



Cirencester College

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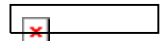
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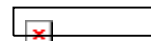
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Basic information about the college

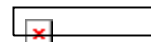


Name of college:	Cirencester College
Type of college:	Tertiary
Principal:	Nigel Robbins
Address of college:	Cirencester College Fosse Way Campus Stroud Road Cirencester G17 1XA
Telephone number:	01285 640994
Fax number:	01285 644171
Chair of governors:	D Brech
Unique reference number:	130686
Name of reporting inspector:	Cathy Morgan HMI
Dates of inspection:	22-26 April 2002

Part A: Summary



Information about the college

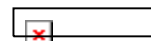


Cirencester College is a tertiary college in Gloucestershire serving the south-east Cotswolds and North Wiltshire. It opened in 1991 with 600 full-time students. At the time of the inspection, there were over 1,300 full-time and 3,800 part-time students, 90 full-time and 150 part-time teachers at the college. The south-east Cotswolds is a rural area where the unemployment rate is very low and there is little public transport. There are four other further education (FE) colleges and four 11 to 18 schools within a twenty-mile radius of the college. The proportion of school-leavers aged 16 in the area, who stay on in full-time education, is 78%.

The college is organised into four faculties; arts, business, humanities and sciences. The majority of enrolments are aged 16 to 18 and are following full-time, level 3 courses. More than one third of students are enrolled on courses in the humanities faculty. Courses are based mainly at the Fosse Way Campus. Provision for adults is expanding and takes place in community venues across the south-east Cotswolds and in the two learning centres in the town centre. Work-based training is provided by Fosse Way Training, which is managed as a programme area within the faculty of business.

In its mission statement, the college clearly states its intention to be a centre of excellence where students may achieve qualifications, progress to higher education (HE) or employment, and further their personal development.

How effective is the college?



The college is effective in providing a range of courses that meet the needs of the local community. The quality of teaching and the standards of students' achievements are outstanding in three of the ten curriculum areas inspected. They are good in three other areas and satisfactory in the remaining four. The work-based learning provision in business is satisfactory. None of the college's provision is unsatisfactory. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- high pass rates on GCE A-level courses
- high proportion of grades A to C
- outstanding provision in performing arts and media, English and modern languages and humanities

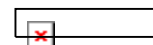
- much good teaching
- good resources to support learning
- rigorous assessment procedures
- effective monitoring of students' progress
- effective links with partners and the community
- good support for individual students
- good leadership and management.

What should be improved

- retention and pass rates on some courses
- lack of rigour in aspects of the self-assessment process
- unreliable data on retention and pass rates
- students' low take up of learning support
- inadequate monitoring of the promotion of equal opportunities.

Further aspects of provision requiring improvement are identified in the sections on individual subjects and courses in the full report.

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum areas and on the effectiveness of leadership and management in the range: Outstanding (grade 1), Good (2), Satisfactory (3), Unsatisfactory (4), Very Poor (5).

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Mathematics and science	Good. General Certificate of Education Advanced-level (GCE A-level) pass rates are high. Many students obtain high grades. Teaching of physics and electronics is good. Students are highly motivated. They acquire good practical skills in science. Assessment procedures are effective. Retention rates are low on some courses.
Business	Good. The majority of teaching is good. There are particularly high pass rates on GCE A-level business, Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) and Personnel Practice courses. Business studies is well resourced. Work-based learning is satisfactory. Pass rates on work-based learning courses are low.
Information and communication technology	Satisfactory. Teaching is good in most practical sessions. Pass rates are high on the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) information and communication technology (ICT) course. Outreach provision is effective. Learning materials for outreach courses are good. Quality assurance procedures are not carried out well. Some course planning is inadequate.
Sport, leisure and tourism	Satisfactory. There is much good teaching. Support for learners is effective. The pass rate on the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) advanced leisure and tourism course is good. The retention rates on a number of courses are low.
Art and design	Satisfactory. Pass rates are high on most courses. Students on GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and A-level courses are prepared well for their examinations. Individual students receive good support. AVCE courses are not planned well and students do not study vocational subjects in sufficient depth. Retention rates on some courses are low.
Performing arts and media	Outstanding. There are excellent pass rates across the provision. Teaching is excellent. Students are highly motivated and many progress to HE. Management of the area is effective.
Humanities	Outstanding. Pass rates are high on humanities courses and many students obtain high grades. Teaching is very good and support for individual students is excellent. There is a very wide range of full-time provision at level 3. Course management is effective.
Social science	Good. Pass rates on GCE AS and A-level courses are consistently high. Teachers give good support to individual students. There is good use of ICT in lessons. There are low retention rates on two subject courses.

English and modern languages	Outstanding. Pass rates on GCE A-level courses are excellent, with a high proportion of students gaining high grades. Teaching is very good. Lessons are carefully planned and there is effective assessment of students' work. Specialist resources are good.
Basic skills	Satisfactory. Teachers make good use of initial assessments to identify students' learning needs on adult literacy and numeracy courses. Most teaching is at least satisfactory. Some aspects of basic skills provision are not co-ordinated well.

How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are good. The college is a well-established provider of FE in a rural area. College provision has expanded considerably since the last inspection in March 1998. The college has been successful in meeting its strategic objective to widen participation through improving partnerships and extending the provision in the community. Governors and managers set a clear strategic direction for the college. The quality of provision in the curriculum areas inspected ranges from outstanding to satisfactory. Pass rates in GCE A-level subjects are above the national average for FE colleges, but retention rates are low. The college has a comprehensive quality assurance system, but this has not proved effective in identifying some weaknesses at course level.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

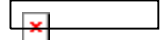
The college works in partnership with the Federation of Gloucestershire Colleges. It is particularly responsive to students from local schools wishing to study courses at level 3. The provision of adult education has grown steadily since the last inspection. Courses are provided in community venues to meet the needs of students across a wide geographical area. There is a well-established access to HE course for adults returning to learning and increasing opportunities for distance learning. Provision of level 1 and level 2 courses has been extended since the last inspection and there has been some development of work-based learning, but the numbers of learners on these and basic skills courses are low. Provision for students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. The college has good data on the gender and ethnicity of students and is well aware of the economic and social context in which it works. The college promotes equality of opportunity through its effective support for individual students, but there is not enough monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of equal opportunities policies.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

There is good support for students. Arrangements to provide information, advice and guidance to prospective students are effective. On entry to the college, all full-time and most part-time students are screened to find out whether they need any additional learning support. There is low take up of the discrete specialist support available to full-time students. Literacy and numeracy support for adult learners, work-based learners and for full-time students is satisfactory. Induction is effective

progress. Individual students receive excellent specialist support. Full-time students receive very good advice and guidance on progression to HE or employment and progression rates are good.

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

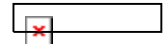
- range and flexibility of courses available
- good teaching
- approachable and supportive staff
- system for reviewing and reporting on their progress
- friendly atmosphere.

What they feel could be improved

- parking facilities
- atmosphere in the refectory
- sporting facilities
- temporary classrooms

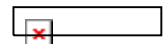
- access to computers.

Other information

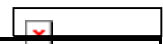


The college has two months to prepare an action plan in response to the report. It must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors must agree the plan and send copies of it to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

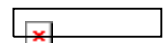


Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	64	32	4
19+ and WBL*	74	15	11
Learning 16-18	71	25	4
19+ and WBL*	82	11	7

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

* *work-based learning*

Achievement and standards



1. The college offers a wide range of GCE AS/A-level and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses mainly for students aged 16 to 18. There is a substantial range of vocational courses for adults and students aged 16 to 18. In 2000/01, 30% of all enrolments were for adults, and 80% of all students on part-time courses were adults. Of students aged 16 to 18, most enrol on level 3 courses and only 9% and 15% enrol on courses at level 2 and level 1, respectively. There is a small, but significant amount of work-based learning in the business area.

who are working towards National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and certification in key skills.

2. In the past two years, pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 have been at least 11% above the national average for general FE colleges. In 2000/01, pass rates were high at level 3 and satisfactory at all levels. At levels 1 and 2, the retention rate for students aged 19+ over the last three years has remained close to the national average. At level 3, however, retention rates have steadily declined to 11% below the national average. Most pass rates for students aged 19+ have been low. In 2000/01, only the pass rates on level 2 courses exceeded the national average. In-year retention rates for full-time students are high and have remained around 89 % for the last three years. Overall, retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 at all levels have remained below the national averages for the past three years.

3. Students on level 3 courses, in particular, develop good personal and learning skills. Students on performing arts courses acquire a great deal of knowledge of their subject and become more self-confident. English students have a good grasp of complex concepts and are developing the skills of critical evaluation and analysis through collaborative work. Students' attainments are high in lessons where teachers question students rigorously and challenge them to explore concepts in depth. In science, students have a positive and mature attitude to their work. Students on the AVCE ICT courses develop good interpersonal skills and learn how to work on their own, but those on courses at foundation and intermediate levels do not. In adult literacy and numeracy lessons, individual students' learning skills are carefully developed. On many courses, students acquire good practical skills. The standard of students' practical work is high. Work experience is not a feature of all vocational courses. On computing courses, for example, timetabling problems make it necessary for students to go on work experience placements outside term time. Most students attend regularly and are punctual. During the inspection, attendance at lessons was 81%, which is well above the national average of 76%. The separate reports on areas of learning in Part C give more detail about students' achievement and standards of work on particular courses.

16-18 year olds

4. The number of students taking GCE AS and A-level subjects has steadily increased over the last three years. The number of enrolments on two-year GCE A-level courses terminating in 2001, was 1,173. Students on the two-year GCE A-level courses were encouraged to take an extra GCE A-level subject at the start of their programme. Some then found their GCE A-level programme too demanding and either dropped a GCE A-level subject, or were entered instead for the GCE AS examination in that subject at the end of the second year. The retention rate on these courses was low, at 66%. GCE A-level pass rates were very high at 92%, which is well above the national average. The proportion of students who achieved C or above was 61% and high grades (A to C) well above the average for general FE colleges. There were 1,639 enrolments on GCE AS subjects in 2000. The retention and pass rates at 86% and 85%, respectively, compare favourably with the national average for tertiary colleges. The proportion of students who achieved grade C or above in GCE AS examinations was 54%.

5. The college has developed its own system of calculating the value added to students' achievements and this involves a comparison of the final examination results students obtain, with their attainments on joining the college. Students on advanced courses are set target grades to achieve in their final examinations and these are determined on the basis of their GCSE grades and other previous results. Their teachers then monitor the students' progress towards reaching these grades. In 2000/2001, the average points score for students who complete two years of study and take a combination of GCE A level, GCE AS and GNVQ advanced courses, was 19.5. This is above the local average of 18.4 and the national average of 17.4 and is almost one point higher than the score for students in 1999/2000.

6. The number of students enrolling on GNVQ advanced programmes has declined over three years from 154 to 79. Pass rates on GNVQ courses are at the national average. Retention rates on these programmes have steadily fallen from 82% to 63% in this period. In 2000/01, the number of students enrolling on Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) courses increased slightly to 59. On these courses, retention rates are above the averages and pass rates have remained satisfactory.

7. The number of course enrolments at level 2 is relatively low, at 383, when compared with that for enrolments at level 3. Pass rates are satisfactory, but retention rates have been below the national average for the last two years. In 2000/01, retention rates for students retaking were at the national averages, but the pass rates, at 26%, were low. About half of the students who retake a GCSE course improve their result by at least one grade. In 2000/01, there were only two GNVQ intermediate courses in business and travel and tourism. Retention rates on these courses were satisfactory, but pass rates were 20% below the national averages. In 2000/01, the retention rate on NVQ level 2 programmes in 2000/01 was good, but pass rates were low at 53% and well below the national average.

8. There are few courses at level 1. Most retention and pass rates are at, or close to, the national averages. For example, in 2000/01, the retention rate on computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) courses was 80%. The highest retention rates were on entry level programmes leading to access certificates, at 100%.

9. Retention rates on work-based learning programmes are satisfactory, but pass rates are low. Many trainees make slow progress and take a very long time to complete their programmes. In the six months prior to the inspection, the proportion of learners who achieved their NVQ and met all the requirements of their apprenticeship framework have increased significantly. Several learners are waiting for their portfolios, including evidence of their acquisition of key skills, to be externally verified.

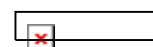
Adult learners

10. On level 1 courses, the retention rates for adult learners are consistently high but pass rates are low. In 2000/01, there were 175 students on the one-year CLAIT course. Of these, 91% completed the course, but only 16% passed. Many adults take short courses accredited by the Open College Network (OCN). Retention rates on these are high at 96% and pass rates on most are also high. Students who attend classes to improve their literacy and numeracy make adequate progress. However, very few students take basic skills courses that lead to an externally awarded qualification.

11. In 2000/01, retention and pass rates on level 2 courses were at or above the national average. The proportion of students who obtain grade C or above in the GCSE has declined to 45% and is in line with the national average. Pass rates on NVQ level 2 programmes are high at 89%. On long courses, over 24 weeks in length, the overall retention rate and the pass rates are 86% and 82%, respectively, and above the national average. There are large numbers of students on some courses. In 2001, for example, there were 273 students on the certificate in care practice course and the retention and pass rates were above national averages at 89% and 100%, respectively.

12. In the last three years, retention rates on level 3 courses have declined to well below the national average. Pass rates on level 3 courses have risen, but are still below the national average for colleges of FE. Enrolments on GCE A-level or GCE AS courses have remained low at around 100 students, for the past three years. The college offers short courses at level 3. These include the certificate in learning support, and the initial certificate in basic skills courses. The retention and pass rates on these two courses are over 80%. In 2000/01, there were only eight enrolments on the access to HE course, but the retention and pass rates were high, at 100% and 83%, respectively.

Quality of education and training



13. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 161 sessions. Teaching was at least good in 66% of these, satisfactory in 29% and less than satisfactory in 5%. Teaching was best

more than one third of teaching was judged as very good or excellent.

14. Students aged 16 to 18 studying at level 3 receive better teaching than those on courses at levels 1 and 2. The highest proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is at level 2. The few unsatisfactory lessons were spread across half the curriculum areas. Students learn most effectively on courses at level 3. In 73% of lessons, students' learning was effective and in 30% of these lessons, it was particularly effective. Literacy and numeracy provision is more effective for adults than for students aged 16 to 18.

15. Most lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives that are understood by students. Teachers have a good understanding of their subject and the majority match their teaching methods to the needs of their students. In the most successful lessons, teachers inspired their students with a variety of well-structured tasks and careful questioning. The teaching was imaginative and students were involved in a range of activities including role-play, whole-class discussions, and individual and group presentations. In all curriculum areas, teaching is closely related to examination requirements and students are shown how to work effectively on their own. Teachers make good use of ICT, particularly in social science, physics, electronics and performing arts.

16. Teachers have very good relationships with their students, encouraging them to ask questions and to seek guidance and support whenever necessary. They provide very good assistance and support to students on an individual basis. The majority of whole-class teaching, individual and group work is well managed. Teachers have high expectations of their students in terms of the standards of their work and their ability to cope with demanding tasks in lessons. The standard of students' behaviour is exceptionally high.

17. In a few instances, lessons had not been planned well and they lacked clear objectives, a sense of purpose and momentum. In these lessons, learning activities were narrow in scope. The students became bored and confused, and some became disengaged and learned little. In some lessons, including those judged to be satisfactory, students are not sufficiently challenged by the tasks set and these failed to reflect the range of their ability and interests.

18. Full-time and part-time teaching staff are well qualified and all hold a recognised teaching qualification. Information and learning technology (ILT) champions contribute effectively to staff development and the increasing range of learning resources on the college intranet is well used by staff and students. Teachers of humanities subjects have taken part in staff development activities which have focused on learning styles, matching different learning activities to students of varying abilities in the class, and devising assignments which the students run and manage themselves. They have used their training to particularly good effect in their classroom practice.

19. Specialist technicians give good support in all faculties. In science, technicians provide very effective practical support. They have established successful links with other science departments in schools and provide valuable staff development activities for them.

20. Since the last inspection, the college has significantly increased the availability of computers for students. The ratio of full-time equivalent students to computers is 5:1. The new learning resource centre, containing 45 networked computer terminals, is well used by students. Following a significant increase in the number of students on specialist computing and ICT courses, the learning resource centre has been used as a classroom. It is not a suitable venue for lessons and when classes use the centre, fewer computers are then available there for students to use on an open-access basis.

21. The college library is housed in an attractive modern building. There is a good range of resources including books, videos, CDs and DVDs. Students make good use of the individual study spaces available for private study. The careers library provides students with up-to-date materials on employment and HE. Specialist physical resources are good. Performing arts and media students have access to specialist resources of a professional standard including a community theatre complete with box office, rehearsal space and dressing rooms. Students on GCE AS and A-level music courses have access to a recording studio, multi-track recording workstations and up-to-

date electronic and traditional musical instruments. Students on modern languages courses benefit from new language booths with audio facilities where they can work on their own. Portable computers are used effectively on ICT courses that take place in community venues. In classrooms used for full-time ICT courses, there are not enough display facilities for teachers to use in demonstrating software to the whole class. Students on AVCE art and design courses are not given the resources they need to produce practical work of a realistic size and develop their understanding of concepts of scale and proportion.

22. Classrooms are decorated well with good displays of students' work and are stimulating places in which to learn. A few temporary classrooms are unsatisfactory. Their layout makes it difficult for some learning activities, such as discussion and debate, or group project work, to be carried out effectively. In these rooms, some students are unable to see the whiteboard clearly. The ventilation is also poor. Whilst most areas of the college are accessible to users of wheelchairs, the newly developed specialist accommodation for hair and beauty is not.

23. Assessment of students' work is rigorous and highly effective in all curriculum areas. Students are provided with clear details of assessment tasks, criteria for grading and their timetable of examinations. Teachers set homework regularly. Teachers mark students' work promptly, thoroughly and to awarding body criteria. Most teachers provide constructive feedback on ways in which students can improve their performance and make progress towards achieving their qualifications. Internal verification procedures are effective. In some subject areas, students' work is marked by more than one teacher with the aim of ensuring that assessment is fair and objective. In psychology, 50% of internally assessed work is marked by more than one teacher. In work-based learning, measures have been taken to assess learners in the workplace more regularly.

24. In general, the monitoring of students' progress is very effective. At regular intervals, tutors review the progress of students towards reaching target examinations grades, and they usually set the students specific targets for improving their performance. Parents of students aged 16 to 18 receive reports on their child's progress regularly and they are informed of their child's attendance record on a weekly basis. Senior tutors deal quickly and effectively with students causing concern. Teachers give students excellent academic and personal support. Teachers make themselves available to individual students on a daily basis. Students and their parents are greatly appreciative of the help and support.

25. The college offers students aged 16 to 18 a wide choice of both general education and vocational courses, and progression routes from these. Good transport arrangements have been made for students who live in rural areas not well served by public transport. The college offers a vocational access course at level 1 accredited by the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The range of vocational courses at level 2 has widened since the last inspection. There are still few courses at levels 1 and 2 for full-time students. Following a recent analysis of local needs, carried out with its partner schools, the college is recruiting students to a general education course called 'Springboard' from September 2002. The college is also introducing pre-entry and entry level courses from the same date, to lead to the new basic skills and essential skills awards.

26. The provision of courses for adults has grown since the last inspection and a range of part-time general education, vocational and recreational courses are now available at more than 60 venues in the community. There is good provision for adults with learning difficulties. Partnerships with local agencies, schools and businesses have improved and grown since the introduction of the college community learning team. In conjunction with some of its partners, the college has launched initiatives to widen participation and extend the provision of basic skills and ICT courses to employers' premises and community venues. There are effective arrangements for learners working in residential care organisations to undertake courses by distance learning. There are low numbers of adults on basic skills courses in literacy and numeracy and they make slow progress towards having their learning accredited. There is insufficient evening provision in English, mathematics and the sciences to meet local demand.

27. Publicity and promotional materials are good. They include CD-ROMs and course booklets informing potential students in local schools and the wider community of what the college has to offer. Information leaflets are readily available in student services, the college library and in a variety

of locations in the community. The adult education brochure is updated termly and distributed widely.

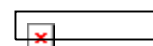
28. Potential students receive good initial advice and guidance. The adult guidance teams in student services are well organised and give prospective students comprehensive and impartial advice on the college's provision. Links with schools are effective and the combination of open evenings and taster days provides pupils with a good level of understanding of the course content and entry requirements.

29. Induction is informative and introduces students to sources of further support within the college. The welfare and personal support is well managed. The service is particularly responsive to students' needs, and provides a wide range of confidential advice and personal counselling. Staff have developed good links with relevant external services.

30. The tutorial system for full-time students is well managed and structured effectively. Personal tutors have a very good understanding of their role in providing students with comprehensive support and guidance throughout their course. There is strong emphasis on the importance of providing academic and personal support for students through group and individual tutorials. Through their frequent and planned links with subject teachers, personal tutors obtain detailed information on students' progress. In their tutorial sessions, priority is given to ensuring that advanced level students receive advice on careers and, in particular, HE.

31. A systematic process for interviews helps staff to identify new students' support needs, often well in advance of enrolment. All full-time and most part-time students undertake an assessment in literacy on entry to their course. This assessment is marked promptly and thoroughly, providing an efficient and effective procedure for identifying students with dyslexia. There is good take-up of additional support by dyslexic students and those with physical difficulties. The college does all it can to help these students and it obtains special equipment and services for them. Further screening of students takes place through key skills assessments for information technology (IT), literacy and application of number. Students who are identified through this process as having weaknesses in key skills are referred to the student academic support staff. The college has recognised that many students are reluctant to take up the offer of literacy and numeracy support and the numbers of those who do so are low. Each faculty now provides learning support workshops where students can receive help with literacy and numeracy. There is insufficient monitoring of the effectiveness of arrangements for providing students with learning support. The teaching of key skills is organised and co-ordinated effectively and many students obtain key skills certification at levels 2 and 3. Trainees on work-based learning programmes receive a great deal of personal support.

Leadership and management



32. Leadership and management across the college are good. Good progress has been made in rectifying most of the weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection. Pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 on level 3 programmes have continued to rise and the proportion of those achieving grade C or above remains significantly above the national average. Low retention rates in some subjects and the low number of students in receipt of specialist learning support remain weaknesses despite concerted action by the college to identify ways to remedy them.

33. Governance of the college is good. Governors and managers set a clear direction for the college. The college's mission and strategic objectives are expressed clearly, communicated well and are shared by staff. The governors contribute to the strategic planning process, are well informed, and have significant involvement in the development of the mission statement. Governors are self-critical and carry out effective self-assessment and review of their performance.

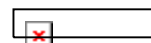
34. The annual planning and review cycle enables governors, managers and staff to play an appropriate part in planning the college's development. The principal's annual report celebrates the success of all students, and parents and the college's partners value the college annual award ceremonies for all learners. Financial management is good and resources are deployed efficiently. Staff appraisal is carried out annually. There is a lesson observation scheme and the findings from this are taken into account when appraising teachers. The college has a good staff development programme. The curriculum is managed effectively in science and mathematics; English and modern languages; performing arts and media; humanities; and adult literacy and numeracy.

35. The quality system has clearly written procedures and has been effective in identifying ways in which the college's provision can be improved. Staff understand the annual cycle of quality assurance activity and this is carried out at all levels in the college. The self-assessment process is well established. It is a key part of the quality assurance process. Action plans are drawn up for the improvement of provision and progress in implementing these is reviewed every term. Heads of faculty carry out course reviews; some are more thorough than others. Self-assessment reports for individual courses are aggregated into a self-assessment report for each faculty. Most course teams are fully involved in the self-assessment process and make good use of students' and parents' opinions on the quality of provision. All teachers are observed in the classroom and their teaching is evaluated and graded. Overall, the grades awarded by the college match those given by the inspectors. Some course and faculty self-assessment reports, however, are insufficiently evaluative. Inspectors found weaknesses in provision which were not identified in the reports. Some of the action recommended in the reports is imprecise. Its intended outcomes are too vague to enable managers to ascertain whether or not the action has proved successful. There has been no external validation of the self-assessment report.

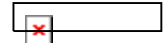
36. The data produced by the college management information system are not reliable. In many cases, data held centrally do not match that held by course teams. A great deal of the individualised student return (ISR) data for 1998/99 was found to be unreliable and could not be included in the tables in section C of this report. Without accurate data, college managers have not been able to make valid judgements about students' performance in general and retention and pass rates in particular.

37. Managers aim to ensure that equality of opportunity is promoted through every aspect of the college's work. The college equal opportunities policy is updated on an annual basis and includes reference to the student charter and policies on disability and a recently included race relations policy. The policy does not refer to current legislation nor bullying and harassment in any detail. There are no clear guidelines in how the policy is to be put into effect or how its effectiveness is to be monitored. The college maintains data on the ethnicity and gender of students. In some curriculum areas, retention and pass rates are broken down and categorised in terms of students' gender and ethnicity. Information is also collected on students who have disabilities. The college is beginning to monitor the progress and achievements of students from particular groups. There are clear measures for responding to students' appeals and complaints, which are dealt with by senior managers and reported to governors. Staff have received little to update them on equal opportunities issues. There are good examples of the promotion of equal opportunities in the classroom in some curriculum areas such as modern languages, art and design and social sciences. Students understand their rights and responsibilities that are clearly outlined in the student charter. An equality and diversity group has recently been reformed and staff from across the college are represented on this. This group has appropriate terms of reference and aims to monitor the implementation of the equal opportunities policy.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Mathematics and science



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

Strengths

- high GCE A-level pass rates
- highly effective teaching of physics and electronics
- students' good practical science skills
- good assessment procedures
- highly effective technician support.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates
- narrow range of provision at level 2 in mathematics
- insufficient provision of formal additional learning support for students.

Scope of provision

38. The college offers GCE AS/A-level biology, chemistry, physics, electronics, mathematics and further mathematics courses. The courses are popular. For example, in 2001, there were more than 300 enrolments. Students on the one-year GCE A-level mathematics course can progress to further mathematics in their second year. Most mathematics and science students are aged 16 to 18, but a few adult students enrol on daytime courses. At level 2, the college offers GCSE mathematics and human physiology and health courses. Over 100 students start a GCSE mathematics course each year. There is only one evening course on GCSE mathematics, and this attracts only a very small number of adult students. The college offers a few mathematics and science studies courses that

do not lead to qualifications.

Achievement and standards

39. Pass rates in GCE A-level mathematics and science courses are consistently well above the national average. Over the last two years, the proportions of GCE A-level science and mathematics students who have achieved grade C or above have been 70% and 63%, respectively, well above the national average. Eleven out of thirteen students who took GCE A-level further mathematics in 2000 passed, most at the higher grades. Retention rates in both mathematics and physics declined in 2001, to around 10% below the national average. The retention rate in further mathematics has remained high, but over the last two years biology retention rates have been below the national average. Retention rates for the new GCE AS courses in science subjects were just below the college's average for GCE AS subjects. Pass rates on the GCE AS courses were high at almost 90% and approximately half of the passes were at grade C or above. In mathematics, for example, the pass rate was 76%, and 45% of passes were at grade C or above. Pass rates in GCSE human physiology and health are consistently above national averages. In 2001, the pass rate in GCSE mathematics fell below the national average.

40. Most students attend regularly and are punctual. Students have a positive and mature attitude to their studies. The standard of students' written work is high. In practical science, students present results clearly and make good use of ICT. Students demonstrate good presentational skills when assessed in practical exercises.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE human physiology and health	2	No. of starts	11	18	11
		% retention	73	50	100
		% pass rate	50	56	45
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	104	121	113
		% retention	83	79	73
		% pass rate	31	35	32
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	*	45	68
		% retention	*	60	60
		% pass rate	*	96	100
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	*	31	36
		% retention	*	71	72
		% pass rate	*	100	92
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	*	42	44
		% retention	*	76	66
		% pass rate	*	100	90
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	*	88	91
		% retention	*	82	64
		% pass rate	*	92	86

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

*data unreliable

Quality of education and training

41. Most teaching of science and mathematics is good. In science, well over half of the teaching is at least good, and some lessons are very good. Teachers of electronics and physics motivated the students to work hard and inspired them to give of their best. In electronics, teachers used appropriate software to simulate the circuits that students build and comment critically on the results of students' experiments. In revision lessons on physics courses, students were required to carry out experiments involving the use of CD-ROMs in order to build upon their earlier work. Students routinely use both computers and graphical calculators to interpret results. Safety procedures are carefully followed when students handle radioactive sources. In chemistry and biology, students clearly enjoy their practical work. Most have developed high levels of skill and can, for example, set up a potometer. Students plan experiments, such as the dissolution of sodium thiosulphate in water, very carefully. Teachers give students careful guidance in practical sessions and ensure that they are given demanding work that challenges them to use their skills to the full. In theory lessons, however, this is not always the case. In a chemistry lesson on electrode potentials, for example, the work the teacher gave the class was not demanding enough for the most able students. Insufficient use is made of ICT in the teaching of biology, chemistry and mathematics. Schemes of work cover the content of individual courses adequately, but give little detail on teaching methods or how available equipment is to be used. Mathematics teaching is mainly satisfactory, and some mathematics lessons are good. Teachers introduce new principles and techniques effectively, which students then practise in the classroom. Worksheets are well written and most assignments are demanding. In the better lessons, teachers make good use of overhead projectors. For example, they use them to illustrate new ideas, how to use a graphical calculator, or the movement of shapes on graph paper.

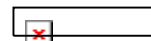
42. The assessment of students' work is very thorough. Regular tests cover the required subject content. Where appropriate, they take the form of demanding experiments which students carry out as part of their practical assessment. Teachers keep a detailed record of students' marks. Biology teachers review all students' notes, correcting or adding comments if necessary. Teachers of mathematics and science mark students' homework carefully. They make useful annotations on students' work to indicate ways in which it may be improved. The college provides good support for students aspiring to HE, particularly those considering medical or paramedical careers. Additional, course-specific help is available to students on electronics and physics courses, but there is insufficient additional support for students who struggle with mathematics or science subjects. GCSE mathematics does not meet the requirements of many students, but the college has not yet found a suitable alternative course at level 2.

43. Staff are well qualified and suitably experienced. Technicians provide very effective practical support and have established good links with science departments in schools. Science laboratories serve their purpose, but some of the equipment in them is out of date. Working practices were safe in the lessons inspected, but no risk assessments for practical work in science have been carried out.

Leadership and management

44. The management of the provision is good. Team meetings are held regularly and are well organised. The science team includes teachers and technicians. Although pass rate data, course reviews and equal opportunities practice are thoroughly monitored, there is little documented evidence of any planned action. Students on physics and electronics courses benefit from a wide range of learning materials in the form of IT software. In contrast, there is little comparable software available to students on biology, chemistry and mathematics courses. Although students' performance, the effectiveness of courses, and the promotion of equal opportunities are monitored thoroughly, there are no written action plans for their improvement.

Business



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

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on some courses
- high retention rates on the AVCE business course
- well-planned lessons
- acquisition of good key skills by students on level 2 business courses
- good support for individual students.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on GCE A-level business studies
- failure of many modern apprentices to complete their programmes successfully
- insufficiently demanding tasks for students in some lessons.

Scope of provision

45. The curriculum in business is varied and includes a GNVQ course in business at intermediate level, the certificate and the diploma course in secretarial and administrative procedures, GCE AS/A-level courses in business studies and accounts, and courses leading to part, single and double awards in the AVCE in business. For part-time students, there are a range of professional and management programmes including the AAT courses at three levels; those leading to the Certificate and Advanced Certificate of the Chartered Institute of Marketing Foundation; the Institute of Personnel and Development (IPD) Certificate in Personnel Practice; and BTEC courses in management studies. There are work-based learning courses for foundation and modern apprentices, leading to NVQs in business administration.

Achievement and standards

46. Pass rates on the GCE A-level business, AAT and personnel practice courses are high and have been above the national average for the last three years. Retention rates on most courses are high. The retention rate on the GCE A level and the intermediate GNVQ courses, however, has been low for the last two years. The college has taken action to improve retention rates, and in-year retention rates on GCE AS and AVCE business courses have risen significantly this year. Retention rates on work-based training programmes are high, but many trainees make slow progress and fail to carry out their learning plan in full within the agreed timescale. Pass rates on work-based training programmes are low. Since 1998, only 4 trainees have successfully completed the modern apprenticeship framework, out of the 26 who have left the programme. In the last six months, however, many of the trainees remaining on the programme have completed, or are about to complete, work for their NVQ and certification in key skills.

47. Students produce written work of a high standard. Teachers give priority to helping students develop their key skills. GNVQ intermediate students make good progress in key skills sessions, which are organised effectively and well planned.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ intermediate in business	2	No. of starts	12	14	39
		% retention	67	86	72
		% pass rate	100	83	50
GCE A-level business studies	3	No. of starts	*	*	98
		% retention	*	*	54
		% pass rate	*	*	92
GNVQ advanced /AVCE in business	3	No. of starts	*	*	23
		% retention	*	*	100
		% pass rate	*	*	78
NVQ in accounting	3	No. of starts	14	29	12
		% retention	86	83	83
		% pass rate	50	71	80
IPD certificate in personnel practice	3	No. of starts	13	11	7
		% retention	100	100	71
		% pass rate	92	100	100

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

*data unreliable

Quality of education and training

48. Most teaching is good. Teachers plan lessons well and there are thorough and detailed schemes of work for most courses. Learning activities are organised effectively and are designed to be carried out by students working on their own, in pairs, or as a group. In lessons, teachers use a variety of appropriate methods to strengthen students' learning. For example, they keep everyone in the class alert by asking questions and then naming individuals to answer them. In an effective GCE A-level lesson on marketing, students considered a topical case study that involved the re-branding

of a well-known chocolate bar. The teacher was very enthusiastic and used a wide range of techniques to motivate students who worked well in small groups. Previous learning about mind maps was cleverly made an integral part of the lesson. During an intermediate GNVQ lesson, students were absorbed in a task that required them to design posters incorporating logos in current use by retailers. The students produced exceptionally imaginative and creative work. In less successful lessons, teachers often fail to provide tasks that challenge and extend the capabilities of the most able learners. Some students had little to say in class discussions and have yet to extend their knowledge through reading, and develop the skills of evaluation and research needed at this level. In a GCE AS lesson, students carried out a well-designed activity analysing press coverage of the recent budget. They only looked at articles in the tabloid press, however, and did not raise the level of their discussion and extend their understanding by comparing these with more sophisticated articles taken from broadsheet newspapers.

49. Teachers are well qualified and suitably experienced. Students taking GCE AS/A-level courses are well prepared by their teachers for public examinations. Most students for example, attended a very effective revision course led by a chief examiner for GCE A-level business studies. Most teaching rooms and other physical resources are good. Visual aids, handouts, task sheets, case studies and learning materials are produced to a high professional standard.

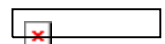
50. Teachers provide good support for individual students. Learners speak highly of the additional help they receive. Procedures for identifying and meeting students' needs for additional learning support are effective. Some teaching of numeracy, however, is poor.

51. Work-based trainees receive an effective induction and are visited every two weeks in the workplace by an assessor. Their portfolios contain a good range of evidence of their acquisition of competences. Reviews of their progress are carried out frequently and employers are usually involved in these. Off-the-job training takes place at the college, but only during term time. On-the-job and off-the-job training are poorly co-ordinated.

Leadership and management

52. Business courses are well managed. Within the faculty of business, course teams are cohesive and effective and they clearly understand and support a common strategic direction. Managers consult staff before making decisions. Staff at all levels work well together. All members of staff contribute to the writing of the self-assessment report and there is a shared understanding of major strengths, weaknesses and priorities. The management of work-based learning is satisfactory. Good assessment processes and procedures have been developed recently and external verifiers' reports on assessment of work-based learning are positive.

Information and communication technology



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on the AVCE ICT course

- good teaching in practical lessons

- excellent learning materials for part-time courses
- effective outreach provision.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GCE A-level and CLAIT courses
- inadequate planning of the GNVQ intermediate ICT course
- insufficient specialist resources on some courses
- ineffective quality assurance procedures.

Scope of provision

53. The college offers a wide range of ICT and computing programmes. In September 2000, new full-time courses in AVCE IT, GCE AS ICT and computing were introduced. In September 2001, provision was further extended by the introduction of courses leading to the GNVQ at intermediate level, and foundation part-awards in ICT. Part-time courses include those leading to the award of the European computer driving licence (ECDL) and qualifications in Internet technologies awarded by the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations Board (OCR). The number of full-time and part-time students taking computing and ICT courses has increased significantly in recent years. The college has continued to expand its outreach provision and adult students can work towards qualifications throughout the year. The college provision includes introductory ICT taster courses and OCN qualifications.

Achievement and standards

54. Most retention rates on the ICT and computing courses are satisfactory and are in line with the national average for FE colleges. The pass rate on the AVCE ICT course is very high and well above the national average. In 2001, pass rates on GCE A-level computing and CLAIT courses were low at 50% and 26%, respectively, and well below the national average.

55. Many students progress to HE courses or relevant employment. All students, who completed the AVCE ICT course in 2000/01, for example, gained employment. Many of the students who study at the outreach centres progress to other courses at the main college site, and work towards further qualifications.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
CLAIT	1	No. of starts	278	370	238
		% retention	81	82	88
		% pass rate	48	39	26
OCN IT	1	No. of starts	23	89	287
		% retention	100	97	95
		% pass rate	61	44	66
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	*	33	31
		% retention	*	64	65
		% pass rate	*	81	50
AVCE ICT	3	No. of starts	*	*	18
		% retention	*	*	83
		% pass rate	*	*	93

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

*data unreliable

Quality of education and training

56. Most teaching is good. Some teaching in practical sessions is very good. The quality of lesson planning and preparation is not consistent across the provision. The best lessons are well planned. In these, students are given well-designed learning materials and a variety of appropriate activities that gain their interest and help them to develop requisite skills. In these lessons, students are encouraged to exercise initiative in their learning and work on their own. Most produce work of a high standard. In one AVCE ICT lesson, students worked independently on one of three different units. The teacher demonstrated substantial knowledge of the subject and was highly effective in managing a diverse range of activities. Students spoke confidently and articulately about their project work, which was of a high standard. In another successful AVCE ICT lesson, a well-planned practical exercise enabled students to configure networks from component parts. The teacher linked the learning effectively to a previous theory session and, by doing so, enabled the students to acquire a thorough understanding of installation practice.

57. Teaching for adult students at the outreach centres is very good. Teachers plan and prepare their lessons thoroughly. Students are given clear learning objectives for each lesson, excellent learning materials and well-structured exercises. The written feedback students receive on their assignments and coursework is comprehensive and constructive. The teachers' comments provide students with a clear explanation of what they need to do to improve their performance.

58. The less successful lessons are inadequately prepared. In these lessons, teachers use methods that fail to meet the learning needs of all students. In one GNVQ intermediate practical lesson, for example, the students' attitude to both the lesson and their learning was casual. The lesson lacked structure. The task the students were set did not engage their interest and it was too easy for them. By the end of lesson the students had made little progress. In another GNVQ intermediate lesson, students were required to complete a programming assignment in a theory room that was unsuitable for such an activity. The learning materials provided were poor. The more able students completed the task quickly, but were not given any additional exercises. Other students found it difficult, didn't know how to proceed, and spent much of the lesson doing nothing.

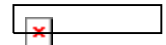
59. There have been significant changes in staffing in this area of the college. New staff have been appointed recently to meet the needs of the large number of students recruited on to new courses.

Teachers are appropriately qualified and suitably experienced. In the majority of lessons, teachers have a good rapport with students and are mainly helpful, friendly and constructive in their feedback to them on their work. Teachers give good support to students outside lessons. The growth in full-time student numbers has not been matched by a corresponding increase in specialist ICT resources. Computing and ICT students do not have sufficient access to ICT equipment and software during, and outside, their lessons. On some courses, there are few or no facilities and resources to enable teachers to demonstrate ICT skills and processes to the whole class. Effective use is made of portable ICT equipment by teachers in the community who travel between local village community centres and libraries.

Leadership and management

60. The management of ICT and computing is satisfactory. Staff teams work well together and hold meetings regularly. Minutes of meetings are carefully recorded and circulated. Through the growth of adult courses in the community, the college is fulfilling its commitment to widen participation. The quality assurance procedures lack rigour. When producing evidence for the self-assessment report, staff teams were not required to evaluate their effectiveness in meeting targets. The team's self-assessment report identified most of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision found by inspectors, but failed to identify the low pass rates on CLAIT courses, and the lack of effective strategies to ensure the learning needs of intermediate students are met.

Sport, leisure and tourism



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

Strengths

- good teaching
- high pass rate on GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism course
- effective support for individual students.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates for GCE A-level physical education
- low retention rates
- inadequate access to ICT facilities.

Scope of provision

61. The college offers a range of leisure, tourism and sport courses. The provision includes GCE AS/A-level physical education, BTEC national diploma applied science (sports studies), AVCE leisure and recreation and travel and tourism, GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism and NVQ level 1 sport and recreation courses. Most of the 150 students are full time and aged 16 to 18. The college has an established and successful football academy. The academy attracts both male and female students who undertake football coaching and training while continuing their studies, and the college timetable makes it possible for them to do this. Students are offered a range of additional programmes, including those leading to the Resort Representative Certificate, Community Sports Leaders Award and Association of British Travel Agents Certificate (ABTAC).

Achievement and standards

62. Pass rates have been consistently high on the GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism programme. They are also high on the recently introduced AVCE travel and tourism and leisure and recreation courses. Retention and pass rates are low on a number of other programmes. The retention rate on the GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism course has remained below the national average for the last two years. The pass rate on GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism course has declined over the last three years, and the retention and pass rates on the GCE A-level physical education course have fallen well below the national average for FE colleges. On some courses offered in 2000, such as the Football Association coaching course, and those leading to an NVQ in sport and recreation at level 2, no student achieved a qualification.

63. The college has stipulated entry requirements for courses. These are applied rigorously in respect of applicants for to GCE AS/A-level courses, but not always in the case of those who wish to follow courses at levels 1 and 2. Students attend the vocational parts of their programme regularly and they are punctual. The average attendance rate on courses is 87%, which is 10% above the national average. Attendance at key skills lessons, however, is poor. Many students develop good personal and study skills. These were demonstrated by a group of AVCE students who have planned a trip to Malta as part of their travel and tourism programme.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	24	17	17
		% retention	63	82	71
		% pass rate	93	86	50
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism	3	No. of starts	27	17	14
		% retention	74	53	64
		% pass rate	100	100	89
GCE A-level physical education	3	No. of starts	33	50	40
		% retention	67	70	58
		% pass rate	86	77	65
		% pass rate	*	*	61
National diploma sports studies	3	No. of starts	*	10	18
		% retention	*	80	78
		% pass rate	*	50	79

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

**data unreliable*

Quality of education and training

64. Teaching is good. Most lessons were at least good. In the best lessons, the teachers gave the students demanding tasks which held their interest and challenged them to use all their skills to the full. In one lesson for example, students analysed a digital video clip of their own sprinting performance against that of an elite athlete. Teachers use a variety of appropriate teaching styles. They give praise to students, when it was justified, in order to encourage them. Teaching of practical subjects is well planned and proper attention is paid to health and safety issues. Teachers are fully aware of the anxieties and needs of individual students and they are particularly careful to ensure that classroom activities do not cause any student to feel embarrassed or vulnerable. For example, they direct activities such as role-play and group discussion with sensitivity to ensure that all students respect one another's views and values. In the less effective lessons, teachers failed to hold the students' attention, time management was poor and students lost interest in the tasks allocated to them.

65. The assessment of students' work is effective and is carried out regularly. Assignments aim to help students to meet the objectives set out in the course specifications. Students are given clear deadlines for the completion of work for assessment. Assessment decisions are moderated through a well-organised internal verification system for which there are clearly written procedures. The feedback students receive on their written work is useful, and provides them with advice on how they may improve it. Comments from the external moderators on assessment and verification processes are positive. At the beginning of their course, students are set a minimum grade to achieve in their final examination. During the programme, teachers set students challenging targets and review their overall progress regularly. Parents of students aged 16 to 18 are informed of the target grades their child has been set to achieve in his or her final examination and they are informed of the findings from their child's progress reviews. Teachers respond quickly to students' problems, such as the failure to meet deadlines regularly or for the completion of work. Teachers maintain close links with parents, which helps to strengthen the support for individual students. Teachers are aware of, and sensitive to, students' specific learning needs and make allowances for these in lessons. Students value the support that teachers give them both in and outside lessons and they view teachers as friendly, approachable and supportive. In one instance, a student was absent from college because of a lengthy illness, and was visited by a teacher both at home and in hospital.

66. The courses are well designed and many involve activities that the students enjoy and find stimulating. Travel and tourism students take part in overseas trips regularly and NVQ sports and recreation students provide football coaching for children in local schools. Courses are timetabled carefully to ensure that students can continue vocational and GCE AS and A-level courses.

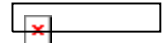
67. Teachers are well qualified and have relevant industrial experience. The football academy is managed by an ex-professional footballer and a manager from a large travel company is a part-time teacher on travel and tourism programmes. Full-time teachers benefit from training events at which they are able to update their professional knowledge and skills. Many students find it difficult to gain access to a computer outside lessons. Sports facilities at the college are not extensive. There are two football pitches, a gym and a small range of fitness equipment that is also used for testing purposes in practical laboratory conditions. To supplement what the college has to offer, students use sports facilities in the local community, but they cannot always get to these easily.

Leadership and management

68. Communications within the teaching teams are good. Part-time staff are given effective help and support. Course teams hold regular meetings and part-time teachers are kept informed of issues discussed. However, many team meetings are not formally minuted. Good practice is not shared

across faculty boundaries. There is considerable variance in the quality of schemes of work, some of which are insufficiently detailed. Course teams monitor progress towards achieving agreed targets through course reviews. Quality assurance arrangements have not been fully effective and problems relating to low retention and pass rates on some courses have not been resolved. The teams plan to broaden provision to meet a wider range of students' needs.

Art and design



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

Strengths

- high pass rates
- effective support for individual students
- effective examination preparation on most GCE AS/A-level courses
- good development of students' skills of working independently.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on some courses
- some unsatisfactory teaching
- poor planning of AVCE art and design course.

Scope of provision

69. The college offers a range of level 3 courses, including GCE AS and A level in art and design, design and technology, photography, textiles, art history and on AVCE course in art and design. There are approximately 300 full-time students on these courses. At intermediate and foundation level, the range of courses is narrower. The only GCSE course offered is photography and there are some 250 part-time adult students on a range of OCN accredited courses.

Achievement and standards

70. Pass rates for most courses are good. The pass rates in GCE A-level art and GCE A-level design and technology are consistently above the national average. In 2001, the pass rate in GCE A-level art was 100% and all students who completed the GNVQ course in advanced art and design obtained the qualification. Retention rates on some courses are low. Over the last two years, retention rates in the GCE A-level design and technology have fallen from 63% to 56%, which is well below the national average. The college acknowledges the problem over the retention rates and is to introduce a graphics option for the course in an attempt to meet needs of students more effectively.

71. Some of the students' visually expressive work is good, but it is not of a high standard across all courses. Coursework produced by design and technology students is innovative and highly professional. Students kept to the design brief and the design sheets were detailed and well presented. On a few courses, students' work is underdeveloped and repetitive. The range of media and techniques used by students is narrow. In their work, students derive too many images from magazines and carry out little drawing from observation.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level art/fine art	3	No. of starts	*	*	54
		% retention	*	*	74
		% pass rate	*	*	100
GCE A-level design and technology	3	No. of starts	*	43	48
		% retention	*	63	56
		% pass rate	*	96	96
GNVQ advanced in art and design	3	No. of starts	*	18	18
		% retention	*	89	67
		% pass rate	*	88	100

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

*data unreliable

Quality of education and training

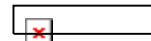
72. Most teaching at least is satisfactory. In the most successful lessons, students' practical work demonstrates clear contextual links and well-developed critical analysis. Students are articulate when talking about their work and make good evaluative judgements. There is a good rapport between students and teaching staff. In a good photography lesson, the teacher showed great sensitivity when helping students of wide-ranging abilities and ages. The teacher kept the momentum of the lesson going successfully whilst reviewing each student's progress. Students are prepared effectively for most GCE AS/A-level examinations. Design students for example, are required to exhibit their coursework at a parents' evening, well in advance of the examination deadline. They then have time to reflect on their work and decide how they can improve it. Together, all the students in the class then decide which is the best work in the display and they identify its particular merits. Some teaching fails to sufficiently challenge students and too high a proportion is unsatisfactory. In these lessons, learning outcomes are unclear and students are not sufficiently challenged. Teachers provide feedback to students that is usually detailed. In the best feedback, students are given clear guidelines on how to improve their work.

73. Teachers are well qualified and most are teacher trained. Some have relevant industrial and commercial experience. All teachers take part regularly in staff development and training activities. At the start of their courses, students are given target grades to achieve in their final examination. The relevance of the grades is clearly understood by students. Students' progress is reviewed regularly and recorded carefully. Tutorials are effective and include good careers action planning. Students on art and design courses make good use of computers equipped with design software. Technician support for students and teachers is good. The specialist accommodation for GCE AS/A-level art, textiles and design courses is well equipped. GCE AS photography is taught in a well-equipped darkroom. The AVCE course, however, is based in inadequate temporary accommodation. There is no room for students to produce work, particularly of a three-dimensional nature, which is large in scope and size. Studios are made available for students who need more work time. Teachers make themselves readily available to give students additional help and support.

Leadership and management

74. There is a good team spirit in the department and much constructive sharing of ideas among staff. There is, however, insufficient sharing of good practice in teaching. Courses are well managed and course logs show that any problems are resolved promptly. Retention and pass rates are reviewed regularly. The team leader manages internal communications effectively. The course teams meet weekly and more formally to carry out course reviews. The self-assessment report was detailed, but did not cover the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of learning in enough depth. The timetabling of the AVCE course is poor. Students are severely disadvantaged by not having any timetabled lessons in the specialist photography, ceramics or printing studios.

Performing arts and media



Overall provision in this area is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- excellent pass rates
- very good teaching
- effective assessment of students' performance
- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on dance courses.

Scope of provision

75. The college offers a broad range of full-time level 3 courses in performing arts, media, film, theatre, dance, music and music technology. Students speak positively about the provision and that it meets their needs and often exceeds their expectations. There are a few part-time courses in the use of specialist design software, such as Photoshop, Dreamweaver, Quark Xpress and Video for both professional and recreational purposes.

Achievement and standards

76. Pass rates on all courses are excellent and consistently above the national average. The retention rate is rising on the majority of courses, but remains low on dance courses. Group sizes are small for GCE AS and A-level music, GCE A-level dance and the Photoshop evening course. Many students achieve standards that are higher than those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE results. Students gain excellent skills in the use of specialist technology. The standard of work in practical classes is high and students demonstrate confidence in themselves and in their performance. Many students progress to courses in HE. Many enrichment activities are available, including visiting theatre productions, drama productions and external visits.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level media	3	No. of starts	*	44	57
		% retention	*	61	72
		% pass rate	*	96	98
GCE A-level music	3	No. of starts	*	12	10
		% retention	*	67	80
		% pass rate	*	100	100
GCE A-level theatre studies	3	No. of starts	*	30	32
		% retention	*	80	72
		% pass rate	*	87	96
National diploma media	3	No. of starts	*	15	20
		% retention	*	67	75
		% pass rate	*	80	93

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

*data unreliable

Quality of education and training

77. Much of the teaching is excellent. Lessons are well planned. Teachers use a range of appropriate methods to help students, individually and in groups, to learn effectively. Teachers provide students with good handouts to stimulate discussion. They make effective use of technology to record students' analytical debate. In lessons, teachers use slides and video and other learning aids skilfully, to hold the students' attention. In some lessons, theory and practice are both covered effectively and the students produce work of a high standard. In the majority of lessons, teachers ensure students are effectively warmed up both literally and metaphorically, in body, voice and

spirit.

78. One particularly successful lesson on a theatre studies course was well prepared. In this lesson, the students enthusiastically created tableaux presentations that explored drama styles from different periods. The students asked intelligent questions and gained a greater understanding of the plays of Brecht.

79. In a successful music lesson the teacher used a well-prepared range of resources to enable students to explore the effect of different instruments and rhythms. Careful questioning of students by the teacher prompted keen and intelligent discussion between attentive and knowledgeable students on issues such as the comparatively limited melody range of the trumpet.

80. Students are highly motivated and achieve the high standards expected of them by their teachers. Teachers aim to ensure they respond to the needs of all students of all abilities. In lessons, teachers promote discussion relating to the promotion of equal opportunities and minority groups. Students who are users of wheelchairs are given a great deal of help and support on performance courses and one has gained a place in HE.

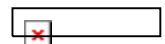
81. Assessments of students are carried out regularly and informative written feedback is provided to them on their performance. The progress of students is reviewed regularly. Students develop action plans in tutorial periods and make appointments with their teachers to discuss these. Reports from external verifiers confirm the rigour and effectiveness of the assessment process.

82. All staff are well qualified, and are trained teachers. Many have worked or are still practising in the performing arts industry. A programme of staff development aims to enable teachers to remain up-to-date in their field and, where appropriate, gain further qualifications. There is good technician support in media, performance and music. Accommodation is good and all areas are accessible to users of wheelchairs. The theatre area is fitted with retractable seating, lighting and with its ancillary rooms, it can be used flexibly for teaching and public performance. Media courses are based in a purpose-built block where the specialist resources are excellent. There is no soundproofing, however, in the music practice rooms, gym or theatre area.

Leadership and management

83. The area is well led and ably managed. Course documentation includes informative minutes of management and course meetings, responses to questionnaires about the quality of provision, and self-assessment reports. Course teams have effective procedures for planning lessons, monitoring and recording students' progress, and internal verification of assessment. Part-time staff play a full part in the work of course teams and are involved in the quality assurance processes.

Humanities



Overall provision in this area is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- high pass rates
- very good teaching

- excellent support for individual students
- broad range of full-time provision at level 3
- effective course management.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on GCE A-level history and politics courses.

Scope of provision

84. There is a broad range of provision at GCE AS and A level for full-time students aged 16 to 18. Students can choose virtually any combination of subjects from those currently taught; archaeology, history, philosophy and religion and politics. There is a wide range of alternative modules and assessment options available within subjects that are often introduced in response to student demand. A large number of students also study critical thinking as part of their enrichment activities. The range of education programmes is increasing and now comprises OCN pre-teaching, short courses for intending classroom assistants and stage 1 and 2 of the FE teachers certificate. Whilst there is no specific day or evening GCE AS or A-level provision for adults, a small number take advantage of the opportunity to join full-time classes. Several short courses are also offered for adults in the summer term.

Achievement and standards

85. Pass rates for humanities GCE A levels are consistently high. The proportion of students gaining high (A to C) grades at GCE A level is well above the national average. Pass and retention rates are high on the GCE A-level general studies course that is followed by the majority of full-time GCE A-level students. In 2001, pass rates on GCE AS courses were particularly high. Pass and retention rates on education programmes are very high. Retention rates are rising on most subject courses, but remain below the national average in the case of GCE A-level history and politics. Strategies to raise retention rates are effective. In 2001, retention rates on GCE AS courses were high. Many students progress to HE.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level general studies	3	No. of starts	*	208	296
		% retention	*	83	91
		% pass rate	*	94	87
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	*	69	67

		% retention	*	75	67
		% pass rate	*	94	100
GCE A-level philosophy and religion	3	No. of starts	**	**	18
		% retention	**	**	56
		% pass rate	**	**	80
OCN pre-teaching	3	No. of starts	44	40	39
		% retention	93	83	97
		% pass rate	95	100	92

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

*data unreliable

**course did not run

Quality of education and training

86. Much of the teaching is excellent. In the most effective lessons, the students are given tasks that they find demanding, interesting and stimulating. Learning objectives are clearly explained and students are fully aware of what is expected of them. Tasks are carefully prepared to encourage students to think for themselves and work on their own successfully. In a GCE AS history lesson, students worked productively in small groups exchanging ideas and learning from one another. To help students with their revision of the post-war civil rights movement in the United States of America, the teacher asked them probing questions. These were carefully phrased and the questions that were hardest were directed at those students who could answer them best. The teacher's own explanations of points and key issues were clear and concise. Students responded to the task set with enthusiasm and demonstrated very good historical knowledge and a keen understanding of the significance of events. Attributes of less effective teaching include classroom activities that are not well managed, questioning which does not explore or develop students' understanding, discussions which do not involve all students and a failure to give students clear guidance on note-making.

87. Students work effectively in lessons, both on their own and in groups. They are well-organised, motivated, and enthusiastic learners. They develop a detailed knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Much of their assessed work is excellent.

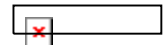
88. Teachers provide excellent support for individual students. Relationships between students and staff are very good. Teachers know their students well and give freely of their time to help them. Teachers mark students' work carefully and offer constructive comments on how students may improve it. Personal tutors meet regularly with students to review their progress. Students are set targets and are awarded grades for their progress. Tutors communicate regularly with the parents of students aged 16 to 18 and keep them informed of their child's progress.

89. Staff-development activities for teachers of humanities subjects have focused on learning methods, ways of modifying learning tasks to ensure they are appropriate for students of differing abilities in a class, and the design of learning tasks which the students have to manage themselves. The teachers value the training they have received and believe it has helped them to meet their students' needs more effectively. There are good resources for teaching and for helping students carry out research and work effectively on their own. The humanities study area and library resources are well used by students. An intranet is being developed. Classrooms are well equipped with whiteboards, televisions, videos and overhead projectors. Good work by students is prominently displayed.

Leadership and management

90. Course management is effective. Subject teachers work well together in teams. They hold regular meetings with common agendas which focus on improving the quality of teaching in order that students may learn more effectively. All staff aim to achieve the continuous improvement of classroom practice in order that pass rates, and particularly retention rates, may rise. For example, they have revised schemes of work for, and assessment options on, some courses. The views of students are taken into account in course reviews and they are acted upon. Students are able to identify improvements made on their suggestion. New staff receive help and support from more experienced colleagues who act as their mentors.

Social science



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

Strengths

- high pass rates
- some imaginative teaching
- good support for individual students
- effective use of ICT.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on law and psychology courses
- poor temporary accommodation.

Scope of provision

91. The college offers a range of provision including psychology, sociology, geography, law, social policy, geology, environmental science and access to HE courses. Much of the provision consists of GCE and A-level courses. Most of the students on these courses are aged 16 to 18, but a few are aged over 19. Psychology attracts a large number of students. Currently, there are 144 working towards obtaining GCE AS psychology. There are about 70 students on GCE AS courses in geography, sociology and law. Some GCE AS courses have been divided into 10-week blocks that are accredited through the OCN. These 10-week blocks, which are, in effect, short courses, attract

adult students. A useful course for both adults and students aged 16 to 18 has been formed out of a combination of the pre-social work course accredited through the OCN, and GCE AS course in social policy. The inclusion of teaching on critical thinking on all courses, and fieldwork on geology, environmental sciences and geography courses, has enriched the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

92. Pass rates on GCE AS and A-level courses are consistently high. The pass rates on GCE A-level courses in 2001 were well above the national average for FE colleges. Many students obtained passes at grade C or above. In 2001, the pass rates on GCE AS and A-level courses in sociology on the GCE AS course in law were 100%. Students achieve higher grades than those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE results. Retention rates on GCE A-level sociology and geography are good. Retention rates for law and psychology courses have declined and have fallen to below the national average. More recently, retention rates on GCE AS and A-level courses are showing some improvement. Attendance rates are high and students are punctual. Many students progress to HE.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	*	105	118
		% retention	*	74	64
		% pass rate	*	92	88
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	*	33	19
		% retention	*	76	74
		% pass rate	*	92	92
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	*	20	28
		% retention	*	60	57
		% pass rate	*	92	81
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	*	40	53
		% retention	*	68	85
		% pass rate	*	96	98

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

*data unreliable

Quality of education and training

93. The majority of teaching is at least satisfactory. The teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and in those lessons judged very good, teaching was imaginative. In the most successful lessons, students were fully involved in whole class or group activities that had been designed to take account of their differing abilities. They found these activities demanding and enjoyable and their ability to carry these out successfully motivated them to discover and learn more for themselves. In an effective psychology lesson, students worked in pairs to discuss and make posters on the similarities and differences between the cognitive development theories of Bruner and Piaget that they had previously researched. Good use is made of competitive quizzes to make revision lessons exciting and enjoyable. In less effective lessons, the students make slow progress and many became bored by having to spend most of the time on one activity which they found dull and considered pointless because they learned nothing from it. In some of the lessons, the teacher talked too much, and the students were required to do nothing more than copy an excessive

amount of notes from the whiteboard. The teacher did not invite questions, engage the students in discussion or give them tasks through which they could explore their ideas and extend their knowledge and understanding.

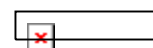
94. Teachers give good support to individual students. In most lessons, teachers spend time checking individual students' understanding and providing students with constructive and encouraging feedback on their performance. Students frequently transfer to the social science area quite late in their course and those who do are given specially prepared induction and learning packs. Many students on psychology courses benefit from provision of additional support in workshop sessions they are advised to attend. Students whose literacy skills are weak can receive help with their basic skills. Students' progress is monitored carefully. Students receive reviews of their progress regularly. Both they and their teachers value these reviews and the targets set during them. Students are prepared for examinations thoroughly and have a good understanding of the criteria used in examination assessments. Marking of students' work is thorough and constructive, and students find it helpful and encouraging.

95. Staff and students make effective use of ICT. Electronic presentations are regularly used in law lessons and these are also available on the college intranet. Geography students make good use of intranet resources including teachers' study guides, references to useful websites, digital images, and the analysis of fieldwork results. The majority of teaching observed took place in temporary classrooms that are uncomfortable and poorly ventilated. Teachers have done their best to make this accommodation more attractive by mounting stimulating displays of students' work. The design and layout of two of the temporary classrooms are such that it is difficult for the students to engage in certain activities such as structured debate and discussion, or group work for which they need plenty of space. Some classrooms are not accessible to students with restricted mobility. All teachers have relevant degrees, many are experienced examiners and most have a teaching qualification. Teachers have benefited from good staff development activities. For example, staff recently attended a faculty training day on ways of ensuring that teaching methods meet the needs of students of differing abilities in any group. They said they found the day inspirational and that they had been experimenting successfully with differing teaching methods in their lessons.

Leadership and management

96. Significant changes in staffing have been well managed. New teachers benefit from working in a close-knit team and the effective staff development programme. Teams participate fully in the self-assessment process and follow the college quality assurance procedures. Action, however, to rectify weaknesses such as low retention rates and some aspects of teaching is not always clearly identified.

English and modern languages



Overall provision in this area is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- excellent pass rates on GCE A-level courses

- many passes at grade C or above on GCE A-level courses

- very good teaching
- effective assessment of students' work
- good specialist resources
- effective curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on some courses
- unsatisfactory pass rates in GCSE English.

Scope of provision

97. The college offers courses in GCE AS and A-level English language, English literature, English language and literature and GCSE level English. GCE AS and A-level, and GCSE French, German, Italian and Spanish courses are offered. Courses accredited through the OCN are offered in four languages at level 1. In the evening, GCSE courses are offered and also level 1 courses in creative and modern languages accredited through the OCN. Conversation classes are provided at levels 2 and 3. Students have the opportunity to broaden their knowledge through organised trips to the theatre and conferences and links with Europe include a successful student exchange programme.

Achievement and standards

98. Standards of students' work on GCE AS and A-level courses are consistently excellent. Pass rates on GCE AS and A-level English and modern languages courses are well above the national average. The pass rate was 100% in GCE A-level English language and Spanish in 1999, GCE A-level English language, French and Spanish in 2000, and GCE A-level English language and literature, English literature and French in 2001. The proportion of students achieving grade C or above on all GCE A-level courses is above the national average. On GCSE English courses, the retention rate is around the national average, but the pass rate is unsatisfactory and in decline. Many adults on GCSE modern languages courses do not take the final examination. The retention rate on most English courses is at, or above, national averages, but retention rates were low on the GCE A-level English literature course in 2000 and on the GCE A-level English language course in 2001. In 1999 and 2000, retention rates on GCE A-level, GCSE and OCN level 1 courses were significantly higher than the national average. Retention rates for GCE AS English courses are high.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
OCN Italian	1	No. of starts	47	*	20
		% retention	91	*	90
		% pass rate	91	*	94
GCSE Spanish	2	No. of starts	14	18	27
		% retention	100	50	56
		% pass rate	21	78	60
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	60	60	71
		% retention	70	70	70
		% pass rate	51	31	20
GCE A-level French	3	No. of starts	*	21	32
		% retention	*	81	66
		% pass rate	*	100	100
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	36	37	34
		% retention	83	84	62
		% pass rate	100	100	95
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	54	48	48
		% retention	80	69	73
		% pass rate	95	97	100

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

*data unreliable

Quality of education and training

99. The overall quality of teaching is outstanding. In more than half the lessons inspected, it was excellent or very good. Lessons are well planned and have clear learning objectives. Teachers use a variety of appropriate activities to engage the interests of students. In one effective English language lesson, students analysed the language of arguments by role-playing confrontational situations and formulating a comprehensive list of precise linguistic features that are likely to appear in spoken arguments. Discussion was then placed in historical context and the teacher used short extracts from arguments in the films '39 Steps' and '48 hours' effectively to analyse stylistic variation. In modern language lessons, teachers make effective use of the target language and place much emphasis on encouraging students to develop their speaking skills. In the best lessons, students are fully involved in demanding tasks and are challenged to use all their skills to the full. In an English literature lesson, students were successfully introduced to symbolism through the teacher's careful selection of a relevant website concerning dreams. This produced a lively discussion and students were encouraged to explore the connotations of words and contemplate the range of interpretations possible in a text. On an Italian GCE A-level class, adult students demonstrated considerable ability and confidence in using the target language in a lively debate about the current employment situation for young people. Teachers frequently check students' understanding. They aim to make sure that the students cover the examination syllabus and do well in their final examinations.

100. Students are made fully aware of the criteria against which their progress is regularly measured. Their work is marked carefully and teachers provide students with helpful annotation and commentary on how they may improve their performance. External moderators report favourably on

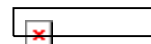
the standard of students' work and the accuracy of teachers' assessment. Modern languages staff meet with students regularly to discuss points of weakness in their work. Teachers' recording of students' progress is comprehensive and includes detailed comments about the performance of individual students. Staff give students a great deal of help and support. Additional conversation classes with native speakers are organised for the GCE AS and A-level students on modern language courses. On GCE AS and A-level courses in English, one hour a week is used successfully to provide individual students with support. During this hour, teachers monitor students' progress carefully. They review students' coursework and help the students develop a good examination technique.

101. Resources for both English and modern languages are very good. Most classrooms are well equipped with television, video and display equipment. The new language laboratory, where broadcasts from the continent can be easily recorded, is a pleasant and stimulating place in which to learn. There are attractive displays of students' work in classrooms. The library is well stocked with English literature and European languages and literature material, including critical texts and a range of European magazines.

Leadership and management

102. The area is well managed; managers have an open and relaxed management style. Staff who teach English and modern languages work effectively in teams. Curriculum leaders disseminate good practice in improving teaching and the effectiveness of learning. Communication between team members is regular and effective. Staff teams set demanding targets for retention and pass rates. Retention rates are monitored regularly. Data, however, produced through the management information system are sometimes inaccurate.

Basic skills



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

Strengths

- effective initial assessments of full-time students' basic skills
- good and highly individualised learning plans for adults
- wide range of learning resources for adult literacy and numeracy programmes.

Weaknesses

- inadequate co-ordination of some aspects of provision
- failure of many adult students to gain literacy or numeracy qualifications

- insufficient guidance on progression for adult literacy and numeracy students.

Scope of provision

103. The college offers courses in basic skills and help with the basic skills for any full-time student on any course. All full-time students are tested effectively in numeracy and literacy when they join the college. Those who are identified as needing help with literacy or numeracy are invited to an interview to discuss their learning needs. At the time of inspection, 142 students were receiving help with basic skills as an inclusive part of their programme within their faculty and, of these, 39 also received discrete individual support. Most of the 11 adult literacy and numeracy classes take place in the college's learning centre in Cirencester town centre and, currently, there are 85 students enrolled for these. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) programmes, which also include the teaching of literacy, are run at the centre as well. Full-time programmes for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities include lessons on literacy and numeracy. Some adult literacy and numeracy programmes have been provided in response to an identified need and with the aim of widening participation of persons from targeted groups in the local community. The venues for these include a learning centre on a local industrial estate.

Achievement and standards

104. Students attending adult literacy and numeracy classes make good progress towards achieving the targets in their individual learning plans. Many adult students make good progress in lessons, but do not achieve a qualification. In 2000/01, the proportions of adult students who obtained qualifications in literacy and numeracy were 49% and 38%, respectively. Most adult literacy students progress to a further programme at a higher level, or to a different course. Some teachers keep a record of the destinations of students who leave the programmes, but managers have little data on students' progression to other courses or employment. Four of the eight students on one programme have been in the same class for at least three years and one has been in it for ten years. During their time on the programme, they have worked towards different qualifications, and at different levels.

Quality of education and training

105. Staff who teach on adult literacy and ESOL programmes carry out thorough initial assessment of students' literacy, numeracy and language skills. They take the results of this into account to draw up appropriate and highly individualised learning plans for their students. Teachers work well with students to identify the specific aspects of literacy or numeracy they need to improve. Teachers of adult literacy and numeracy keep detailed records of students' targets, planned learning activities and progress. Students develop their literacy skills through keeping their own written records of their aspirations and achievements. Many of the adult students have returned to learning successfully and they are acquiring important skills and the confidence to use them in their personal and working lives. For example, one student working on sentence structure and spelling has successfully started to use the text messaging service on a mobile telephone. In the most effective lessons, the teachers set the students challenging goals and determine these on the basis of the students' performance in initial assessment.

106. Full-time students receive individual support from specialist literacy teachers or their subject teachers. Some students receive help from learning support assistants during their main subject lessons. Students with specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, are identified early and they receive excellent support from specialist teachers. Students make good use of workshops that aim to help them improve their study skills and examination techniques. Full-time students who are given help with literacy and numeracy do not have the detailed individual learning plans such as those provided for adult students.

107. Most teachers have considerable expertise in teaching literacy. They are skilful in explaining complex concepts to students, such as the technical terms required for specialist subject assignments. Insufficient numbers of staff, however, have appropriate qualifications in teaching numeracy. Students benefit from the wide range of learning materials available, such as dictionaries in different formats, audio-visual resources, practical numeracy equipment and reading materials they find interesting and stimulating. Most teachers encourage students to bring in reading and writing materials that reflect their own experience. Students based at the college's main campus do not benefit from the resources kept on the site in the town centre. Teaching accommodation is satisfactory. Students benefit from being able to use computers to help them in their literacy, numeracy and English language learning. The learning centre in Cirencester town centre is well used and convenient for adult literacy and numeracy students.

108. Students on programmes for adults receive comprehensive feedback on their progress towards their identified learning targets, at least once a term. Teachers and students work well together to identify and record new learning goals. In addition, most students on adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL programmes receive informative and constructive feedback on their progress at the end of each lesson.

Leadership and management

109. The learning programmes in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL are well managed. Staff have a good understanding of the aims of the provision. The internal communications network is effective and includes staff teaching on and off the college's main campus. The forms and paperwork used by teachers and students on adult literacy and numeracy programmes are well designed and effective. The college has recognised that some aspects of the college-based provision are inadequately co-ordinated and managers have been recently appointed to bring more cohesion to this area of work. The college puts on new courses in response to identified need. Few staff are sufficiently involved in writing the self-assessment report for this area. The quality of data on students' achievements is poor. Staff do not have reliable data on pass rates and students' progression to enable them to determine appropriate targets for courses and students.

Part D: College data

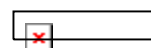
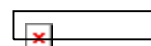


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	15	16
2	9	40
3	68	12
4/5	0	1
Other	8	31
Total	100	100

Source: Provided by the college in 2002.

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
	No.	No.	Enrolments %
Science	1,021	1,009	28
Agriculture	39	36	1
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering	39	32	1
Business	358	437	11
Hotel and catering	82	15	1
Health and community care	141	144	4
Art and design	724	131	12
Humanities	2,425	415	39
Basic education	41	225	3
Total	4,870	2,444	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+		
		1997/ 98	1998/ 99	1999/ 2000	1997/ 98	1998/ 99	1999/ 2000
		1	Starters excluding transfers	177	265	572	391
	Retention rate (%)	67	72	74	71	81	76
	National average (%)	82	80	80	80	78	79
	Pass rate (%)	32	36	17	41	33	26
	National average (%)	59	62	66	61	63	68
2	Starters excluding transfers	488	399	406	343	237	304
	Retention rate (%)	64	78	67	75	77	80
	National average (%)	77	76	77	80	79	79
	Pass rate (%)	62	66	56	50	48	51

	National average (%)	63	67	68	66	65	68
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,161	2,163	1,527	292	279	211
	Retention rate (%)	70	87	72	60	78	70
	National average (%)	78	77	77	79	79	79
	Pass rate (%)	83	65	85	57	57	54
	National average (%)	70	72	73	63	65	69
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	1	0	0	27	1	35
	Retention rate (%)	*	*	*	89	*	91
	National average (%)	84	83	81	85	84	81
	Pass rate (%)	*	*	*	26	*	71
	National average (%)	64	65	69	58	61	60

Note: Summary of retention and achievement for the last three years by age and level of course, compared against national averages for colleges of the same type (that is general FE/tertiary colleges or sixth form colleges).

Sources of information:

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

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

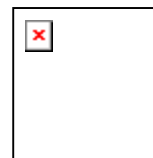
3. College rates for (1999/2000): provided by the college in spring 2001.

* too few students to provide a valid calculation

Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	70	28	2	112
Level 2 (intermediate)	52	31	17	29
Level 1 (foundation)	71	29	0	7
Other sessions	61	31	8	13
Totals	66	29	5	161

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