific issues relating to them. Students are attentive and interested in the subjects.

98. Mechanisation and motor sport work closely with industry in a range of contexts. The college has a team that takes part successfully in rally sport and track racing. Students are involved in building, preparing, operating and servicing vehicles at events at major motor racing circuits. National projects in engineering, backed by industry, are being led and developed by the college. 'Formula Festival', a motor racing event for college/university-built vehicles, is taking place at Myerscough in 2003. Students take part in a range of industry exhibitions, including the world's largest motor sports exhibition. Learners benefit from close links with large, global organisations. There are links with a number of industry organisations, including local major motor dealerships. Staff and students operate joint stands at exhibitions, and a number of industry personnel contribute directly to courses. A major manufacturer has a demonstration unit based at the college and students have full access to and use of up-to-date equipment. Another business, which imports flat packed tractors from China, allows the college to have three tractors to assemble during the year.

99. There is good assessment practice in the work placements. Learners receive good support in the workplace from their training assessor. Assessors visit the learners regularly. Visits are planned in accordance with the support needed. Meetings are scheduled in advance, with a follow-up call from the training provider to ensure that the learner will be able to attend. Learners' progress reviews take place every 12 weeks, but earlier and more frequently if necessary. Assessors have a good working relationship with the learners. It relates to the completion of set tasks, evidence collection, portfolio building and the implementation of learners' individual learning plans. Action planning is carefully recorded, although not always sufficiently demanding. When assessors visit learners, they set them deadlines for the completion of tasks through which the learners will gather evidence of their NVQ competences. All learners have the same format for their individual learning plans. However, they are differentiated to take account of learners' abilities and prior achievements. The recording of learners' learning activities is carried out thoroughly. Learners are aware that their assessor can give them extra support if and when they need it.

100. Much of the observed teaching is satisfactory; it meets the curriculum requirements, but is often uninspiring. Some teachers set clear objectives for the lesson, which are reviewed at the end some, however, do not. The planning of some lessons is weak, with no clear objectives or consideration of how the lesson will be taught. In the majority of lessons, teachers do not regularly check students' understanding. The extensive use of undirected questions does not enable teachers to identify the students who are having difficulty. Some lessons proceed at an inappropriately slow pace. There is poor use of presentation materials and there are missed opportunities to use computer graphics, films, cartoons, and manufacturers' videos. There is a lack of good handouts and often the quality of reproduction is poor.

101. The accommodation in motor vehicle and motor sports section is in modern well-lit enclosed buildings, and is appropriate for the programmes offered. The supply of vehicles and tractors is sufficient for the student needs, although much of the vehicle stock is dated and has to be supplemented with staff and student vehicles. Although there is no rolling road facility, the college has various up-to-date, computer-based portable diagnostic machines. The workshops in the motor sport area are new. Tools and equipment are in good supply and meet modern standards of technology. However, there is a shortage of post ramps. Workshop practices consistently meet standard health and safety requirements, and there is good risk assessment practice. The welding workshops have an adequate range of machines and equipment. These workshops are well maintained and clean. They are run according to good housekeeping and safety procedures. There are pockets of good IT equipment within the mechanisation and motor sports department.

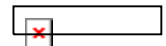
102. Insufficient planned training occurs in the workplace; there is a heavy reliance on watching and working with a supervisor or an experienced member of staff, rather than on formal, planned training. Most employers do not have a formal training plan. There are no training assignments in the workplace that are planned to increase incrementally trainees' competence. There are no written training guidance notes for methods of training in the workplace; Myerscough assessors carry out the only formal assessment of competence. There are no qualified workplace assessors. Progress

reviews are carried out regularly within the contractual period in the workplace. Although employer information packs have been introduced describing the employer's role in the training process, they are not used.

Leadership and management

103. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff meet to discuss performance against strategic objectives or targets. Formal meetings take place at programme area level, but are not affecting the operational issues. There is a staff development and appraisal system in place. There is little promotion of equal opportunities within the workshops. The programme area has had little success in actively recruiting under-represented groups. There is a gender imbalance on the current full-time courses. There is no routine monitoring of equal opportunities in work-based learning in the workplace. The management of the programme area has changed over recent months. The head of the programme area is on long-term sick leave. The current programme leader is standing in, but is also fulfilling other duties at a more senior level within the college. College managers are realistic about the provision and aware of the under-performance. The department's strategy to improve performance relates essentially to the development of the teaching skills of the staff and raising the image of the department. There are some signs that this is having an effect, but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of these strategies.

Sports studies



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

Strengths

- strong and effective management and leadership
- outstanding facilities and resources
- good teaching and coaching
- high levels of practical performance
- improved retention and improvement
- extensive range of relevant additional qualifications

- good industrial links.

Weaknesses

- no part-time or level 1 provision
- insufficient opportunities for female students
- some poor classroom management.

Scope of provision

104. The provision range is good. A sports science first diploma provides an introductory programme to courses at level 3, which are based on a common core with specialist options of golf, soccer, rugby and outdoor education. A generic sports science programme is also available for students who are not ready to specialise. Students have the choice of a good range of additional qualifications, which they value and which have credibility in the workplace. Competitive sports opportunities provide a platform to enable students to perform at the highest levels. There is no provision at level 1 or for students who can only attend part-time.

Achievement and standards

105. Student retention and pass rates on full-time programmes have improved. In 2001/02, 92% of retention and pass rate indicators were better than the most recent averages for colleges of the same type. Pass rates for the golf studies and sports science national diplomas, the Community Sports Leaders Award (CSLA) and sports science first diploma were particularly good. The retention rate on the first diploma course in sports science showed significant improvement of 35%. In the two years prior to 2001, 40% of student outcomes had failed to match national indicators.

A sample of retention and pass rates in sports studies, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Sports science first diploma	2	No. of starts	*	17	9
		% retention	*	88	78
		% pass rate	*	85	57
Pool lifeguard	2	No. of starts	*	*	13
		% retention	*	*	100
		% pass rate	*	*	69
Community sports leaders award	2	No. of starts	*	*	48
		% retention	*	*	96
		% pass rate	*	*	59

GNVQ leisure and tourism	3	No. of starts	21	28	7
		% retention	76	89	71
		% pass rate	100	75	100
Golf studies national diploma	3	No. of starts	20	38	30
		% retention	85	68	67
		% pass rate	94	88	100
Sports science national diploma	3	No. of starts	*	*	7
		% retention	*	*	71
		% pass rate	*	*	80

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

106. Teaching is good. The best teachers use a good range of techniques to engage and motivate students. These include class discussion, group discussion, and individual and group tasks. Good quality resources are available and mostly well used. Nearly all classes are well planned, progress is at a good pace and at an appropriate level. Teachers have good communication and presentation skills. Schemes of work include well-planned assignments and good reference guides. Learning and attainment in all classes are at least satisfactory. Students are attentive and enthusiastic. Students' practical competence is very good. The management of some classroom space is not good. In these cases, practical tasks are carried out in a cluttered environment and some overhead projector slides are not legible. There is also external noise disruption in some classes. In a minority of instances, teachers talk too much and students occasionally lose concentration.

107. Assessment and monitoring of learners' progress are satisfactory. Assessments are set within an agreed timeframe to reduce overload. Nearly all assignments are set at an appropriate level. Marking is moderated through a common internal verification scheme but teachers carrying out moderation are not properly trained. Standard marking sheets are used, which include supportive comments as well as helpful advice on how to improve. Marks are recorded and learning support advisers are informed about students' progress. Advisers meet formally with students at least twice a term to track progress and provide support. Learning advisers do not use the results of progress to date within the main course and additional qualifications to inform target setting. Personal improvement targets are negotiated with students to focus future learning. At college level, individual progress is monitored at review boards, where senior managers and learning support advisers review individual student progress and agree support as needed. Students have the opportunity to undertake work experience, which is voluntary and not assessed.

108. Teaching staff are experienced in their field. Some 70% of full-time and 20% of part-time staff are educated to degree level. All have appropriate coaching qualifications, many at the highest levels. Only 20% of staff are teacher trained, although 40% of full-time staff have completed year one of their qualification. In the last two years, other staff development activity has been low, although there is evidence that the recent reinforcement of appraisal is improving take up. Facilities for students are outstanding. Indoors, there is a four-court sports hall, a martial arts and yoga centre, a fitness centre containing 30 workstations and a performance laboratory. In addition, golf students can perfect their skills with the most up-to-date video and simulation equipment at the golf academy. Outside, there is a nine-hole golf course, two driving ranges, playing fields for all major outdoor sports and an all weather playing area.

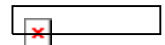
109. Very good links exist with local employers in key sports. These links facilitate work experience and provide access to part-time and full-time employment for students as well as providing opportunities for sponsorship for both students and the college. Support for students is good. On entry, students are allocated to a course leader who manages their induction. They are then

allocated to a learning support adviser who is responsible for their academic and pastoral support. Informative course handbooks are issued which enable students to understand both their course commitments and their rights and responsibilities. Early in the course, key skills are assessed and results are acted upon. Basic skills needs are not properly diagnosed. Advisers meet with tutees both in groups and on a one-to-one basis to provide academic and personal support. Topics for meetings include UCAS and careers advice. The service is highly valued by students.

Leadership and management

110. Leadership and management are good. New, dynamic and consistent leadership has enabled sound management principles to be established which benefit both students and an enthusiastic and committed staff team. A business plan has been initiated which builds on both the strategic priorities of the college and the needs of potential students. A new curriculum has been devised and was launched in 2002. Students now have access to a flexible curriculum which meets their individual needs. Currently, only 6% of the students are female. There are no strategies to ensure that the curriculum is attractive to female students. Teachers are now systematically appraised. This has enabled personal training needs and curriculum development priorities to be recognised and addressed. Teacher observation is also carried out and support offered where needed. Communication between staff has improved through attendance at weekly meetings that enable programme area activities and issues to be jointly considered and dealt with. Teachers value these changes. They are also enthusiastic to resolve additional outstanding matters. These include a need for all teachers to be teacher trained, a shortage of properly qualified internal verifiers and a more focused strategy for targeting improvement activity.

Foundation



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on some vocational qualifications
- excellent provision at the Croxteth Centre
- some good teaching in practical and theory lessons
- good collaboration with partners to meet the needs of disadvantaged students
- effective processes to provide an inclusive learning experience for students.

Weaknesses

- inadequate monitoring of basic skills on most foundation courses
- insufficient implementation of quality assurance procedures
- low attainment
- poor use of ICT in teaching and learning
- deficiencies in management of individual student learning.

Scope of provision

111. The college offers pre-entry and entry-level courses in essential skills, vocational foundation courses with an emphasis on horticulture, basic skills courses, and a bridging programme for those recovering from mental illness. Courses are offered on the main campus and at venues across Lancashire in collaboration with external agencies. This has resulted in considerable expansion, which has widened the provision for disadvantaged students and made a significant contribution to widening participation.

Achievement and standards

112. The pass rates on vocational courses are high and rising. The pass rate on the vocational foundation certificate in horticulture was 87% for 2001/02, an improvement of 39% from 2000/01. The pass rate on the work preparation skills for 2001/02 was 100%, a rise of 77% from 2000/01. The pass rate on the foundation vocational award has been 100% for each of the last three years. Retention rates are good for these courses. Pass rates on basic skills courses are low, at 16%. The development and achievement of basic skills elements are not monitored within most students' main learning programme. Students' achievement of targets is often not formally recognised. On a few courses, including the Awarding Body Consortium (ABC) essential skills course and the vocational foundation course at Croxteth, the teaching of basic skills is skilfully included within the main subjects and the achievement of progress is effectively monitored.

A sample of retention and pass rates in foundation, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Vocational foundation certificate horticulture	entry	No. of starts	*	71	70
		% retention	*	100	89
		% pass rate	*	48	87
City and Guilds basic literacy course 1 year	entry	No. of starts	*	23	33
		% retention	*	87	97
		% pass rate	*	0	16

Work preparation skills	entry	No. of starts	*	43	8
		% retention	*	81	88
		% pass rate	*	23	100
Foundation vocational award	entry	No. of starts	12	6	8
		% retention	100	67	87
		% pass rate	100	100	100

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

113. There is good teaching in many practical and theory lessons, with a well-planned variety of activities to reinforce learning and to stimulate interest. In a practical session at an outreach centre, students mucked out a yard with enthusiasm and efficiency while others completed recording a count of animals. Students' newfound confidence in their skills was enhanced by unobtrusive supervision. In another lesson, a group of students with severe learning difficulties used taste, smell, vision and touch to discover and learn about bacteria, food hygiene and its deterioration over time. They produced a simple data table that some students transformed into charts by using IT. The strategies used also promote group working, social skills and self-advocacy. The promotion of student confidence and self-esteem is an important part of the ethos of the teachers in this area of learning. Carers and external support agencies identify this as one of the strengths of the provision. The provision at the Croxteth Centre offers a high quality learning experience. The integration of the learning content and the vocational practice is virtually seamless and is valued by the students.

114. In the weaker lessons, the teaching methods used do not meet the learning needs of the students. In many classes, students are not sufficiently challenged and attainment is low. In some lessons, there is too much talking and note taking. Assessment tasks are formative, with rapid feedback to students, but there is an over-reliance on worksheets to assess students' work and the outcomes are not effectively used to inform progress reviews. The initial assessment process for basic skills is weak. The recording of achievement of basic skills on vocational courses is inadequate. Through the tutorial system, there are informal checks on student progress. However, there are deficiencies in the development and implementation of individual learning plans, which inhibit student attainment. There is good personal support for students and guidance on progression routes.

115. The college has widened participation amongst disadvantaged groups by collaborating with other agencies to increase the number of venues and range of part-time courses it offers. The success of the bridging course, with some 400 students recovering from mental illness, is one such initiative. The OPAL courses, offering the foundation programme in horticulture at venues across Lancashire, have also enabled those with learning difficulties to re-enter education. The full-time courses at the main campus offer different entry points to meet the varying needs for those with learning difficulties. However, the courses do not offer a range of options as the majority of the curriculum is focused on working in horticulture. The absence of work experience on most programmes does not prepare students adequately for progression to the workplace.

Leadership and management

116. Leadership and management of the area are satisfactory. There is a strong management commitment to widening participation and ensuring effective support processes. The quality assurance procedures are not, however, sufficiently implemented. Staff development needs are not always identified, for example, in the management of challenging behaviour. Regular communication with outreach teaching staff in informal meetings when they travel to the centre ensures that all staff feel they are supported and part of a team.

Part D: College data

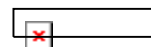
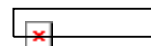


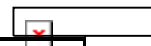
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18	19+
1	14	10
2	30	21
3	25	21
4/5	1	4
Other	30	44
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2002

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments %
science and mathematics	250	38	3
land-based provision	2,080	4,112	63
construction	26	14	1
engineering, technology and manufacture	53	16	1
business administration, management and professional	26	168	2
information and communication technology	395	610	10
retailing, customer service and transportation	0	4	0
hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	180	169	4
hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
health, social care and public services	98	212	3
visual and performing arts and media	15	113	1

humanities	6	22	0
English, languages and communication	371	85	5
foundation programmes	557	160	7
Total	4,057	5,723	100

Source: provided by the college in 2002

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001
1	Starters excluding transfers	11	566	348	8	165	173
	Retention rate	82	89	86	100	86	84
	National average	88	89	87	85	87	85
	Pass rate	89	64	71	80	53	49
	National average	63	67	70	63	66	70
2	Starters excluding transfers	275	435	565	174	385	541
	Retention rate	85	87	88	90	89	93
	National average	85	83	83	80	81	81
	Pass rate	87	71	68	83	76	67
	National average	76	76	73	69	71	69
3	Starters excluding transfers	252	330	361	168	332	433
	Retention rate	81	85	86	89	90	94
	National average	83	84	81	80	82	82
	Pass rate	71	80	78	75	38	52
	National average	80	80	80	64	63	68
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	0	27	0	55	30	19
	Retention rate	*	100	*	100	93	68
	National average	**	**	**	**	**	**
	Pass rate	*	33	*	9	52	85
	National average	**	**	**	**	**	**

colleges or sixth form colleges).

Sources of information:

1. National averages: *Benchmarking Data 1999 to 2001: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England*, Learning and Skills Council, September 2002.

2. College rates for 1999 to 2002: *College ISR*.

* too few students to provide a valid calculation

** data unavailable

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)	55	38	7	80
Level 2 (intermediate)	49	46	5	41
Level 1 (foundation)	78	11	11	9
Other sessions	60	33	7	15
Totals	55	38	7	145

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