



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

NEW College Pontefract

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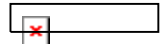
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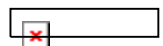
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Basic information about the college

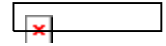


Name of college:	NEW College Pontefract
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Robert Phillips
Address of college:	Park Lane Pontefract West Yorkshire WF8 4QR
Telephone number:	01977 702139
Fax number:	01977 600708
Chair of governors:	John Gough
Unique reference number:	130550
Name of reporting inspector:	Melanie Kavanagh HMI
Date of inspection:	28 April-2 May 2003

Part A: Summary

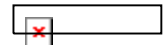


Information about the college



The college offers courses in 10 of the 14 areas of learning. Provision in health and social care, sport, leisure and tourism, and land-based provision is relatively small. In the year beginning 2002, there were 1,268 students aged 16 to 18 on roll, 1,238 of whom were full time. There were 141 adult students, 131 of whom were part time. In 2002, 85% of students aged 16 to 18 were studying at level 3 and 14% at level 2. Of the adult students, 36% were on level 1 courses, 26% on level 2 courses and 38% on level 3 courses. The college's mission is 'to encourage the fulfilment of individual potential by providing high quality education in a supportive environment'.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged the provision to be outstanding in business, administration and management and professional and social sciences. The areas of science, mathematics, information and communications technology (ICT) and computing, visual and performing arts, humanities and English and communication were judged to be good. The college's main strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below:

Key strengths

- high pass rates

- good retention rates

- much good teaching

- highly motivated students and staff

- very good assessment of students' work

- very good support for students

- good use of information learning technology (ILT) to promote learning.

What should be improved

- pass and retention rates on key skills courses

- planning in a minority of lessons

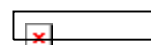
- pass rates at A* to C on GCSE English and GCSE mathematics courses

- some aspects of quality assurance

- governors' links with the curriculum.

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

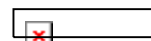


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum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

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science	Good. Pass rates are high on most courses, with the exception of General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) physics. Retention rates are good on the majority of courses. Teaching is varied in approach and thorough. Effective use is made of information learning technology (ILT) in lessons. There is good support for students and assessment is thorough and rigorous. The standard of students' written and practical work is good.
Mathematics	Good. Teaching is well planned and effective. Pass and retention rates are high on all GCE AS and GCE Advanced-level (A-level) courses, but pass rates at A* to C are low in GCSE mathematics. Learning resources are good and ILT is used effectively in lessons.
Business, administration and management	Outstanding. Pass rates are high and many students achieve high grades. Teaching is very good and some is excellent. Teaching

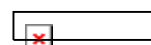
	activities are varied effectively and good use made of ILT in lessons. Students produce work of a high standard and are well motivated. The area is very well led and managed.
Information and communications technology and computing	Good. Pass rates are high and retention rates are good on most courses. Teaching is well planned and makes good use of excellent IT resources. Students are well supported and there is an effective internal verification system for vocational courses. There are insufficient links with industry for staff and students.
Visual and performing arts	Good. Pass and retention rates are high. Teaching is good and teachers provide comprehensive feedback to students enabling them to improve their performance. Students are well supported and produce work of a high standard. There are insufficient IT facilities for music and media students, and students' drawing skills are inadequately developed.
Humanities	Good. Pass rates in most subjects are high, but are low in GCE AS geography. Students' progress is effectively monitored. Their written and oral work is of a high standard. Most teaching is good and clearly focused on exam success. A small number of lessons are poorly planned; in these, there are insufficient checks on students' learning.
Humanities - social sciences	Outstanding. Pass and retention rates are high and many students achieve high grade passes. Teaching is very good and some is outstanding. Students develop very good analytical skills. Excellent resources are skilfully used in lessons, with particularly good use of ILT. The area is very well led and managed.
English and communication	Good. Teaching is very good on GCE AS and GCE A-level courses and many students achieve high grades. Assessment of students' work is rigorous and helps students to improve. Pass rates at A* to C are low in GCSE English. Some GCSE lessons are poorly planned.

How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are good. The college has made sound progress since the last inspection. The college has established a clear mission and pursued it with success. Demanding targets are set and met. Pass rates are high and improving for both level 2 and 3 provision. Financial management is sound. Teaching is good in all curriculum areas. The strategic plan gives a clear direction and is effectively linked to development and operating plans. Rigorous self-assessment has led to improvements in course provision. The management of curriculum areas is good. Aspects of the quality assurance system need strengthening, in particular staff appraisal, lesson observation and the monitoring of staff development. Governance is satisfactory, but governors have insufficient knowledge of, and links to, curriculum areas.

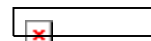
To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to education and social inclusion is good. There are clear and successful strategies to widen participation. The college has worked effectively with local schools to recruit

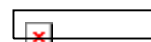
pastoral support for students. Progression routes are clear and students can study a wide range of subjects at levels 2 and 3. The college provides a small number of evening classes to the local community through its Next Step programme and runs outreach courses for local community and business groups. However, numbers of students have declined in this area. All students study key skills IT at level 3 and those who are assessed as needing support in key skills in communication and numeracy are offered key skills at the appropriate level. Level 2 key skills in communication and numeracy are taught in conjunction with GCSE English language and mathematics. Key skills pass rates have risen in 2002, but are low at 50%. Current data show an improving trend. The college has a good equal opportunities policy which is well disseminated to staff and students. Issues related to disability and equality of opportunity are well promoted in college materials. Access to most buildings and specialist resources for students with restricted mobility is satisfactory. Learning resources have been reviewed to ensure their compliance with the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and staff have received training on their statutory obligations.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Guidance and support for students are very good. The college provides students with comprehensive advice before they start their courses. There is effective communication between student services and personal tutors to identify any difficulties for individual students and a wide range of services is provided to support students' progress. These services include specialist equipment, learning support assistants and special arrangements for examinations and home tuition. A comprehensive tutorial system provides good academic and pastoral support, and students' progress, attendance and punctuality are closely monitored. There are good working relationships between parents and teachers and effective communication through parent evenings and detailed, twice-yearly reviews. An active student assembly effectively voices student views and brings about change through discussion with managers and governors. Second-year students are used for peer counselling and to support new students. Additional support is readily available through the college counselling service. The quality of information and guidance on progression to higher education (HE) is good and there is a well-managed careers advisory service.

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

- supportive and approachable staff, with high expectations

- subject expertise of staff

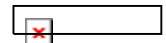
- friendly and adult environment

- wide variety of subjects available
- counselling and careers service
- good ICT resources and workshops.

What they feel could be improved

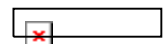
- limited range of enrichment activities
- common and recreational space in the college
- prices in the canteen.

Other information

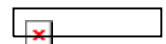


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The college's action plan must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

Part B: The college as a whole



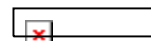
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors



Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	72	25	3
Learning 16-18	72	26	2

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).

Achievement and standards



1. NEW College provides GCE AS courses in 35 subjects, GCE A-level courses in 33 subjects, and GCSE in 7 subjects. There are four courses leading to the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCEs) and four intermediate General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses. The college also provides a small number of evening classes for adults. The number of adults studying at the college has declined from 304 in 2001 to 203 in 2002. Students between the ages of 16 to 18 taking advanced courses account for 85% of the provision in 2002/03.

16 to 18 year olds

2. Results on advanced level courses are very good. Pass rates in 2002 on level 3 courses were high and have remained above the national averages between 2000 and 2002. Retention rates for students on level 3 courses are also consistently above the national averages, and in 2002 the retention rate was high, at 93%. Over 88% of students passed at GCE AS and GCE A level, with 30% achieving grades A and B. Pass rates at AVCE were 86%, with 40% of students achieving high grades. Many students achieve better results than those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE results. Analysis of value added data shows positive residuals in most subjects. Pass rates are high in all curriculum areas. Students achieved 100% pass rates in GCE A-level chemistry, further mathematics, computing, design and technology, art and design, audio and visual media, government and politics, economics and English literature. In GCE AS, students achieved 100% pass rates in design and technology, economics and English literature.

3. Overall achievement in 2002 at level 2 was good. Between 2000 and 2002, there has been a sharp rise in pass rates from 64% in 2000 to 88% in 2002. Pass rates at A* to C in GCSE English language are low at 45% and have declined between 2000 and 2002 to below the national average. Pass rates at A* to C in GCSE mathematics are also low at 36% and have been below the national average between 2001 and 2002. Retention rates on level 2 courses have steadily improved from 75% in 2000 to 83% in 2002.

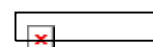
4. Pass rates for adults on level 2 courses have shown consistent improvement. In 2000 and 2001, pass rates were poor at 59% and 65%, respectively. In 2002, pass rates improved to 72%. Pass rates for the small number of adults studying level 3 courses improved markedly in 2002, rising from 70% in 2001 to 88% in 2002. Retention rates in 2001 were very low at 57%, but rose to 80% in 2002.

5. IT is the sole element of key skills that level 3 students are required to enter. The pass and retention rates in 2001 were very low at 32% and 24%, respectively. In 2002, the pass rate improved to 50%, but the retention rate was very low, and at 57% was significantly below the national average.

6. Students are well motivated and show interest and enthusiasm in their lessons. They work effectively, both collaboratively and individually. In science, students work well in practical sessions and handle equipment and apparatus confidently and competently. Mathematics students

confidently discuss topics such as hypothesis testing. Students can present articulate and well-argued points of view which are underpinned by good subject knowledge. Business studies students are able to analyse and criticise theories and models and present logical and mature arguments. Students work well in practical and theory lessons. In ICT and computing, they develop good computer programmes and interactive web sites. Visual and performing arts students produce a high standard of work and show very effective dance skills. Humanities and social sciences students use specialist vocabulary confidently and develop good oral skills. In English, students use specialist vocabulary from an early stage in their course confidently and demonstrate very good analytical skills. Most students' written work is of a high standard and essays and assignments are well structured and presented. Students arrive at lessons punctually and overall attendance is good. Average attendance during the inspection was 89%.

Quality of education and training



7. Teaching and learning were graded by inspectors in 127 lessons. Teaching was graded good or better in 73% of lessons, satisfactory in 24% and less than satisfactory in 2%. Learning was good or better in 72% of lessons, satisfactory in 26% of lessons and less than satisfactory in 2%.

8. There is effective and consistently good teaching in all curriculum areas and across all levels. The most effective teaching was seen in the areas of business, administration, management and professional where all teaching was good and some was excellent. Most lessons are well planned, but there are a small number of poorer lesson plans that are too brief and give unrealistic lengths of time for topics to be covered. Teachers set clear objectives in lessons and use effective questioning to monitor students' progress. Staff and students have good working relationships and the atmosphere in lessons is pleasant and courteous. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and show a genuine enthusiasm for their subject that they communicate and share with the students. Students are effectively encouraged to express their own ideas and formulate mature arguments on the basis of sound subject knowledge. Teachers develop students' use of specialist vocabulary from an early stage in their course. Students receive good individual support in most lessons. ILT is well used in many curriculum areas and students demonstrate appropriate levels of IT and research skills. There are good links between practical and theoretical teaching in ICT and computing and visual and performing arts. Learning materials used in lessons are well prepared and presented. In the small number of less effective lessons, the most able students were insufficiently challenged and the less able made slow progress. Teachers effectively use their extensive knowledge of examination criteria and requirements to promote high levels of attainment.

9. Resources to support learning are generally good. Teachers are well qualified and experienced; some 93% have recognised teaching qualifications. Most teaching staff are well matched to the demands of the courses they teach, but some staff teaching English at level 2 are not subject specialists and have not received sufficient training in the additional subject they teach. Staff development is explicitly linked to the college's strategic plan, but there is inadequate monitoring of the impact of staff development on teaching and learning and good practice is insufficiently disseminated. There are well-developed plans to identify additional training needs through the recently up-dated appraisal system, but at the time of the inspection it was too early to assess the effectiveness of appraisal in identifying and addressing the learning needs of staff. Technicians, administrative and support staff provide effective help to teachers and students.

10. The teaching accommodation now provides a very good working environment and is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Teaching rooms are assigned to specific subjects and contain varied and attractive displays of information and students' work. Most rooms are well equipped with computers, digital projectors, televisions, video recorders and audio equipment. There are some good specialist facilities such as a new dance room with sprung floor. There is, however, inadequate space for drama and the rooms are poorly equipped with out-dated audio equipment. Access to college buildings for students with restricted mobility is satisfactory.

11. The library is well stocked with books, computers and journals, but opening times are restricted, with the library closing at 4.30pm on three days a week. The college has a wide range of computing facilities and students have free access to the Internet at all times. Students generally have good access to IT facilities, with the exception of those studying design, where there are insufficient computers.

12. Students' progress is very effectively tracked and monitored. All students are tested during induction to identify additional needs in literacy and numeracy and to determine the level of support needed. Good use is made of value added data to set realistic minimum target grades. Students are clear about their targets, but there is insufficient action planning in some subjects on how to attain or surpass them. The assessment of students' work is thorough and rigorous. Teachers give detailed and constructive feedback to students on how to improve their performance. Subject handbooks provide clear guidance on the number and type of assignments required for the course. The internal verification of vocational courses is rigorous and effective.

13. Students understand the assessment process. They are given clearly written assessment briefs that include criteria for grading and dates for submitting work. Late submission of work is dealt with promptly. Students' views on teaching and assessment have resulted in amendments being made to assessment schedules.

14. The college provides a wide range of subject choices in most curriculum areas. Students are able to choose from 35 GCE AS subjects and 33 GCE A-level subjects. A small number of vocational courses are offered in business, health and social care, ICT and computing and leisure and tourism. The college has a genuine commitment to increasing participation from young people who have not previously considered progressing to FE from school. The curriculum is planned and managed to provide good progression routes within the college and to HE. Students are able to mix levels and types of qualification and undertake non-traditional combinations of subjects. Those students achieving modest GCSE grades at school are able to progress to FE through combining level 2 and level 3 courses. Progression rates from GCE AS to GCE A level in science and humanities are, however, low. The college provides good support to students needing additional learning support to enable them to complete their studies successfully. In 2002, 72% of students progressed to HE, with 91% of students gaining places at their first choice university. A further 24% entered employment.

15. The college has good links with local schools and has a well-organised programme of visits. Staff and students are actively involved in promoting the college to pupils, parents and careers advisers. Promotional materials are well produced and the college publishes a quarterly newsletter which is sent to all applicants. Teaching and learning materials have been surveyed to check their suitability in promoting equal opportunities for all students in accordance with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

16. The college provides the opportunity for students to participate in team sports, music lessons and student executive groups. However, there is insufficient cultural and social enrichment. Links with industry are inadequate in business and ICT and computing, and there are insufficient opportunities for students on vocational courses to gain experience in the workplace.

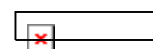
17. Guidance and support for students are very good. Students receive impartial and comprehensive advice before they enter the college. There are many opportunities for students to visit the college and have taster lessons in subjects that they are considering studying. Induction is effective and valued by students. During induction, students review their choice of subjects and can negotiate an early change of course or subject. All students undergo an initial screening test to identify literacy and numeracy needs. There is good communication between student services and personal tutors to identify any difficulties for individual students and there is a wide range of services available to support students' progress. Students are provided with specialist equipment, learning support assistants and special arrangements for examinations and home tuition.

18. Tutorials are well managed and valued by students. All students receive individual tutorials to monitor their progress and group tutorials for personal and social development. Tutorial records and action plans are kept, but there is insufficient action planning for individual subjects to ensure that

students understand how to attain their targets. Communication between the college and parents is good. Parents are well informed about students' progress through parents' evenings and twice-yearly reviews. Concerns about absence, lateness or poor performance are quickly communicated to parents by the students' personal tutors. Students' attendance and punctuality are closely monitored through an electronic system and the average attendance rate is high. The college counselling service provides effective and valued support for students on personal issues.

19. Students benefit from a well-managed careers' advisory service that prepares students for progression to HE or employment. The college intranet provides a comprehensive careers' web site and there is a wide range of visits to HE institutions. The student assembly is active in planning and organising activities, including events to raise funds for charity. Students regularly meet governors and college managers and changes have been brought about by their comments and suggestions.

Leadership and management



20. Leadership and management are good. The college has made sound progress since the last inspection in 2001. Full-time enrolments have increased significantly over the three-year period from 2000 to 2003. Part-time adult evening class numbers have fallen during the same period. There has been a steady improvement in retention rates at levels 2 and 3 for students aged 16 to 18 to a point where it is above the national average. Pass rates have remained consistently high at level 3 for students aged 16 to 18. There has been an improvement in pass rates to above national averages at level 2 for students aged 16 to 18 and adult students.

21. The college has established a clear mission and pursued it with success. The strategic plan and strategic objectives are clearly defined and cross-referenced to the college mission statement. The annual development plan is drawn from the self-assessment reports and linked to standards funds requirements. The college sets and meets demanding targets for recruitment, retention and pass rates. All requests for staff development must demonstrate how they contribute to strategic objectives; however, there is insufficient subsequent analysis of the overall impact of staff development on teaching and learning.

22. Communications within the college are good. Meetings to inform and consult staff include a daily briefing meeting attended by all staff and a four-weekly cycle of meetings including a full staff meeting, a subject leaders' meeting, a tutor group meeting and subject team meetings. A wider management group was established in 2002 to address strategic and developmental issues. The group has made a useful contribution to the debate on some issues such as the new strategic plan, but it has not yet established a clear and effective role in the college's structure.

23. Management of curriculum areas is good. It is a significant strength in social science as well as the business, administration and professional department, and is good or very good in all other curriculum areas. Subject managers provide strong and effective leadership. Course teams meet regularly and focus appropriately on students' achievements. In many curriculum areas there is productive sharing and standardisation of course materials, assessment practices, schemes of work, tutorial materials and assignments. Since the last inspection, there has been a reorganisation of curriculum management with the responsibility for course management and self-assessment passed directly to subject heads. The staff who were curriculum area managers now have cross-college responsibilities. This has given subject leaders and staff teams effective and direct accountability for their own performance and self-assessment. Cross-college managers have not yet established a sufficiently clear role for the areas they manage.

24. The college has a thorough and effective self-assessment process. Each subject area produces a report in a common framework with development plans addressing weaknesses and with clear, quantifiable targets. Demanding targets for retention and pass rates based on national averages for sixth form colleges and current performance are set for each course. Good use is made of value

added data. Self-assessment reports are thoroughly moderated by a quality panel which includes a governor. Staff teams are fully involved in the preparation and review of the self-assessment report in their curriculum area. The final self-assessment report was largely accurate in identifying the college's main strengths and weaknesses. There is insufficient monitoring of some aspects of quality assurance. The monitoring of progress towards targets set in development plans is not fully developed.

25. The college MIS effectively meets the needs of teachers and managers. It provides reliable and up-to-date information on attendance, retention and pass rates. It is used with confidence by the staff to monitor the performance of courses and students and contribute to the self-assessment process.

26. The promotion of equal opportunities is good. The college has appointed an equal opportunities co-ordinator who chairs the equal opportunities committee and effectively acts as the point of contact for advice and help. There is an annual review of policies and practices, but the formal recording of any events for subsequent review is inadequate. The gender and ethnic balance of staff and students is monitored. However, the college has no overall data for its local area against which it can measure itself. The college has thoroughly analysed retention and pass rates by gender and ethnicity and followed this up with a detailed examination of reasons for minority ethnic students failing to complete courses. The college meets its statutory duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Teaching materials have been audited for stereotyping and bias. There are effective procedures for dealing with complaints and to eliminate all forms of harassment. An anti-bullying policy has been in place since 2001 and the staff charter emphasises co-operative working relationships.

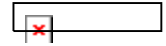
27. Governance is satisfactory. Governors have an appropriate mix of expertise and experience. They are generally well informed about the overall academic and financial performance of the college and their responsibilities with regard to health and safety, equal opportunities and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The corporation has an appropriate calendar for meetings. Although one governor sits on the college quality assurance panel, there is no standards committee and governors have insufficient knowledge of individual curriculum area performance. There are no formal links with curriculum areas or regular briefings from curriculum managers. Strategic planning is discussed at corporation meetings, with the principal providing a sound strategic lead that is generally agreed to by the governors. The finance and general purposes committee receives regular financial statements and closely monitors the financial position of the college. Governors have appraised the performance of the principal, but not that of the vice principal and the clerk to the governors.

28. Financial management is good. The college is financially sound and achieved operating surpluses for each of the last three years. The college accumulated reserves to invest in its approved accommodation strategy. A £1.2 million project to construct a new teaching block and to refurbish the college sports hall was completed within budget and on time. There is thorough monitoring and control of the college's financial position by college management.

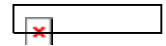
29. Lesson observation of all staff takes place annually. These observations have been insufficiently rigorous and have resulted in a markedly higher proportion of lessons being graded good or better compared with national averages for sixth form colleges. A new system introduced in 2003 has been used to carry out a small number of observations and has resulted in grades similar to those obtained during the inspection. The appraisal system used for all staff was recognised by the college management as not functioning effectively and was reviewed by the staff development committee in 2002, resulting in a new appraisal system being introduced in the 2002/03 academic year. There are clear plans for the appraisal and observation of all teaching and support staff, but at the time of inspection few staff had been appraised or observed under the new system.

30. Inspectors judged that the college provides good value for money through efficient management, good deployment of staff and accommodation, and high pass rates.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses

- varied and stimulating teaching

- good use of differentiated learning materials in biology

- good individual support for students

- effective and rigorous assessment.

Weaknesses

- low and declining pass rates in GCE AS physics

- insufficient differentiation in a small number of classes

- low progression rates from GCE AS to GCE A level in science subjects.

Scope of provision

31. The college offers a wide range of courses at GCE AS and GCE A level including biology,

chemistry, geology, physics and science in the environment. GCSE is offered in human physiology and health and environmental science. Science in the environment is a new course offered by the college at GCE AS and A level, combining the practical and social applications from all the other science subjects. It is particularly aimed at students who have not previously studied science and those following vocational courses. There are approximately 450 students studying science subjects, with 50 studying GCSE, 250 studying GCE AS and 140 studying GCE A levels. The largest group of students is studying biology, with approximately 247 students on GCSE and GCE AS and A-level biology courses. All students are full time and aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

32. Pass rates on most GCE A-level courses are high. GCE A-level science in the environment and GCE A-level geology had pass rates of 100% in 2002. Pass rates in GCE A-level physics and GCE A-level biology are above the national averages. Pass rates at GCE AS in biology, chemistry and science in the environment are at or slightly below national averages. The GCE AS physics pass rate is poor, at 67%, which is significantly below the national average. Students frequently achieve higher pass rates than those predicted by GCSE performance. This is particularly evident in geology and chemistry. Retention rates are good on all science courses, with all subjects being at or above the national averages.

33. Progression from GCE AS to A level is low in all areas except biology. In GCE AS physics, it has declined from 54% to 29% in 2002. Most GCE A-level students progress to HE with many studying science-related courses. All students are well motivated, interested and enthusiastic. They participate well in all class activities. Students' work is of a high standard with well organised and presented folders and files.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCS AS biology	3	No. of starts	*	142	134
		% retention	*	93	85
		% pass rate	*	84	83
GCE AS chemistry	3	No. of starts	*	71	72
		% retention	*	92	90
		% pass rate	*	94	83
GCE AS physics	3	No. of starts	*	58	62
		% retention	*	90	89
		% pass rate	*	77	67
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	133	132	83
		% retention	76	77	98
		% pass rate	92	89	95
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	71	52	38
		% retention	72	83	100
		% pass rate	92	95	95
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	53	80	28
		% retention	72	63	96
		% pass rate	100	100	89

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

34. Teaching in science is good, with particularly effective use of ILT to enhance the students' learning. In the best lessons, careful planning provided sufficient demand for more able students whilst allowing time and activities for those needing more support to complete a topic. All worksheets contained the same information, but with three levels of difficulty. In GCE AS and GCE A-level biology, worksheets at different levels were well used. These allowed students to choose the most appropriate level of work for a particular topic. This ensured that all students had the appropriate information, but extended the more capable students. In one chemistry lesson on reaction rates, a well-prepared PowerPoint presentation and handout was used to consolidate students' knowledge effectively and prepare them for examinations. In a revision lesson on immunity and defence mechanisms, useful and relevant materials including a video recording were used in a lively and interesting session. Questioning was skilfully used and students made clear progress. A small number of lessons failed to address sufficiently the differing abilities of students, leaving the less able without a sound understanding and failing to stretch the most able. Students were encouraged to select and interpret information and all had developed good skills in these areas. During practical sessions, students worked safely and handled apparatus in a confident and competent manner.

35. Teaching staff and technicians are well qualified. Two out of three technicians have teaching qualifications and there is good support and assistance for students during practical classes. Staff use their wide examination experience effectively in guiding students precisely towards examination requirements. Equipment and accommodation are well maintained and effectively used to support learning. For example, the use of the flexi-camera in physics is particularly effective in extending students' understanding and skills. The college intranet contains good science resources which students use extensively for independent study.

36. Assessment is rigorous and thorough, using examination criteria to guide students. Students display a good knowledge and understanding of examination mark schemes. Extensive use of examination questions during class work and for homework prepared students well for final exams. Written and oral feedback to students is detailed and helpful in identifying areas for improvement.

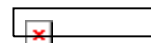
37. The wide range of science courses provides students with appropriate routes to progress to a variety of HE courses or employment. Science courses include relevant external trips. For example, students take part in geology fieldwork, and science in the environment students visit farms and breweries. Subject extension days include relevant and interesting activities.

38. Students are well supported by enthusiastic and committed staff. There are good working relationships between staff and students. Staff are widely available to offer both subject and pastoral support. Initial course guidance is good and allows students to make informed decisions.

Leadership and management

39. Courses are well managed at subject level by subject leaders. Staff meet daily to discuss students' progress and also hold regular meetings where subject and college issues are addressed. Technicians are well informed about subject and cross-college initiatives. The self-assessment process is thorough and addresses issues of retention and pass rates. It has been effective in bringing about improvements in teaching and student achievement. Subject and course development plans are regularly reviewed and closely monitored.

Mathematics



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE AS and A-level courses

- high retention rates on GCE A-level maths and GCE A-level further maths courses

- effective use of ILT in lessons to improve learning

- much effective and interesting teaching

- good learning resources.

Weaknesses

- low GCSE mathematics pass rates

- some teaching which does not sufficiently address the needs of all students.

Scope of provision

40. The mathematics department offers a wide range of courses at GCE AS and A level in mathematics and further mathematics. Students are able to study modules in pure mathematics, mechanics, discrete mathematics and statistics. There are currently 102 students taking GCE AS mathematics courses and 58 taking GCE A level. There are 37 students across the two years of the further mathematics course.

41. There are currently 107 students on the GCSE mathematics course, which is available as a short course for the November examination or as a one-year course. There is also a free standing mathematics unit (FSMU) available.

Achievement and standards

42. Pass rates on all GCE AS and GCE A-level courses were very high in 2002; well above the national averages and showing an improvement on the previous year. Retention rates on both GCE A-level mathematics and further mathematics courses were 100% in 2002. The retention rate on the GCE AS mathematics course is satisfactory. Pass rates on GCSE mathematics are low and were below the national averages in 2001 and 2002.

43. Student attendance at the lessons observed was high. Students arrived punctually at lessons. Students are well motivated and there is a pleasant atmosphere in classes. Teachers have good working relationships with their students.

44. In GCSE lessons students made good progress studying the enlargement, translation and reflection of simple shapes, but a minority had difficulty in drawing a line of reflection from a given equation. Students in a GCE A-level statistics lesson were able to discuss hypothesis testing, but some had difficulty in applying their knowledge. In a GCE AS pure mathematics lesson, students were able to sketch curves from a given equation. First-year further mathematics students revising integration by substitution used integration, differentiation and algebraic manipulation with confidence.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	177	144	202
		% retention	85	86	91
		% pass rate	40	36	38
GCE AS mathematics	3	No. of starts	*	122	112
		% retention	*	84	89
		% pass rate	*	69	80
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	125	124	54
		% retention	70	68	100
		% pass rate	89	88	91
GCE A-level further mathematics	3	No. of starts	10	10	7
		% retention	70	80	100
		% pass rate	86	88	100

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

45. Teaching in mathematics is good. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subject and communicate ideas clearly. There are good working relationships between staff and students and students are confident when asking and answering questions. Individual support for students during problem-solving exercises is good. Teachers use a varied and interesting range of activities in their teaching. For example, FSMU students were engaged in practical activities such as producing wall charts to illustrate simple ratios and matching cards showing percentages and fractions. The activity was successful and effective in promoting students' understanding and interest in the topic.

46. ILT is effectively used to promote learning. In some lessons, ILT is used to illustrate ideas, for example, in a FSMU lesson, a PowerPoint presentation was used to illustrate the basic concept of percentages and equivalent fractions. In a GCSE mathematics lesson, an omnigraph was used to reinforce correct plotting of straight-line graphs. ILT is used to display information, such as formulae, needed in the lesson. In a GCE AS mechanics lesson, the projector and screen were used to display a reminder of the law of conservation of momentum which the students were using to solve problems. This effectively helped them to make progress.

47. Staff in the mathematics department use comprehensive, common schemes of work and teaching schedules and effectively share resources such as work sheets. Lesson plans are produced by individual teachers. A minority of these lack the appropriate detail; timings in these are

often unrealistic and teachers run out of time to review work and reinforce ideas covered in the lesson. Few lesson plans show evidence of planned differentiation and more able students are sometimes insufficiently challenged.

48. The mathematics department has good resources. Staff in the department are well qualified and experienced. The mathematics classrooms are located in a new building in rooms with permanent screens and projectors. All staff have laptops and a range of software. There are appropriate textbooks, pre-prepared learning materials and practical equipment including calculators. There is good library provision which includes textbooks to support taught courses and books and journals of more general interest to enable students to read around the subject. The new building does not have a central mathematics storage area and resources are stored in classrooms. Lessons are sometimes interrupted by staff needing resources held in other classrooms.

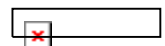
49. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good. Homework and assessment tasks are set regularly for all students. Work is accurately marked and helpfully annotated. Students receive regular and helpful feedback from teachers to help their progress and improve their work. There is an effective central records system in place on the intranet to track the progress of GCE AS students.

50. Students receive helpful initial guidance to help them choose courses. A personal tutor monitors their minimum target grades and academic progress. All students receive good one-to-one support both in and out of class time. An additional support member of staff attends one lesson each week with each GCSE and FSMU group. There is insufficient use made of information on individual achievement in lesson planning.

Leadership and management

51. The leadership and management of the mathematics department are good. Common schemes of work, teaching schedules, assessment materials and worksheets are effectively used. Staff work well as a team and there are regular and purposeful team meetings. Student panels provide the team with feedback and views that are used to improve courses and teaching. The analysis of students' results is sometimes insufficiently rigorous to provide detailed information on performance and provide for an effective review of courses.

Business, administration and management



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

Strengths

- very high pass rates

- very good teaching

- excellent student work

- o very good integration and use of ILT
- o effective leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- o insufficient external business links.

Scope of provision

52. The business department offers GCE AS and A-level business studies and accounting courses and vocational programmes at GNVQ intermediate and advanced level. Students taking the advanced vocational route can study for either the single or double AVCE award. Most students are aged 16 to 18 and are studying on full-time level 3 courses. There are 234 students on GCE AS and A-level courses and 45 on the AVCE award. Student numbers are growing on most courses, but have declined at level 2. Part-time evening provision is offered through the Next Step Centre and includes GCE AS accounting and administration courses such as text and word processing. The number of students on these courses is small and enrolments have declined in 2002.

Achievement and standards

53. Pass rates on GCE AS and A-level and GNVQ intermediate business courses are very high and pass rates on all courses are above the national averages. Retention rates on all courses are at least at, and some are above national averages. The pass rate for GCE A-level business studies has been 96% from 2000 to 2002. In 2002, 43% of students achieved high grades in GCE A-level business studies. The pass rate on GCE AS business studies was 97% in 2002, with 67% of students achieving high grades. In GCE AS accounting, the pass rate is above national average at 78%, with 40% of students passing with high grades.

54. Students' work is of a high standard. They work effectively with others and on their own in class and gain in confidence and self-esteem. Written work is well presented and detailed, with good use of IT. Students in AVCE business confidently use theoretical models to underpin discussions about the performance of different economic systems. In GCE A-level classes, students are able to analyse, criticise and present logical arguments with increasing intellectual maturity. Students' project and assignment work in vocational business programmes demonstrates good use of primary research and the analysis of different forms of data. Students' attendance and punctuality are good.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business, administration and management, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ in intermediate business	2	No. of starts	21	17	26
		% retention	67	76	85
		% pass rate	64	92	95
GCE AS accounting	3	No. of starts	16	64	52
		% retention	81	97	88

		% pass rate	77	89	78
GNVQ advanced/ VCE (double award) in business	3	No. of starts	41	42	14
		% retention	73	76	93
		% pass rate	93	91	85
AVCE in business (1 year)	3	No. of starts	*	25	24
		% retention	*	80	79
		% pass rate	*	55	84
GCE A-level business/ management/office studies	3	No. of starts	74	89	80
		% retention	73	79	99
		% pass rate	96	97	96
GCE AS business/ management/office studies	3	No. of starts	**	133	102
		% retention	**	92	88
		% pass rate	**	93	97

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

* course did not run

** too few students to provide a valid calculation

Quality of education and training

55. Teaching is very good and some of it is outstanding. Lessons are carefully planned and all courses have detailed and helpful schemes of work. Learning materials used in lessons are of a high standard with effective use of topical case studies. In many cases, extension tasks are provided for the topics under discussion, which helps students to consolidate their knowledge and understanding. Students are highly motivated and work hard in lessons and on assignments and homework. Teaching is focused on examination success and considerable use is made of past examination questions. In the best lessons, a wide variety of teaching methods is used including lively, topical discussions, interesting business case studies and practical activities. For example, in an AVCE lesson on administrative operations, students reviewed a social event that they had arranged at the college for work placement providers. This led to a lively discussion in which students relayed their own experiences of the event. Students were able to evaluate accurately the activities and appreciate the importance of good organisation and teamwork. Teachers question students effectively to assess their understanding of relevant business concepts and topics and develop confidence in their ability to judge and analyse information. In a few lessons, teachers do not fully cater for the range of needs of a diverse group of students. In these cases the pace of the lesson is neither quick enough to meet the needs of the most able nor measured enough to support the work of the less able.

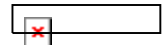
56. Teachers are well qualified and experienced and benefit from regular professional development activities. The specialist accommodation offers a welcoming and pleasant environment, including teaching rooms which are filled with interesting displays and good learning resources. Students and staff make excellent use of IT facilities, including the business intranet and virtual learning environment. These resources are effectively used by students for independent study. The library book stock is broad ranging and up to date. In addition, the department has a variety of other learning resources such as videos, business periodicals and departmental materials which are shared amongst staff and used to improve teaching. Students' progress is closely and thoroughly monitored. Assessment is very well planned and effectively linked to awarding body standards. Students receive carefully considered feedback with detailed comments on how to improve their grade and suggestions for future work, including help with sources of information. There is rigorous standardisation of marking for students' work on GNVQ and AVCE courses. Guidance and support are effective, with regular progress reviews taking place for all students, including two formal reports each year. Students have individual progress plans, but the documentation does not allow sufficient

action planning. Staff have very good working relationships with students, who value the academic and pastoral advice available to them. Students benefit from well-organised, drop-in workshops provided by teachers for those who require additional help in their vocational or academic studies. Initial guidance is helpful to students making subject choices.

Leadership and management

57. Leadership and management are very good. There are excellent communications and clear performance targets. Staff work well as a team and progress towards targets is closely monitored. The self-assessment process is rigorous with regular review-meetings teams that include student representatives. Course teams are well organised and share good practice. Centralised resources and common schemes of work are used throughout the department. Contacts with local businesses are currently insufficiently developed. This weakness has been recognised by the department and detailed plans are in place to increase and develop external business links.

Information and communications technology and computing



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

Strengths

- high pass rates
- much effective teaching
- very good IT resources
- thorough and rigorous internal verification system for vocational courses
- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- insufficient extension activities for more able students
- insufficient links with industry.

Scope of provision

58. The college offers a wide range of courses for full-time students at advanced level, which includes GCE AS and A-level computing and IT courses and AVCE in IT. There is also a GNVQ in IT at intermediate level. There is a range of courses at levels 1 and 2, including computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), Internet technologies, European computer driving licence (ECDL) and a computer maintenance and installation certificate course. There are 279 full-time students, all of whom are aged 16 to 18. Most of the 45 part-time students are aged 19 or over. Enrolments on part-time courses have declined in 2002.

Achievement and standards

59. There are high pass rates on most courses. In the past two years, pass rates on all courses for full-time students have been above the national averages. Pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate course in 2002 were very high, with a 95% pass rate, as compared to a national average of 69%. Retention rates are good with all courses having retention rates at or above national averages on all courses. Courses for part-time students have satisfactory retention and pass rates. Students are punctual and attendance rates are high.

60. The standards achieved by students on all courses are at least satisfactory and much of the work is good. Students can effectively apply theory to the solution of practical problems. Students demonstrate a good level of skill in the use of word processors, spreadsheets, databases, computer graphics, e-mail and the Internet. Some students develop high-quality computer programs and interactive websites with clearly laid-out documentation. Most students are well motivated and work effectively in workshop-based and theory lessons. There is a good level of mutual student support with AVCE ICT students available at specified times to provide technical support for students on other courses.

A sample of retention and pass rates in information and communications technology and computing, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
CLAIT (1 year)	1	No. of starts	562	54	36
		% retention	83	71	81
		% pass rate	64	61	69
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	*	19	23
		% retention	*	89	87
		% pass rate	*	71	95
GCE AS IT (1 year)	3	No. of starts	**	120	132
		% retention	**	85	86
		% pass rate	**	81	80
GCE AS computing (1 year)	3	No. of starts	*	35	33
		% retention	*	74	94
		% pass rate	*	92	90
GCE A-level IT (2 year) A2 (1 year) for 2001/02	3	No. of starts	72	73	45
		% retention	70	68	96
		% pass rate	91	93	93
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	35	39	**

(2 year) A2 (1 year) for 2001/02	% retention	72	60	**
	% pass rate	90	85	**

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

* course did not run

** too few students to provide a valid calculation

Quality of education and training

61. Most teaching is well planned and effective. In the best lessons, teachers plan thoroughly, use a range of interesting activities, and display sound vocational knowledge. The digital projection equipment is used well to focus students' attention on specific themes and the virtual learning environment provides the students with a wealth of information and guidance to help them to make progress. A wide variety of teaching methods is used. Lessons are interesting and stimulating. Assignments are well designed and cover the skills and knowledge required by the examining boards. In practical lessons, teachers supply very good support to the less able students. This support also takes place outside lesson time. However, extension activities are rarely available for more able students and are infrequently referred to in planning documents.

62. IT resources for staff and students are very good. The computer rooms have sufficient space and are equipped with up-to-date networked computers, and resources such as printers, scanners, CD re-writers and easily reached universal serial bus (USB) ports. Each room has a data projector, screen and blinds and the virtual learning environment allows students to explore details about courses, information, assignments, and quizzes and review their progress using the electronic grade books. All students have disk space allocated on the network to save their work and extra large multimedia files can be saved on CD-ROM and USB memory devices. The students' network folders and the virtual learning environment are available via the Internet enabling them to study outside college. Technical support for the college network is good.

63. Teachers are well qualified, but many have insufficient recent industrial experience. Written resources are satisfactory, with a small book stock in the library and relevant textbooks and course books held in classrooms.

64. Internal verification practices for vocational courses are rigorous and effective. Cross marking is carried out on a large sample of students' work and grading criteria are carefully and accurately considered. Teachers mark students' assignments thoroughly and accurately. Teachers accurately record the progress of students and provide them with helpful and timely feedback to improve their future performance. Students' progress is carefully monitored and recorded. Students are fully aware of the assessment requirements and know what is required to achieve their target grade.

65. Links with industry are inadequate, and vocational computing and IT students are not provided with opportunities to gain industrial or commercial experience in the workplace. Teaching staff have insufficient opportunities to develop and maintain their skills through regular contact with industry.

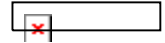
66. Liaison with local feeder schools is good and regular communication is maintained throughout the year. The college offers a good range of level 3 courses in ICT and computing and the possibility of mixing these courses with a wide choice of non-computing courses is valued by students.

67. Students are strongly supported throughout their course. Additional learning support needs are identified at the start of the course. Effective support is supplied through extra lessons, the use of learning support assistants and specialised software and equipment. Students are given target grades at the start of the course and value this guide to their performance. There are purposeful weekly pastoral and subject tutorials. During the pastoral tutorials, students' attendance and punctuality are closely monitored and any absence or lateness is promptly checked. Students value the extensive support provided by the student and careers services.

Leadership and management

68. Leadership and management of computing and IT courses are good. Teachers have clear aims, are well supported and work well as a team. Curriculum and course teams meet frequently and detailed minutes of the meetings are kept. Actions agreed at these meetings are monitored to ensure that they have been implemented. Sharing of good practice is widespread, not only within the computing and IT team but also college wide. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process, which is rigorous and accurate.

Visual and performing arts



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

Strengths

- high pass rates

- good retention rates

- much good teaching

- very good assessment practices

- high quality of student work.

Weaknesses

- insufficient IT facilities for media and music students

- inadequate development of drawing skills across visual arts.

Scope of provision

69. The college offers a wide range of subjects at levels 2 and 3 in visual arts, media, drama, performance studies and music. There are seven GCE AS and GCE A-level subjects and two GCSE subjects.

70. There are 553 individual subject enrolments in visual and performing arts, representing 9% of college enrolments. Most students are aged 16 to 18 and are studying full-time level 3 courses. The small number of students aged 19+ has fallen from 3% to 1%.

Achievement and standards

71. Pass rates in all subjects are high and have been well above national averages for the last three years. Students in GCE AS drama/theatre studies, media studies, music, and performance studies and GCE A-level drama, media studies, textile design, and music achieved 100% pass rates in 2001 and 2002. Challenging targets for achievement are set and met, with only GCE AS art and design falling short of its target by just under 6%. Students studying GCE AS and A-level media studies and GCE AS textiles achieve well above the target set for them based on their GCSE grades.

72. Retention rates for 2002 have improved to above national averages for the majority of courses. Retention rates of media studies students are particularly high. Students' attendance and punctuality are good.

73. Students are able to work independently and many produce a high standard of written and practical work. Particularly good examples of the use of mixed media, combining embroidery, paint, collage, ILT and photography are demonstrated in GCE AS and GCE A-level textile design. Students show good dance skills and innovative dance routines in GCE AS performance studies. However, there is inadequate development of drawing skills across visual arts.

A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GSE AS art and design	3	No. of starts	*	78	78
		% retention	*	88	90
		% pass rate	*	97	94
GCE AS design and technology	3	No. of starts	*	42	49
		% retention	*	78	88
		% pass rate	*	97	100
GCE A2 art and design-textiles	3	No. of starts	26	20	23
		% retention	96	69	95
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level audio and visual media	3	No. of starts	79	58	65
		% retention	78	81	97
		% pass rate	93	100	100
GCE A-level drama	3	No. of starts	31	34	**
		% retention	68	62	**
		% pass rate	100	100	**
GCE AS media studies	3	No. of starts	*	129	130
		% retention	*	84	91
		% pass rate	*	97	99

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

* course not running

** too few students to provide a valid calculation

Quality of education and training

74. Teaching is well planned and effective. There are good working relationships between teachers and students. There are good diagnostic and induction procedures to determine individual students' needs. Most teaching is planned to meet students' different needs and there is good individual support for students during most lessons. There are effective measures for monitoring and following-up any student absence or lateness.

75. ILT is effectively integrated into textile design, product design and media courses. Students' work is of a high standard and well presented. Students' progress is effectively supported by detailed individual learning plans and quarterly reviews. Additional teaching is offered during the summer term to improve performance in GCE A-level media studies and GCE AS and A-level textile design. In the best lessons students work creatively, demonstrating independent thought and a high level of motivation. Students produce work of a high standard in video production and design development.

76. The assessment of students' work is thorough and rigorous. Students' progress is regularly reviewed to help them improve their performance using individual learning plans (ILPs). Teachers' written and verbal feedback to students is clear and detailed. Assessment is clearly focused on examination success and includes extensive testing and mock examinations. Teachers consult students to obtain their views on the quality of the teaching and the contents and organisation of the courses. Parents are kept well informed of students' progress through parents' evenings and twice yearly reports.

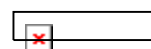
77. Communication between teachers, learning support and student support services is good. Students are promptly referred to the appropriate services and detailed advice on subject choices is available at induction. Tutorials offer students good support and encouragement. All students are offered careers guidance, and the records of meetings are included in the ILP. Tutorial meetings are carefully recorded, and students receive a high level of informal support from staff who are available outside lesson time, and via e-mail outside college time.

78. Staff are well qualified and experienced and regularly attend relevant training courses. In visual arts, specialist rooms and equipment are good and specialist rooms are available to students on a drop-in basis. Health and safety induction is effective. There are insufficient IT facilities for media and music students. Media GCSE students are unable to use the IMAC computers for one term a year while GCE AS students complete their coursework. There is inadequate rehearsal space for performance studies students. In media studies and visual arts, good reference material is held in specialist teaching areas. However, there are insufficient library resources to support music and drama students. A lack of up-to-date equipment limits opportunities for music students to use IT for composition. The rehearsal rooms for music students are insufficiently soundproofed, leading to some lessons being disturbed by outside noise.

Leadership and management

79. Leadership and management are good, with effective quality assurance and self-assessment processes. Clear and effective strategies for improving retention and pass rates have resulted from the self-assessment process. Staff development needs for individuals and the team are identified through the self-assessment procedures. In 2002, teachers gained qualifications in first aid and the use of ILT. Other teachers took opportunities to gain placements in industry or attend events promoting subject standardisation. Equal opportunities are actively promoted across the curriculum.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- high GCE A-level pass rates

- much good teaching

- good support for students

- effective monitoring of student progress

- high standard of students' written and oral work.

Weaknesses

- low pass rate in GCE AS geography in June 2002

- poor planning of a small number of lessons.

Scope of provision

80. The college offers a wide range of subjects at level 3 in humanities. GCE AS and GCE A levels are offered in economics, geography, government and politics, history, law, and general studies. GCE AS archaeology was introduced in September 2002. GCE AS law is offered as a part-time evening class for a small group of adult students. GCE AS and A-level general studies are taught to all students in the college through the tutorial system and in lectures to combined groups. There are 359 students taking GCE AS in humanities subjects and 205 taking GCE A-level subjects. History, law and geography attract the largest number of students. Numbers are smaller in economics and government and politics. The college introduced GCE AS law in September 2000 and enrolments rose from 62 to 135 in September 2002.

Achievement and standards

81. Pass rates in humanities are good. The GCE AS pass rates for all subjects except geography are at or above national averages, with students achieving above average high grades in economics, government and politics and law. GCE AS geography pass rates for 2002 were low and significantly below the national average. Pass rates for all GCE A-level subjects are very high. GCE A-level law pass rates have risen to 94% and students achieved a 100% pass rate in GCE A-level economics. The pass rate in GCE A-level government and politics has remained at 100% for the past three years. Retention rates are good, with all subjects being at or above the national averages in 2002.

82. Students produce written work of a high standard which is well structured and demonstrates a mature understanding of their subjects. Students use specialist vocabulary confidently to support their ideas and develop good analytical and evidence handling skills. Most students are developing good oral skills and are confident and fluent when expressing ideas.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCE AS geography	3	No. of starts	**	75	85
		% retention	**	93	91
		% pass rate	**	96	57
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	100	87	48
		% retention	82	79	96
		% pass rate	80	92	98
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	*	*	35
		% retention	*	*	94
		% pass rate	*	*	94
GCE AS law	3	No. of starts	**	62	121
		% retention	**	89	90
		% pass rate	**	82	89
GCE AS economics	3	No. of starts	**	21	18
		% retention	**	90	89
		% pass rate	**	89	100

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

* data unreliable

** course did not run

Quality of education and training

83. Teaching in humanities is good. Most lessons are effectively planned. Teachers use a clear scheme of work aimed at ensuring that students acquire the knowledge and skills for exam success. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and are familiar with the requirements of the exam specifications, which they use to plan activities and assessment. In the best lessons, students are challenged by probing questions, with extension activities available for the most able. In a successful archaeology lesson, students were given well-prepared materials representing types of evidence to discuss and analyse. They were interested and stimulated by the lesson and showed very good development of skills and understanding. In a few lessons, planning was not sufficiently focused on the needs of individual students and failed to make sufficient demands on the most able students.

84. Homework is regularly set and carefully marked using exam criteria. Comments are encouraging and helpful, clearly showing students how to make progress. Students are assessed at the start of the GCE AS course. Their progress is regularly reviewed and monitored using value added predictions. However, there are insufficient written records of agreed actions.

85. Working relationships are excellent. Students and staff treat each other with friendly respect and students value the availability of staff outside lesson time for any additional support that they need. Lunchtime workshops provide effective extra support for students and are well attended.

86. Staff are well qualified and experienced in their subjects. Teachers regularly attend training and

development activities in order to up date their subject and examination knowledge.

87. ILT facilities are good. Students are given access to extension materials which include downloaded materials and websites. The geography, government and economics departments have put extensive materials on the intranet and encourage students to use them. A geography CD-ROM has been prepared for student use, with PowerPoint presentations, quizzes, animations, links to websites, exam questions and extra revision materials.

88. Staff and students have satisfactory access to computers. Teaching accommodation is suitable and provided with appropriate equipment. The older accommodation, however, is less suitable. A wide range of learning materials are provided for students in or around the classrooms. The geography resource area is well equipped, and students can collect materials from lessons they have missed, find extension packages or use the intranet. The library has an appropriate stock of books, and students use these well for research on their assignments.

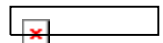
89. Enrichment activities are available in most subjects. Recent archaeology and geography field trips have been successful in developing students' understanding and skills in their subjects. Visiting speakers in government and politics have successfully encouraged students' knowledge and interest in the subject.

90. Students receive good support through regular tutorials which they value for the help they provide with academic and pastoral issues. Teachers provide extensive support either through workshops or with individual students. There is a clear and effective policy on attendance. Teachers communicate well with parents, both at parents' evenings or to follow up individual causes for concern.

Leadership and management

91. Courses are well led and managed, with strong teamwork and regular meetings. The self-assessment reports are thorough and include self-critical statements closely linked to the lesson observation scheme and to targets. GCE AS and A-level humanities subjects are well led and managed at subject level, but there is insufficient overview at a more general level.

Humanities - social sciences



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

Strengths

- very high pass rates

- high percentage of high grade passes

- very good teaching

- o very good curriculum leadership
- o particularly good use of computer-based resources.

Weaknesses

- o a few lessons which fail to meet the needs of all students.

Scope of provision

92. The college offers GCE AS and A-level sociology and psychology, and GCSE sociology. There are 300 students studying GCE AS psychology and 206 students on the GCE A-level psychology course. There are 84 students taking GCE AS sociology and 59 on GCE A-level sociology. There are 42 students on the sociology course. There is a single GCE AS evening course for eight adults studying GCE AS psychology.

Achievement and standards

93. Achievement in this curriculum area is outstanding. Pass rates on GCE AS psychology and sociology have improved from the national average to significantly above at the same time as the number of students has increased. In 2002, 97% of GCE A-level psychology students and 94% of sociology students passed GCE A level. Students achieved above their expected grade, based on GCSE scores. The percentage of students at GCE AS and A level achieving higher grade passes is above national averages in both subjects. In GCSE sociology, pass rates declined in 2001 to below the national average but in 2002 pass rates improved to 77%, which is above the national average. Retention rates are satisfactory or high in GCE AS and GCE A-level subjects, but have declined to 70% in GCSE sociology. The majority of students progress to HE.

94. Students are highly motivated to succeed, are punctual and attend regularly. Students at GCE A level develop very good IT and research skills throughout their course and learn excellent examination techniques. Students debate issues with clarity, making good use of technical language. Students in GCSE sociology organise their files very well, work effectively in groups and are able to balance issues in debate and class discussions. In all classes, students regularly and confidently use specialist subject terminology.

A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities-social sciences, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE sociology/social studies	2	No. of starts	15	19	37
		% retention	80	79	70
		% pass rate	83	40	77
GCE AS sociology	3	No. of starts	**	97	96
		% retention	**	87	86
		% pass rate	**	89	92
GCE AS psychology	3	No. of starts	*	256	299

		% retention	*	86	88
		% pass rate	*	88	96
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	56	46	53
		% retention	77	65	92
		% pass rate	100	100	94
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	105	143	147
		% retention	88	80	98
		% pass rate	99	96	97

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

* course did not run

** too few students to provide a valid calculation

Quality of education and training

95. Most teaching in social sciences is very good and some is excellent. Teaching is well planned, has a clear, identified purpose, and is supported with relevant and well-presented handouts. Teachers ensure that lessons are demanding and include a wide range of teaching and learning strategies. In a GCSE sociology lesson, students studying industrialisation worked effectively in groups to prepare for a debate on the relative quality of life in town and country. In revision lessons for psychology, students were actively involved by well-prepared and interesting teaching. They showed enthusiasm for their subject and a mature understanding of the topics. In most lessons, students' understanding is regularly checked and they make very good progress in developing their understanding and skills. In a few lessons, planning is insufficiently focused on individual student needs and students make slower progress. All students are assessed for learning needs on entry and where these are identified students are well supported. Teaching staff maintain good contact with personal tutors and the reasons for student absence are carefully monitored.

96. Students benefit from the excellent use of ILT in lessons. Teachers use PowerPoint presentations and video clips to illustrate and explain relevant concepts and ideas. Questioning is clearly focused and group work is effectively used to reinforce learning and to encourage students to think critically about the issues involved. Students are articulate and take an active part in class discussions. Homework and assignments are regularly set and accurately and carefully assessed. Students receive constructive and detailed feedback from teachers on how to improve their performance.

97. Teachers are well qualified and many have extensive experience of examining in their subject. Students clearly benefit from their teachers' examination experience and they develop and practise examination skills from early in the course. Psychology lessons are particularly well structured and students are provided with excellent notes including sections they complete in class.

98. The monitoring of students' work is excellent, with very good support to ensure improvements are made. Students' progress is checked regularly against personal target grades set early in the course. Regular tests are used effectively to check learning and to ensure individuals are on target to achieve or exceed target grades. Tests are marked according to examination board practice to ensure students are aware of their progress. Students who achieve a lower grade than expected on a test repeat the exercise to achieve their target grade. Teachers provide regular support on an individual basis as required. Workshop sessions are made available to students falling below expected grades or those finding a topic more difficult. There is good communication between teachers and parents, with two formal review meetings a year when parents and students discuss progress with teachers.

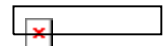
99. Lessons are held in the new purpose-built accommodation. Teaching rooms are well equipped with computers that are also available for private study lessons. Library resources include a good

range of textbooks and computers. Students have good access to computers whenever they need it. Students are provided with good quality textbooks, revision materials and very well produced notes, handouts and exercises that are regularly updated. A comprehensive range of learning materials is available on the intranet to support learning.

Leadership and management

100. The area is very well managed. Curriculum managers have an excellent knowledge of all aspects of their courses. Teachers use an effective recording system to monitor accurately the progress of each student. Priority is given to ensuring consistent standards are maintained across the large number of teaching groups in these subjects. Teaching staff are fully involved in producing the accurate and evaluative self-assessment report. The subsequent development plans are efficiently followed through and the outcomes closely monitored by teachers. The effectiveness of different approaches to the teaching of each topic is reviewed in subject meetings. Any changes made are incorporated into the packs of teaching materials and suggestions for activities and homework that accompany each topic pack. Changes in examination requirements and modifications to the way the examination boards assess work are also considered and the implications for the students are carefully considered. There is effective teamwork and staff are enthusiastic and well motivated.

English and communication



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

Strengths

- very high pass rates on GCE AS and A-level courses

- high proportion of high grade passes in GCE AS and A-level courses

- much good teaching on GCE AS and A-level courses

- rigorous assessment of students' work

- high standard of student work.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GCSE English in 2002

- poor planning in some GCSE lessons

- insufficient enrichment activities.

Scope of provision

101. The college offers GCSE English and GCE AS and A-level English literature and English language courses. Key skills communication at level 2 is taught through the GCSE programme. There is one evening GCSE class and most advanced level students are taking English as part of a full-time programme of GCE A-level study. GCSE students are drawn from courses across the college.

102. There are currently 197 students on the GCE AS courses and 154 students on GCE A-level courses. There are 90 GCSE students, 72 of whom are also registered for key skills communication at level 2. The single GCSE evening class is offered as part of the college's Next Step adult provision. Most students are studying full time and are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

103. Pass rates are very high on GCE AS and A-level courses. All were above national averages for 2002, with a trend of annual improvement. Pass rates with high grades on GCE AS and A-level courses are above national averages. GCE AS and A-level students achieve almost one grade above that expected on the basis of their attainment at GCSE. On the GCSE course, retention rates are good and many students are improving their previous grades. However, attainment of A* to C grades is declining and the 2002 pass rate was low.

104. Students on GCE AS and GCE A-level courses are confident in their use of complex subject terminology and use it skilfully in critical evaluation. Students demonstrate good independent learning and take responsibility for their own work in individual and group exercises. Written work is well presented and of a high standard.

105. Target minimum grades are well used to motivate students to succeed. All students are aware of their minimum target grades and show pride in attaining and exceeding them. Progression rates to HE are good with 88% of students gaining university places in 2002.

106. Students' attendance and punctuality are good. Tutors follow up absences promptly. They communicate well with parents and have good working relationships with them.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	73	82	110
		% retention	77	82	79
		% pass rate	82	70	45
GCE AS English literature	3	No. of starts	*	91	108
		% retention	*	81	94
		% pass rate	*	99	100

GCE AS English language	3	No. of starts	*	113	132
		% retention	*	87	88
		% pass rate	*	99	96
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	91	87	59
		% retention	81	78	95
		% pass rate	96	97	100
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	91	76	72
		% retention	79	68	93
		% pass rate	96	88	99

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

107. Teaching on GCE AS and A-level English courses is very good, but some GCSE lessons are poorly planned. The schemes of work for GCE AS and A-level courses are well designed to help students make the transition from level 2 to level 3. Texts are well chosen to appeal to a wide range of students. Teaching in GCE AS and A-level lessons is well planned, with clear explanations to help students develop critical skills. Teachers display expert knowledge of their subjects and their teaching frequently challenges and inspires their students. Students speak confidently and fluently in lessons, using extensive technical vocabulary. For example, in a GCE AS English language lesson exploring language and gender, students enthusiastically debated the linguistic properties of a statement chosen for discussing, demonstrating a firm grasp of linguistic terms and their application to language. In GCE AS English literature, students demonstrated a sophisticated grasp of the relationship between form, meaning and context, speaking with confidence about the relationship between Shakespeare's sonnets and Larkin's poetry. Teaching in some GCSE lessons is poorly planned, with inadequate lesson plans and insufficient variety of teaching methods to sustain students' interest. There is inadequate use of ILT across the curriculum, with little use being made of resources apart from the production of coursework.

108. Students' work is rigorously assessed and there is detailed feedback on written assignments that effectively helps students to improve their performance. Students' written work is of a high standard. Assignments and essays are well planned, show good development of skills and understanding, and are well presented. The English workshops provide effective extension activities for the most able students and are equally effective for students requiring additional support.

109. The monitoring and assessment of students' progress are good. Teachers make good use of the pastoral system to support students. Students receive regular progress reviews to allow them to monitor progress against minimum target grades and develop detailed action plans for improvement.

110. There are insufficient enrichment activities in the curriculum area. GCE AS and A-level English literature students have had little opportunity to see a dramatic text or poetry in performance. There are no arrangements for trips to conferences for extension activities or examination preparation.

111. Staff are well qualified and experienced. All staff teaching on GCE AS and A-level courses are English specialists. Staff development, however, particularly for teachers on GCSE programmes, is inadequate. Few staff have attended staff development events in professional updating. Teaching and learning resources are good. The library is well stocked for both English literature and English language. Course booklets and handouts are comprehensive and well presented and English materials are available to students on the intranet. There are significant variations in the quality of accommodation. All rooms used for teaching are dedicated to the subject and the best rooms are spacious and well equipped. However, a few rooms are too small for the groups that are taught in them.

Leadership and management

112. Leadership and management in this area are good. Staff work very well together and there is effective formal and informal communication. Management information is effectively used for action planning and promoting student achievement. There are comprehensive tutor handbooks, standardised course materials and good schemes of work. Staff participate fully in self-assessment and performance management processes to produce demanding targets for student achievement. Staff demonstrate good awareness of equal opportunities policies and actively promote equal opportunities through the planning of courses and materials.

Part D: College data

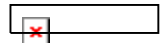
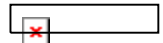


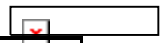
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	0	43
2	11	33
3	87	21
4/5	0	0
Other	2	3
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2003

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments %
Science and mathematics	1,068	33	17
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	70	0	1
Business administration, management and professional	364	42	6

Information and communication technology	566	89	10
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	260	6	4
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	75	1	1
Visual and performing arts and media	519	0	8
Humanities	2,554	29	39
English, languages and communication	781	102	13
Foundation programmes	83	2	1
Total	6,340	304	100

Source: provided by the college in 2003

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
		1	Starters excluding transfers	1,401	43	**	124
	Retention rate (%)	84	74	**	69	68	70
	National average (%)	81	83	83	74	74	74
	Pass rate (%)	71	28	**	71	69	85
	National average (%)	70	66	66	65	66	66
2	Starters excluding transfers	772	394	496	135	64	85
	Retention rate (%)	75	81	83	81	77	81
	National average (%)	81	81	81	75	74	74
	Pass rate (%)	64	78	88	59	65	72
	National average (%)	79	83	83	68	67	67
3	Starters excluding transfers	2,278	4,423	5,021	47	47	54

	Retention rate (%)	82	85	93	70	57	80
	National average (%)	80	84	84	70	71	71
	Pass rate (%)	89	90	89	73	70	88
	National average (%)	85	85	85	63	66	66
Short	Starters excluding transfers	136	45	56	60	83	22
	Retention rate (%)	98	93	91	95	93	95
	National average (%)	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Pass rate (%)	57	64	100	60	82	71
	National average (%)	*	*	*	*	*	*

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 1999 to 2001: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2002.

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

**data not available*

*** 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)	71	26	3	105
Level 2 (intermediate)	74	21	5	19
Level 1 (foundation)	100	0	0	2
Other sessions	100	0	0	1
Totals	72	25	3	127

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