



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Long Road Sixth Form College

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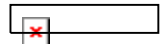
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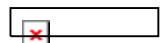
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Basic information about the college

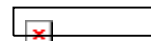


Name of college:	Long Road Sixth Form College
Type of college:	Sixth form college
Principal:	Andrew Thomson
Address of college:	Long Road Cambridge CB2 2PX
Telephone number:	01223 507400
Fax number:	01223 507444
Chair of governors:	Christopher Hesketh
Unique reference number:	130616
Name of reporting inspector:	Philip Pullen HMI
Dates of inspection:	18-22 October 2004

Part A: Summary



Information about the college

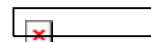


Long Road Sixth Form College was formed in 1974. It occupies a 23-acre site on the southern edge of Cambridge. The college is part of the Cambridge Collegiate Board group of schools and colleges which includes three further education (FE) sector colleges, 3 11-18 schools and 15 11-16 schools. A significant minority of the college's students are drawn from outside the Collegiate Board region, with some students travelling considerable distances to attend. The college was awarded accredited status by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in 2000.

There has been an approximate 12.5% growth in the number of students attending the college since its FEFC inspection in 1999. In 2002/03, the college enrolled 2,676 students of whom 1,695 were full time. All but four full-time students were aged 16 to 19. The majority of the 973 part-time students were aged 19 or over. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds was 9.1%, which was higher than that of the local community. The main curriculum provision is at level 3, and comprises almost exclusively advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) and general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses. Of the 10% of students studying level 2 courses, 80% are taking general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects and the rest are on general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) programmes.

The college's mission statement indicates that it specialises in the provision of academic and general vocational courses for full-time students aged 16 to 19 and also provides 'lifetime learning through the provision of education for the local community and training for education and business'.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged the provision to be outstanding in art and design and psychology. The areas of mathematics, social science, humanities and English and modern foreign languages were judged to be good. Provision in science and business studies was judged to be satisfactory. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- the clear leadership and strategic direction of the college

- high pass rates in many subjects

- the value that the college adds to students' progress

- effective teaching and learning

- support for full-time students

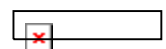
- very good learning resource centre and information technology (IT) provision that support students' learning
- wide choice of subjects at AS level and GCE A level
- very good opportunities for enrichment and personal development.

What should be improved

- some insufficiently challenging teaching
- students' attendance and punctuality
- insufficient monitoring of students' progress against targets
- some aspects of quality assurance
- overcrowded accommodation
- social areas for students.

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

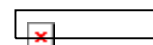


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall

range: Outstanding (grade 1), Good (2), Satisfactory (3), Unsatisfactory (4), Very Poor (5).

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science	Satisfactory. Pass rates are high on AS-level physics and electronics and GCE A2 physics courses but are below national averages on some other courses. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but much teaching is insufficiently challenging. Academic guidance and support are good and are valued by students.
Mathematics	Good. Pass rates are consistently high on GCSE and GCE A-level mathematics courses. There is effective use of information and learning technology (ILT) to enhance learning but in some lessons learning outcomes are unclear and learners are insufficiently challenged. Support for individual students is good. There is insufficient use of assessment to guide students' progress.
Business studies	Satisfactory. Pass rates are high on GNVQ intermediate business but low on AS-level and GCE A-level accounting, Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) and GCSE business courses. Teaching is satisfactory overall but some lessons do not meet students' individual learning needs. There is effective development and integration of key skills.
Art and design	Outstanding. Students' achievements are outstanding with consistently high pass rates on all level 3 courses. Students produce work of a very high standard. Teaching and learning are very effective. There is insufficient rigour in some aspects of quality assurance.
Humanities	Good. Pass rates are high in most subjects but are low and declining in AS-level geography. Most teaching is good or better with effective use of ILT. Students develop very good analytical and research skills. There is insufficient use of targets to support students' learning.
Social science	Good. Psychology contributory grade: outstanding. Pass rates are high in psychology and sociology but there are low pass rates in law. Many students achieve results higher than predicted by their GCSE entry scores. There is much good teaching. Support for students is good.
English and modern foreign languages	Good. Pass rates are high in most subjects although there is only a small number of high-grade passes on GCE A-level English courses. Most teaching is good or better. There are good enrichment opportunities. There is insufficient sharing of good practice to improve learning.

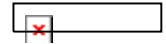
How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are good. The principal and governors provide clear leadership and strategic direction. Examination pass rates and the retention rates of students on courses are at or slightly above the national average for sixth form colleges. The college clearly adds overall value to the performance of its students, many of whom come to the college with quite low levels of prior performance. Most teaching and learning is effective. Communication is good and senior managers have an open and consultative style. Management at course level is good in most of the curriculum areas but there are distinct weaknesses in others. There are systematic quality assurance

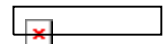
dealt with well through self-assessment, analysis of the quality of teaching and learning is often not sufficiently thorough. Financial management is good. The college provides good value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



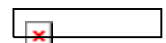
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. It works in partnership with the local collegiate board and provides for students in line with its mission statement. The college has good educational links with several local community organisations. Students are well supported and value the atmosphere of openness and mutual respect. The college is flexible and responsive in supporting the individual needs of its students. There has been an effective response to both the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) and the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000. The college's social inclusion group effectively monitors the recruitment of both staff and students, and students' achievement by gender, minority ethnic group and disability. The college has a race equality policy and has made reasonable progress in its implementation. Staff have received effective disability and race awareness training. Most areas of the college are accessible to those with restricted mobility.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support for students is good. Cross-college support is well managed and effectively integrated. Students are well informed about, and make good use of, the services on offer. The college provides effective pre-course guidance. Students feel they have chosen courses that are appropriate for their needs and abilities. A good induction effectively introduces students to college life. The college carefully uses a range of information to make an assessment of individual additional support needs. Support is flexible and adaptable. The effectiveness of learning support is evaluated annually and the information is used well in development planning. Well-planned and well-resourced tutorials provide good support for full-time students. However, part-time students do not receive formal tutorials to support their learning. A specialist team provides good progression and careers advice and guidance. The college has a child protection policy and appropriate implementation procedures.

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

- good academic and pastoral support

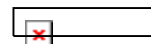
- responsive, hard-working staff and an accessible senior management team

- the acceptance of diversity
- the open and friendly atmosphere with mutual respect and freedom
- the variety of subjects to study and the flexibility of choice
- good two-way communication between staff and students
- good learning resource centre and access to computers
- good support for application to higher education (HE).

What they feel could be improved

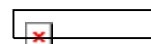
- overcrowded classrooms
- student common room facilities
- overcrowded canteen with insufficient choice, poor layout and long queues
- limited parking for students
- the size of lockers
- timetable design and length of the college day.

Other information



The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the local LSC. The local LSC should send to Ofsted only action plans from colleges that have been judged inadequate or have been awarded a grade 4 or 5 for curriculum provision, work-based learning and/or leadership and management.

Part B: The college as a whole



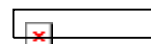
Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect and 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	77	21	2
19+ and WBL*	59	33	8
Learning 16-18	75	21	4
19+ and WBL*	59	33	8

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

**work-based learning*

Achievement and standards



1. Overall judgements about achievements and standards for the years 2002 and 2003 are based on aggregate information in the college performance report produced by Ofsted. This is derived from data supplied by the college in its individualised learner record. Data for 2004 are derived from the college using its own software. The separate reports on areas of learning in Part C give more details about achievements and standards of work on particular courses.

2. The college's main curriculum provision is at level 3. The majority of students are on courses leading to AS level and GCE A level from a choice of 45 subjects. Around 120 students are studying for an advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) in one of five subjects. The college also

provides GCSEs in 14 subjects and 2 intermediate GNVQ programmes. Around 10% of students are taking level 2 programmes. The college also makes evening class provision for adults. In 2003/04, there were 1,100 adult enrolments, funded by the local LSC. The majority of enrolments were in humanities, business, English and modern foreign languages and visual and performing arts subjects.

16 to 18 year olds

3. Students' achievements are good overall. Retention rates for level 3 qualifications have steadily improved and are now around the national average. Retention rates are slightly above the national average for level 2 qualifications. Retention rates for GCE A levels are above the national average and are around the national average for AS levels. Retention rates for AVCEs are below the national average. Retention rates for GCSEs and GNVQ intermediate qualifications are above the national average. Overall, pass rates are around the national average and the college's performance by this measure is generally within the middle 50% of sixth form colleges. Pass rates for the majority of qualification types are at or slightly above the national average, although pass rates for AS levels have declined. Pass rates for AVCEs at level 3 are significantly higher than the national average.

4. The average GCSE points score of students on entry to the college is relatively low and has declined in recent years. In 2003/04, approximately 45% of students entered the college with an average GCSE points score of 5.2 or lower. Analysis of added value data shows that many students achieve results higher than those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE performance. The college's overall performance by these measures places it in the top 10% of sixth form colleges.

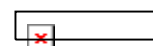
5. There are good progression rates for students. Around 71% of advanced-level students progress to HE and the majority of level 2 students progress to other FE provision.

6. The quality of students' work is good overall. Inspectors judged that the standard of students' work was good or better in 62% of the lessons observed. Attainment was exceptionally high in art and design where a significant majority of lessons were judged to be good or better. Students work well together and develop good oral and written communication skills; most have a well-organised approach to study and make confident and effective use of ILT. There is good development of students' critical thinking and analytical skills in a number of subject areas, including humanities and social science. Art and design students develop exceptional skills in painting and produce high standards of design work. English and modern foreign language students demonstrate a good understanding of complex grammatical concepts. Attendance during the inspection averaged 81% in the lessons observed. This is significantly below the average of 85% for sixth form colleges inspected in 2002/03.

Adult learners

7. Retention rates for level 2 and level 3 qualifications are above the national average, although retention on AS-level courses declined significantly in 2003/04 to below the national average. Pass rates are above average for level 2 qualifications and slightly below for level 3 qualifications.

Quality of education and training



8. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 99 lessons. Teaching was good or better in 75% of these, satisfactory in 22% and unsatisfactory in 3%. Teaching was very good or outstanding in 22% of lessons observed.

9. Teaching and learning at level 3 had the highest proportions of lessons graded good or better. The quality of teaching and learning was highest on GCE A2 courses where 79% of the lessons

were judged to be good or better. AS-level courses had the widest range of teaching and learning in terms of quality: the small amount of teaching that was judged to be outstanding was seen on these courses, as was all the unsatisfactory teaching and learning. The lowest proportion of lessons judged to be good or better was on GCSE courses, although there were also some examples of very good teaching and learning.

10. The best lessons were well planned and were characterised by dynamic delivery and imaginative activities, which stimulated and motivated students. For example, in a GCE A-level geography lesson, the effective use of ILT captured students' imagination and encouraged them to carefully investigate the measures taken to mitigate the impact of an earthquake on a community. In a number of psychology lessons, pieces of research were brought to life by enacting them with students, which made them more aware of the psychological points arising from the research. Questioning was used effectively to involve learners, to check progress and to probe, develop and extend their learning.

11. In the less effective lessons, there was insufficient clarity and focus on learning outcomes. On some occasions, the quality of learning was reduced due to difficulties with the timing of activities that over-ran, resulting in loss of concentration and leaving those students who finished early with no extension activities. Questioning was often insufficiently challenging and opportunities to elicit students' views and check their understanding were missed. The poorer teaching, particularly in business, mathematics and science, was dull, overly theoretical and failed to meet the individual needs of students. In some lessons, teachers talked too much and demanded too little of the students.

12. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Many have higher or specialist professional qualifications and several are external moderators or examiners for their subject. Newly qualified teachers and new members of staff are well supported through the college's mentoring scheme and induction arrangements. Staff development opportunities are well planned and are closely linked to curricular and departmental requirements. Teachers are well supported by technician staff in several curriculum areas. There is good availability and use of modern foreign language assistants.

13. The college has invested substantially in accommodation since the last inspection. A new building has been added to provide improved teaching facilities and the building of a replacement sports hall was nearing completion at the time of inspection. Despite these improvements, some classrooms are overcrowded and restrict teaching and learning strategies. The canteen also serves as a student common room and is too small for comfortable use at times. The college has plans to address these issues. Most areas of the college are accessible to those with restricted mobility and, where necessary, changes are made to the location of classes to accommodate students with particular needs.

14. Students have access to high-quality learning resources. The learning resource centre is very well managed and its staff provide good support both for students and teachers. There are very effective links between subject teachers and learning resource centre staff to ensure that specialist resource needs are well catered for. There is very good provision of ILT throughout the college. Most curriculum areas have a suite of networked computers and drop-in facilities are available in the learning resource centre and other rooms in the college. Several classrooms have interactive whiteboards and data projection facilities. An excellent and rapidly expanding intranet facility further enhances students' learning. Staff development has been effective in encouraging more teachers to use ILT as an integral part of their teaching.

15. There is a clear and planned system for the regular formal monitoring of students' progress. Reviews of progress and tutorial discussions are recorded on standardised record sheets. Progress review tutorials are carefully scheduled to fit in with planned reporting and parents' evenings. This system is well established and understood by all staff and students. Individual learning plans are drawn up on an agreed day in the first few weeks of the course and students are informed about their minimum target grades. However, in several curriculum areas, students are insufficiently clear about these targets and many individual learning plans lack specific guidance on what students need to do in order to achieve them. The college provides general guidelines on assessment and some departments have produced their own assessment policies. Homework assignments are regularly

set, marked and promptly returned but the approach to assessment and marking varies between, and sometimes within, departments. Most departments have standardisation procedures but practices in some curriculum areas are inconsistent. Some departments make good use of cover sheets for marked work which show students' component marks against assessment objectives. Parents are kept well informed of students' progress through regular parents' evenings and formal reports as well as frequent informal contact.

16. A large number of level 3 courses are offered at the college including 45 AS-level and GCE A-level subjects and five AVCEs. At level 2, two GNVQ intermediate courses are offered as well as 14 GCSE subjects. Flexible curriculum arrangements maximise subject choice and combinations for students. Links with feeder schools and other post-16 providers are good and keep the college well informed of changing needs. The college maintains good links with the community, including employers. In 2003, two vocational GCSE courses, in health and social care and business, were added to the college's curriculum provision as a response to changing needs. Plans are well under way to replace AVCE provision with national diploma qualifications in September 2005.

17. There is very good curriculum enrichment both within subject areas and as part of general education provision. Students participate in a wide range of sports, music, drama and general education courses in addition to their chosen academic and vocational courses. Enrichment activities within programme areas include: opportunities to study abroad in art and design, humanities and modern foreign languages; regular visits to galleries, theatres, museums and relevant employers; contributions by outside speakers; the production of a monthly magazine; and the opportunity to participate in the Young Enterprise Award.

18. A clear key skills policy provides opportunities for level 2 students to develop and accredit skills in all three areas. At level 3, students are able to develop and accredit one skill through their subjects. For the majority of students, this is in communication. Key skills are centrally co-ordinated and there are good arrangements for monitoring and moderating standards achieved by students. As a result of low portfolio completion in 2003/04, systems have been put in place to address when and where departments will address key skills elements in their courses. Integration of key skills is particularly effective in business and economics and social science.

19. Support for students is good. The college provides effective pre-course guidance. Staff visit feeder schools to talk to pupils and the college provides open evenings and taster courses which many potential students attend. There is a well-established and effective support and guidance team, with clear lines of responsibility. Specialist student services are centrally located in the college and communication between staff is good. Students are well informed about the support services during induction and these are further publicised in the student planner and in supplementary leaflets. Students feel that they have been well prepared for their programmes and that they have chosen courses appropriate for their needs and abilities. A specialist careers team, which includes Connexions advisers, provides careers advice and guidance which results in very good progression.

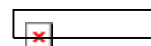
20. A good induction process effectively introduces students to college life. Individual support needs are identified using information supplied by local schools followed by a dyslexia test undertaken by all students and the analysis of a piece of work carried out as part of departmental induction. In addition, students can refer themselves for additional support. Flexible, timely support arrangements, which are used by around 250 students a year, include additional learning support, counselling, subject 'surgeries' and student mentors. The effectiveness of learning support is evaluated through a comprehensive annual review which provides the basis for development planning. All staff have been provided with effective disability awareness training.

21. Tutorials provide good pastoral and academic support for most students. College guidelines set out clear tutorial procedures and outcomes are recorded on standardised record cards. All full-time students are required to attend a weekly group tutorial. A comprehensive group tutorial work scheme ensures that content is standardised. Students also have an entitlement to a minimum of one individual tutorial per term, although many receive at least two. Regular departmental 'surgeries' provide tailored subject support and these are appreciated by the students. The quality of tutorial provision is monitored through regular observation visits to group tutorials and file checks of individual sessions. Part-time students do not receive formal tutorials but teachers make themselves

available out of lesson time and provide support materials for students to use at home. Tutors conduct individual tutorials in a manner sensitive to individual needs and equality of opportunity and students feel well supported. Students' attendance is monitored and minimum attendance targets are set. Most teaching departments routinely check student absence with follow up by tutors, although the rigour of checking in some departments is inconsistent.

22. The college has a child protection policy and procedures. The assistant principal (guidance) is the senior member of staff responsible for child protection. All staff who work in a supervisory or individual capacity with children undergo criminal records bureau checks.

Leadership and management



23. Leadership and management are good. The principal and governors provide clear leadership and strategic direction. The college's plans respond in the main to the needs of students aged 16 to 18, many of whom have quite low levels of prior achievement at GCSE. In 2003/04, approximately 45% of students entered the college with an average GCSE points score of 5.2 or lower. Analysis of value added data indicates that, overall, students achieve results higher than those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE performance. Retention rates on college courses are around the national averages. Pass rates are generally at or slightly above national averages. Most teaching and learning is effective.

24. Governors participate actively in the development of the strategic plan and monitor its progress well. Planning is currently focused on the overall improvement of the college's provision in terms of teaching and learning, students' achievement, learning resources and accommodation. The corporation's standards committee systematically monitors and evaluates students' performance and achievement through a thorough review of the self-assessment report and papers on quality issues, like the college's value added performance. The committee monitors the setting of recruitment, retention and examination performance targets and reviews their progress. It receives reports of the teaching observation scheme and student surveys. The standards committee regularly reports its findings to the main board.

25. Senior managers work well as a team. Communication is good and the open and consultative approach of all senior managers leads to high morale throughout the college. Management meetings focus on the curriculum and the improvement of its delivery. Four curriculum managers, who oversee the heads of subjects, provide an effective additional layer of quality assurance to departments and curriculum support to their heads. However, management at course level is of uneven quality. In business and economics, strong leadership is developing an effective team that is focusing successfully on some of the area's weaknesses in teaching. Team work in social sciences and a common commitment to improvement has led to a radical overhaul of law courses, which had performed poorly for two years. However, modern foreign language courses lack cohesion and each language operates separate systems of assessment. Until recently, there was little sharing of good practice across the science subjects. In art and design, team meetings are not regular and there is little recorded discussion of teaching and learning.

26. Arrangements for assuring the quality of the college's provision are systematic. Course reviews contain thorough analyses of achievement and retention rate data. Value added data are scrutinised and play a significant role in judging the quality of provision as well as providing a target minimum grade for monitoring students' progress and assessing their performance. Appropriate action plans are developed at college level and realistic targets for achievement, retention rates and attendance are set and monitored by managers. Students' views of the quality of the provision are carefully collated and taken into account at course level. There are examples of successful interventions at departmental level which have brought success to courses where pass and retention rates had been consistently low.

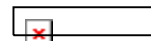
27. Self-assessment has varying degrees of impact in the curriculum areas. In humanities, it is thorough and provides a realistic view of each department. In several curriculum areas, however, there are deficiencies in the quality of action plans in identifying areas for improvement. While most key aspects of the college's work are dealt with well through self-assessment, analysis of the quality of teaching and learning is often not sufficiently thorough. The profile of grades awarded by the college through its internal lesson observation procedures is significantly higher than those awarded by inspectors. The college recognises these deficiencies and has taken steps to address them. A whole college programme that was designed to improve teaching and lively initiatives to enable teachers to share good practice have led to an increasing awareness of the need for teachers to review and improve their skills. However, this has only become systematic recently.

28. Full-time and part-time staff are appraised and their performance is reviewed annually by their line managers. Account of the quality of their teaching is taken from the teaching observation programme and from peer observations. A detailed staff development plan is compiled annually which is effectively linked to the college's objectives and to departmental reviews. Priority recently has been given to the improvement of teaching and learning. Training days and summer term sessions are used to provide opportunities for the sharing of good practice. New teachers are provided with mentors and effective strategies for their induction are in place. The college is accredited as an Investor in People.

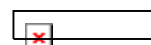
29. The college's equality forum has recently effectively reviewed the college's equality of opportunity policy. A co-ordinator effectively oversees the activities of the forum. Its membership comes from across the college's curriculum areas and includes students. Reports are made to the governors. The college has responded appropriately to the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000. A policy has been developed which is integrated with the overall equality policy. This policy was published after wide consultation and its impact has been reviewed. Analysis of minority ethnic groups at recruitment and admission takes place. Achievement by minority ethnic group is monitored. Appropriate measures in response to SENDA have been taken. The requirements of the SENDA were taken into account when the equality policy was revised. Staff training in both the Race Relations (amendment Act) 2000 and SENDA has taken place.

30. Management information systems are used effectively. Curriculum managers have ready access to data on attendance and retention and pass rates and most make good use of it in managing students' learning and quality assurance arrangements. Senior managers are provided with accurate data. However, a recent upgrading of the system has resulted in a delay in the setting up of this year's student target minimum grade system. Financial management in the college is good. The college has consistently met its funding targets and operated with appropriate surplus. Retention and pass rates are generally good. Average class sizes are high. Teachers are efficiently and effectively deployed. Students are offered a wide choice of subject and enrichment activities. The college provides good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science



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

Strengths

- consistently high value added scores for many students on AS-level physics and electronics and GCE A2 physics courses
- strong academic support for students
- good specialist accommodation
- regular and thorough assessment of students' learning.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on AS-level biology and chemistry courses
- low progression from AS-level to GCE A2 courses
- insufficiently challenging teaching
- lack of rigour in target setting.

Scope of provision

31. The college offers a good range of full-time science courses. Approximately 500 students each year study AS-level and GCE A2 courses in biology, human biology, chemistry, physics, electronics and environmental science. A GSCE programme, which includes human physiology and health and physics, has approximately 70 enrolments. Part-time evening classes are available in AS-level and GCE A2 biology and human biology. There are about 40 students aged 19 and over studying these courses.

Achievement and standards

32. Pass rates on AS-level physics and electronics, and GCE A2 biology, human biology, electronics and physics courses are close to the national averages. In 2003/04, all students taking GCE A2 human biology and biology passed the examination. Over the past three years, students taking AS-level physics and electronics and GCE A2 physics have achieved well in relation to the outcomes predicted for them on the basis of their previous GCSE grades. Pass rates for GCSE human physiology and health have improved over the last three years and are now above the national average. However, pass rates in AS-level biology and human biology have declined over the last three years and are now significantly below the national average. Pass rates in AS-level and GCE

A2 chemistry are also both below the national average. Retention rates on GCSE human physiology and health are good and are consistently above the national average. Retention rates for most AS-level and GCE A2 courses are below the national average, except for AS-level electronics and GCE A2 physics courses.

33. Many students demonstrate good knowledge, skills and understanding in lessons. They are able to apply the knowledge they acquire effectively and to relate their learning to personal experiences. In one lesson, GCE A2 students were able to calculate surface area to volume ratios, plot a graph and interpret the meaning of the curve, then relate this knowledge to new situations. The number of students progressing from AS-level to GCE A2 courses is very low; around half the students starting an AS-level science course do not progress to GCE A2 in the same subjects.

A sample of retention and pass rates in science, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE human physiology and health	2	No. of starts	44	49	58
		% retention	89	86	86
		% pass rate	38	50	60
AS-level biology	3	No. of starts	69	85	79
		% retention	87	81	89
		% pass rate	90	75	53
AS-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	52	60	67
		% retention	87	87	87
		% pass rate	60	75	67
AS-level physics	3	No. of starts	77	74	80
		% retention	91	93	83
		% pass rate	81	71	83
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	47	39	41
		% retention	91	95	93
		% pass rate	93	94	100
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	36	18	27
		% retention	100	89	100
		% pass rate	81	94	81
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	48	50	43
		% retention	96	98	100
		% pass rate	100	94	95

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

34. Teaching is satisfactory or better. Teachers know their students well and have good working relationships with them. In the better lessons, teaching is well planned with a variety of activities that provide a good balance of theory and practical work. In an AS-level chemistry lesson, students' attention was captured by an amusing, colourful and informative demonstration which illustrated the effect of a catalyst on hydrogen peroxide. Teachers adeptly draw on the personal experience of students and help them apply it to scientific situations. For example, GCSE human physiology

students volunteered information on why athletes use ice to alter blood flow. Questions are used effectively to probe and challenge and teachers sensitively draw out responses from quieter students. Too much teaching, however, is insufficiently challenging. Many lessons lack variety and are dominated by the teacher with few contributions from students. Teachers provide limited opportunities to identify and help students of differing abilities to achieve the lesson outcomes.

35. There is thorough assessment of students' learning. Students are set a good range of tests and are required to do homework regularly, focusing on past questions or practical reports. Assessed work is marked accurately and carefully. Longer pieces of work are graded and contain detailed feedback for students on areas for improvement.

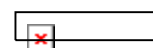
36. Academic support and guidance is good and is highly valued by students. A structured programme of 'surgery' sessions, coursework support, revision classes, dedicated topic-based sessions and extension classes is aimed at maximising the students' performance. Students who need help are directed to the 'surgery' sessions or can refer themselves if they have missed work or want help with a specific problem.

37. Teachers are well qualified. Several are examiners, moderators or authors and make effective use of this experience in their teaching. Approximately one-third of the staff are new to the department or their role since September 2004, including the two heads of department. Teachers are supported by well qualified and efficient technicians. Teaching accommodation is good. The laboratories provide a pleasant learning environment with attractive wall displays. Rooms and equipment are well maintained. The recent combining of the chemistry and biology departments has enabled the flexible use of rooms and sharing of resources.

Leadership and management

38. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Recent action taken by the two new heads of department has led to an increase in the monitoring of the quality of provision but this has not yet had time to have an impact. Departmental self-assessment reports for 2003/04 underestimate areas of weakness, particularly in relation to students' achievement and the quality of teaching. There is insufficient rigour in setting targets and actions for improvement.

Mathematics



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCSE and GCE A-level mathematics courses

- effective use of ILT to enhance learning

- good individual support for students

- good resources to enhance learning.

Weaknesses

- lack of challenge and clear focus in some lessons
- insufficient use of assessment to guide students' progress.

Scope of provision

39. The college provides a good range of mathematics courses at intermediate and advanced levels. Students have a choice of AS-level and GCE A2 courses, including statistics and mechanics options and further mathematics. Previously, intermediate-level foundation advanced mathematics was offered to those students who required further preparation prior to embarking on traditional AS-level courses or who were seeking a more applied course. This course has now been replaced by the AS-level use of mathematics course. Basic skill level numeracy courses are also provided for a small number of adults in the community and as part of the college's evening class programme. Approximately 490 students are enrolled on mathematics courses.

Achievement and standards

40. Pass rates at GCSE and GCE A-level mathematics have been consistently high during the three years to 2003/04. AS-level further mathematics students perform better than would be expected from their GCSE scores, although the number of high-grade passes is below the national average. Pass rates in foundation advanced mathematics have been consistently at or above the national average, whilst the pass rate in AS-level mathematics remains at the national average, it has declined over the last three years. Retention rates for all courses are in line with national averages.

41. Students demonstrate a good understanding of basic concepts, which they confidently apply. They are comfortable with mathematical language and use it well to explain tasks. There is good use of scientific and graphical calculators. Students' files are well organised with some good use of colour and outlining to highlight important concepts. Students consolidate their learning well by reading notes, practising examples and re-writing notes.

A sample of retention and pass rates in mathematics, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
Foundations of advanced mathematics	entry	No. of starts	100	67	61
		% retention	89	85	84
		% pass rate	89	84	88
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	252	221	233
		% retention	88	84	88
		% pass rate	48	49	49
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	128	165	155
		% retention	78	86	89

		% pass rate	82	73	72
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	63	50	75
		% retention	95	96	95
		% pass rate	82	94	96

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

42. Teaching is satisfactory or better. Teachers display high levels of knowledge and their enthusiasm for the subject is apparent and infectious. In the best lessons, a variety of imaginative activities is used to stimulate and motivate students and to enhance learning for those who are not necessarily strong mathematicians. These activities include group work, paired work, matching titles to different graphical data, throwing dice to examine probability, and using mini whiteboards to explore solutions. Students receive a high level of individual help in all lessons. Teachers make good use of ILT to enhance learning, for example, through powerpoint presentations and autograph software. Graphical calculators enable students to examine a wider variety of problems in lessons than would be possible through using traditional drawing methods. In less effective lessons, learning outcomes are unclear and are not shared with students, which results in a lack of focus. In other lessons, teachers talk too much and demand too little of the students.

43. There is insufficient use of assessment to guide students' progress. The department does not have a consistent approach to providing feedback to students. Although work is set, marked and corrected regularly, comments to inform students of how to improve are rarely given.

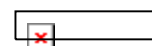
44. Students receive a high level of academic support both inside and outside of lessons. This support takes a variety of forms, for example, drop-in 'surgeries', targeted revision workshops and an extra half an hour of double staffing for GCSE. In addition, volunteers from Cambridge University help students on level 2 and 3 courses. The department also operates a 'buddy' system.

45. Teachers are experienced and well qualified. Learning is well supported by high-quality resources. An attractive, stimulating learning environment has been created through decorating classrooms and corridors with a mixture of displays of students' work and posters relating mathematics to everyday life. A member of the mathematics department administers the Young Engineers scheme which allows teams of four students to work with an engineering firm on problems related to the workplace.

Leadership and management

46. Leadership and management are good. Teachers work together well as a team. There are regular, minuted departmental meetings which focus on teaching and learning, monitoring students' progress and strategies for improvement. Good practice is shared both formally and informally through peer observations and the evaluation of a range of resources. Course reviews are comprehensive and critical performance indicators have been completed but are insufficiently used to identify necessary improvements to provision. The self-assessment report accurately identifies the strengths of the department, however, it fails to identify weaknesses in relation to assessment and teaching and learning.

Business studies



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

Strengths

- consistently good pass and retention rates on GNVQ intermediate business, AAT foundation and GCE A-level economics courses
- good home study materials on AAT courses
- effective development and integration of key skills
- regular and constructive feedback to full-time students about their progress.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on AS-level courses
- poor pass rates on AS-level and GCE A2 accounting, AAT technician and GCSE business courses
- some lessons that do not meet students' individual learning needs
- inadequate tutorial support for adults.

Scope of provision

47. The college offers a broad range of qualifications at advanced level to full-time students aged 16 to 18, including AS-level and GCE A2 courses in business studies, accounting and economics and an AVCE in business. Provision at level 2 comprises a GNVQ intermediate in business and a GCSE in applied business studies. Part-time evening provision includes AAT accounting qualifications at foundation, intermediate and technician levels. At the time of the inspection, there were 366 students aged 16 to 18 and 78 students aged 19 and over in the business curriculum area.

Achievement and standards

48. There is a mixed pattern of achievement on business courses. There are consistently high pass rates on GNVQ intermediate business, GCE A2 and AAT foundation courses. Pass rates on AS-level and GCE A2 accounting, however, are poor and significantly below national averages. At AAT technician level, many students fail to complete all the assessment components of the qualification, which results in pass rates that are below the national average and declining. Retention rates on

GCE A2 economics and GNVQ intermediate courses have been 100% for the three years to 2003/04. By contrast, retention rates on all AS-level courses are consistently below national averages.

49. Most business students are attentive in class and enjoy their lessons. Students on GCE A-level and AAT courses question teachers thoughtfully and prepare homework carefully. Many full-time students effectively develop the key skills that will be useful to them when they progress to employment or HE. For example, in some lessons, students successfully recapped and developed skills in percentages, ratios and graphical analysis. Students on vocational courses use ICT software applications and the internet with confidence; they work well in groups to discuss local and national businesses and can illustrate business theory by applying it to their work experience. There is good progression from intermediate to advanced level courses. Attendance is satisfactory overall, although, during the inspection, several full-time students arrived late for lessons in the morning and after breaks.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business studies, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level business	3	No. of starts	174	176	187
		% retention	85	85	83
		% pass rate	80	70	90
AS-level economics	3	No. of starts	15	30	33
		% retention	80	87	85
		% pass rate	100	81	79
AS-level accounting	3	No. of starts	38	40	47
		% retention	84	80	77
		% pass rate	59	66	53
AVCE business	3	No. of starts	22	33	28
		% retention	95	48	57
		% pass rate	100	100	75
GCE A2 business	3	No. of starts	117	89	64
		% retention	93	94	91
		% pass rate	90	90	97
AAT intermediate accounting	3	No. of starts	32	45	44
		% retention	88	91	91
		% pass rate	75	68	73

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

50. Most teaching is satisfactory or better. In the best lessons, teachers encourage enquiry and use carefully structured questions to test students' understanding. Humour is often used well to enliven learning. Lessons on vocational courses are lively and involve students in a broad range of practical activities. In a GNVQ intermediate marketing lesson, students took part in a focus group activity to taste test chocolate buttons. The exercise enabled key learning points to develop from real practice and students were able to evaluate the appropriateness of focus groups as a method of primary research. As part of the Young Enterprise programme, a lively debate to consider a range of fundraising options was chaired by a student and supported by a business advisor. Eventually,

students decided to organise a fun day for local schools and considered realistic budgets for, and the legal requirements related to, setting up their enterprise activity. A minority of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory and fails to recognise the individual needs of students. Teachers sometimes fail to ensure that all students participate actively. For example, there is an over-reliance on teachers explaining dull and very theoretical facts whilst students take notes.

51. Students receive regular feedback about their progress in their main subject studies and also in the three main key skills. They understand how and why targets have been set for potential grades. Teachers set work regularly and make constructive annotations that help students to understand what they need to do in order to improve.

52. Students' learning experiences are enriched by links outside the college and include participation in the ProShare Student Investor Portfolio Challenge, the Young Enterprise programme and an opportunity for several students to attend a 'young management' conference.

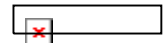
53. Support for students completing projects and assignments is available through weekly 'surgeries'. Teachers give encouragement in lessons for students to develop the analytical and evaluative skills to strive for high grades. There is good emphasis on assisting students to develop independent research and evaluative skills. There is an extensive range of useful booklets and hand-outs for AAT students to supplement their studies at home. However, there is no formal tutorial support for these or other evening-class students. Although teachers try to help students by offering e-mail support, the current arrangements for individual students to discuss their progress are inadequate.

54. The overall standard of accommodation and specialist equipment is satisfactory. Interesting posters and topical business materials create a welcoming curriculum identity in classrooms. For large groups, most classrooms are cramped and restrict teaching and learning strategies. Occasionally, the arrangement of furniture prevents the use of small group activities in lessons and there is insufficient space for the teacher to gain access to all students to provide individual support.

Leadership and management

55. Leadership and management are good. The business team is led by an enthusiastic head of department. The team meets regularly and there are constructive discussions about ways to improve the quality of provision, including strategies to improve retention and pass rates. Some, though not all, actions have led to improvements such as higher pass rates for AS-level business students in 2003/04. This has, in turn, led to an improved progression rate from AS-level to GCE A2 business. Several staff are unclear about specific course targets that have been set for retention and pass rates.

Art and design



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

Strengths

- outstanding pass and retention rates

- high standards of students' work

- very effective teaching and learning

- good student support

- excellent range of enrichment activities

- high-quality learning resources.

Weaknesses

- insufficient rigour in some aspects of quality assurance.

Scope of provision

56. The college offers a wide range of art and design courses for full-time students aged 16 to 18 and part-time continuing education and professional training courses for students aged 19 or over. Full-time provision includes GCSE art and design and AS-level and GCE A2 courses in art, photography, design technology and history of art. The college also offers an AVCE in art and design. Part-time courses include AS-level and GCE A2 photography and art. At the time of the inspection, there were 568 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 110 part-time students aged 19 or over studying visual arts. Students attend from a wide geographic area and many students cite the college's good reputation for art and design as a reason for enrolling.

Achievement and standards

57. Students' achievements are outstanding. There are consistently high pass rates on all level 3 art and design courses. During the period 2000/01 to 2003/04 the percentage of students gaining high grade passes in GCE A-level art, art and design and design technology has been well above the national averages. A high proportion of students achieve grades significantly higher than those predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. Students following the AVCE programme achieved 100% pass rates for each of the three years between 2001 and 2004. Retention rates are consistently high on all courses.

58. Students produce work of a very high standard, much of which shows a developing understanding in the use of a range of materials, media and techniques including painting and drawing, printmaking, ceramics, sculpture, graphics, design technology and photography. They are able to talk confidently about their work, use subject-specific language well and develop their ideas by producing rich and experimental sketchbooks. Painting at GCE A level is exceptional, particularly in the development of work from contextual references and the maturity in application of mark making. High standards of work in both two-dimensional and three-dimensional design are effectively displayed around the college and within the art studios, where they are often used as learning resources. Students also exhibit their work in the local community and host very successful and well-attended annual exhibition evenings for parents and prospective students.

A sample of retention and pass rates in art and design, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level design technology	3	No. of starts	84	88	89
		% retention	88	89	91
		% pass rate	93	95	99
AVCE art and design	3	No. of starts	20	19	19
		% retention	90	79	84
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level art	3	No. of starts	138	124	103
		% retention	97	98	97
		% pass rate	97	99	100
GCE A-level history of art	3	No. of starts	25	21	23
		% retention	88	100	91
		% pass rate	100	95	95
GCE A-level design technology	3	No. of starts	55	48	59
		% retention	96	98	100
		% pass rate	96	100	100

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

59. Teaching and learning are very effective. Teachers are very knowledgeable about their subjects. They deliver challenging lessons with great enthusiasm and carefully maintain focus and pace throughout. Lessons are well structured to allow students to experiment and develop personal approaches using a wide range of materials and techniques. In an AS-level textiles lesson, the teacher effectively encouraged students to relate the qualities of watercolour paint to the silk painting they were undertaking for the first time. AVCE students worked productively on a range of sculptures and, with encouragement from the teacher, talked confidently about their work and the progress they were making. In an AS-level art history lesson on classical Greek architecture, the teacher displayed sound knowledge of the subject and inspired students to recite specific and quite complex architectural terms such as 'entasis' and 'intercolumniation' in relation to a carefully constructed slide presentation. Students receive consistent verbal feedback and encouragement, although there is little recorded formative assessment during extended project work to give students clear guidance of how well they are doing and where they need improve.

60. There is good support for students. Regular support 'surgeries' are available with a clear booking system outlined in the course handbooks. Group tutorials provide good forums for information dissemination. Students often work in studios outside of their lessons during lunch and break times supported well by tutors and technicians.

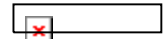
61. Students benefit from an excellent range of enrichment activities. During the past year, GCE A-level students have visited galleries including the Tate Modern, the Royal Academy, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the New Designers Gallery to strengthen their appreciation of the work of other artists. There are exciting opportunities for all arts students to study abroad. Regular annual field trips abroad include visits to Paris, Venice, Florence and New York. All AVCE and design technology students undertake a range of subject-specific work placements around Cambridge. Art and design technology students recently worked effectively alongside two sculptors in residence to develop their own technical skills.

62. High-quality learning resources effectively support students' work in all course areas. Course handbooks are visually stimulating and very student-focused in their language and appearance; they contain schemes of work, summary assessment information, work checklists, references to Internet sites and case study guidance. The learning resource centre holds a wide range of current specialist subject books, videotapes and periodicals that are used regularly and are valued by students. A very well-managed intranet site contains stimulating learning materials that have been developed by course teams. The department employs experienced arts technicians who support lesson preparation and students' project work well. There are very well-equipped art and technology studios and a digital arts suite that hosts a range of ICT and design equipment. Storage space for three-dimensional work is limited. Work is stacked both outside and inside the art studios which restricts access to studios.

Leadership and management

63. Leadership and management are good overall. Courses are well managed. Staff work very closely in course teams and share good practice well. Design technology teachers make effective use of contacts with local design-related businesses to secure work placements and project partnerships. There is insufficient rigour in some aspects of quality assurance. The department development plan does not sufficiently focus on the impact its actions will have on learning. Qualitative information gathered from student satisfaction surveys is not analysed sufficiently to identify areas for improvement. Risk assessments that have been undertaken recently have not sufficiently addressed issues that have been identified.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- high pass rates in most subjects

- students' very good analytical and research skills

- much good teaching

- good academic support for students.

Weaknesses

- low and declining pass rates in AS-level geography

- o insufficient use of targets to develop students' learning.

Scope of provision

64. The college offers a wide range of AS-level and GCE A2 courses in geography, history, religious studies, philosophy and classical civilisations. There is a GCSE course in geography. At the time of the inspection, 590 full-time students aged 16 to 18 were enrolled on these courses.

Achievement and standards

65. Achievements are good on most AS-level and GCE A2 courses. Pass rates in GCE A2 history and philosophy and in AS-level history and religious studies are above national averages. There are low and declining pass rates in AS-level geography. Retention rates are generally around the national average, with the exception of AS-level philosophy which is significantly below.

66. Students are well motivated and keen to learn. They use their time effectively in lessons. GCE A-level students demonstrate the ability to think critically and to make sound judgements; they display good powers of analysis, are fluent in oral work and use ILT confidently to research tasks and for essay work. Students use specialist terminology confidently. In a GCE A-level religious studies lesson, the students considered the concept of 'creatus ex nihilo' comparing the thesis that God had created the world from nothing with that of Buddha who proposes that the world is a place in which people are trapped. Attendance is satisfactory overall, although some lessons were poorly attended.

A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
AS-level geography	3	No. of starts	111	114	112
		% retention	88	91	90
		% pass rate	86	81	83
AS-level history	3	No. of starts	110	128	135
		% retention	95	95	89
		% pass rate	93	93	87
AS-level philosophy	3	No. of starts	45	41	47
		% retention	76	76	66
		% pass rate	88	71	81
AS-level religious studies	3	No. of starts	23	21	36
		% retention	78	86	94
		% pass rate	94	94	85
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	87	70	73
		% retention	97	100	95
		% pass rate	99	97	93
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	92	74	81
		% retention	93	95	95
		% pass rate	99	99	95

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

67. Most teaching is good or better. Teachers use effective strategies to develop students' analytical and research skills. They plan their lessons well and make good use of learning resources to engage students' interests and extend their learning. In a GCE A-level geography lesson, students used classroom computers to interrogate a San Francisco earthquake preparation site. They developed a questionnaire for the residents of the Bay Area of San Francisco to check their awareness of the precautions to take in case of an earthquake. This exercise stimulated the students' imagination as they investigated the measures taken to mitigate the impact of an earthquake on that community. In an AS-level history lesson covering Hitler's rise to power, a video, video stills and powerpoint were used very effectively. In the subsequent analysis and discussion, students identified the ways in which the publicity was being used in 1933 to depict Hitler as the God-like 'saviour' of the German people. In the less effective lessons, there is insufficient use of targeted questions; teachers are overly directive in discussion and do not recognise that, in their efforts to ensure that all students are involved, the more able students are finding the discussions insufficiently challenging.

68. Homework is set and completed on a weekly basis. Teachers mark and return work promptly. The feedback and comments provided to classical studies students are particularly helpful in enabling students to improve their work. However, there is no systematic approach to cross marking or moderation, and insufficient use is made of targets to develop students' learning. Individual learning plans do not provide explicit targets for improvement or record current achievement.

69. There is a wide range of subject-based enrichment activities. The college offers trips, visits and outside lectures from nationally recognised speakers. Curriculum visits have included trips to Barcelona, Paris and a Buddhist centre.

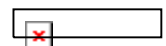
70. Guidance and support for students are very good. Academic support for students is very good and includes weekly subject 'surgeries' and informal support by teachers. Procedures to respond to absence and lateness are not consistently applied.

71. Teachers are well qualified for the subjects that they teach. Classrooms have good, relevant displays that create a positive learning environment. There is a good supply of ILT equipment, including computers and electronic whiteboards. There is an excellent intranet that is easily accessed from within the college or from home both by staff and students. Subject materials are extensive and students are able to obtain 'catch up' notes as well as more detailed additional materials from the intranet. The learning resource centre is well stocked with humanities resources.

Leadership and management

72. Leadership and management are good. Effective communications exist between staff, and the delegation of responsibilities is clear. Curriculum reviews, lesson observations and self-assessment have been used to identify what needs to be done in order to improve retention and pass rates. Subsequent actions have been largely successful, although strategies to improve achievements in AS-level geography have yet to have any significant impact. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and inclusive and provides a realistic view of each department. Action plans lack measurable targets, so meaningful monitoring is not possible.

Social science



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

Contributory grade for psychology is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- high pass rates in psychology and sociology

- students achieve better results than predicted

- much good teaching and learning

- good support for students

- highly effective social science intranet.

Weaknesses

- very low pass rates in law

- some overcrowded classrooms.

Scope of provision

73. The college offers AS-level and GCE A2 courses in psychology, sociology, law and government and politics. GCSE is offered in psychology and sociology. The majority of students are aged 16 to 18. Evening provision is limited to one GCE A-level class in psychology and one in law. At the time of inspection, there were 693 students studying social science subjects.

Achievement and standards

74. Examination performance in psychology at both AS level and GCE A2 is outstanding. Pass rates and achievement of high grades are above national averages and consistently large numbers of students gain higher grades than predicted from their GCSE profile. Sociology pass rates at GCSE and GCE A2 are also higher than the national average. Pass rates for AS-level sociology are similar to the national average but the achievement of high grades is very good and students consistently exceed the grades predicted from their GCSE profile. Pass rates in government and politics are satisfactory overall. In GCE A-level law, pass rates are poor and students' performance is significantly lower than expected from their GCSE profile. Retention rates for GCSE psychology and sociology are consistently above the national average. At GCE A level, retention rates are satisfactory overall, with the exception of GCE A-level law, which has declined to below the national average over the three years to 2004.

75. Students express their views confidently in lessons and develop good team-working skills. Advanced level students demonstrate the ability to evaluate critically; for example, when discussing the impact of sampling, ethics or ecological validity on research findings. Second-year students' essay and report work shows excellent development of skills in presenting and supporting a logical argument. There is good progression to HE from all social science courses.

A sample of retention and pass rates in social science, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	52	58	42
		% retention	87	81	83
		% pass rate	47	47	51
AS-level law	3	No. of starts	73	80	106
		% retention	85	90	89
		% pass rate	61	47	66
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	305	345	372
		% retention	83	91	87
		% pass rate	84	94	94
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	151	137	154
		% retention	77	88	82
		% pass rate	89	96	88
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	233	179	241
		% retention	93	98	94
		% pass rate	94	97	96
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	83	64	73
		% retention	95	100	99
		% pass rate	100	98	99

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

76. Most teaching is good or better. Teachers plan their lessons well to maximise students' active involvement in learning. Effective questioning is used to increase the depth of learning, make links with earlier topics and carefully test students' understanding. Students are often invited to use their own life experience to illustrate social science concepts. For example, AS-level sociology students discussed their experience of newspaper and television reports to illustrate the concept of hegemony. In a GCSE psychology lesson, students learnt about personal space by measuring how close other people could get to them before they felt uncomfortable; following this experience the teacher was able to draw out from them many of the points that psychologists have made about this topic. AS-level psychology students tested their colleagues for autism and then analysed the results of the same test as it was used in a piece of published research; involvement in this way gave great personal understanding of one of the core studies and also developed analytic skills. In the weaker lessons, students did not settle down to work in a timely manner and the briefing and debriefing of tasks set were not effective in focusing their attention on key learning points.

77. Assignments and homework are set regularly. Most feedback is helpful and indicates how students might improve their marks. Psychology assignments are very effectively managed; there are common feedback sheets, regular standardisation meetings and all students' marks are kept on

a database which is used to identify those who are performing poorly.

78. There is a wide range of enrichment activities. For example, politics students have talked to people involved in the miners' strike, and an animal rights campaigner came to speak to sociology students. Key skills are effectively integrated with students' academic study.

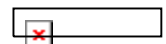
79. Guidance and support are good. Students greatly value the support provided by teachers both in and out of the classroom. Regular subject 'surgeries' are provided to help them with topics they find difficult or have missed. Most 'surgeries' deal with individual students' problems but some are advertised with a set topic, particularly in psychology where sessions are organised to deal with each of the core studies in the syllabus. Individual learning plans are produced and reviewed twice a year but many targets lack precision.

80. Teachers are well qualified; many are examiners and some have contributed to textbooks. Learning resources are well constructed and often help structure learning within lessons. Learning materials in psychology are particularly well organised by the use of a system in which all studies and related theories are presented on hand-outs of the same colour. An excellent intranet facility contains a substantial amount of material relevant to all the social science syllabuses, including interactive materials on the core studies in psychology and an engaging activity on youth culture for sociology. Most lessons are held in base rooms that contain appropriate and stimulating subject materials. Psychology has recently moved to a new set of rooms, which provides a comfortable learning environment. However, for some lessons in other subjects, the size of the classroom presents a challenge to learning as students have to sit with their backs turned to others, which creates difficulties for management of discussions and small group activities.

Leadership and management

81. Leadership and management are good. Staff work well together and have a common purpose in seeking to improve students' achievement. Regular team meetings are supplemented by very extensive informal networking. The co-ordination of teaching plans, assignments and resources is very effective. Reasons for poor performance in law have been effectively identified and changes have been made, resulting in a much better learning experience for the present cohort of students. The self-assessment process is robust in psychology, but in sociology some action points are not sufficiently focused to allow for effective monitoring.

English and modern foreign languages



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

Strengths

- high pass rates in most subjects at GCE A2 and in GCSE English

- much good teaching

- very effective learning resources

- good enrichment activities.

Weaknesses

- low number of high-grade passes on GCE A-level English courses
- insufficient sharing of good practice..

Scope of provision

82. There is a good range of provision in English and modern foreign languages. Courses offered include English language, English literature, English language and literature, French, German, Italian and Spanish at AS level and GCE A2. GCSE courses in English, Italian and Spanish are also available. National vocational qualification (NVQ) Spanish is also offered as part of the enrichment programme for full-time students. The college offers evening classes for adults in English language and English literature and French at AS level and GCSEs in French, Spanish and Italian. Beginners' languages courses for adults are also offered in French, Spanish and Italian. There are 764 students aged 16 to 18 in this curriculum area and 212 students aged 19 or over. Modern foreign languages students represent 15% of the total number of students aged 16 to 18 in this curriculum area.

Achievement and standards

83. Pass rates at GCE A2 are high on most courses. They are also consistently above national averages in AS-level English language and literature and German and GCSE English. However, pass rates for AS-level English language, English literature and Italian fell significantly in 2003/04. GCSE pass rates for modern foreign languages are also low. There are low numbers of high-grade passes on GCE A-level English courses. Retention rates are generally high although at AS level they declined in several subjects in 2003/04.

84. Students are responsive and well motivated. They make confident use of specialist terminology and some demonstrate good understanding of complex grammatical concepts. Modern foreign language students gain a good understanding of the target language spoken at natural speed.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English and modern foreign languages, 2002 to 2004

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2002	2003	2004
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	135	114	126
		% retention	85	88	86
		% pass rate	57	69	75
AS-level English language	3	No. of starts	45	47	60
		% retention	84	89	87
		% pass rate	95	74	87
AS-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	150	143	149
		% retention	87	87	89

		% pass rate	98	94	95
AS-level French language	3	No. of starts	33	37	50
		% retention	88	89	82
		% pass rate	93	97	85
GCE A-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	72	92	80
		% retention	97	98	94
		% pass rate	99	99	100
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	50	60	78
		% retention	96	97	97
		% pass rate	98	97	93

Source: ISR (2002 and 2003), college (2004)

Quality of education and training

85. Most teaching is good or better. Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and there are several native speakers teaching modern foreign languages. Well-designed activities help students to analyse texts or apply grammatical structures. In the best lessons, there is good summary of learning through effective facilitation of discussion or feedback from group work. Learning is encouraged through the use of lively, topical examples. In an AS-level English language lesson, the students completed an exercise on word class via the internet as a means of revising linguistic terminology. They then used this information to analyse the language in the personal advertisements column from a local newspaper to identify how imagery is used in everyday language. This linked very well to a debate on political correctness and the effect of language on attitudes. There is a positive approach to equality of opportunity. In one lesson, a teacher used a speakerphone to assist a hearing impaired student, and in another a student in a wheelchair, who had some speaking difficulties, clearly felt at ease within the group and played an active role in the lesson, volunteering to read aloud from the text. In the less effective lessons, there is insufficient focus on the learning taking place and students lose concentration, or finish tasks early with no additional activities to complete. Learning is not always reinforced and students are insufficiently challenged when teachers miss opportunities to elicit their views or to direct questions at individual students.

86. Most assessment practice is good. Clear and effective systems are in place and are used well for the assessment of coursework in English subjects. A common front sheet for NVQ assessment in modern foreign languages provides useful information to the students and enables them to comment on their own progress. In modern foreign languages, systems are not shared between teachers and there is insufficient standardisation of GCSE coursework.

87. There are good enrichment opportunities. English students produce an excellent magazine each month containing film reviews and articles on a range of topical issues and sports. English students have seen productions of *Othello* and the film *Sleepy Hollow*. They have heard lectures on the Gothic genre, Victorian melodrama and Caribbean poetry, delivered by visiting speakers. A high proportion of students on modern foreign languages courses undertake work experience abroad. Recent examples include placements in a chocolate shop, a veterinary practice and a radio station.

88. Support for students is good. Teachers are encouraging and approachable and students seek help when necessary. There are regular subject 'surgeries'. Four modern foreign languages assistants give weekly conversation lessons for AS-level and GCE A2 students, work in lessons alongside teachers and help to prepare learning resources.

89. Resources in English and modern foreign languages are excellent. They include an intranet site with online dictionaries and links to useful websites, live radio and several TV channels. The learning resource centre houses a wide range of specialist books and periodicals and an extensive collection

of videos. All full-time students have at least one lesson per week in the languages computer suite which provides access to the 'virtual laboratory'.

Leadership and management

90. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Course management responsibilities are clearly identified and regular meetings take place to discuss students' progress, curriculum development and sharing resources. There is thorough analysis of data and students' views, but some aspects of quality assurance are ineffective. For example, some aspects of modern foreign languages, such as the data and feedback relating to adult students, are analysed separately and this does not give a clear overview of the area as a whole. Weaknesses identified in self-assessment reports are not always included in the action plan. Actions identified are imprecise and lack clarity. There is insufficient sharing of good practice.

Part D: College data

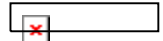
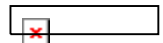


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2003/04

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	0	17
2	7	17
3	64	12
4/5	0	3
Other	29	51
Total	100	100



Source: provided by the college in autumn2004

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	1,163	51	8
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	237	2	2
Business administration,	454	208	5



management and professional			
Information and communication technology	571	74	4
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	365	114	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	17	0	0
Health, social care and public services	30	15	0
Visual and performing arts and media	1,485	176	11
Humanities	3,344	274	25
English, languages and communication	1,874	192	14
Foundation programmes	25	48	1
Unknown	3,728	5	27
Total	13,293	1,159	100

Source: provided by the college in 2004

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
1	Starters excluding transfers	*	*	*	*	46	*
	Retention rate %	*	*	*	*	100	*
	National average %	81	75	83	71	72	73
	Pass rate %	*	*	*	*	100	*
	National average %	67	75	72	68	73	75
2	Starters excluding transfers	785	789	709	30	64	102
	Retention rate %	79	84	83	80	78	75
	National average %	80	81	81	71	70	69
	Pass rate %	89	90	88	53	69	75
	National average %	86	87	88	67	73	77
3	Starters excluding transfers	6,243	5,757	5,721	138	115	119
	Retention rate %	85	87	91	79	77	92

	National average %	80	89	90	65	72	73
	Pass rate %	89	90	88	53	69	75
	National average %	86	87	88	67	73	77
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	*	*	*	*	30	26
	Retention rate %	*	*	*	*	97	100
	National average %	**	**	**	**	**	70
	Pass rate %	*	*	*	*	52	54
	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 2000 to 2002: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2003.

2. College rates for 1999/2000 to 2001/02: College ISR

* numbers too low to provide a valid calculation

** data unavailable

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	78	18	4	81
Level 2 (intermediate)	63	37	0	16
Level 1 (foundation)	0	100	0	1
Other sessions	100	0	0	1
Totals	75	22	3	99

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