



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT MARCH 2000

Exeter College
trading as
Training South West

SUMMARY

Exeter College as Training South West offers good training in the making of hand-crafted furniture, and satisfactory programmes in business administration and engineering. Its programmes in construction, hospitality and hair and beauty are not satisfactory because assessment processes are poorly managed, arrangements for the initial assessment of trainees are inadequate and training in key skills is underdeveloped. The college has good policies and procedures for equal opportunities and trainee support but these are not applied well to trainees in the workplace. The management of work-based training is satisfactory. Quality assurance arrangements, however, do not cover all aspects of work-based trainees' learning experience.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	4
Engineering	3
Manufacturing	2
Business administration	3
Hospitality	4
Hair & beauty	4

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ good off-job training programmes in many areas
- ◆ good resources for off-the-job training in most areas

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ unclear working relationship between TSW and other college departments
- ◆ underdeveloped initial assessment processes
- ◆ poor use of individual training plans
- ◆ trainees' slow progress in many areas
- ◆ underdeveloped provision of key skills
- ◆ under use of employers as a training resource
- ◆ insufficient work-based assessment
- ◆ some invalid assessment practices
- ◆ unsatisfactory internal verification processes
- ◆ failure of self-assessment to identify strengths and weaknesses in work-based training
- ◆ failure of course review to focus on work-based training issues
- ◆ failure to apply equal opportunities policies to work-based trainees

INTRODUCTION

1. Work-based training at Exeter College is provided through Training South West (TSW). It represents around 5 percent of the college's overall provision.

2. Exeter College is a tertiary college and it serves as a general further education college for the surrounding region. The college enjoys a productive working relationship with the local education authority through the countywide provision of Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) funded adult education programmes and as a member of the Devon and Torbay Lifelong Learning Partnership. It has seven sites within a short distance of the centre of Exeter. The college works in partnership with the five high schools in the city to ensure that school pupils progressing make the right choice of course. In 1998-9 the percentage of students progressing from city schools was 86 percent. Around 3750 full-time students attended the college in 1998-9. Approximately two thirds of these came from outside the city, an area where strong competition exists from schools with sixth forms and from the further education colleges at Tiverton, Torquay and Barnstaple. In 1999, in Devon as a whole, the percentage of 16-year olds who achieved at least 5 GCSEs at grades A* to C is 48.4 percent, which is slightly higher than the national average of 47.9 percent. The proportion in Exeter's five high schools is lower at 41 percent. There were nearly eight thousand part-time students in 1998-9. The college constantly aims to create new markets and attract new students.

3. The college's work-based training department, Training South West (TSW), is located in one of the college's newly built city centre sites. It was founded in 1991. At the time of inspection, there were 598 trainees on TEC-funded programmes. Most of these were contracted through PROSPER, the Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) for Devon and Cornwall. There were also 16 trainees with contracts through National Training Partnerships (NTP), working in Hilton hotels throughout the country. In addition, there were seven New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option, subcontracted through PROSPER, and two others on the subsidised employment option. The TSW team consists of a manager, and 14 training officers, of whom eight are full-time and six part-time. There is also an administrative staff of four. In the college as a whole, there are 481.5 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 290 are employed directly in supporting learning. At work trainees receive help from their training officer. In most cases, they are assessed in the workplace by their training officer as well. Some trainees are assessed by work-based assessors in their own companies. All trainees come to the college for their off-the-job training, with the exception of the retail trainees in motor vehicle training, who do not come into the college at all. Some trainees are assessed in college.

4. Exeter is the county town of Devon, which is still largely reliant on agriculture, particularly dairy farming. Most of the local employment opportunities are in small and medium-sized enterprises. The local unemployment rate in Exeter was 2.4 percent in December 1999, compared with 3.8 percent in England as a whole, and



2.8 percent for the whole county. The proportion of people from ethnic minorities in the local population was also very low at the time of the last census in 1991. In Devon overall it was below 1 per cent. In Exeter itself-the proportion was 1.3 per cent, and there are some city wards where it was higher.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. The self-assessment the college prepared for the inspection was the third it had produced. All members of the college are involved in the self-assessment process, through course and support team reviews, which provide evidence for the departmental self-assessments. Information from surveys of students and employers is also used. The TEC advised that a separate self-assessment report for TSC purposes would be easier for TSC to use, but as the college was going to be subject to a joint inspection, the self-assessment report was prepared for both the TSC and the FEFC inspectorates.

6. The TSC inspection took place jointly with the FEFC inspection. The TSC team consisted of seven inspectors, who spent a total of 32 inspector days on the inspection. They observed training sessions, reviews, and assessments. They interviewed 96 trainees, and spoke to 39 supervisors or employers. They visited 42 work placements, including hotels in Milton Keynes and Coventry where most of the NTP trainees were working. They also interviewed 34 members of the college staff. The grades they awarded for the training sessions they observed are shown below. They also worked closely with the FEFC inspectors in construction and management, and with FEFC on aspects of cross-college provision.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction		4 (FEFC)	4 (FEFC)			8
Engineering		5	4			9
Manufacturing		1 (FEFC)	1 (FEFC)			2
Business administration		4		1		5
Hospitality		1				1
Hair & beauty			2			2
Total	0	15	11	1	0	19

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 4

7. Exeter College currently has 196 trainees on construction programmes. There are 60 trainees in electrical installation and installing and commissioning, of whom

34 are modern apprentices; one is a national trainee, and the other 25 are on other work-based training programmes. In plumbing, there are 54 trainees, of whom 46 are modern apprentices, two are national trainees and six are work-based trainees. There are 22 trainees in wood occupations, including nine modern apprentices, seven national trainees and six work-based trainees. In bricklaying, there are seven modern apprentices, eight national trainees and three work based trainees. All national trainees are working towards National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at level 2. Modern apprentices and work-based trainees are working towards NVQs at level 2 and level 3. There are 17 trainees and four trainees on higher national certificate (HNC) and national certificate (NC) courses in building studies respectively and 15 trainees and six trainees on HNC and NC courses in civil engineering, respectively. Most trainees are employed, and attend the college one day each week, where they join college students on day-release courses. Occupationally competent tutors carry out off-the-job training, and most are qualified teachers and have assessor qualifications. Some tutors are qualified to TDLB D34 and act as internal verifiers for the provision. Trainees' progress is monitored in the workplace by two training officers who work within Training South West, the work-based training department of Exeter College. The training officers are responsible for interviewing, inducting, reviewing trainees and liaising with the companies providing employment. Reviews of trainees progress are carried out every three months. All assessment takes place under simulated workplace conditions in the college workshops. The self-assessment report was produced for the engineering and construction department as a whole, and nearly all of the strengths and weaknesses were of little relevance to work-based training in either engineering or construction. The grade awarded by inspectors was lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good induction to the college and workplace
- ◆ strong links with employers
- ◆ good monitoring of trainees' progress in college

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little co-ordination of on and off the job training
- ◆ no assessments in the workplace
- ◆ trainees' low achievement rate on some programmes
- ◆ insufficient key skills training
- ◆ poor workshop facilities for some courses

8. Trainees remember their induction, and can recall the strong emphasis placed on health and safety. Trainees who start after the beginning of the college year also receive a full induction. The college uses a common induction pack for construction occupations, which aims to ensure that trainees understand their responsibilities, are aware of and observe all the health and safety regulations relevant to their occupation, understand the NVQ process, are aware of equality of

opportunity and other important issues. Trainees also receive an induction to the workplace, where specific company requirements such as those relating to customer relations and health and safety are emphasised.

9. There is a strong relationship between employers and training officers who make visits every twelve weeks to review trainees' progress. Training officers also make good contacts with employers and trainees through regular telephone calls. Trainees benefit from the good liaison between the college and employers. Many trainees are able to obtain employment on completion of their training programme.

10. Most training sessions at the college were satisfactory. In many, however, the trainer did not take account of the differing abilities of trainees and all trainees were expected to learn at the same pace. Lesson plans do not allow for the different learning needs of trainees. Most schemes of work are satisfactory but copies are not given to employers, to inform them of the trainees' programme at college. Courses are not arranged flexibly to enable trainees to start at any time.

11. The college maintains clear records of trainees' achievement of NVQ units and of trainees' progress towards gaining their qualifications. These records, however, are not shared with training officers and employers. The information in them is not taken into account when writing reports on the trainers. These reports are insufficiently detailed. They contain few details about trainees' progress towards achieving the qualification and do not enable the training officer to set the trainees demanding targets at their twelve-weekly progress reviews.

12. There are many opportunities for trainees to be assessed in the workplace but no assessments take place there. For assessment purposes, trainees have to repeat at college tasks they have already carried out in the workplace and the assessment is carried out under simulated, rather than real workplace conditions. Employers are committed to the training process and many wished to be involved in the assessment of trainees on site. There is a significant increase in the proportion of trainees leaving early. This has risen from 39.5 per cent in 1996-97, to 74 per cent in 1998-99. In 1998-99, only 17.4 per cent of all trainees obtained an NVQ. The trainees' achievement rates on the HNC courses in building studies and civil engineering and the course leading to an NVQ in brickwork at level 3, are above the national average. Modern apprentices and national trainees must obtain certification in key skills but they have not yet received any assessment of their key skills. Many trainees nearing completion of their NVQ have yet to be credited for any achievement of key skills. Some workshops in the college are too small for the growing numbers of trainees. In one workshop, half the space is used as a classroom and in many others there is shortage of storage space.

Engineering (motor vehicle)

Grade 3

13. Engineering provision at Exeter College which includes motor vehicle training, is jointly managed by the head of Engineering responsible for off-the-job training in the college, and TSW which is responsible for the trainees in the

workplace. There are 216 trainees on the scheme. Of the 86 engineering trainees 93 percent are employed. There are 44 modern apprentices, 17 national trainees and 25 work based trainees. The college provides the trainees with a wide range of training opportunities in engineering as well as training in motor vehicle, including production, technical services, electrical, machining, manufacturing or maintenance. Initially trainees either work for an NVQ at level 2 on a day release basis over two years or they study for an NC or HNC. They can progress to a higher national diploma (HND) course, which is run in partnership with the University of Plymouth. Trainees who achieve an NVQ level 2 or an NC can work for an NVQ at level 3 through workplace activities. The college has contact with many good quality small to medium sized engineering companies. The TSW training officer regularly visits the trainees in these companies to monitor and assess their progress. The retention rates on engineering programmes have increased over the last year from 83 per cent to 92 per cent

14. Of the 130 motor vehicle trainees, 41 are modern apprentices, 28 are national trainees, and 61 are on other work-based training programmes. Fifty-three are being trained as light vehicle mechanics, 24 as heavy vehicle mechanics, 36 in vehicle body repair and refinishing, and 17 in retail operations. Fifty-four per cent of these trainees are employed. All trainees on motor vehicle related programmes work towards achieving an NVQ at level 2 or 3, and some trainees study for other qualifications. All trainees are trained and assessed in their work placements. On motor vehicle programmes, college staff who are assessors carry out some assessment of trainees in the workplace.

15. The self-assessment report did not cover the area inspected and did not identify any strengths or weaknesses relating to the work-based engineering provision. It gave a grade for the occupational area and this was higher than that awarded by the inspectors.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ frequent work based assessment
- ◆ focus in reviews on trainees' progress towards the NVQ
- ◆ enthusiastic and motivated trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ trainees' low retention and achievement rates on motor vehicle programmes
- ◆ trainees' and employers' poor understanding of key skills
- ◆ inadequate resources for off-the-job motor vehicle training

16. Off-the-job training in the college is well planned and it is carried out by a team of enthusiastic lecturers. The trainees' work is of a good standard. Their progress in college is monitored closely and trainees are encouraged to progress beyond their initial goal. Trainees' work placements are varied, but all are good.

They range from the largest heavy vehicle repairer in the South West, to small specialist engineering companies, including a vehicle body repair centre that has won a number of awards for quality. Most employers show a strong commitment to high quality training. They are very complimentary about the standard of training received by their trainees, and work closely with TSW staff to ensure trainees make continuous progress in the workplace. They co-operate fully in planning the training programme and ensuring that assessment can take place in the workplace. Staff in the companies are aware of the importance of health and safety and they are committed to observing health and safety regulations fully. The range of work available is varied. It includes toolmaking, design, sheetmetal work, the manufacture of wood and oil burning stoves. Trainees can cover a wide range of motor vehicle skills. Some of the work produced by the trainees in the workplace reaches very high standards.

17. Trainees receive frequent assessment of their work-based activities. The TSW assessment process is thorough, and it is well recorded. Assessors provide excellent feedback to the trainee and employer, and the process fully meets the requirements of the national training organisation and awarding bodies. External verifier reports praise the continual improvement in the assessment process.

18. Trainees receive regular reviews of their progress. These reviews focus on trainees' progress towards achievement of the NVQ. Where appropriate, the views of the college tutor and the employer are taken into account in the reviews. These reviews are helpful in reminding the trainees of the work they have to do, and the targets they have to meet in order to obtain their NVQ.

19. All trainees are enthusiastic and committed to achieving their goals. They enjoy their training at college as well as at work. College staff have worked hard to provide sound programmes and the trainees appreciate this. However some retail trainees expressed concern that they never attended the college. They said they felt isolated in the workplace, and felt deprived of the opportunity of sharing experiences with other trainees at the college. They said they would have liked some opportunity for group work.

20. Most engineering and motor vehicle trainees and employees have little knowledge and understanding of key skills. They do not understand their importance or how key skills training can be incorporated into the programmes of work. The college has recently introduced key skills training into its courses, but at present it is not an integral part of training in the workplace. Some engineering trainees and employers have a poor understanding of their modern apprenticeship or national traineeship framework. Some trainees are unsure which programme they are on and what they have to do to succeed.

21. The college has a separate training centre for motor vehicle work based in an old, three story building in the city centre. It is virtually impossible to take vehicles into the mechanical workshop because there are legal restrictions on their crossing of the pavement. Lack of access to the single vehicle hoist, little modern garage repair equipment, outdated training resources and a shortage of basic consumables result in these workshops being inadequate for NVQ training. The college is

investing heavily in purpose-built motor vehicle repair workshops that are expected to be open by September 2000 and which they plan to be fully equipped to provide NVQ training for all aspects of motor vehicle repair.

22. The trainees' overall NVQ achievement rate is only 28 percent. A large number of trainees leave in the first few weeks of their training programmes. The overall retention rate for motor vehicle trainees is only 45 percent. Trainees' retention and achievement rates improve significantly in the second and third year of training. Nearly all third year starters achieve their NVQ.

Manufacturing

Grade 2

23. Exeter College has 13 trainees on manufacturing programmes, of whom five are in year one and eight are in year two. All are work-based trainees working towards NVQ level 2 in the production of handcrafted furniture. This is a relatively new course that started two and a half years ago. During this time, three trainees have achieved their qualification and seven have left. Trainees' workplaces range from small domestic furniture manufacturers and fitters, to large manufacturing operations specialising in antique reproduction furniture 80 per cent of which is exported to the United States. Most assessments take place while the trainees are doing their off-the-job training at the college. Employers, however, provide evidence, in the form of witness testimony, of trainees' attainment of requisite competences for some of the NVQ units. They also allow the trainees to carry out their final assignments in the workplace. The self-assessment report did not refer to the training programmes in manufacturing.

GOOD PRACTICE

Companies value the training to the extent that they are prepared to contribute to the cost of the materials for trainees' final piece of work, their 'masterpiece'. They carry this out in the workplace at the end of their training.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effectiveness of off-job training in meeting the requirements of industry
- ◆ effective training links with employers
- ◆ highly motivated trainees
- ◆ financial support for trainees to enable them to go on manufacturers' courses

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient teaching and training space
- ◆ poor retention rates

24. The training at the college provides trainees with the skills they need to start working in the industry. After they have acquired the basic skills, they move on to develop more specialised skills. Employers and the college work together to support trainees and to emphasise the importance of health and safety and the use of personal protective equipment. Employers are able to use the trainees' skills and give them opportunities to practise them while they are working. Trainees and employers value the opportunities to be able to acquire these specialist skills in the

safe environment of the college. Trainees are very employable once they have gained these skills, and employers are anxious to take them on and keep them. Some trainees are able to command a full wage. One trainee is provided with a company car, and is given considerable responsibility within the company while his employer is on holiday. The college tutor is highly respected by the trainees. He and the workplace training officer have close connections with the industry. Employers are invited twice a year to an open evening, to examine the work which is being produced and discuss trainees' progress. They are prepared to contribute to the cost of trainees going on courses provided by manufacturers, and encourage their trainees to take time away from the workplace to experience learning with colleagues from other types of furniture manufacturing. The college organises these events, and secures the necessary funding from the local TEC for them.

25. A large proportion of trainees who started the course when it was first offered, abandoned it early on. A third of the people who started the programme, identified that it was not for them and left. However, those who are left on the course, are highly motivated, and keen to complete their programme. They know how much they still have to do, and participate in negotiating realistic targets, bearing in mind their work pressures from their employers. The two cohorts of trainees did not have any initial assessment, either for their suitability for the occupational area, or for their basic skills, or key skills. The accommodation where training is provided in the college is too small. Trainees' bags and belongings take up workshop space. One of the classrooms is not big enough for the size of class using it.

Business administration

Grade 3

26. There are 45 trainees on the accounting programme. They are working towards NVQs at levels 2, 3 and 4. There are 27 modern apprentices, one national trainee and 17 work-based trainees. Accounts trainees may also be prepared for professional qualifications. Off-the-job training is provided through day-release and evening classes where trainees study with college students. Most work placements are with small or medium-sized employers. Training officers from TSW visit trainees in the workplace every 12 weeks to monitor their progress and help them compile their portfolios.

27. There are 25 administration national trainees, and three information technology national trainees. There are eight administration modern apprentices, all working towards their level 3 qualification, and two information technology modern apprentices. Both the IT modern apprentices are working towards an NVQ at level 2. One trainee is working towards an NVQ in administration at level 3 outside the modern apprenticeship framework. All but eight trainees are employed, although some are employed on fixed-term contracts with 'trainee' status. Trainees work in companies throughout the city and further afield. They usually come to college one day a week for off-the-job training sessions. The IT trainees, and the administration trainees at levels 2 and 3 are taught in separate groups. Separate sessions on key skills are provided for the information technology trainees. Administration trainees develop key skills through their NVQ work. Assessors

POOR PRACTICE

A modern apprentice in information technology was asked to produce a scale drawing for an application of number key skills exercise. He asked if he could do it on the computer, as it was a large part of his job at work. The tutor encouraged him to complete the exercise on computer, instead of using the trainee's wealth of workplace evidence.

visit trainees in the workplace to advise on portfolio building and to carry out observations. When each unit is completed, the assessor takes that section of the portfolio away to assess it.

28. The self-assessment reports prepared by the department of business and computing and the business school do not refer to the work-based training programmes. The self-assessment report gives separate grades for administration, information technology and accounting. The grade the inspectors awarded for business administration was lower than any of these.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-planned training programme
- ◆ opportunities for trainees to gain extra qualifications
- ◆ good learning resources and facilities
- ◆ trainees' above average achievement rates in accountancy
- ◆ able and motivated modern apprentices

POOR PRACTICE

One particularly able trainee took two and a half years to obtain her NVQ in administration at level 2 before being able to work at level 3. She had already gained a general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) in business studies at an advanced level with distinction.

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ trainees' slow progress towards achieving NVQs at level 2 in administration and IT
- ◆ mechanistic approach to assessment
- ◆ undemanding targets for trainees
- ◆ failure to make key skills training fully integral to programmes
- ◆ little involvement of employers in training

29. In accountancy training sessions, trainees acquire knowledge and skills and carry out tasks under simulated workplace conditions. All tutors work from comprehensive schemes of work and lesson plans. Trainees have detailed course programmes. These specify the dates when they will be assessed and by which they must complete NVQ units. Training sessions are carried out well. Tutors make good use of a variety of teaching methods. Good handouts and recommended texts provide a source of reference for trainees. Trainees participate fully in their training sessions. There is obvious rapport between the tutors and the trainees. Trainees work well with each other in groups. There are few opportunities for trainees to gain experience of the real world of work on employers' premises. Trainees work through practical exercises and their performance in these is assessed. Key skills are incorporated into the scheme of work and whilst a fully integral part of programmes, they are learnt assignments which are relevant to the accountancy programme. Much preparatory work has been undertaken to ensure key skills training is integral to the programmes. Internal verifiers use an effective sampling process that aims to ensure that they sample the work of every trainee. Internal verification is carried out as trainees complete NVQ units.

30. The majority of accountancy trainees enter training as employees with the

support of their employer. The accountancy trainees are committed to their programmes, and there are very low levels of absenteeism. Tutors go to great lengths to ensure trainees are aware of their availability to provide additional support and guidance. Tutorial time is programmed at the end of each accountancy training session.

31. The administration training programme run at the college is well planned. It covers all the theory which trainees need to know, in order to strengthen their competence in the workplace. Trainees are given good handouts. The college tutors follow a clear scheme of work, and trainees know what they have to do each week. Assessors attend some of the sessions, to give trainees advice on portfolio building. Tutors provide reports on trainees' progress at the end of each term. They send copies to the trainee, the employer, and the assessor.

32. Trainees spend much of the time in administration training sessions developing keyboard skills, and preparing for information technology, text and word processing examinations. All administration trainees have the opportunity to work towards these qualifications. Assessors are kept informed of trainees' progress at college, and understand their training programmes. They are also aware of training which trainees receive in the workplace, and whenever possible, they assess trainees as they carry out work-based tasks. They work with trainees to help them gather evidence of their competence in the workplace, and wherever possible, they assess their performance across a range of NVQ units, rather than unit by unit. The administration modern apprentices are able and highly motivated. They welcome the demands work for their level 3 qualification makes upon them, and enjoy the responsibilities of their job roles.

33. Neither tutors nor assessors for accountancy make workplace visits. Employers are fully aware of the difficulties encountered in providing the range of work experience to meet the assessment criteria. They are supportive of the college programmes and teaching methods and some would welcome the opportunity to make a contribution to the programmes.

34. Level two trainees, in administration and information technology, are taking a long time to achieve their qualification. Trainees expect their level 2 programme to last at least 18 months, and are aware that their national traineeship can last for two years. The shortest length of time it has taken a trainee to achieve an NVQ at level 2 is 15 months. Several trainees with the ability to start a modern apprenticeship at level 3, are inappropriately placed on level 2 programmes. Most are on national traineeships rather than modern apprenticeships, because their job roles do not give the level of responsibility a modern apprentice should have. When trainees are making slow progress towards achievement of the qualification, assessors visit them more regularly. They do not, however, set them demanding targets. Level 2 trainees are polite rather than enthusiastic about their programme, and do not feel that they are being stretched. Some trainees waste time in their college sessions, and do not exhibit the same degree of commitment as they show at work.

35. Assessors take the lead in structuring the portfolio, positioning and cross-

referencing the evidence, and completing the cumulative assessment record to show how the evidence meets the performance criteria and range statements. Trainees at level 2 do not take the initiative in the assessment process. Assessors prescribe the evidence the trainees should collect for each unit but they do not necessarily explain to the trainees how the evidence relates to the NVQ specifications. They also carry out observation of the trainees' performance in the workplace on occasion. Although assessors sometimes observe trainees' performance in the workplace, the evidence in the portfolios consists mainly of work the trainees have produced. Portfolios are only assessed when they have been completed. There is no ongoing verification of portfolios.

36. Although administration and information technology trainees who have started their programmes recently have begun work on their key skills, there has been no attempt to plan the NVQ work to take account of key skills requirements. Key skills training is not an integral part of the programme. Some trainees who have been on programme for some time, are aware that they have done little or no work in developing key skills. Trainees learn key skills almost exclusively through assignments. Employers are not given information about key skills, and do not contribute to any planning of opportunities for assessing key skills.

37. The achievement and retention rates for modern apprentices have been low. Of the 30 modern apprentices in administration who began their programme between 1996 and 1999, 19 have failed to complete it. One has achieved certification in key skills. Nineteen have achieved an NVQ at level 2, and one achieved an NVQ at level 3. In accountancy, 30 modern apprentices have completed their programme and two modern apprentices in information technology have also completed their programmes. The retention rate for national trainees is higher, at 76 per cent. Only one national trainee, however, has achieved an NVQ at level 2 and none has achieved certification in key skills. Thirty-six of the 56 work-based trainees who began programmes between 1996 and 1999 have obtained their NVQ at level 2, an achievement rate of 64 per cent.

Hospitality

Grade 4

38. There are 63 trainees on the programme. Twenty-nine are modern apprentices, 32 are national trainees, and two are on work-based training programmes. The provider offers training leading to a range of hospitality and bakery qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3. The majority of trainees are aiming for food preparation and cooking qualifications. During their programme, all trainees are expected to achieve a basic food hygiene qualification. Training leading to this qualification is offered at college three times per year. All trainees receive an induction to the college from their course tutor, as well as a separate company induction at their workplace. Seventy-eight per cent of the trainees are employed. The establishments used for training are varied, and include hotels owned by national chains, family owned hotels, small- and medium-sized restaurants, residential homes, hospital and college catering and bakeries. Sixteen of the trainees are modern apprentices employed by a national hotel chain with which the college has a subcontract. All the trainees with the exception of those on the housekeeping

programme and the subcontract group attend college one day a week for off-the-job training and for assessment. All assessment and verification, except for housekeeping, is undertaken at college by staff who are vocationally qualified and hold the relevant assessment and verification qualifications. The housekeeping trainee is assessed in the workplace by a workplace supervisor who is vocationally qualified and holds the relevant assessor awards. College staff undertake internal verification for the area. A workplace supervisor undertakes assessment of the modern apprentices from the hotel chain. The self-assessment report failed to identify clear strengths and weaknesses in this occupational area. Inspectors awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good resources for off-the-job training
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ enthusiastic and motivated trainees
- ◆ good teamwork amongst trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some poor assessment practices
- ◆ failure to make key skills training an integral part of the programme
- ◆ trainees' lack of awareness of programme requirements
- ◆ failure of modern apprentices and national trainees to meet framework requirements
- ◆ ineffective links between on-the-job and off-the-job training
- ◆ failure to plan training to meet the individual needs of trainees

39. The college has a good range of facilities for off-the-job training. There are practice kitchens, equipped with a good range of equipment. The college has two restaurants which are open to the public on four days a week for lunch and two evenings a week. There are a number of classrooms available for the use of the department as a whole. Food preparation and cooking trainees are grouped according to the level of NVQ. Because of numbers, one group consists of a mixture of level 3 trainees and level 2 trainees in their second year. Some level 3 trainees have complained that they do not receive enough help and support during training sessions and that they are not enabled to cover the requisite range of skills. In craft baking, it has also been necessary to place level 2 and level 3 trainees in the same group. Training sessions with this group are managed well with the more advanced trainees assisting the newer trainees. In off-the-job training sessions, there is an appropriate balance between demonstrations by the tutors and trainees' practical work. Training relates to NVQ units. Trainees are given relevant handouts.

40. In work placements, trainees gain experience in preparing and presenting a

wide range of menu items, and they use a variety of equipment. They develop good practical skills. Trainees are working with supervisors who are experienced professionals in the industry and who take an active interest in the development of their trainees.

41. Trainees are committed to a career within the hospitality industry in their chosen area. They are determined to achieve their target qualification and complete their programme. College staff and the workplace supervisors work hard to further the development of the trainees. All trainees acknowledge the level of support available from the occupationally qualified and experienced training officer from TSW.

42. Trainees are supportive of one another, especially during the off the job training. For example, in an information technology key skills workshop, more experienced trainees were readily helping less able trainees. In the kitchen, newer members of the group receive support from other trainees to help them settle into their programmes and the college environment quickly. Trainers encourage all trainees to help one another when working in the kitchen, and this leads to good teamwork.

43. The vast majority of assessment is undertaken at college. For some food preparation and cooking trainees, evidence of their competence is gathered through work undertaken in the training kitchen. This has not been produced under the pressures usually found in a commercial workplace. Trainees work well together in the training kitchen but it is not always easy for assessors to attribute particular pieces of evidence to individual trainees. The use of witness testimony is under developed, and some trainees are unsure how this should be used. There is little assessment of trainees on employers' premises even though some workplace supervisors hold assessor awards. Most assessment takes place in the college and trainees are not encouraged to gather evidence in naturally occurring situations in the workplace. Internal verification takes place at set times during the year and there is no systematic sampling of assessments. Many trainees have no idea who their internal verifier is, or what his or her role is.

44. Training in key skills delivery is underdeveloped. Trainees, trainers and assessors still see key skills as a separate aspect rather than an integral part of the programme. Trainees do not gather evidence of their attainment of key skills through occupational work for their NVQ units or workplace tasks. Modern apprentices who have been on the programme for some time, in at least seven cases for over two years, have yet to show any significant progress towards completing their key skills units. Some trainees who have been on the programme for over two years do not fully understand why they have to achieve key skills units. Some trainees are unaware of which programme they are on, and, whether they are modern apprentices or national trainees. Two modern apprentices have completed their programme but none has yet completed a national traineeship.

45. Trainees do not receive a detailed introduction to their particular programme. In a few cases, trainees have yet to complete the induction part of their framework within the six months recommended by the national training organisation. It is a

recommendation that trainees should complete work for their food hygiene qualification in the first six months of their programme, but some trainees who have been on programme for over a year still have not taken their certificate. This is in contravention of food hygiene regulations as persons working in kitchens and restaurants serving the public must be appropriately qualified. Trainees are not told in advance of the dates when the food hygiene programme will be running.

46. Employers are given little information on what trainees cover at college. They only find out by asking the trainees. Some trainees have an outline programme but those on the food preparation programme do not. Often trainees do not know what will be covered during off-the-job training days until the week before. Few trainees have written plans outlining their training in the workplace. Little link is made between off-the-job training at college, and the training received in the workplace. The training plans for all trainees specify the date by which all aspects of training must be completed. The plans are not differentiated to take account of individual trainees' progress and aptitude. Trainees are not set clear targets during progress reviews. Many trainees are unclear about the extent of their progress and they do not know when they can realistically expect to complete each unit of their programme.

47. In 1998/99, 12 trainees achieved an NVQ at level 2 and five achieved an NVQ at level 3. Retention rates are poor. In 1997-98, the proportion of leavers who completed their programme successfully was only 20 per cent. In 1998-99, this proportion rose to 25 per cent.

Hairdressing

Grade 4

48. There are 65 trainees on hairdressing programmes. Forty-nine of them are national trainees, and 12 are modern apprentices. Fifty-two of the trainees are on programmes leading to NVQs in hairdressing at level 2, and 13 trainees are on level 3 programmes. Most trainees attend the college one day a week for theory, practical training and assessment. Nine receive all their training and assessment in the salon where they work. Two TSW training officers visit trainees in their salons every eight weeks to carry out progress reviews and assessments. There are also four work-based assessors in the placement salons who carry out assessments with their own trainees. Trainees work in a variety of 48 salons in the Exeter area. Thirty of the trainees are employed, and the other 35 are trainees on placements. The training officer visits the workplace on the first day the trainee starts his or her programme, to complete paperwork and an induction checklist. Induction also takes place at the college for those trainees who attend day-release programmes. The self-assessment report identified strengths and weaknesses across the whole department of community services within which hairdressing programmes are based. Inspectors agreed with one of the strengths and one of the weaknesses relating to hairdresser training. They found other strengths and weaknesses the college had not identified and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-structured programme at the college
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ opportunities for trainees to achieve additional qualifications

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ missed opportunities for trainees to gather evidence in naturally occurring situations
- ◆ little understanding of the programme requirements by trainees and employers
- ◆ insufficiently demanding targets
- ◆ insufficient sampling of assessment practice in the workplace
- ◆ failure to make key skills training integral throughout the programme
- ◆ trainees' poor achievement rates

49. Trainees who attend the college receive a well-structured theory programme. Comprehensive schemes of work and schedules are broken down into each specific area of the NVQ. Lecturers and tutors use a wide range of training methods in the classroom, and encourage trainees to participate in a variety of appropriate learning activities. The trainees can identify from the scheme of work when assessments will be carried out, and when assignments will be issued and the date by which they have to be completed. Should trainees miss specific weeks then it is easy for them to identify what they have missed. Trainees also have individual tutorials with their tutors at the college, where they have the opportunity to discuss confidentially any problems they may have with their college work, or in their workplace. They may also discuss issues related to their general welfare. Trainees receive valuable support through these tutorials. The college has put considerable effort into working with employers to meet trainees' needs, and improve retention rates. However, some employers still do not feel they are well informed about the content of the trainees' programmes, and they are not able to link the salon to the NVQ specifications. Many employers say they have not been issued with a scheme of work. Where salons offer their own training programmes, these are not related to those the trainees follow at college, and trainees do not gather evidence for their portfolios through them.

50. The trainees have good opportunities to progress in the salons where they work. Most salons offer very high standards of customer service and technical skill. Most trainees perform hairdressing services competently in the salon early on in their programmes. Trainees within the first few weeks of joining the salons can carry out services such as shampooing, conditioning, neutralising and blow-drying. They develop reception skills quickly and trainees work well together as a team.

However, the trainees make slow progress towards achieving their NVQs.

51. Good opportunities are available at the college for the trainees to work towards additional qualifications. Trainees can also take the barbering units of the NVQ, and a theatrical makeup course is offered and proving popular.

52. There is poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. The trainers and assessors at the salons and the college do not work as a team. Although regular meetings take place and decisions are recorded, these are not acted upon. Action to ensure that there is standardisation of working practices across the team of assessors both in the workplace and at the college have been agreed on more than one occasion, but have not been implemented.

53. Both the internal verifier and the external verifier have noted regularly that assessment records need to be signed and kept up to date, but assessment records are still incomplete. Assessment plans and assessment recording methods are used in the college, but not in the workplace. In some instances, trainees are assessed in theory work at the college but assessment of their practical work is supposed to be carried out in the workplace. In practice, however, trainees receive infrequent assessment at work and their progress towards achieving the NVQ is delayed.

54. Assessors and trainees are missing opportunities to gather portfolio evidence through naturally occurring situations in the workplace. The training officer has a fixed schedule of appointments for making visits to trainees in the workplace. These visits often occur, however, when trainees have no suitable clients to work on and they then have to bring in models for assessment purposes. Trainees often have difficulty finding suitable models, and if they don't find one, they cannot be assessed. Opportunities are missed at other times of the week to assess trainees who are working on their own clients. There are qualified assessors in many workplaces whose skills are not being used. Many trainees have missed assessments owing to the lack of suitable clients at the time of the assessors' visits. In some instances, trainees are not assessed because they do not have their assessment books with them at the time of the training officer's visit. The training officer has not used the progress review sheet as a means of recording assessment in the interim.

55. Trainees have little understanding of their NVQs and key skill requirements. Assessors take charge of the assessment process. Trainees are not encouraged to take the initiative for gathering evidence between the training officer's visits. Neither trainees nor their employers understand the use of witness testimonies. The salon-based trainees who do not attend the college have little understanding of their assessment records, and rely on the visiting assessor to manage the paperwork on their behalf.

56. Trainees are not set demanding targets. They are put under pressure to make progress at work, but are rarely stretched by the training programme itself. Trainees rarely complete ahead of their target dates even when they have the ability and opportunity to do so.

57. The college has produced a sound internal verification system for hairdressing, partly as a result of receiving helpful guidance from the external verifier. On the training programmes, however, internal verification extends only to the trainees' portfolios. The internal verifier has not yet sampled assessment practice in the workplace, checked the assessment practice of all the work based assessors, or provided support in the workplace for the assessors. There is inconsistency in assessment practice and the recording of assessments is not standardised.

58. There is little integration of key skills training with the occupational training for the NVQ. The college has made good progress developing key skills training over the last year. As a result of an external verifier's recommendations, the college has produced some particularly good assessment plans designed to help the trainees plan their assessment. However these are not used to plan opportunities for gathering evidence of competence in key skills through all work for the NVQ. Owing to the delay in implementing key skills training, the modern apprentices and national trainees who started before 1999 have fallen well behind with their programme. Some of the modern apprentices have almost completed work for their NVQ at level 3 but have received no training in key skills. This has demotivated the trainees.

59. Trainees' retention and achievement rates have been poor for the last three years. In 1996-97, 59.5 per cent of trainees left the programmes early and did not achieve an NVQ. In 1997-98, 59.6 per cent of trainees left early with no achievements. In 98/99, there was an even a higher percentage of early leavers, as 64 percent left with no achievements. In the current year, retention rates have improved dramatically. In the year to date, only 20 percent of trainees have left early, but no modern apprentice or national trainee has yet completed his or her framework.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 4

60. The college has had an equal opportunities policy since its incorporation in 1993. Its equal opportunities statement is included in trainees' induction booklets and students' handbooks. The college seeks the views of students, staff and employers about the extent to which it meets its commitment to uphold and promote equal opportunities. The college's 'quality committee' deals with issues related to equality of opportunity. People with mobility problems could access most of the college sites, but two of the sites would not be easily accessible. The college produced a separate self-assessment report on equal opportunities to meet TSC requirements. The strengths and weaknesses it identified, however, related to the promotion of equal opportunities across the college as a whole, rather than for work-based trainees in particular. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report. However, the nine strengths and three weaknesses identified focus on the activity within the college, rather than looking at the overall

experience of the work-based trainees. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ high level of awareness of equal opportunities issues among college staff
- ◆ rapid response to any incidence of harassment in the workplace

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ trainees' and employers' poor awareness of the importance of equal opportunities
- ◆ failure to apply the college's equal opportunities procedures fully to trainees
- ◆ no recent equal opportunities training for TSW staff or trainees
- ◆ failure to make use of equal opportunities data relating to trainees
- ◆ no systematic checking of employers' equal opportunities policies

61. The college has an action plan for implementing its policy on equal opportunities. College staff have a high level of awareness of the importance of upholding equality of opportunity. A programme of in-service training related to equal opportunities has been launched. For example, all tutorial staff have recently received training on inclusive learning. TSW staff, however, have not yet received any of this training.

62. Many trainees and employers have a poor understanding of equal opportunities. Many trainees are unsure whether there was any reference to equal opportunities in their induction. They are given a booklet containing a statement to the effect that they are protected against discrimination by legislation but this does not mean much to them. They are given a copy of the students' handbook containing information about the college's equal opportunities policy but they said that they had not had any discussion about this.

63. Many trainees are not aware of the college's complaints procedure. They have received no advice on ways of dealing with bullying or harassment in the workplace. In the week of the inspection, however, TSW staff took appropriate and swift action over an incident involving bullying in the workplace.

64. Marketing materials aimed at schools contain positive images in terms of gender. For example, they contain pictures of female motor mechanics and a male care assistant. TSW, however, has not taken any specific action to recruit female trainees to occupational areas where workers are predominantly male, and vice versa. There are no special initiatives, for instance, to recruit more young men to hairdressing and administration programmes, and more young women to construction and engineering programmes.

65. Equal opportunities data on applicants, in terms of their gender, race and disabilities, are not collected. The proportion of trainees from minority ethnic

groups is slightly lower than the proportion of persons from such groups in the local population.

66. There is no systematic process for checking that the employers of modern apprentices have an equal opportunities policy, or that they carry one out. Some assessors carry out such checking on their own initiative but others do not. Similarly, there is no systematic monitoring of work placements to ascertain that employers operate within the terms of the college's equal opportunities policy. All the college's sites, except two, are accessible to persons with physical disabilities.

Trainee support

Grade 4

67. All work-based trainees are registered students of the college and are given full entitlement to all support services including learning support, careers guidance, personal counselling and specialist advice. Written college policies such as those for health and safety cover work-based training. All employers' premises are subject to an initial health and safety inspection, and subsequent to monitoring by college staff. Trainees are mainly recruited either by referral from the careers service, Employment Service or from the local schools. All new trainees are interviewed by training officers and are given advice on training choices. Trainees are given an induction to their training programme, and during this they receive a copy of the student handbook. Trainees receive a separate induction to their work-placement. TEC contracts require that trainees' progress is reviewed every three months. Reviewing trainees' progress is the responsibility of a nominated training officer. The training officer is the first point of contact for the trainees and there is a team of occupationally experienced training officers. The self-assessment failed to identify clear strengths and weaknesses in trainee support. It focused on the support available for students at college rather than for work based trainees. Inspectors awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ excellent specialist support services in college
- ◆ clear progression routes for trainees

GOOD PRACTICE

One trainee who had recently had poor assessments was given additional support, encouragement and sound guidance on the next steps, including adjustments to his lifestyle, which were welcomed by both the trainee and employer.

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor arrangements for the poor initial assessment of trainees
- ◆ poor use of individual training plans
- ◆ poor conduct of trainees' progress reviews in most areas
- ◆ insufficient accreditation of trainees' prior learning

68. The college offers excellent specialist support services. Trainees receive help from experienced staff, qualified in guidance and counselling. Information on college support services is contained in the students' handbook, copies of which

are issued to all trainees during induction. Trainees are aware of the range of services available to them and use these as and when required. There is a large nursery facility available to trainees and staff. This has recently been expanded to 75 places. This is also used as an after school and holiday club. Trainees pay a nominal amount for using this facility. There is a college hardship fund which has been drawn upon to help work-based trainees. Staff are sympathetic and sensitive to trainees' needs, and can help them with training issues and personal matters. A number of TSW staff are currently working towards NVQ Level 4 in guidance. Trainees acknowledge the high level of support they receive from staff.

69. Trainees are encouraged to progress to further courses where these are appropriate for them. The college offers a wide range of provision and trainees can easily move to another programme if their career aspirations alter. Some New Deal clients have progressed to work-based learning programmes as national trainees or modern apprentices, and there are opportunities for national trainees to become modern apprentices. In many of the occupational areas, trainees may work towards additional qualifications.

70. There is no systematic approach to initial assessment of trainees' occupational competence or basic skills, or key skills. There are instances in both engineering and business administration, of trainees having completed an advanced level GNVQ and then being placed on an NVQ programme at an inappropriate level.

71. With the exception of the motor vehicle training programme, trainees' individual training plans are not devised and maintained well. The plans are not differentiated to reflect individual trainees' aptitude and progress. The target dates for the completion of various components of the trainees' programmes are usually the same as the date for the completion of the programme as a whole. The plans do not give the trainees a clear picture of what they will be doing over the duration of their programme. More able trainees are not challenged to complete early or at a faster rate than other trainees. Individual training plans are rarely updated to show trainees' achievement of NVQ units, attendance on additional courses or achievement of additional qualifications.

72. Occupationally experienced training officers carry out reviews of trainees' progress regularly in line with TEC requirements. There is a good system for ensuring that reviews take place. Employers or supervisors are usually involved in the review process, but in general, reviews are not carried out well. In most areas trainees are not set appropriate targets to attain before the next review. During the reviews, staff do not always check that trainees have carried out action required of them or that they have met the targets set during the previous review. The reviews do not provide trainees with a clear indication of the extent of their progress. Trainees are not clear about what parts of their programme they have completed and what they still have left to do. In many instances, trainees are not given specific objectives to achieve at work, such as the collection of evidence of their achievement of the requisite competencies for particular NVQ units. Some reviews become, in effect, occasions when trainees' portfolios are assessed and staff fail to make any distinction between progress reviews and assessment sessions.

73. There is little accreditation of trainees' prior learning. The college is not necessarily aware of the skills some trainees already have. Some trainees are placed on programmes where they receive training to acquire competencies they already possess. Some trainees who hold the same qualifications are put on programmes at different levels.

Management of training

Grade 3

74. The college's strategic direction is described in its three-year plan. It also has a one-year operating plan and policy and procedure statements for the curriculum, cross-college activities, and business support. All teaching staff have a copy of the handbook for tutors. TSW is a department of the college and is responsible for liaison with employers and the monitoring and assessment of trainees in the workplace. Eight full-time and six part-time training officers, directed by a manager and supported by four administrators, are responsible for modern apprentices, national trainees and work based trainees throughout their programme. Training officers are responsible for checking that work placements are suitable for trainees and that appropriate health and safety standards are upheld in them. They make monitoring visits to work placements at least once every six weeks. In some instances, they also assess the trainees during these visits. Records of trainees' progress reviews are copied to the appropriate tutors and assessors. The self-assessment report identified some strengths and few weaknesses but these related to the management of college courses rather than work-based training. The self-assessment report did not award a grade for the management of training.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive administrative procedures in the work-based training department
- ◆ good communications
- ◆ effective staff development programme

GOOD PRACTICE

TSW has a small fleet of cars, branded with the TSW logo, for assessors' use when travelling to visit trainees. The provider has a large rural catchment area, and the use of these cars makes it possible for assessors to visit their trainees without having to use their own vehicles.

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ ineffective working relationship between TSW and the other college departments
- ◆ inadequate systems for monitoring trainees' progress
- ◆ failure to offer 'roll-on roll-off' programmes to all new deal clients

75. Procedures covering the recruitment of staff, induction, appraisal and professional development are clearly stated in the tutor handbook. TSW has comprehensive policies and procedures for the administration and monitoring of TEC-funded programmes. These procedures have been produced in line with external quality assurance measures such as ISO 9000. Many of the procedures had been updated shortly before the inspection.

76. A new structure of senior management and departmental management groups has been introduced. Communications across the college are good. Information is disseminated to staff through weekly information bulletins, circulars, full staff meetings and seminars. Staff are encouraged to assist in the setting of strategic goals and operating targets. The roles and responsibilities of tutors, assessors and training officers for the work-based trainees are undergoing change. Many job descriptions no longer reflect these developing roles and responsibilities accurately. The working relationship between TSW and the rest of the college is not clearly defined. Training officers are unsure of their authority to enter college departments and influence the off-the-job training. College tutors and lecturers in some departments are not allowed to assess the trainees they teach. It is often not clear who has responsibility for ensuring the co-ordination of on and off the job training. Similarly, it is not clear who has overall responsibility for the welfare and progress of each group of trainees.

77. Throughout the college staff meetings are held regularly. Decisions taken at them are recorded, acted upon and reviewed. In some areas, these meetings are becoming less frequent, as participants do not appreciate their value. Some departmental meetings have yet to address a number of key issues within the provision of work-based training, particularly relating to the development of key skills training, assessment and internal verification.

78. Staff receive an annual appraisal. Professional development programmes meet the needs of individual staff. Staff who undertake training and development activities evaluate them afterwards. All members of staff may attend college courses free of charge to enable them to further their professional and personal development.

79. There is no college-wide system for monitoring trainees' progress and achievements. Individual departments have designed and maintain their own systems and those in the engineering and construction departments are particularly effective. The systems in some of the other departments do not enable staff to spot when trainees are taking a disproportionate length of time to achieve their targets. Some trainees do not know how far they have progressed towards achievement of their qualification.

80. New Deal clients are entitled to 'roll-on, roll-off' provision. This is difficult for the college to arrange for some areas, and there have been few examples of provision derived or adapted specifically to meet the needs of New Deal clients. Staff expect that some New Deal clients will meet their targets easily. Some of the targets for New Deal clients' achievements, however, are insufficiently demanding.

Quality assurance

Grade 4

81. The college's quality assurance meets the requirements of the TEC contract,

and awarding bodies. The college is a member of the British Quality Foundation. In a quality assurance statement, the college emphasises its commitment to improving the quality of its provision. The college has been participating in a pilot project to replace external verification with a system of self-reporting and remote sampling. It has made a video for the Further Education Development Agency on self-assessment. The self-assessment report was written in accordance with the guidelines set out in FEFC circulars, rather than those in *Raising the Standard*. Many of the strengths and weakness identified in the report were not relevant to work-based training. Inspectors awarded a lower grade for quality assurance than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ college-wide strategy for evaluating and improving training programmes
- ◆ systematic observations of classroom practice

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficiently rigorous internal verification
- ◆ failure of course reviews to focus on problems in work-based training programmes
- ◆ failure of self-assessment process to identify strengths and weaknesses in work-based training

82. The college's commitment to improving the quality of its provision shows in its clearly written strategy for evaluating and improving all its programmes of teaching and learning. The framework includes a process for new course approval through the college managers' committee, course and course review at the end of each year, using appropriate performance indicators. This process covers the work-based training programmes. The views of trainees and employers on the quality of provision are gathered through questionnaires at the beginning of, and midway through, programmes. The questionnaires used, however, are those given to students on college courses and they do not contain queries relating to work-based training.

83. Each college department arranges for its staff to meet with their colleagues in the work-based training department. The minutes of some of these meetings show that significant issues relating to work-based training are discussed and action is planned to improve programmes. Other meetings, however, are not as effective in focussing on issues relating to work-based training. The minutes of meetings in one department where work-based training had significant deficiencies, record a recent decision to have fewer meetings because staff did not regard them as useful.

84. There is a system for regular observation of full and part-time lecturers in the classroom. Lecturers know in advance when they will be observed, and who will be carrying out the observation. Judgements are made during observation according to a well-understood set of criteria. Feedback is given to the person being observed, and a grade for the observation is agreed. College staff see the

observation process as an aid to their professional development, rather than a threat, and welcome feedback and guidance.

85. The college's internal verification system is well established. Procedures for internal verification processes are clear and well understood. The written procedures follow Qualifications and Curriculum Authority guidelines, although they make no reference to the 'Common Accord'. There is a system for pursuing action points from external verifier reports. Procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of internal verification have not led to the improvement of assessment practice. This was poor or in need of development in all occupational areas except engineering and manufacturing. In two areas, the work-based assessors did not receive adequate guidance from the internal verifier. Internal verifiers are not providing effective guidance on how assessment of key skills may be integrated with assessment of NVQ competencies. They have not addressed the lack of work-based assessment or the failure of trainees in some areas to gather evidence of their competence in the workplace.

86. The course review system is well understood by staff, and covers all courses offered by the college. Most trainees are in classes with college-based students, and the focus of the review is on the teaching input, rather than the overall learning experience of the work-based trainees. Even where the course being reviewed is a class run exclusively for work-based trainees, there is no review of any element of the learning experience outside the classroom, apart from a reference to the survey of students' and employers' satisfaction. This is part of every review, and is gathered from a standard questionnaire. The reviews did not identify many of the problems with the programmes found at inspection. The action plans therefore did nothing to resolve these problems, and in some cases, the targets were unclear, and dates for achievement were either not given, or had not been achieved.

87. Unusually, the college had attempted to incorporate its self-assessment to the criteria specified in Raising the Standard, in its FEFC self-assessment. This meant that the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college were aggregated differently, and many sections of the self-assessment had little or no reference to the provision for work-based trainees. Because much of the self-assessment was aggregated according to the college's provision, the grades were often reflecting the college's view of its total programmes, including further education or even higher education provision, rather than specifically its work-based training programmes. This led to the college having a generally higher set of grades in its self-assessment than inspectors found appropriate. Discussions with college staff were open, and the college was already aware of many of the problems found by inspectors. But this awareness was not evidenced either by the self-assessment report, or by the individual course reviews. It showed in some of the notes of departmental meetings, but not all, and in the college's willingness to participate in, and learn from, the inspection process. However, the process of reflection and self-assessment against the TSC framework was not evident in any of the written materials available to inspectors either beforehand or at the time of inspection.