



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT MARCH 2000

Doncaster College

SUMMARY

Doncaster College provides good training in management and professional studies and engineering. Trainees are encouraged to gain additional qualifications and are provided with a high level of individual support. Wheelchair users and trainees with disabilities are well catered for. Trainees lack understanding and appreciation of the issues of equality of opportunity. The college's strategic and operational planning is effective and well understood at all levels. Staff are widely involved in identifying areas for improvement, and taking appropriate action. The college's quality assurance system for work-based training is underdeveloped. Trainees' reviews on management and professional programmes do not comply with contractual requirements.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	2
Management & professional	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	2
Management of training	2
Quality assurance	2

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good teaching and effective learning
- ◆ trainees encouraged to achieve additional qualifications
- ◆ high level of individual support given to trainees
- ◆ effective strategic and operational planning
- ◆ wide participation in quality assurance procedures
- ◆ good equipment and facilities for people with disabilities

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of awareness of equal opportunities issues among most trainees
- ◆ failure to extend some quality assurance arrangements to cover work-based training
- ◆ inadequate review process on management and professional programmes

INTRODUCTION

1. Doncaster College is a large general further education college. First established as a college of technology in 1953, the college is now the major provider of adult, further and higher education for the 300,000 inhabitants of Doncaster Metropolitan Borough. The college is based on four major sites. These are at Bessacar, High Melton, Church View, and the main site at Waterdale in the town centre. The Bessacar site, which is situated some four miles from Doncaster, has specialist facilities for training in construction, painting and decorating, and interior design. Some training in motor vehicle and electrical engineering is also done on this site. The centre at Church View is used to provide training in floristry, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and art and design, including fashion. Management and professional, and business administration courses are provided at the High Melton centre, which lies approximately six miles north west of Doncaster, and at the Waterdale site. Doncaster College has provided work-based training since 1976 and has had a New Deal contract with the Employment Service since 1998. It offers work-based training on behalf of Barnsley and Doncaster Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and also holds a separate contract with North Yorkshire TEC. Currently these two contracts provide 6 per cent of the college's income. For the purpose of the inspection, Barnsley and Doncaster TEC took responsibility as the co-ordinating TEC.

2. There are 26 trainees on work-based training programmes. Of these, 10 are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 to 5 in professional and management programmes. The remaining 16 are undertaking mining engineering qualifications in engineering maintenance and installation. There are 105 New Deal clients studying for NVQs at levels 2 and 3, A levels, or key skills qualifications. New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option are able to study in any of the college's curriculum areas. These include construction, business administration, health, care and public services, media and design, and foundation for work. All these occupational areas of the New Deal training were inspected; the outcomes will be reported in a separate report. The college employs 388 full-time equivalent academic and managerial staff, most of whom are directly involved in the training of young people and adults. In addition, 227 people provide administrative support. The college has an external-contracting unit based at its main Waterdale site which, for operational purposes, is managed by the dean of faculty for technology. The management of the contracts is the responsibility of the external contracts manager. The college subcontracts arrangements with a local company to secure and monitor work placements for New Deal clients. Engineering trainees undertake initial training in the college's well-resourced specialist workshops and complete their training in the workplace. Training in management and professional studies is provided through work placements together with day-release sessions at the college on one or two days each week. There are additional weekend schools and evening classes provided for trainees.

3. Doncaster Metropolitan Borough is an area of high multiple social and economic deprivation. It is among the 10 per cent of the most deprived local authorities. It has a mix of urban, rural and semi-rural locations. The unemployment rate in Doncaster area is 15.5 per cent, compared with the national average of 3.9 per cent. Unemployment is expected to rise in the next two years. The highest incidence of unemployment is among young people under 25. The Doncaster electoral wards with the highest unemployment rates are those with the highest proportion of people from minority ethnic groups. People from minority ethnic backgrounds constitute 1.9 per cent of the population, compared with the national average of 5.5 per cent. The greatest number of employment opportunities are in sales occupations, for example telesales, followed by hotel and restaurant work, particularly chefs, waiters and bar staff. There are vacancies for skilled people in health and social work. There has been a steady decline in employment in mining, fuel refining and chemicals and the decline is expected to continue in most areas of manufacturing. The worst affected areas are expected to be metals, machinery and equipment, and minerals. The educational achievements of school leavers are significantly below the national average. In 1999, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 36.2 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. The proportion of young people staying on at school is 56.1 per cent, compared with the national average of 67.9 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. Doncaster College produces a self-assessment report every year. Its preparation involves staff at all levels. The report prepared in advance of this inspection was comprehensive and identified some weaknesses, but inspectors identified a number of others. Many of the strengths cited by the college were judged by inspectors to be no more than normal practice, but inspectors identified some additional strengths. Inspectors agreed with the grades in the self-assessment report for management and professional studies, equal opportunities and management of training. They awarded higher grades than those given in the self-assessment report for engineering, trainee support and quality assurance.

5. A team of eight inspectors spent a total of 32 days at the college during March 2000. They met trainees, trainers, managers, employers and a TEC representative. They interviewed 43 trainees, 81 college staff, eight employers and one external verifier. They visited 10 work placements and observed four training sessions and one progress review. The grades awarded to training sessions are summarised in the table below.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Management & professional		4				
Total	0	4	0	0	0	4

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Grade 2

Engineering

6. Doncaster College provides mining training for 16 trainees. One company employs all the trainees at five mines in the South Yorkshire region. Prior to this programme, there has been no recruitment of trainees in this occupational area for four years. All the trainees are in the final year of a five-year modern apprenticeship. Trainees on this programme undertake one year's off-the-job training at the college where they learn basic engineering skills on four days a week. The remaining day at college is spent working towards a national certificate in mining engineering. On completion of the basic training, trainees work in a colliery five days a week as mechanical fitters or electricians where they collect evidence for the NVQ level 3 in engineering maintenance. Four days are spent working under supervision in the mine and an average of one day a week is set aside to work on portfolios and research assignments. Assessment is undertaken by colliery staff who are occupationally experienced and are assessors. A representative from the college carries out internal verification. Inspectors found many strengths in the self-assessment report to be no more than normal practice.

The report also failed to identify the weaknesses found on inspection. However, inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good retention and achievement rates
- ◆ wide range of workplace activities
- ◆ rigorous assessment procedures
- ◆ strong emphasis on health and safety
- ◆ good-quality portfolios
- ◆ opportunities to undertake additional qualifications

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ key skills not integrated into workplace activities
- ◆ some inappropriate timing of off-the-job training
- ◆ lack of involvement of some senior colliery staff

7. Thirty mining trainees were recruited onto the programme in 1995-96. Of these, twenty-seven remained on the programme and 11 have achieved the full modern apprenticeship. The remaining 16 trainees are working towards completing their programmes within the next four months. Thirteen trainees were recruited in 1996-97 and are still on the programme. These retention and achievement rates are well above the national averages for young people on engineering programmes.

8. Activities in the workplace are geared towards meeting the needs of the trainees. All trainees work under the strict supervision of qualified craftsmen until they complete the award. Most trainees have planned work schedules designed to maximise the opportunities to practice appropriate skills. Support from craftsmen and supervisors is good. Trainees feel comfortable asking for advice and all parties involved in the training are committed to the trainees' development. Trained individuals authenticate trainees' work records. Work is inspected and tested by qualified craftsmen, a shift charge engineer, and assessors, who question trainees in detail to ensure that they have the required background knowledge. The engineer or deputy engineer may then interview each trainee to confirm their competence over a range of activities. The whole process is overseen by the internal verifier from Doncaster College. This process ensures that the high standards of safety and inspection required by industry regulations are met and re-inforces the importance of a rigorous approach to every day work.

9. Trainees accumulate evidence from a wide range of sources over their five-year apprenticeship. A portfolio index indicates where evidence relating to each performance criterion can be found. The evidence includes validated witness testimonies, site reports and assignments. Comprehensive feedback is given to trainees when completing tasks and all trainees are aware of exactly what they need to do to achieve the qualification. Trainees gain many additional qualifications,

such as in health and safety, risk assessment, first aid or related to specific pieces of equipment used in mining. Some trainees progress to higher-level qualifications on completion of the modern apprenticeship. Several former trainees have undertaken degrees in engineering or achieved chartered engineer status.

10. Training in key skills is provided during the first year of off-the-job training. This makes it difficult for trainees to relate the key skills to the workplace and to understand the transferable nature of key skills. Trainees make use of key skills on a regular basis at work, but they are not able to relate them to the course they undertake at college.

11. The teaching relating to the national certificate in mining engineering is done during the first year of training. At this stage, trainees have not been on a placement and have spent a large part of their time in the college. The timing of this course is inappropriate, as trainees are not able to relate theory to practice. For example, trainees draw diagrams of components they have never seen, and complete assignments on topics of which they have no working knowledge. Some trainees have had to re-sit national certificate examinations several times.

12. Although the level of general support for trainees is good, the input of, and commitment from, senior colliery staff, varies. In some mines they spend a substantial amount of time with trainees, who value the advice and guidance provided. At other mines, managers spend little time with trainees and in some cases the learning process is slower than for others.

Management & professional

Grade 2

13. Doncaster College provides management and professional training for adult trainees at its Dearne Valley Business School. The management programme is designed for managers who have been unemployed for at least six months. It provides them with additional management qualifications to increase their employability. It aims to increase their skills, knowledge and understanding of management, and to restore their self-confidence and motivation. The programme provides appropriate work placements, together with attendance at the business school on one or two days each week. There are also weekend schools and evening classes. All trainees on the programme work towards the owner manager NVQ at level 3. They also work towards one or more other relevant management NVQs, professional and postgraduate qualifications.

14. Of the group of 28 who began the programme in 1997-98, 11 gained employment during or soon after completing the programme. Twelve NVQs and four academic awards were achieved. Five of the 28 did not gain employment or achieve an award. Twenty-five trainees began the programme in 1998-99. Eleven secured employment during the programme or soon after completing it. Two NVQs and six academic awards were achieved. Nine of the 25 achieved neither employment nor an award. There are currently 10 trainees on the programme. Another six left after gaining employment and four left for personal reasons. So far,

five of the trainees in this year's group have achieved the level 3 owner manager NVQ.

15. Some of the features identified as strengths in the self-assessment report are no more than normal practice. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ excellent training facilities and resources
- ◆ good teaching and effective learning
- ◆ trainees encouraged to achieve additional qualifications
- ◆ trainees' management of their own development

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient involvement of placement providers in reviews
- ◆ no systematic setting of short-term targets

16. The Dearne Valley Business School was founded at Doncaster College in 1992. It is located in spacious premises on a large attractive site in open country at High Melton near Doncaster. It is based on a modernised and extended country house. New buildings have been added. All training facilities and resources are excellent and attract business students from nationally known companies to the school's undergraduate, postgraduate, professional and doctoral programmes. The facilities are fully used by trainees. The teaching staff have appropriate academic qualifications backed by recent management experience. The standard of teaching is high, and trainees are helped to learn effectively. Assessment is well planned and recorded. Trainees apply to be assessed when they feel competent in specific areas. The lead internal verifier ensures appropriate standards of assessment and internal verification. Staff are informed about external verifiers' comments and any necessary actions are carried out rapidly.

17. Management trainees enter the school for a year to work towards owner manager NVQ at level 3. The programme is open to entrants of at least 25 years of age who have prior supervisory or management experience, have been out of work for at least six months and who wish to go on to a formal or higher management qualification. Certain other trainees are also eligible. Selection is by interview, during which the trainee's previous experience and qualifications are reviewed and the available options discussed. The trainee and the interviewer then identify what further appropriate programmes can be undertaken in the year. The options include level 3, 4 or 5 NVQs in management, the Institute of Management Certificate, Diploma and Postgraduate Diploma awards, or the Master of Business Administration (MBA). Trainees identified on entry to the programme as having the potential to go through to the MBA work towards the postgraduate diploma as well as the NVQ level 3 in owner management. Subject to the approval of Doncaster Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise and of Hull University, they can then work

at Dearne Valley Business School for the final year of the MBA course. There is Single Regeneration Budget funding to support this. For all of these additional qualifications, trainees join existing classes at the business school.

18. Trainees are encouraged to take responsibility for their own development. They are involved from the start in choosing, with the business school, the most appropriate additional course for them to take. Many find their own placements although the school will do so for them. With placement providers, they identify mutually beneficial assignments to carry out as part of their programmes. Some placements are in the business school itself but apart from this, employers have little involvement in the training process. Many do not understand what is involved in the NVQ or other management qualifications. Employers' questionnaires have recently been developed for use at the end of the programme, but as yet the results have not influenced the training programmes.

19. As part of its contract with the TEC, the college is required to undertake formal reviews with each trainee within four weeks of starting on the programme and thereafter quarterly. The review procedure must be recorded and the views of employers must be taken into account. The practice of the business school is to carry out workplace reviews early in the programme, at mid-term and at the end of the programme. This does not meet TEC contractual requirements. There are frequent discussions about progress during lessons and tutorials, but these do not include employers. Although employers' views are generally sought for the formal review, it is the reviewer who records them on the review form. Employers do not check or sign this form. The review form is insufficiently detailed to provide adequate data about targets or their achievement.

20. Trainees are not set clear short-term targets as they work towards their NVQs. There is no system to record or monitor each individual's progress towards the achievement of NVQ units. Some trainees are well advanced in completing their qualifications at diploma level without having made corresponding progress towards their owner manager NVQ at level 3. Some interim target and achievement information is provided through assessment reports and reviews, but this information is not integrated into the training plans.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

21. Doncaster College has an equal opportunities policy which is reviewed annually. It applies to all sites and is communicated to all trainees. Procedures are clearly written, and cover all the essential aspects of equality of opportunity. There are policies covering harassment and grievance which take account of recent legislation. A senior manager has overall college responsibility for equal opportunities. The college has recently established a cross-college equal opportunities committee, which reports directly to the senior management team. The committee members have received training on equal opportunities. Recently,

posters have been produced informing trainees of the equal opportunities policy, their role in its application and how to make a complaint should the need arise. These are displayed around the buildings. There is a staff handbook that is updated three times a year.

22. There are a small percentage of people from minority ethnic groups in the local population. This was 1.6 per cent at the time of the last census, and is currently estimated to be 1.9 per cent. The college's student minority ethnic population is now 2.8 per cent. The governing body includes two members from minority ethnic groups. The grade awarded by inspectors was the same as that given in the college's self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good equipment and facilities for people with disabilities
- ◆ effective complaints procedure

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some trainees unaware of equal opportunities issues
- ◆ insufficient analysis of equal opportunities data

23. Trainees with disabilities are well catered for. Most of the buildings have ramps, lifts suitable for wheelchair users and toilets designed for people with disabilities. There are also low-level reception counters for the benefit of wheelchair users. People in wheelchairs are now able to access 85 per cent of the buildings across all the college sites. Where access is not possible, alternative arrangements are made. For example, in buildings where there is no lift suitable for use by wheelchair users, the training has been moved to ground-floor rooms. There is colour coding of floors at the Waterdale site to assist the partially sighted. Signers are available, and trainees are introduced to their prospective signer before working together to enable them to build a good rapport.

24. All complaints are recorded on a computerised database which can be interrogated at faculty and section level to assess how well the complaints procedure is working. The findings are analysed to identify the areas in which the majority of complaints arise. The analysis shows that the main areas of complaint are about staff attitudes, non-provision of certificates and poor timetabling. The number of complaints recorded is increasing. A variety of reasons have been suggested for this, including trainees' growing awareness of and willingness to use, the complaints procedure. The college recognises the need to improve the speed with which complaints are resolved and regards staff training as being the key to this.

25. Most trainees have a weak understanding of the issues concerned with equality of opportunity. There is insufficient training to raise their awareness of their rights and responsibilities. In the trainees' handbook, the only reference to equal opportunities is a contact number. Equal opportunities are mentioned during induction, but are not reinforced throughout trainees' programmes. There is no

mention of equal opportunities in the advertising for the management gateway programme. Course leaflets contain no visual stereotyping, but there is no equal opportunities statement or disability symbol on them as there is, for example, on college job advertisements.

26. Although equal opportunities data are collected, they are not analysed or used to identify trends or to form action plans. Monitoring is done across the college rather than on an individual programme or faculty basis. The results are not used to address any imbalances in recruitment of trainees or to highlight disparity in trainees' achievements or progression. Placement providers are not given copies of the college's equal opportunities policy. No checks are made to ensure that the policy is implemented in the work placements. The standard form which is used to identify the potential of prospective placements includes such details as training support but makes no mention of equal opportunities.

27. The age of trainees on the management and professional programme, varies widely. Trainees range in age from 20s to 60s. The college has links with schools, voluntary and community organisations. Some college brochures have 'welcome' in different languages on them. Currently some leaflets and other communications with trainees are being translated into different languages. Two prayer rooms are provided for trainees and staff.

28. A cross-college equal opportunities committee was established recently. It has been given the job of setting targets relating to equality of opportunity and monitoring progress towards their achievement. A draft action plan has been prepared which covers key areas to be addressed. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of this committee.

Trainee support

Grade 2

29. Potential trainees at the business school have an informal initial interview. At this interview, trainees' needs are established and appropriate qualifications are discussed. There is no separate initial assessment procedure. Trainees receive a thorough induction. Throughout their time on the programme, they receive counselling, support and guidance to enable them to progress towards their target qualification and seek employment. Trainees on the mining modern apprentice programme are all employed. There have been no new trainees on this programme for four years. Trainees undertake an induction programme. Additional learning support is provided for trainees to enable them to achieve their qualification. Inspectors identified additional strengths to those given in the self-assessment report and awarded a higher grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ high level of individual support
- ◆ good opportunities for progression
- ◆ effective induction programmes

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor use of individual training plans
- ◆ initial assessment lacks rigour

30. Trainees on the management programme have been unemployed for at least six months. Many have previously held senior positions. Experienced interviewers conduct an initial interview during which they review the previous experience of potential trainees and help them to identify their training needs. All trainees are enrolled on the NVQ level 3 owner manager programme. They are also given strong encouragement to undertake further qualifications at a higher level, for example NVQs in management at levels 4 and 5, a management diploma and the MBA. The induction programme is effective. It includes health and safety, advice on managing projects, and assignments, and the completion of self-assessment tests. Trainees' self-esteem is increased. There is a high level of individual support for trainees provided on a one-to-one basis by tutors at the business school. Trainees who need help with assignments receive additional support through the tutorial system. Tutorials are available on request. The expert guidance at the beginning and the counselling throughout the programme ensure that trainees choose the right qualifications and then go on to achieve them. Retention and achievement rates are high.

31. Trainees on the mining modern apprentice programme take part in a 20-day induction programme. This covers the statutory and legal requirements of the industry, issues of health and safety, and an introduction to the workplace. Trainees' additional learning needs are identified through testing which is carried out sensitively. Extra assistance with key skills is provided for those who need it. Trainees in the workplace work under the close personal supervision of a mentor. Trainees who are referred in their final examinations receive extra tutorial support from colliery and college staff.

32. The college has a range of support services which is available to all trainees. They can seek advice and guidance at the careers information and guidance centre and the Lifetime Careers centre, both of which are located on the main college site. There is a confidential counselling service, which is well advertised on college noticeboards. Trainees with hearing impairments are supported in lessons by signers and note-takers. There is a team of vocationally qualified learning support tutors who provide support for trainees with learning difficulties. At induction, each trainee receives a handbook, a guide to support services and a students' charter. All are written in plain language and are well presented and easily understood.

33. In both the management and professional and the mining sectors, individual training plans are not individualised to reflect each trainee's needs and are not updated or used to support trainees through their training programmes. Information about the dates of trainees' reviews is not regularly recorded on the training plans. Initial assessment in both sectors lacks rigour. Management and professional trainees' occupational experience and previous training are reviewed informally at the initial interview, but there is no formal assessment of their vocational or key

skills. The business school does not use standard tests to identify any additional learning support needs. Mining trainees are all employed and have an initial assessment at college at the start of their training to assess their suitability for the course, but the selection criteria are not systematically applied. As a result, some trainees have experienced difficulties with mathematics, and additional lessons have had to be arranged to enable them to achieve their qualification. Again, diagnostic tests across the range of basic, key and vocational skills are not used.

Management of training

Grade 2

34. Doncaster College revised its management structure in the autumn of 1999. An external contracts team, located in the faculty of technology, is responsible for the administration of government-funded programmes and responsibility for the management of the programmes lies with the faculty in which each occupational area is located. The mining engineering training is a discrete programme managed by the head of engineering. The management and professional programme is managed by the dean of the college's Dearne Valley business school. The size of both programmes has remained constant for the last three years. Doncaster College has appropriate procedures for the recruitment, induction and appraisal of staff. The college operates a probationary period of six months for new support staff and 12 months for new teaching staff, during which time their performance is monitored and reviewed. Appraisals, linked to staff development, are conducted annually. Updates on staffing matters are circulated via a weekly newsletter. The college's mission statement, goals and policies are communicated to all staff and displayed on noticeboards within the college. Regular staff meetings take place at all levels. The Dearne Valley business school became an Investor in People in 1995 and was successfully re-assessed in 1998. Doncaster College gained the Investors in People Standard in 1996 and was successfully re-accredited in 1999.

35. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report and awarded the same grade as that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective staff development programme
- ◆ effective strategic and operational planning
- ◆ wide and co-operative relationships with external organisations

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ failure to specify employers' responsibilities for training
- ◆ under-use of management information

36. Doncaster College has an effective staff development programme. Discussion of staff development forms an integral part of the appraisal process, at which time

individual needs are identified and agreed, in line with organisational goals. Staff have further opportunities to highlight their training needs at any time during the year, for example, in response to new initiatives and changing programme requirements. Staff value and make use of these opportunities. The college has a programme of observing training sessions. Development needs that are identified as a result of this are discussed and action taken. The effectiveness of resulting staff development is evaluated through further observations. On a wider scale, evaluation of staff development activities is conducted through the completion of questionnaires. Participants complete one questionnaire prior to the activity to identify their training objectives. They then complete a follow-up questionnaire to evaluate whether these objectives have been met. The college also offers opportunities for staff to develop their own personal skills and interests through courses and training opportunities. Free vouchers are issued for courses that do not necessarily have to link to organisational needs. For example, one member of the management team is learning yoga. College-wide staff development plans are co-ordinated and monitored by the director of human resources development. Each person's development activities are well recorded on a computerised system. These records show that all staff involved in government-funded programmes have had appropriate training. Staff who deal directly with trainees have received training to enable them to meet the diverse needs of trainees.

GOOD PRACTICE

The college uses an experienced information technology tutor to train staff. A member of the administration team for government-funded programmes was quickly trained to use a new database.

37. The college's strategic planning process is well understood by all staff. Strategic plans are published and shared internally and externally. The college has developed strategic plans to increase participation in work-based training programmes in order to meet the needs of local employers. Well-devised operational plans enable the college to implement good support systems and appropriate staffing structures, before expanding its government-funded programmes.

38. Staff in the engineering section and at the business school have developed effective and co-operative relationships with all parties involved in training programmes. In engineering, staff are experienced and well respected in the mining industry. To develop the programme, staff worked closely with employers, lead bodies and awarding bodies. This has resulted in a unique programme, geared to meet the needs of employers. Problems encountered early in the programme have been resolved through effective communication. Employers seek and receive advice from college staff on a range of issues. At the business school, staff use their good working relationships with local employers to create opportunities for trainees to undertake management projects in the workplace. All staff at the business school are members of professional institutes and keep up to date with industry trends. They take every opportunity to provide commercial management training programmes in the company, rather than at the business school. This enables them to keep abreast of developments in commercial and employment practices. Senior members of the academic staff at the business school contribute to the national development of programmes and NVQ standards, and communicate these new developments to staff. In addition, the business school has piloted a number of training programmes and assessment methods for awarding bodies.

39. In mining engineering, all trainees are employed by one company and are assessed in the workplace by qualified assessors employed by the company. The company also provides other aspects of the programme, such as on-the-job training. College staff monitor this through visits to the company. However, there is no contract or agreement which sets out the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in training and assessment. An employer agreement was issued in 1996 but this has not been reviewed or updated. It does not include any standards or targets relating to training and assessment. At the business school, employers provide work placements during which trainees complete management projects. A profile of each project is agreed, but there is no agreement which clearly sets out the employer's responsibilities. This means that the college is unable to assure the quality of the employers' part in training programmes.

40. The college has recently updated its computerised management information system. This has improved the collection of data, but is not yet effective in monitoring achievements on NVQ programmes which do not start and finish in line with the academic year. The college keeps paper-based records of retention and achievement rates for the two government-funded programmes. However, these data have not been used to make comparisons with other training providers, or to set targets. Paper-based systems are kept by different departments of the college for different purposes. At times these data conflict. There is no system for the central monitoring and analysis of trainees' destinations and their reasons for leaving.

Quality assurance

Grade 2

41. Doncaster College has a quality assurance policy and strategy which is disseminated throughout the college. Quality assurance systems are integrated into strategic and operational planning cycles. Strategic responsibility for quality assurance lies with a member of the senior management team. Operational responsibility is shared between the quality assurance co-ordinator and the director of human resource development. A cross-college quality team, led by the senior quality assurance manager, co-ordinates and evaluates all quality assurance arrangements. This team reports to the senior management team and the academic standards and policy committee. The college has operating procedures which are currently being reviewed and updated. Doncaster College contracts with two TECs and meets the requirements of both. A team of administrators, led by the external contracts manager, is responsible for contract compliance. The college is approved to offer qualifications for a range of awarding bodies. External verification reports from awarding bodies are monitored centrally by the curriculum co-ordination and student services manager. Internal verification is conducted satisfactorily for government-funded programmes within the college.

42. Self-assessment of quality assurance focused on centralised college systems and failed to identify weaknesses in the quality assurance of particular aspects of work-based training. However, inspectors agreed with the strengths identified in the self-assessment report and awarded a higher grade than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ wide participation in quality assurance procedures
- ◆ well-established self-assessment
- ◆ extensive action planning which leads to improvements
- ◆ effective, comprehensive target setting

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ failure to extend some quality assurance arrangements to cover work-based training
- ◆ lack of standards set for work-based training

43. Quality assurance strategies at Doncaster College are implemented throughout the organisation. Staff are widely involved in identifying areas for improvement and ensuring that remedial action is taken. Over the last two years, Doncaster College has implemented a staged programme to develop 'quality teams'. Each faculty now has a team which meets fortnightly to discuss quality assurance issues. The chair of each quality team sits on the cross-college quality team. Where issues cannot be addressed at faculty level, they are reported to the cross-college team and from there to the senior management team. Staff representatives are allowed six hours each week away from their normal duties to attend quality team meetings and to carry out the remedial activities identified. Several staff from government-funded programmes are representatives on the quality teams. Representatives seek the views of colleagues at staff meetings and take these to the quality team meetings. Results of student evaluations and data on retention and achievement rates are fed into the quality teams. Meetings are minuted and action points are noted. Staff value the voice they have in quality assurance issues.

44. The process of self-assessment is well established. It starts at course level where staff assess and report on their own areas. These reports are then sent via the heads of faculty to be incorporated into the college-wide self-assessment report. The process of self-assessment takes place throughout the year, taking into account achievement rates and feedback from awarding bodies. Issues identified through quality teams are fed into self-assessment. A full college report is produced on an annual basis. A realistic self-assessment of the college's wider involvement in government-funded programmes has been used to develop plans for expansion of the college's contracts.

45. Comprehensive action plans are developed at each stage of self-assessment. From these plans a co-ordinated plan is developed at college level. Progress towards the objectives set out in the action plans is monitored and reviewed at all levels of the college. Results of activities are evaluated at course level and faculty level. Results from faculties are reported to the senior management team and to the academic standards committees. Action plans are well thought out, specific and targeted. The college is able to show the improvements resulting from action planning, since completing its most recent self-assessment report.

46. Target-setting for work-based training is comprehensive and involves all staff. As a result of strategic planning, goals for the college are identified. Specific targets for participation, retention and achievement are set and agreed with senior managers. These are then allocated at section head level. Section heads share these with all staff and monitor progress towards them. Progress towards targets is then monitored by line managers and senior managers. As part of the appraisal process, the resources and skills needed to achieve targets are analysed. Development activities are identified to enable targets to be met, which in turn contribute to the achievement of college goals. This process of target and goal setting is used effectively to manage expansion and change within the college.

47. Evaluation systems within the college include collecting feedback from students and employers, using questionnaires. These questionnaires are not designed for work-based training programmes. They are designed to collect feedback on students' experience of the college and employers' perception of the college. They do not include questions on the quality of training and assessment conducted in the workplace. Consequently, the feedback obtained from trainees and employers is not useful for developing work-based programmes.

48. Doncaster College has a range of operational procedures which are currently being reviewed and updated by the quality assurance co-ordinator. However, these procedures do not cover the key processes of training, such as recruitment and selection of trainees on government-funded programmes, initial assessment of these trainees, special induction requirements, conduct of progress reviews and exit interviews. There are no written procedures for all parties involved in the training to follow.

49. The college has a comprehensive set of 'service standards'. These set out the standards of service that each faculty or department must adhere to and relate to most aspects of college's work. However, they do not extend to work-based training.