



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT MARCH 2000

Brighton College of Technology Training Agency

SUMMARY

Brighton College of Technology provides good training in computer engineering and satisfactory training in hospitality, where there is good employer involvement, and in foundation for work. Construction training is less than satisfactory although the training in carpentry and joinery is good. Trainees have access to the full range of college facilities. There is insufficient assessment in the workplace. Some trainees face delays in their training because of the fixed academic start dates. Equal opportunities are widely promoted although access to the college is poor for trainees with mobility difficulties. The college has recently won funding to rectify this issue. The college has a sound planning cycle which includes the planning of work-based training. The college does not adequately integrate the on- and off-the-job training and there is not enough co-ordination between the work-based training unit and the curriculum areas. Quality assurance is underdeveloped but there are many good examples of continuous improvement during the last two years.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	4
Engineering	2
Hospitality	3
Foundation for work	3

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	3
Management of training	4
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good carpentry and joinery training
- ◆ high achievement of computing qualifications
- ◆ good employer partnerships in hospitality
- ◆ wide promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ trainees make good use of college facilities
- ◆ many examples of continuous improvement

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ some trainees make slow progress
- ◆ low achievement of jobs
- ◆ inadequate work placements in foundation
- ◆ on- and off-the-job training not integrated
- ◆ unsystematic co-ordination of training across curriculum areas
- ◆ underdeveloped quality assurance system for work-based training

INTRODUCTION

1. Brighton College of Technology (the college) is a general further education college on the south coast of England. It serves the towns of Brighton and Hove which together have a population of 250,000 people. It has been providing educational courses for over 100 years and offers training from foundation level to higher national diplomas. The college has seven sites. Some accommodation is poor but the college has just been awarded funding to implement a major new building strategy. This should give the college a single accessible campus. The college has 1,624 full-time and 15,000 part-time students. The college has held a contract for nine years with Sussex Enterprise, the local training and enterprise council, for work-based training. Currently, the college has 100 trainees. Two trainees are in agriculture, 15 in construction, 37 in engineering, 18 in hospitality, two in hair and beauty, three in media and design and 23 in foundation for work. Fourteen trainees are modern apprentices, nine are national trainees, 34 are youth trainees and 43 are adult trainees. Inspection focused on the four areas with the most trainees. The college also provides the full-time education and training option for the Brighton and Hove New Deal Unit of Delivery. There are 57 clients on 11 vocational courses.

2. The Sussex economy is healthy and is particularly strong in high technology, manufacturing, hotels and visitor attractions. The college has benefited from the improved optimism of businesses and the need to recruit staff with high level skills. The college works within the 'Education Action Zone' for east Brighton, intended to raise the standard of education in this socially deprived area. The college currently has three major European Social Fund (ESF) projects and is part of another project to facilitate work-related learning for 14 to 16 year olds for 120 students from its six feeder schools. Brighton and Hove have figures higher than the national average for residents claiming income support and housing benefit. The area also has higher-than-average levels of people with mental health problems. People from minority ethnic groups account for less than 4 per cent of the population. Six point five per cent of the adult population is unemployed and nearly 20 per cent of young people have been unemployed for more than 26 weeks. The suicide rate is 11.4 per cent, again higher than the national average. The college is in the top 21 per cent of general further education colleges facing high levels of deprivation. Thirty per cent of people in work are employed in the financial and business sector, 8 per cent are employed in hotels and catering and 7 per cent in manufacturing. Seventy-two per cent of firms employ fewer than five people and account for just over 13 per cent of local employment.

3. In 1999, the percentage of school leavers in Brighton achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 42.1 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. The college produced its self-assessment report in December 1999 and updated it in February 2000. A self-assessment report was also produced for the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) whose inspection took place at the same time as the Training Standards Council's inspection. Self-assessment is part of the college's quality assurance cycle. The director for curriculum and quality and the training agency manager produced the self-assessment report. The work-based training report was similar to the FEFC report and included some of the same strengths and weaknesses. Some of the strengths were descriptive rather than evaluative. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by the college for engineering, hospitality, foundation for work, trainee support and quality assurance. Construction, equal opportunities and management of training were awarded lower grades. Construction and management of training were less than satisfactory.

5. Six inspectors spent a total of 24 days on inspection. They interviewed 63 trainees (53 per cent of the trainees), 24 employees and 53 college staff (some staff had second interviews). They visited 26 placements and observed seven training sessions. Inspectors reviewed trainees' files, portfolios, management information, curriculum and assessment material, internal and external verifier records, and policies and procedures.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction	1					1
Engineering		1	1			2
Foundation for work	1	1	1			3
Total	2	2	2	0	0	6

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 4

6. There are 15 trainees in construction of whom three are modern apprentices, five are national trainees and seven are on other youth training programmes. They work towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in electrical installation, carpentry and joinery and painting and decorating. There are five trainees in each occupational area. Trainees attend college one day a week for the off-the-job training. There are six New Deal clients working on a construction project at Gatwick Airport. This project aims to provide them with the skills of a general builder's labourer. Clients are working towards the intermediate construction certificate or the level 2 NVQ in

construction operations. All work-based trainees are employed. Carpentry and joinery trainees are assessed in the college and in the workplace. Other trainees are assessed in the college through simulated assignment work. Over the past five years, retention rates for those on carpentry and joinery courses have been between 70 and 86 per cent, while achievement rates have varied between 61 and 78 NVQs for each hundred leavers. The director of the division wrote the self-assessment report for construction with help from specialist staff and the training agency manager. The report identified strengths, some of which were contractual requirements and weaknesses. The weaknesses were underestimated. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded a grade less than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ good training and assessment in carpentry and joinery

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ NVQ at level 2 offered but not accredited
- ◆ poor facilities for painting and decorating
- ◆ good practice not shared between crafts

7. Most trainees have good on-the-job training in a range of work placements. Employers provide a variety of opportunities for trainees to develop their skills. On-the-job training is well related to off-the-job training. Trainees in these work placements make good progress towards achieving their NVQs. Carpentry and joinery trainees are involved in a barn conversion and refurbishment, while others are fitting good-quality kitchen and bedroom furniture. Electrical installation trainees are involved in domestic installations and designing control systems, and the painting and decorating trainees are refurbishing houses and flats. All this work is completed to industrial standards.

POOR PRACTICE

A trainee who is employed by the college in the estates curriculum area is working towards an NVQ at level 2 in electrical installation. His work is based on the maintenance needs of the college buildings and does not provide the range of tasks the trainee needs to fulfil the NVQ requirements. The college had not identified this shortfall in the trainee's experience.

8. Carpentry and joinery training is particularly good. Workshop facilities are of a high standard and include a good variety of equipment and areas set up for trainees to practise different methods. This enables assessors to take full advantage of the trainees' development and to assess the trainees as they master new skills. During the last three years some trainees have been successful in gaining both silver and bronze awards from the awarding body for outstanding achievement. The carpentry and joinery area has been recognised by the awarding body as a centre of excellence. During the last six months, assessors from the college have visited trainees in the workplace. This is welcomed by employers and helps to improve the links between on- and off-the-job training. Key skills training is well integrated into the trainees' assignment and project work. However, the trainees' progress in key

skills is not adequately monitored. Assessment is well planned and systematic. Records are comprehensive and well maintained. Trainees understand the NVQ standards and know how they are progressing. The internal verification in carpentry and joinery is rigorous. Trainees' portfolios are of a high standard.

9. Training in electrical installation is well delivered but focuses on the traditional craft qualification and not the NVQ. Portfolio building and key skills training are being introduced but are not seen as a priority. Opportunities for work-based assessment are missed because assessment is not adequately planned and there are not enough work-based assessors. The college is not accredited to offer the NVQ at level 2, even though it is promoted to trainees and is part of the individual learning plan.

10. The college's facilities for painting and decorating are poor and do not provide sufficient opportunities for skills development. Trainees are not making adequate progress towards their NVQ. Assessment records are incomplete. Staff have not provided sufficient support to trainees and, on occasion, have been absent from classes without explanation. A new tutor has recently been appointed. The good practice in the carpentry and joinery programmes is not shared with the electrical installation and construction programmes. A new project in construction has just begun for New Deal clients. Seventeen clients were enrolled onto the programme but not all attend regularly and only two were available during the inspection. While it is too early in the programme to evaluate the quality of the training, some of the work undertaken was of a low standard. Trainees are not sufficiently challenged and have few resources to complete their tasks. For example, there are not enough shoring boards and there is not enough digging equipment. The training is not well structured and there has been no assessment to date.

Engineering

Grade 2

11. There are 35 adult trainees in engineering and two youth trainees in motor vehicle engineering. The motor vehicle training was not inspected because of the small number of trainees. Adult trainees are recruited by referral from the Employment Service and in response to local newspaper advertisements. There is a selection procedure consisting of an interview and a formal test. Once trainees have been accepted onto the course they are given an open learning pack to complete before the course starts. Trainees work towards a higher national certificate (HNC) in either computer engineering (hardware) or computer software engineering. The training lasts 12 months and starts in January. Training is carried out in college premises. During the summer trainees have a 10-week work-placement. College staff visit trainees during this period. Trainees are assessed using periodic assignments and an end-of-course project. The last two weeks of the

course are spent on job-search activities. Inspectors identified additional strengths to those identified in the self-assessment report and awarded a grade equal to that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effectively planned and taught training
- ◆ good open learning material
- ◆ high achievement of qualifications

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate resources
- ◆ low achievement of jobs

GOOD PRACTICE

Some course material is available through the college's intranet. Students can download all or part of the material when and if required from remote terminals. This innovative practice makes teaching material accessible at any time from any location.

12. The training programmes for both courses are well planned. Trainees receive a schedule for the whole year which shows the units to be achieved, the 10-week work placement and the weekly programme. This information is also available on the training room wall and on the college intranet site. All trainees have access to the college intranet. Trainees and the training agency identify work placements. Trainees apply to placement employers as if they were applying for permanent employment. Curriculum staff help trainees prepare curricula vitae and give advice on techniques for interview. Staff also promote full-time jobs for trainees by pointing out job advertisements and working with trainees on their applications. Staff are well qualified and provide effective teaching. Trainees are enthusiastic and motivated by this training. Lessons are well organised and trainees are involved at all stages of lessons. This applies from software engineering, where trainees develop computer programmes individually on screen, to practical sessions in computer engineering, where trainees identify and rectify computer faults. Practical facilities are available up to 8.30 p.m. each day and tutors make themselves available for help and advice outside normal teaching hours. Where possible trainees use their work placement experience as a basis for their practical project. This project is assessed as part of the course. Trainees' progress is reviewed each term and a report produced for the training agency manager.

POOR PRACTICE

The engineering computing room is used for both practical and theoretical training. This means equipment cannot be left out when training is switched to theoretical work and trainees have to set up equipment before they are able to resume their practical activities.

13. When trainees are accepted onto the programme they receive an open learning booklet. Most trainees have not studied for some considerable time. The open learning material helps trainees to revise their study skills and prepares them for the course. The booklet and an associated test are used during the initial stages of training. Two professional training manuals covering theoretical knowledge have been produced for computer engineering students. The material has also been placed on the college intranet. Students can access this facility from home or other remote locations.

14. The two training rooms are not conducive to good learning. The software laboratory has poor ventilation. The computer engineering room is used as a classroom for theoretical training in addition to being used as a practical training room. Computers under test and repair are piled in corners of this room when trainees have theoretical training and brought out when the training is practical. Some benches face the wall and students have to turn round to see the white-board. Trainees have difficulties in taking notes in such circumstances. Transparencies cannot be projected onto the screen because the room has been rearranged since the screen was installed. During practical sessions the room is exceptionally crowded when trainees work on computers. Trainees have difficulties seeing what is on the computer screen when the tutor is illustrating particular points. It has been recognised for some time that an on-screen video projector for both training rooms would be beneficial for trainees' learning. One was delivered during the inspection. In computer engineering there is a shortage of up-to-date computers and component parts to industrial standard. Normal practice is for two trainees to work on one computer.

15. The trainees' achievement of jobs is low. Over the four-year period between 1996 and 1999 (inclusive) a total of 103 trainees started training. Of the 71 of those who completed their training, 61 gained a higher national certificate qualification and 29 (28 per cent) gained jobs. In computer engineering, a total of 87 trainees started their course over the same period. Of these, 65 completed their programme and 54 of these gained their higher national qualification. Over the comparable period 45 (52 per cent) gained permanent employment within six months of completing the course. Information technology is, however, a high employment area in Brighton. All trainees from both courses had been unemployed for at least six months before starting the course. Most have not been employed for considerably longer. One trainee had been unemployed for five years.

Hospitality

Grade 3

16. There are 18 trainees in hospitality. Eleven are modern apprentices, five are national trainees and two are on other youth training programmes. Twenty-seven trainees have been recruited in the last two years. Nine trainees have left the programme before completing their training plans. Trainees are recruited from the careers service or referred from employers. Twelve of the trainees are part of the Brighton and Hove Hospitality Partnership (BHHP), a specific initiative involving local employers. Most trainees attend college one day each week for practical kitchen and theory sessions. Assessment and verification are carried out in the college. Assessments are supported by witness statements from the employers. Two work-based supervisors are working towards their assessor awards.

Inspectors did not agree with the strengths identified in the self-assessment report and regarded some as no more than normal practice. Inspectors identified additional strengths and awarded the same grade as that given in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good range of work placements
- ◆ innovative partnership for training
- ◆ good key skills training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow progress by some trainees
- ◆ inadequate resources for training
- ◆ inadequate support for work-based assessors
- ◆ some unrealistic NVQ targets set

17. There is a good variety of work placements. Trainees gain a range of experience in kitchens, front of house, housekeeping and restaurants including experience in four- and five-star hotels. Trainees also work towards company-specific qualifications including food hygiene, health and safety and customer service.

18. The BHHP initiative is a good example of employers working together. Numbers involved in the project are small but hoteliers have overcome the traditional barriers of competition with each other to plan and implement a well structured training programme, which provides competent and qualified staff. Trainees receive nearly all of their training on the job but come into college for key skills training. A college assessor and the training agency manager visit trainees in the workplace. Trainees are selected by a joint college/employer panel. Training is planned, lasts three years and leads towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in hospitality. Trainees spend six months in each department within a hotel; those who successfully complete the training are offered jobs with the BHHP. The seven trainees not on the BHHP initiative are working towards an NVQ at level 2. Individual training plans are completed and used in the reviews. These are carried out by the hospitality assessor and the training agency manager.

19. Key skills training is carried out by the training agency's key skills assessor. She has visited most trainees in the workplace and identified areas for collecting evidence. She also advises work-based assessors on opportunities for key skills

assessment. Trainees attend college one day a month for key skills training with an emphasis on information technology training.

20. Some trainees make slow progress towards the NVQ. During the last two years only four trainees on the BHHP project have successfully achieved an NVQ at level 2. Recruitment for the BHPP is limited to eight trainees per year. Thirty per cent of trainees withdraw from training, which is typical for this industry. Trainees have given long hours, anti-social hours and wages as some of the reasons for leaving the programme. Some trainees do not regularly attend the college for training but college staff and employers are working together to increase attendance. College staff tell the employers when trainees do not attend or are late and employers then talk to trainees about this. Employers remind trainees of the date of the training day in advance.

21. There are some inadequate resources to support the college-based training and assessment. Some equipment is in need of replacement to reflect industry standards. Some trainees do not have sufficient knives, uniforms and textbooks. The kitchen facilities are clean and are maintained in good order.

22. There is one college assessor to visit the trainees, assess them in the workplace and advise the staff who are working towards assessor qualifications. Four hours a week are allowed for these duties. It is insufficient to effectively support and monitor the workplace supervisors. Sometimes the assessor has only been able to see one trainee within the four hours because he also advises the supervisor, discusses any issues with managers and carries out an assessment. There is little sampling of work-based assessment to ensure the quality of assessment. Inspectors were unable to identify adequate verification records for the work-based trainees.

23. Some of the targets set for trainees are too demanding. The modern apprentices working towards an NVQ at level 3 do not have the supervisory opportunities to gain the award. Unless the trainees are promoted or seconded for long periods they do not have the opportunity to gain the necessary experience.

Foundation for work

Grade 3

24. There are 23 young people on the foundation for work programme. This is aimed at trainees with additional learning needs and 25 per cent have statements of special educational needs. Many trainees also have behavioural problems. Initially, trainees attend a full-time college-based programme and work towards wordpower and numberpower at entry level and an NVQ at level 1 in information technology. The programme also provides training in work-related skills such as jobsearch, interview skills, communications and personal development. In addition, all trainees undertake vocational tasters on one or two days a week; this can lead to an NVQ at level 1 in an occupational area. This is in addition to the NVQ in information

technology. Trainees are currently working towards NVQs in catering, business administration, motor vehicle maintenance, and horticulture. Training is also available in construction. Additional support needs are identified through the college's screening process. Arrangements for support are then agreed with the trainee and provided by the college's learning support unit. The self-assessment report identified strengths and weaknesses, some of which were regarded by the inspectors as normal practice and some they did not agree with. The grade awarded by inspectors was the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective skills development
- ◆ comprehensive and effective review of trainees' progress
- ◆ effectively set targets

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some trainees following inappropriate NVQs
- ◆ inadequately structured progression for trainees
- ◆ insufficient work placements

25. All trainees follow an individual timetable which is designed to develop their basic, job-related and occupational skills. Sessions are well planned and taught and use a range of resources and activities to maintain trainees' interest. Training rooms are well equipped. Tutors ensure that activities are available at different levels so that trainees can work at their own pace. Many of the teaching resources have been prepared by staff specifically to meet the needs of this group. Staff are appropriately qualified and some of the vocational tutors also have expertise in basic skills and learning support. They use aspects of the occupational training to develop trainees' literacy and numeracy skills. Group sizes are small and some sessions use a team teaching approach to increase the level of individual attention. The work produced by trainees shows clear evidence of the development of their skills. Attendance is good and trainees understand that regular attendance is an important part of gaining a job.

26. Trainees' progress is monitored effectively by means of a tutorial every fortnight and a progress review meeting every 12 weeks. The training agency manager conducts progress reviews with the course co-ordinator and the trainee. Discussions are conducted on a one-to-one basis and as a group. Trainees build a strong working relationship with their personal tutor and are confident about discussing personal and confidential matters in the tutorial. The college's curriculum area of 'Entry Level' and 'Learning Development' is responsible for the tutorials and for the personal development aspects of the programme. The course co-ordinator from this area has recently been allocated time to liaise with tutors in the vocational areas to discuss trainees' progress. This co-ordination is working well

and trainees have a clear understanding of their progress on the different parts of their programme. Occupational tutors provide written reports every term and these are used in the formal progress reviews.

27. Trainees have short-term targets for all aspects of their development, such as managing their anger and improving their eye contact with others. Tutors regularly remind trainees of the targets during training sessions. Successful achievement of targets is celebrated during tutorials and weekly staff meetings. College certificates are also used to recognise personal progress. Trainees see the target-setting as an adult approach to managing their own development. They are clear about the benefits of achieving their targets and are highly motivated to achieve.

28. All trainees are encouraged to gain one or two NVQs at level 1. In some cases, this has led to trainees undertaking NVQs not linked to their career aim. In a few cases, training is not available in the trainees' chosen areas. All trainees undertake the NVQ at level 1 in information technology. However, the full NVQ is not appropriate for all trainees. There has been some disruptive behaviour in information technology sessions. There have also been problems in obtaining work-based evidence for the NVQ; an alternative accreditation route such as the key skills unit in information technology is not offered.

29. Trainees work towards qualifications for two years. This is not appropriate for some trainees. Many trainees see progression into a job or mainstream training as their primary goal. In the year 1999 to 2000, only 35 per cent of trainees completed their plan. The college has only just started to record the destination of trainees in foundation for work. Achievement rates have increased over the last three years. Of the 17 leavers in the year 1999 to 2000, 53 per cent achieved wordpower and numberpower qualifications at entry level. This is an increase of 14 per cent on the previous year. In the same group of leavers, 35 per cent also achieved an NVQ at level 1. This is an increase of 18 per cent on the previous year but is still below the average NVQ achievement rate for the region.

30. Only two trainees are in commercial work placements and two are placed with non-profit making organisations. A further six are in work placements within the college. These provide a sheltered environment, which is helpful in some cases. For some trainees it is the only work experience they gain on the programme. Some trainees in their second year on the programme have not had an external work placement. Most NVQ training and assessment takes place in the college and there is little use of work-based evidence. Although trainees do achieve their NVQs in the college environment many have little real work experience to increase their employability.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

31. The college has a stated commitment to equality of opportunity for students and trainees. Each trainee and client receives a copy of the college's charter. The college has an established equal opportunities policy, which is reviewed periodically by an equal opportunities group. The group monitors equal opportunities across the college and makes recommendations as necessary. There is a formal complaints procedure for staff and students. The deputy principal monitors complaints. Trainees are regarded as part of the student body and treated as students. The self-assessment report identified six strengths, the inspectors agreed with two of them. Inspectors agreed with both of the weaknesses but identified that failure to address gender imbalances in some courses was an additional weakness. The grade awarded by the inspectors is lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-promoted equal opportunities policy
- ◆ cross-college forum reviews equality of opportunity

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor access for trainees with mobility difficulties
- ◆ no monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ no targeting of under-represented groups

GOOD PRACTICE

An engineering and construction initiative for year-10 to year-12 schoolgirls has been carried out. It involved site visits and investigations coupled with college follow-up simulation work. This is good practice because it is an attempt to encourage applicants to address gender imbalances in perceived male-dominated industries.

32. The college's commitment to equal opportunities is set out in its mission statement, and in the student's charter which is issued to all trainees. It is widely promoted to students and trainees in the student's handbook and on college notice boards. The training agency offers interviews to all potential trainees and offers training from foundation level to level 3 NVQs and higher national certificates. Complaints are recorded on a database and monitored by the deputy principal.

33. A cross-college committee reviews the equal opportunities policy and recommends changes where appropriate. The committee is chaired by the human resource director and membership consists of all curriculum directors and assistant directors, student representatives and representatives of the college's support services. Unfortunately the manager of the training agency does not sit on this committee. The committee meets at least once each term to review the policy and practice and recommend improvements. This forum has been instrumental in recommending monitoring of applicants for staff jobs and was also responsible for a staff survey in 1999 regarding equality of opportunity.

34. The college is a multi-site organisation with a variety of different types of accommodation. It is old and many of the sites have poor access for people with mobility problems. One building is Victorian and has a large number of internal steps between landings and half landings. For people with mobility difficulties this prevents access to engineering courses, which are held in this building. Potential trainees are encouraged to apply for similar courses which are held in more accessible buildings within the college campus, or are referred to another local college with greater access. The college identified its access problem in its self-assessment report. It has just been awarded funding from the FEFC to make the college a one-site campus, accessible at all levels. The building work will start this year and is due for completion in 2002.

35. Many employers are not aware of the college's equal opportunities policy. Many said that they supposed the college has a policy but they did not know what it contained. Part of the contractual agreement between the college and employers is designed to ensure that employers are aware of the college's policy. The college does not monitor the understanding or implementation of equal opportunities by employers. Trainees are given a copy of the policy at their induction. The college does not routinely monitor their understanding of the policy. Most trainees interviewed have a good awareness of the grievance and complaints procedure.

36. There are no women on the engineering or construction programmes. The one woman trainee from this year's engineering programme left the course early. Photographs used to promote engineering and construction courses in the college's full-time prospectus reinforce stereotypical gender images. The pictures show no women. Course brochures and newspaper advertisements for engineering do not mention that the college is an equal opportunities employer; they do not target women. There are few women applicants for this training.

Trainee support

Grade 3

37. Trainees are recruited to the college by three main routes. Foundation trainees are referred by the local careers service, national trainees are recruited from school visits and job fairs and modern apprentices are referred by employers. All trainees go through a standard basic skills selection test and an interview by the training agency manager. There is a training agency induction which can last up to three days depending on individual trainees' need. Trainees are given the students' handbook and a separate induction handbook, which outlines their rights and responsibilities. Following induction, trainees are referred to the curriculum areas for separate assessment tests and an occupational induction. Progress reviews take place every 12 weeks and are conducted by the training agency manager. Many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report were no more than standard practice. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ trainees have access to college facilities
- ◆ wide-ranging support offered to trainees
- ◆ comprehensive induction process

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ prior learning not systematically tested on entry
- ◆ reviews lack rigour in some areas
- ◆ fixed entry dates delay training in some vocational areas

38. Trainees are treated as students and have access to the same college facilities. They make wide use of the library, computers and the Internet. There are two nurseries in the town subsidised by the college, with up to 25 places in total. Trainees are entitled to make use of these although no trainee presently does. Thirty-seven per cent of trainees used student support services during 1999, which included use of the professional counselling service, and access to finance and accommodation. There is also a student canteen with a lively atmosphere. Music sessions with a student group are sometimes held there during the lunch hour.

39. Induction is thorough and all trainees interviewed could remember the content. There is a group talk by the training agency manager, followed by an induction from the vocational tutor and, if the trainee is on placement, by the employer. Trainees are given a pack containing explanations of their rights and responsibilities, equal opportunities, health and safety issues and details of the employers' responsibilities for national trainees and modern apprentices. There is an explanation of an individual training plan, of initial and other assessments, of the internal and external verification process and of the trainees' charter. There is a checklist at the back of the handbook which allows trainees to monitor receipt of their induction information. This is often returned to the training agency manager and acts as a check on the induction process. The foundation for work trainees complete their checklist as a classroom exercise when they first begin.

40. There is a high level of practical support for trainees. The college has links with a local housing association and can offer up to 10 bed spaces for students. Some New Deal clients are using this accommodation. There are at least 14 trainees who have dyslexia or learning difficulties. The training agency is paying college staff for additional learning support sessions for them. At least three staff members in the college can use sign language, and they are used to provide additional tutoring sessions for the hard of hearing. For one trainee who has particular hearing problems, the training agency manager pays for an interpreter for one session a week. This helps the trainee to manage the theoretical aspects of the course. Hospitality trainees are given additional coaching from tutors during unsocial hours.

41. Prior learning is not systematically tested or assessed. In some vocational areas trainees repeat tasks they have already done. For example, in hospitality a number of trainees already have a GNVQ at level 2 in food preparation but are still required to repeat the corresponding unit in the NVQ by the employer. Trainees are bored by this repetition.

42. The training agency manager carries out reviews every 12 weeks. However, in some areas of construction, and in engineering, reviews lack focus. No real action plans are developed as a result of review and no short- or long-term targets. Apart from the hospitality sector, the manager has little occupational or technical knowledge and cannot discuss occupational progress in any detail. A new system under which the vocational tutor also goes into the work placement has recently been introduced. This has yet to be implemented in all areas. Presently, eight out of 34 trainees do not have a review at their work placement with their vocational tutor.

43. In most vocational areas training starts in September in line with the academic year. In foundation for work, trainees are not allowed to join the course from April onwards and have to wait until after the summer break. In engineering, trainees can only join in January, although they are selected during the summer. Trainees are left for a number of months with a promised start date but without training. In some cases, they are enrolled and left without training. In hospitality, although theoretically trainees can join at any time, the timetable is structured and the weeks numbered so that different aspects of the programme are covered week by week, beginning with the basics. Trainees attempting to join the programme at a later date miss out on the initial training.

Management of training

Grade 4

44. Work-based training is managed through the college's training agency. It is staffed by a full-time training manager, one full- and one part-time administrative assistant and one part-time key skills assessor. The agency manager reports to the curriculum and quality assurance director who reports to the college executive. The agency has an office across the road from the main college site. The college has three contracts with the TEC, one for foundation training, one for adult training and one for youth training. Each contract has a separately named college contact. The agency is responsible for carrying out the initial interview, induction, progress reviews, liaising with curriculum staff, identifying key skills evidence and monitoring progress. Curriculum staff are responsible for training in theory and practical skills and assessing trainees both on and off the job. In 1998-99 the college achieved 52 per cent of NVQs for every 100 leavers. The college also offers New Deal. This is not managed by the training agency but has separate staff and a separate location. The New Deal co-ordinator also reports to the director for curriculum and quality. The college was re-established as an Investor in People in March. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report and regarded some others as descriptive statements rather than evaluative. They

identified additional weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good business planning
- ◆ clear accountability for training agency staff

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ on- and off-the-job training not integrated
- ◆ unsystematic co-ordination of training across curriculum areas
- ◆ ineffective use of data

45. The college has a well-established business planning process, which meets the requirements of the FEFC and the TEC. The plan specifies work-based training and refers to the training agency as the means of delivering the plan. The agency is treated as another curriculum area and forms part of the curriculum and quality assurance director's plan. This feeds into the whole of the college's plan. There are clear references to work-based training in the strategic plan and a clear commitment from the college executive to continue to provide work-based training and improve its integration into the whole of the college's activity. The agency manager meets with the curriculum and quality assurance director each month to agree on and review the plan. The training agency team is hard-working and committed to the success of work-based training. The agency staff are clearly accountable to the manager and through the manager to the director. A part-time key skills assessor was appointed in January. Specific objectives for her work include identifying opportunities for key skills assessment and gaps in the trainees' ability to achieve the qualifications. Staff are appraised annually and training needs are identified. Information technology training for the agency staff has been identified as a need but has not taken place because staff have been too busy. The self-assessment report identified that some occupational staff have not had any recent industrial experience to update their knowledge and skills.

46. The college does not manage the on- and off-the-job training effectively. The co-ordination of the college training and the workplace experience is not sufficiently planned, assessed or monitored. Employers are not involved in developing the individual training plans or in reviewing them. Trainees have progress reviews carried out by the agency manager but these are not consistently managed. They do not always involve the workplace supervisor and are not specific to the vocational training. In some instances, this has resulted in gaps of several months between reviews. Employers are not aware of either the schedule or content of the classroom lessons and cannot structure the on-the-job training to complement and consolidate the teaching. One employer made an effort to review a trainee's portfolio regularly because he was concerned about the progress of the trainee.

However, not all employers do this. Employers have an agreement with the college which identifies the support for the trainee, but the college does not adequately monitor the implementation of the agreement. Achievement targets are not sufficiently shared with employers so that they understand the rate of progress the trainee should make. Trainees' progress is linked to the academic cycle and youth trainees are enrolled for two years at college. Adult trainees have a one-year programme which start in January and ends in December. Opportunities for assessment in the workplace are not planned and do not take place consistently for all occupational areas. Recently, the agency has paid college assessors to visit painting and decorating trainees in the workplace. The hospitality assessor has also assessed modern apprentices.

47. The college teaching is not managed systematically by the training agency manager. Targets are not sufficiently shared with course teams and do not influence the teaching of work-based trainees. Communication between the agency and the course teams is generally poor. There is some good practice in foundation training, which has developed following the appointment of a new course director and a new course tutor. There has been some confusion between the agency and the course teams as to who is responsible for the work-based trainees. The agency manager is not equivalent to a course director and does not have sufficient authority to monitor the quality of teaching or influence the assessment. In hospitality, the agency manager has worked well with the course tutor for BHHP in promoting the college's services to employees.

48. Data are not used effectively. The agency produces much information which identifies the trainees on the variety of programmes, and records progress reviews and achievement. The self-assessment report identified that data had not been used to show trends in work-based training. Many detailed records are kept but not used with college staff to focus attention on work-based trainees, systematically monitor progress and influence the structure of the on- and off-job training. Trainees' files are maintained in the training agency's office but curriculum files are not maintained for all trainees.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

49. Brighton College has a three-year quality assurance plan, which is based on the corporate objectives, the FEFC requirements, Investors in People standards and the quality assurance management system of the TEC. The college has carried out self-assessment for the FEFC since 1996. The self-assessment of work-based training started in 1998. Quality assurance is managed through a variety of methods. The college analyses retention and achievement data which are measured against the national benchmarks from FEFC. The college's governing body monitors progress on self-assessment. The college produced two similar but separate self-assessment reports for the FEFC and TSC. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive quality assurance policies
- ◆ many examples of continuous improvement

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped quality assurance system for work-based training
- ◆ no systematic evaluation of work-based training

50. The college has a wide range of policies and procedures both for students and staff. These policies are recorded and included in the staff handbook and the quality assurance manual. Lesson observations, annual course reviews, internal verification, student surveys and action plans form part of the college-wide self-assessment process. The principal and the college governors are ultimately responsible for fulfilling the quality assurance policy.

51. The training agency has made many improvements in the quality assurance of work-based training over the last two years. The current manager inherited severe problems of quality assurance, which resulted in payment for training having to be returned to the TEC. Recently, the agency manager has identified and taken action on the need for key skills assessment, started on-site assessment in hospitality for modern apprentices and painting and decorating trainees, produced a briefing pack for employers and developed written guidance for work-based assessors. The agency recently held an evening for employers to promote key skills. The evening produced some positive feedback but was not well attended.

52. The quality assurance system for work-based training is underdeveloped. The extensive policies and procedures do not refer to work-based training and only cover it by implication. The college identified this weakness in its self-assessment report. It is not clear how the quality of work-based training is assured. The quality of the trainees' experience is dealt with in lesson observations and course review data but the quality assurance system does not specify the work-based element of the trainees' activity, which accounts for the majority of training in most occupational areas. The agency manager is reviewing the system and has drafted some procedures specific to work-based training. There has been little consultation with employers and college staff about these procedures.

53. The work-based training report was developed by the training agency manager in consultation with the director for curriculum and quality assurance and based on individual curriculum staff's feedback. It followed the report produced for the FEFC and identified key developments, strengths and weaknesses, corroborative statements, sources of evidence and action plans for each aspect. It also included a wide range of performance data for further education students and some data for adult work-based trainees. This has been the first attempt at evaluation of work-



based training. Trainees have completed a questionnaire about the quality of their training and the agency manager has collated the results. Employers were sent a questionnaire in February. The results have still not been fully analysed and used to improve work-based training. The views of students in the college are surveyed three times a year.

54. There is a college-wide internal verification policy. In hospitality, inspectors identified inconsistencies in the sampling of assessors. In electrical installation the college is offering an NVQ for which it is not yet approved. The college monitors the achievement of trainees and reviews this with the TEC. The destination of trainees is identified when they leave work-based training but there is no longer-term monitoring which adds to the evaluation of the quality of work-based training so as to promote the success of trainees.