



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JUNE 2000

Liverpool Community College

SUMMARY

Training in engineering and business administration at Liverpool Community College is satisfactory. Trainees benefit from good resources in engineering and well-qualified, competent staff. Business administration trainees have good work placements where they receive help and support. They are able to work towards additional qualifications. College staff visit trainees in the workplace frequently. Trainees on both the engineering and business administration programmes are assessed infrequently and assessment is poorly recorded. A great deal of care is given by the college staff to ensure equality of opportunity for all trainees. There is, however, little monitoring of the promotion of equality of opportunity in the workplace. Support for trainees is particularly good. There is an extensive range of support facilities. Some reviews of trainees' progress, however, are not carried out well. The structures for the management of training are good but they are not always used to best effect. The college has good arrangements for self-assessment. Internal inspection is carried out regularly and staff teams constantly evaluate the quality of training.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	3
Business administration	3

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ well equipped engineering workshops
- ◆ flexibly arranged engineering programmes
- ◆ good work placements for business administration trainees
- ◆ frequent visits of assessors to business administration trainees at their workplace
- ◆ effective promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ extensive support facilities for trainees
- ◆ effective communication structures
- ◆ good self-assessment arrangements
- ◆ thorough internal inspection process

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ infrequency of assessment on engineering programmes
- ◆ lack of structure in business administration training for modern apprentices
- ◆ no continuous monitoring of the promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ failure to make key skills training fully integral to programmes
- ◆ inadequate internal verification records
- ◆ failure of some employers to take part in training

INTRODUCTION

1. Liverpool Community College is a general further education college serving one of the most deprived communities in England. It is currently based on six sites within the city of Liverpool and offers education and training in over 50 outreach centres in and around the city. The college employs 452 teaching and 369 support staff. It also employs 400 part-time staff. The substantive part of the college's activity is full- and part-time education and training funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC).
2. Before Liverpool Community College was established in 1991, other colleges first offered work-based training in 1980. The volume of work-based training directly contracted to the college has declined over the years. The college currently holds a direct contract for work-based training for young people and adults from Merseyside Training and Enterprise Council (MTEC). In the occupational area of engineering, the college acts as a subcontractor to several other national and local training organisations. The college also acts as a subcontractor to the Liverpool Employment Service Unit of Delivery to provide options for the New Deal clients.
3. The numbers of modern apprentices, national trainees, other youth trainees, adult trainees, New Deal clients and trainees on subcontracted programmes at the college in June 2000, is shown in the table below.

	Modern apprentices	National trainees	Other youth	Adults	New Deal	Total
Construction			8		13	21
Engineering	21				18	39
Business administration	9		11		8	28
Media & design					31	31
Foundation for work					35	35
Total	30	0	19	0	105	154

4. This report covers work-based training in engineering and business administration at the college. At the time of inspection, there were few construction trainees and construction training was not inspected. New Deal options were not inspected as these had already been covered by the Training Standards Council's inspection of the Liverpool Employment Service Unit of Delivery.
5. Liverpool Community College mainly serves the boroughs of Liverpool and the south section of Knowsley. Liverpool's traditional industries have been subject to rapid decline. Merseyside has been less successful than some other major urban

areas in attracting new employers and businesses. The economic difficulties of Merseyside have been recognised by the European Union and it has been designated an objective 1 area for funding purposes. It is expected that Merseyside will continue to receive European Union objective 1 funding for the period 2000-2006. There has been growth in recent years in tourism and retailing and a number of major commercial employers, including banks, insurance companies, football-pool companies and the National Lottery, have come to the area. The local hospitals and universities also employ large numbers of people.

6. In June 2000, the unemployment rate in the Liverpool travel to work area was 8.5 per cent, more than double the average for England of 3.5 per cent. In some areas of Liverpool, unemployment rates are between 13 per cent and 20 per cent. There is a high rate of long-term unemployment in Liverpool. Over 70 per cent of residents live in 10 per cent of the most deprived electoral wards in England, according to the Index of local deprivation. The proportion of persons in Liverpool from minority ethnic groups is 4 per cent. Half those from minority ethnic groups live in three inner city wards served by the college, and 20 per cent of them are aged between 16 and 24. In 1998-99, 9 per cent of students and trainees at the college declared that they had a disability and 9.5 per cent identified themselves as members of minority ethnic groups.

7. In 1999, the proportions of school leavers in Liverpool and Knowsley achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above were respectively, 32.4 per cent and 23.6 percent, compared with the national average for England of 47.9 per cent. A labour market assessment carried out in Merseyside in June 1999 shows that the proportion of persons in Liverpool with poor literacy skills is 20 per cent, compared with 15 per cent in the United Kingdom as a whole, and that the proportion of persons with poor numeracy skills is 25 per cent, compared with 21 per cent in the United Kingdom as a whole.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

8. Self-assessment is well established at Liverpool Community College. In preparation for inspection by the Training Standards Council the college's self-assessment report was prepared in accordance with the guidelines in *Raising the Standard*. All college course teams, curriculum groups, programme areas, cross-college services and business support units contributed to the self-assessment. Occupational area reports drew upon college curriculum area reports, which, in turn, drew upon self-assessment reports prepared by course teams. The findings in these reports were taken into account by cross-college services and business support units, when determining grades for the generic areas. All reports were validated by the college's quality assurance management group, the college's corporation standards committee and a colleague from MTEC. Inspectors agreed with the grades in the college's self-assessment report for engineering, trainee support, management of training and, quality assurance. They awarded grades lower than those given by the college, for business administration and equal opportunities.

9. A team of 11 inspectors spent a total of 33 days in June 2000 inspecting MTEC-funded work-based training at Liverpool Community College. Inspectors observed and interviewed 78 trainees at the college and in the workplace. Training, review and assessment sessions were observed. 110 interviews were held with college staff and 16 visits were made to employers. Inspectors looked at trainees' files and portfolios of evidence, training plans, training materials, resources for teaching and trainee support, policies and procedures and other relevant documents.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering

Grade 3

10. There are 21 modern apprentices working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in motor vehicle engineering at level 2 and level 3 on a programme lasting for up to three years. The six apprentices specialising in vehicle body repair and refinishing are working towards an NVQ at level 3. The other 15 apprentices are working towards NVQs in vehicle mechanical and electrical repair at level 2 and then progress to level 3. All attend the college on a day-release basis predominantly for theory work. There is one female apprentice. No apprentice is from a minority ethnic group. Apprentices cover theory work, but do not work for an additional qualification. Modern apprentices are employed in a range of businesses including large main dealerships, large non-franchised garages, transport companies and small independent garages. They receive training on the job. They develop key skills mainly through assignment work towards the end of training. College staff carry out assessments at college and in the workplace. A part-time member of staff is responsible for carrying out reviews of apprentices'

progress, monitoring apprentices' progress towards achievement of the target qualification, and for apprentices' personal welfare. The programme started in 1998-99, and two young people have already completed their modern apprenticeship. The college's self-assessment report for engineering listed many strengths and a few weaknesses, but was not particularly self-critical. The grade awarded by inspectors was the same as that given in the college's self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-equipped workshops
- ◆ flexibly arranged training programme

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ low retention rate for modern apprentices
- ◆ infrequent assessment
- ◆ failure to make key skills training fully integral to programmes

GOOD PRACTICE

This is an example of good practice in testing trainees' knowledge of theory. The colleges tests modern apprentices on a number of motor vehicle engineering subjects throughout their courses, using software from an external body. The tests are individual, externally set and modern apprentices take them on a computer. Those who are successful gain a certificate which may be used as evidence of the trainees' acquisition of competence, for the purpose of assessment.

11. The large workshops are well equipped with components and 40 cars, vans and motorcycles. The vehicles include some which are old, but fit for the purposes of training, and many modern cars and vans. Insurance companies have donated some of these. There has been significant investment in both equipment and modern vehicles. The college has excellent links with a major automobile manufacturer, which supplies complete light vehicle bodies and other body parts for use in practical sessions. Off-the-job theoretical and practical sessions are well taught and hold the apprentices' interest. Apprentices expressed their appreciation of the way their theory work and practical work at college are relevant to their on-the-job experience.

12. The college provides carefully structured, well-planned, off-the-job training. This is carried out by experienced, highly occupationally qualified staff who have appropriate teaching and NVQ assessor and verifier qualifications and a good knowledge of current industry standards and practices. Tutors use a range of visual aids, videos, good handouts and practical examples to help the trainees learn effectively. Apprentices demonstrate a high degree of commitment to both theoretical and workshop training and are enthusiastic about attending college. They respect the college staff and appreciate the way they take a genuine interest in their progress and learning. In their workplace, most apprentices carry out a wide range of tasks and are able to develop the competencies they need to demonstrate in order to obtain the NVQ. In the small number of cases where apprentices are unable to cover the requisite range of competencies in their workplace, the college finds an alternative and temporary placement for them, or arranges for them to develop the competencies in a simulated work-based environment. Key skills training is not fully integral to the engineering programmes. Apprentices have to carry out assignments on key skills which are

not always relevant to engineering. Apprentices miss opportunities to gather evidence of their competence in key skills as they carry out everyday tasks in the workplace.

13. Apprentices may join the programme at any time. Many are recruited following direct application to the college, others are referred by the careers service, and some transfer from other training organisations. Apprentices receive initial assessment and a number have benefited from the accreditation of their prior learning and experience. The apprentices' individual training plans are mostly standardised. They are held centrally, although a copy is kept in the department. A sheet in the front of apprentices' portfolios lists the units to be followed, and this is used when monitoring the apprentices' progress. All apprentices have an induction lasting a week. Health and safety procedures are given particular emphasis during induction. Apprentices are able to recall the content of their induction programme well. More capable apprentices, especially those with relevant experience and qualifications, are able to determine the pace of their training and make faster progress towards achieving their NVQ. Two apprentices are making particularly rapid progress.

14. The modern apprentices' retention rate is poor. Thirty-six apprentices have joined the scheme in the last two years; two have completed their apprenticeships but 13 left early. Six of the early leavers went to alternative employment in the motor trade, three employers withdrew their support for college-based training, three apprentices left for other reasons and one left because of unacceptable performance. The retention rate of 64 per cent is below the national average for modern apprentices in motor vehicle engineering. The concerns about retention feature in the college's self-assessment action plan. Those who leave early are credited with the NVQ units they have completed. Concern about the low retention rate is reflected in the action plan which accompanies the self-assessment report.

15. Full-time and a part-time member of staff carry out assessments in the workplace. Assessment methods used include observation and the gathering of evidence from diverse sources. All assessors are occupationally qualified and have assessors qualifications. Some modern apprentices, however, have a gap of up to nine months between assessments and they can become demotivated by not knowing the extent to which they are making progress. The internal verifier observes assessment in the workplace. Apprentices, however, do not understand the role of the internal verifier and none could recall having ever met one. Another part-time member of staff undertakes the reviews of apprentices' progress in the workplace and he also undertakes some assessment. Apprentices are confused by this arrangement and are sometimes uncertain whether they are being assessed or receiving a progress review. The system for monitoring and recording assessment is good. Assessors complete a form giving feedback on apprentices' performance. There is no space for a date on the form. Some assessments are not clearly dated or not dated at all.

Business administration**Grade 3**

16. There are currently 20 trainees undertaking business administration training at the college. There are two modern apprentices in information technology, studying at NVQ level 3. Seven modern apprentices are working towards an NVQ level 3 in administration. There are also 11 people on youth training, under the local brand name of 'Futures' who are working towards their NVQ level 1 in administration. There is a group of eight New Deal clients, on the full time education and training option, who are working towards different administration qualifications including general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) and bilingual secretarial diplomas. The youth trainees are referred to the college by the local careers office or by their schools. MTEC refers the modern apprentices, all of whom are employed before starting their training programmes. All the trainees working towards the NVQ level 1 are endorsed by the careers office as having some form of learning disability. The youth trainees undergo a basic skills initial assessment covering literacy and numeracy. The modern apprentices have a job interview as their initial assessment. The youth trainees attend a two-week group induction in the college. The modern apprentices have a short individual induction, given by their trainer, in their workplace. The youth trainees have a work placement for three days a week and they attend college for off-the-job training on the remaining two days. They spend one day of off-the-job training working towards an NVQ in administration, and on the other day they receive extra learning support and work towards additional qualifications. The modern apprentices receive all their training on-the-job. The placements include administration and information technology departments within the college, housing associations, the local council, a law centre, a city farm and small businesses. The off-the-job training takes place in an office which simulates a realistic working environment. The office is equipped with telephones, faxes and a range of information technology hardware and software to industry standard. Two faculty curriculum managers have responsibility for the trainees. There are five business administration training staff, who hold appropriate vocational and assessor qualifications. Over the last three years, the trainees' retention rate has been 75 per cent. The trainees' achievement rate over this period has been 73 per cent. The retention rate is higher on the youth training programme than on the modern apprenticeship programmes. The achievement rate has risen from 57 per cent in 1997 to 87 per cent achieving their NVQs in the last contract year. No young person has yet completed a modern apprenticeship. The average length of stay on the programme is two years. Inspectors considered some of the strengths stated in the self-assessment report to be either no more than normal practice, or not relevant to work-based training. Inspectors found strengths and also weaknesses, particularly those relating to the quality of the trainees' learning experience, which the college had not identified. They awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good work placements offering a range of learning opportunities
- ◆ good opportunities for trainees to gain additional qualifications and increase their employability
- ◆ frequent visits to the workplace by assessors

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of structured training for modern apprentices
- ◆ poor recording of assessment decisions affecting modern apprentices

17. The training staff are responsible for finding placements for the youth trainees and matching them to the needs of the individual trainees. Staff in the work placements help those trainees who have learning disabilities. The college staff have built up a bank of placements to meet trainees' learning needs. The workplace supervisors are patient and give the trainees time and support so that they can learn and practise new skills. They help them to identify appropriate evidence of their acquisition of competencies for the purposes of NVQ assessment. The trainees are given tasks which are within their capabilities but which they find demanding. One trainee who did not communicate easily with strangers when she first started in the placement, now works on the company's reception desk. She greets visitors and helps them as necessary. The modern apprentices are also in work placements where they receive help and support. When a modern apprentice joins the programme, the trainer works with staff at the work placement to ensure that the apprentice can develop the requisite range of NVQ competencies. One trainee works as an information technology technician. When hardware or software needs to be installed or rectified, the trainee's workplace supervisor checks to see if the work entailed will enable the trainee to demonstrate the requisite NVQ competencies. If so, he is given the job so that he can collect the necessary evidence. Trainees welcome the support they receive in their work placement and it helps them to increase their confidence. They are also able to use new skills in the workplace, which they have learnt at college.

POOR PRACTICE

This is an example of poor practice in implementing the modern apprenticeship framework. Both the modern apprentices on the information technology programme began working towards NVQ level 3 when they did not possess the relevant NVQ at level 2. Under the terms of the modern apprenticeship framework, the apprentices must obtain an NVQ at level 2 first before progressing to work towards an NVQ at level 3.

18. All trainees are encouraged to undertake extra qualifications. These include basic skills certificates and vocational certificates for oral communication. Trainees can work towards word processing qualifications at varying levels according to their ability. They can also follow general courses to acquire skills of use to them in the workplace. These include a first aid course and a manual-handling course. Almost all trainees achieve at least one extra qualification during their training programme. They work towards additional qualifications with the aim of improving their chances of employment. Many trainees have never obtained a qualification before joining their training programme. The chance to gain one now motivates them to succeed and as they make progress, so their self-confidence increases.

19. The assessor visits the trainees in the work placement at monthly intervals. On

their visits, the assessors carry out progress reviews, monitoring of the trainees' progress towards achieving the NVQ, assessment and action-planning. The assessors come to know the scope of the work trainees undertake in their work placements well, and they encourage the trainees to identify evidence of their acquisition of work-based competencies. Assessment by observation often occurs during these visits. Portfolios contain a substantial amount of work-based evidence. Trainees only gather evidence under simulated work-based conditions when it is impossible for them to obtain this in the workplace. Assessors set trainees targets to reach before their next visit.

20. There is no structured training for the modern apprentices. All training happens incidentally on the job. Off-the-job training is not part of the apprentices' normal programme. Apprentices do not cover theory work. The training apprentices receive in the workplace relates to their job rather than their need to develop and acquire specific NVQ competencies. Owing to the pressure of their work, some apprentices do not have time to acquire all the relevant NVQ competencies in the workplace. When the assessors discover this is the case, they sometimes have to arrange off-the-job training for the apprentices to fill gaps in their acquisition of competencies. Some apprentices are demotivated by their slow progress towards achievement of their qualification. Apprentices are only assessed in key skills when they have completed all work for their NVQ. The apprentice then has to examine all the evidence in his or her portfolio to cross-reference it, where possible, to the key skills standards. One apprentice took a year to do this after completing work for the NVQ.

21. There is a lack of recording of assessment decisions affecting modern apprentices. Though assessment occurs frequently, it is not recorded properly or in detail. As the external verifier has pointed out, assessment records do not clearly show whether the apprentices have covered the requisite range of competencies, have had their knowledge of theory assessed, or which assessment methods have been used. There is no record in the portfolios of any summative assessment decisions. Apprentices are not provided with any written feedback on how they have fared in the assessment process, or what evidence they still need to provide in order to complete a unit. Evidence that a portfolio has been assessed is found in the apprentices' logbooks. However, these are not completed progressively but only when the apprentice has completed work for the qualification. The assessors sometimes sign all units as having been completed on the same date. They do not show how the apprentices have achieved units progressively. Some assessors have no system for recording apprentices' completion of NVQ units. Other assessors' records do not show the dates on which apprentices completed units. Assessors miss opportunities to encourage and motivate the apprentices by crediting apprentices with NVQ units as they achieve them.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

22. Liverpool Community College has an equal opportunities policy, which is regularly reviewed and updated in line with current legislation. Staff are made aware of any changes to the policy. Copies of the equal opportunities statement are displayed in all the college centres. A sub-committee of the corporation board, the equality assurance management group, monitors the implementation of the policy. The college's quality assurance manager has responsibility for ensuring that quality assurance procedures cover the promotion of equal opportunities. A wide range of marketing materials contains an appropriate diversity of images indicating that the colleges welcomes and supports all persons, irrespective of gender, ethnicity and age. Certain key areas of information have been produced in Braille. Policies and procedures have been produced in a variety of languages. All applicants applying for a staff position complete a tear-off slip that contains information on their ethnicity. Staff from the personnel department analyse this information to identify trends as part of the process for monitoring the promotion of equal opportunities in the college. Chairs of the various staff recruitment panels receive appropriate training in equal opportunities and are not allowed to chair a recruitment interview unless qualified to do so. All trainees receive a handbook during their enrolment, which sets out details of their rights and responsibilities. There is a complaints procedure. All complaints are logged and reviewed, and an annual report is produced which details all complaints, action taken to resolve them and the implications, if any, for college policies and procedures. Inspectors agreed with the strengths stated in the college's self-assessment report. The college's self-assessment of this generic area was insufficiently rigorous. Inspectors found a significant weakness relating to the lack of analysis of data pertaining to work-based training. They awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

GOOD PRACTICE

There is one engineering trainee who is profoundly deaf. The other trainees found it difficult to communicate with him and some staff were unsure how to attract his attention in an emergency in the workshop. A qualified support worker provided two three-hour sessions on the finger alphabet to the other trainees in the group. Staff were advised that they could flash lights on and off as a sign to attract the deaf trainee's attention. The trainees are communicating with the deaf trainee. In turn, the trainee is encouraging them to learn deaf sign language as well as the finger alphabet. The trainees are delighted with their own achievements and those of the deaf trainee whom they have been able to help.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective links with a wide variety of community groups
- ◆ good training for staff on equal opportunities
- ◆ effective promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ effective forum for identifying ways of improving access to premises

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no continuous monitoring of the promotion of equality of opportunity in the workplace
- ◆ lack of analysis of equal opportunities data relating to work-based training

23. Extensive links exist between the college and local community groups. Every partnership committee has a senior college manager who provides advice on how the college can help it fulfil its overall aims and objectives. Local links are used to

obtain relevant placements and work for trainees. Links with a Somali community group were instrumental in encouraging several persons whose first language is not English to become New Deal clients. A local careers organisation has very useful links with the college's guidance service. Local support groups have assisted the college to provide valuable ways of helping those who are deaf or have visual impairment.

24. A comprehensive range of staff training events relating to equal opportunities is provided by the college. Training covers basic counselling skills and how to provide help and assistance to trainees who experience harassment or bullying. There is prescribed action for countering racism. All members of staff, both teaching and support, attended a two-day event last spring on inclusive learning. Staff said the event helped them to realise the importance of helping trainees who have learning difficulties to learn to work on their own. Two tutors have attended a course in signing language for the deaf. Training sessions on dyslexia, run in conjunction with the dyslexia association, have helped staff to recognise vital signs of the condition. Curriculum managers have attended training to ensure that when they observe teaching and training, they take account of the extent to which tutors uphold equality of opportunity.

25. There is a clearly written policy and set of guidelines on equal opportunities and harassment. A number of staff have been trained as volunteer counsellors whom trainees can contact if they have a problem. Every one of the college's sites has one such member of staff and his or her name is given in the student handbook. These members of staff provide an informal confidential service for trainees, in addition to the regular counselling service. Help and advice are provided and, if the trainee wishes to take the grievance further, they are given help on how to complete a complaint form. The staff member plays no part in the investigation of the complaint but acts on behalf of the complainant and supports him or her through the process. As a pilot measure to ensure the complaints procedure is more widely used, suggestion boxes have been introduced at strategic points on the college's sites.

26. An annual report on complaints is produced and submitted to the quality assurance management committee for discussion and action. Complaints are clearly recorded and are dealt with in a sensitive manner. Trainees find the staff approachable and receptive. In one instance where a group of trainees felt they had been discriminated against on a personal development residential event, two trainees wrote of their experiences to the tutor. The tutor dealt with the matter promptly. The trainees had brought the problem to light quickly because they had confidence that the tutor would resolve it fairly and effectively. When a subsequent group took part in a similar event, they were supervised more closely.

27. An extensive range of multi-lingual literature is produced to aid trainees who have little command of the English language. The literature includes an abridged version of the student/trainee charter, the equal opportunities policy statement and the right to complain procedure. Languages include Somali, Arabic, Bengali and Chinese.

28. The college's forum for disability and access was established in 1996. Its members are a full-time member of staff and five students, some of who have a physical disability and are wheelchair users. The remit of the group is to identify problems with physical access in any of the college's buildings and to draw the problem to the attention of management. Some problems have been resolved already. Minicomms have been installed in all the college's offices, public telephones have been lowered and an area on one site was made suitable for wheelchair users. Last year, senior management asked the group to conduct a formal survey of all the sites. The group produced a report that has been presented to the equality assurance monitoring group, and action is being taken with the estates department to address the issues raised. These issues are mainly concerned with adaptations to doors and ramps. The group meets once a term and the principal attends the meetings at least once a year.

29. There are no formal procedures for monitoring the upholding of equal opportunities in the workplace. Forms for recording the outcomes of trainees' progress reviews do not include a space for any issues related to equal opportunities. Questions about equal opportunities are not asked of the trainee, the workplace supervisor or the employer once the placement has been approved.

30. The college maintains data on the gender, ethnicity and known disabilities of all those who attended the college. Course teams and departments use these data in their continuous process of self-assessment. The data on trainees, however, are not disaggregated and analysed in order that college management may identify trends in the recruitment and progression of trainees on work-based learning programmes.

Trainee support

Grade 2

31. Work-based trainees come to the college through a variety of routes. The business administration youth trainees, all of whom have learning difficulties, are recruited mainly from specialist schools in the city. Many business administration modern apprentices are recruited by employers and subsequently sent to the college for their training. Some engineering modern apprentices have progressed from other courses at the college and a few have been referred by employers. Before starting a programme, trainees are interviewed by guidance staff and specialists from the occupational area in which they have shown an interest. On entry, their basic reading and comprehension, writing and numeracy skills are assessed. Teaching staff provide an induction to the college, the occupational area, and the programme. During induction, trainees are made aware of their rights and responsibilities, college policies and procedures, and support services. They receive student handbooks and a copy of the college charter. The college charter details rights and responsibilities for students/trainees, employers and the general public. As members of the college, trainees are able to make use of all the college's support services including additional learning support, counselling, financial advice and free nursery provision. A personal tutor is allocated to each trainee to provide pastoral care, academic guidance, careers advice and personal development support. Tutorials may be one-to-one or group sessions. In addition,

trainees receive reviews of their progress towards achieving their NVQ. The college's self-assessment report was insufficiently self-critical. Some of the statements of strengths were not relevant to work-based training. Inspectors found a strength relating to job-search activities and a weakness in key skills training, which the college had not identified. They awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clear initial guidance
- ◆ extensive support facilities and resources
- ◆ effective and flexibly arranged job-search programme

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ infrequent and narrowly focused progress reviews for many trainees

32. Potential trainees are screened by qualified guidance staff. These staff have achieved NVQ level 4 or a diploma in careers education and guidance. Throughout the guidance process staff deal with learning and financial support issues in a sensitive manner. The guidance interview is designed to ensure that trainees are on programmes appropriate to their aspirations, abilities and needs. One trainee, who applied initially for a basic computer skills course, was advised by the guidance staff to enrol on the youth training business administration programme and this trainee is doing well.

33. Following the interview with guidance staff, trainees have a further interview with teaching staff from the occupational area. For initial assessment of basic skills, staff use the college's standard reading and comprehension, writing and numeracy tests. All trainees receive an induction to the college and their occupational area. Staff complete checklists to ensure coverage of the basic elements of induction including health and safety and equal opportunities. Student handbooks are provided for work-based trainees and adults. These contain specific information about procedures when the trainee is absent from work and for applying for bus passes.

34. The college has an extensive range of support services. Contact names and extension numbers of support team leaders are widely publicised. Support is provided for deaf or visually impaired students, those with learning or physical disabilities, students with mental health problems and those with dyslexia. All the main college centres plus six outreach centres have study centres for basic skills support. Trainees who have recognised basic skills needs are timetabled into a study centre for part of the week. Each centre has at least two members of staff available at all times and a wide range of computerised equipment and worksheets. Some of the computers are specially adapted for use by those who have physical disabilities. Trainees receive particularly good support in these centres.

35. On both business administration and engineering programmes, there are staff who are qualified and experienced in dealing with trainees who are deaf or visually impaired. Two staff have completed a two-year signing course and another a deaf awareness course. Guidance staff have also attended a short course on deaf awareness.

36. The college has a pool of about eighty education support workers on whom they can call to give one-to-one support to trainees. The posts are advertised in local job centres and support groups. The support workers are expected to have reached a good level of education themselves, especially in mathematics and English, and to have a commitment to inclusive learning. The college aims to recruit from a variety of different backgrounds. All the potential support workers are invited to attend a one-day induction, after which they may be matched with a student or trainee. They are provided with further training, during each half term, related to topics such as learning styles and awareness of mental health needs. Once one-to-one support is arranged, the trainee signs an agreement with the support worker. The trainee agrees to work responsibly and to co-operate with the support worker. The support worker agrees to help the trainee learn and to log the hours of the trainee's attendance. The support worker is present at the trainee's review with their tutor.

37. During basic skills initial assessment the tutors determine, through observation and questioning, whether the trainee would benefit from one-to-one support. If a trainee is identified as having a need once the programme has started, staff display flexibility in meeting this. One trainee, who has difficulty in concentrating, has received particular benefit from having a support worker. The support worker breaks tasks down into stages and repeats and clarifies instructions. The support worker also helps the trainee to list the goals to be achieved in the coming week.

38. There are three full-time qualified counsellors, three part-time and 10 volunteers. The names and contact numbers of these staff are widely publicised on all college sites. The college also has well-developed links with external support agencies. The volunteers are members of staff who have undertaken a two-day in-house training course. Their programme covers college policies and procedures, harassment issues, confidentiality, and ways of developing listening skills. All counselling staff receive training to update their skills each year.

39. Guidance staff teach job-search skills to individual trainees and to groups of trainees. There are close links between the guidance staff and the local careers service. Job vacancies and training opportunities are updated daily. Sessions on job-search skills cover the writing of curricula vitae, letters and interview techniques. Trainees in engineering have benefited from these sessions. On the college site where the business administration trainees are based, there is a special room for job-search activities. This has a seating area for discussion groups and a work area with computers giving access to the Internet. Trainees can compile portfolios of their work in relation to job-search activities and these are accredited. Portfolios contain curricula vitae, letters of application and logs of telephone calls.

40. There is considerable variation in the way progress reviews are carried out. Some trainees receive a review every four weeks but others receive one only once a term. When carrying out progress reviews, some staff concentrate on recording the trainees' achievements and on setting the trainees demanding targets. Other staff only review the trainees' general progress and set trainees targets that are not directly relevant to the training objectives. In engineering, reviews are not carried out frequently enough to meet contractual requirements. Most reviews are superficial and apprentices are not set clear targets. They are also narrow in focus, concentrating only on progress towards achievement of the NVQ. There is little mention of pastoral issues, health and safety or equal opportunities. The apprentices and supervisors make comments and these are summarised on the form by the reviewer but they do not have the opportunity to write on the form themselves. The review does not include any three-way discussion between the reviewer, apprentice and the supervisor. Neither the supervisor nor the apprentice receives a copy, although each signs the form.

41. Reviews in business administration do not involve the work-based supervisor, although they may be consulted informally prior to the review. Reviews occur monthly and the youth trainees benefit from participating in the regular college tutorial system. For modern apprentices, the outcomes of their progress reviews, assessment, and monitoring of their progress towards achieving the NVQ are all recorded on the same form. During the progress reviews for modern apprentices, reference is seldom made to issues relating to pastoral care, health and safety or equal opportunities.

42. During the summer months, trainees do not receive progress reviews when staff are on holiday. All trainees remain at work or in their placements and are not supervised by the college. Some, but not all, have a contact number for their tutor. The study skills centres remain open during the holidays but trainees do not make use of them.

Management of training

Grade 2

43. Overall responsibility for education and training at the college rests with the principal, who is supported by three assistant principals and a director of finance, who, in turn, devolve operational responsibility for subject and cross-college support areas to faculty and support section heads. Each college faculty is made up of groupings of curriculum areas. The college's strategic plan sets out strategic priorities, corporate objectives and operating statements. A concise version of the strategic plan is widely available to all staff all who use, or have an interest in, the college. Key college structures and policies are contained in a staff handbook. The college is recognised as an Investor in People. There is a college management information system. Staff have access to the system through the college's intranet. The contract arrangements for work-based training at Liverpool Community College funded by MTEC are managed through a contracting unit. Potential trainees are referred to the unit from the careers service and by employers. The college contracting unit directs trainees to an appropriate college faculty who then

assumes total responsibility for their on- and off-the-job training, progress reviews, and assessment. In some faculties, trainees join groups of other college students working towards similar qualifications. In others, trainees form discrete groups or their training occurs wholly in the workplace. Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report and awarded the same grade as that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good working practices of staff to meet the college's priorities
- ◆ good staff development arrangements
- ◆ effective communication structures

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ failure of some employers to become involved in training
- ◆ inadequate internal verification records

44. Staff understand the college's priorities set out in the organisation's strategic plan. They work with a sense of purpose to meet these. College policies, procedures and organisational arrangements aim to widen participation and promote lifelong learning. Staff are responsive to the needs of employers and other agencies seeking training for young people from a variety of backgrounds and abilities.

45. All staff receive an annual appraisal and their teaching is observed as part of the appraisal process. The college's staff development programme is determined by the findings from observations of teaching, national initiatives, the college's strategic objectives and the outcomes of self-assessment. The programme also meets the needs of the subject faculties and the support areas. Staff development activities are evaluated. They are well managed by a cross-college group whose members include representatives from all areas of the college.

46. Communications structures, both internal and external, are good. The college takes part in many local initiatives to promote the role of education and training in helping individuals, the community and business. Staff are informed of the impact of these initiatives through the cycle of college meetings. Staff work hard to maintain their relationships with employers and work-placement providers. Staff maintain good liaison with employers, and update their industrial and commercial knowledge by visiting employers. Employers sponsor events to help the trainees and enhance the college's training resources with gifts of equipment and materials. Working groups of staff hold well-structured meetings and keep each other informed of their agendas. At all levels, staff have no hesitation in raising key issues and, when necessary, expressing their concerns. In turn, staff appreciate being kept well informed by senior managers. Trainees make a significant contribution to debate and decision-making in the college. Trainees are well able to express any concerns or make recommendations, at tutorials, through their representatives on curriculum boards of study and in their responses to the

questionnaires they are asked to answer twice a year. Their views are treated with respect and acted upon.

47. Many employers are not wholly engaged in the training programme their trainees or employees follow. Few employers play a structured part in trainees' training and development. What the trainees do in the workplace is usually dictated by their job roles and the priorities of their workplace supervisors. Their work is often repetitive. College staff usually try to help trainees obtain the knowledge and skills they are unable to gain in the workplace. In some instances, college staff have succeeded in establishing co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Some employers recognise that the knowledge trainees gain at college gives them the confidence to undertake greater responsibility in the workplace. Other employers acknowledge that they have a role in helping the trainees acquire the skills and confidence to carry out their work-based tasks more effectively. Good practice in ensuring the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is seldom shared across the college.

48. The college has an internal verification working group which implements and reviews good practice. All internal verifiers and assessors are appropriately qualified. Internal verification of assessment in work-based training programmes occurs at irregular intervals throughout training programmes. Internal verifiers observe assessors, review trainees' portfolios of evidence for assessment, and meet with the external verifiers from the awarding body. The reports produced by internal verifiers all have a similar format. The content of these reports is scant and uninformative. The reports do not provide a full analysis of assessment practices and there are no action points to help assessors develop and improve their procedures.

Quality assurance

Grade 2

49. The college's assistant principal (curriculum) is responsible for quality assurance arrangements throughout the college. A designated manager who has operational responsibility for quality assurance and equal opportunities across the college assists the assistant principal. The assistant principal chairs the college's quality assurance management group. The quality assurance management group is a sub-committee of the college's academic board. Its membership is drawn from senior staff of college faculties and cross-college support areas. The group has terms of reference and it prepares annual reports for the college corporation. The college corporation has established a standards committee, which reviews enrolment and retention and achievement rates. It also addresses matters arising from external inspection reports and quality assurance issues relating to the three key priorities of the college strategic plan. Each college faculty has a designated quality assurance manager whose role within the faculty is to implement college quality strategies. Faculty quality assurance managers report to and work with the college's quality assurance manager to review and develop quality assurance policies and procedures. One key feature of their work is to facilitate self-assessment at course, curriculum area and faculty levels. This self-assessment is

taken into account in the college's main self-assessment report and action. Fifty college staff have been trained to carry out internal inspection. A guidance framework helps them in their work. Internal inspection covers both academic and cross-college areas. Internal inspection priorities are determined by government initiatives, any recurring weaknesses revealed through internal and external assessment of the college's work and, key priorities in the college strategic plan. The process of internal inspection includes cyclical validation of self-assessment carried out by the various sections of the college. Twice a year, the quality assurance management group monitors the implementation of action plans stemming from annual self-assessment to ensure they lead to continuous improvement and help the college to meet its priorities and fulfil its objectives. This group reports to the academic board and the corporation's standards committee. Inspectors agreed with the findings in the college's self-assessment report. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that given in the college's self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good self-assessment arrangements
- ◆ effectiveness of self-assessment in leading to improvement
- ◆ thorough internal inspection process

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of employer involvement in course evaluation
- ◆ insufficient depth of focus in some action plans

50. Self-assessment arrangements are systematic and thorough at all levels and for all services offered by the college. There is a clear framework for self-assessment. The college assesses its performance against clear goals and targets for trainees' achievements and retention. Course teams, curriculum areas, faculties, support areas and senior managers all carry out annual self-assessment rigorously. A range of other college quality assurance measures are used in self-assessment. The resultant action planning is good. Faculty quality assurance managers play a key role in self-assessment. They ensure that teams are addressing the correct agenda and help staff to develop analytical skills in order that they may make sound judgements. The college's quality assurance management group reviews self-assessment reports and their action plans on a twice-yearly basis. Issues raised by the management group are addressed in various ways, including training events and the revision of policy and procedures.

51. Self-assessment and action planning has led to improvements in training and in the trainees' learning experience. Course teams have devised effective ways of dealing with trainees' poor attendance. The observation of teaching and learning has led to improvements in the techniques used for teaching theory. Practical resources have been updated. College-wide training events have prepared staff for

the implementation of national initiatives in education and training.

52. There is a very thorough internal inspection process. The annual agenda for internal inspection is determined by the college's quality assurance management group who are guided by the outcomes of area self-assessment, the college's priorities and national initiatives in education and training. In any one year, internal inspection will cover three curriculum areas, two support areas and key themes or areas of work, such as key skills. There is a framework for internal inspection. Internal inspection leads to written reports of inspection findings on areas of the college and these are compared with the area's own self-assessment judgements. The findings from internal inspection are taken into account in the college's self-assessment report.

53. There is a lack of employer involvement in the evaluation of course programmes. Although there are good links with employers through advisory groups and work placements, there is no systematic process for gathering the views of employers.

54. The college's self-assessment report was published in November 1999. The report was prepared especially for inspection. The report is detailed and contains an introduction and separate sections for each occupational and generic area of training. Strengths are substantiated by appropriate evidence. Action plans address weaknesses. These specify performance indicators, targets to be achieved within a given timescale, and state who is responsible for implementing action. The action plan was carefully prepared, informative and a valuable base from which inspectors could begin planning for inspection.