



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT MARCH 2000

Tower Hamlets College

SUMMARY

Tower Hamlets College offers training to TEC-funded trainees and New Deal clients. The training in catering is good. Trainees progress well from previously low levels of attainment. Engineering training is well structured, but some assessment practices are inadequate. In both occupational areas, trainees achieve at least one qualification. Quality assurance arrangements are effective and well integrated with planning and staff development. There is a strong commitment to equality of opportunity, which permeates all the work. Trainees are well supported, both at college and in the workplace. New Deal clients train in a wide range of occupational areas. The core of their training is satisfactory and sometimes good, but arrangements for work experience and other elements of their training are underdeveloped.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	3
Hospitality	2

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good preparation for work in catering and engineering
- ◆ well-designed quality assurance system
- ◆ substantial improvements in training resulting from quality assurance
- ◆ good use of management information
- ◆ good support for individual trainees
- ◆ extensive monitoring of equality of opportunity

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate planning of assessment
- ◆ inadequate space for motor vehicle trainees
- ◆ poor co-ordination of elements of New Deal training

INTRODUCTION

1. Tower Hamlets College is a general further education college situated in the borough of Tower Hamlets in east London. The college was opened in 1990 and has grown rapidly since then. It has four centres. The main site is at Poplar, close to the Canary Wharf development. Other centres are at Stepney, Bethnal Green and East India Dock Road. The New Deal work is centred at Poplar and at Arbour Square in Stepney. Tower Hamlets falls within the area covered by London East Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Contracts are held with the TEC for work-based training and with the London and South East region of the Employment Service for the New Deal work.

2. The college has been involved in work-based training since 1991. The catering and motor vehicle programmes are designed to provide vocational training for young people with low levels of prior attainment as measured by general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) results. Between 1996 and 1999, the college also held contracts for modern apprenticeships in motor vehicle work and business administration. The majority of this work has now ceased. Only two modern apprentices in business administration remain. The college has been involved in the New Deal work since April 1998 and leads the consortium providing the full-time education and training option on behalf of Tower Hamlets Unit of Delivery.

3. There are 79 TEC-funded trainees following training in motor vehicle engineering, catering and business administration. As there are only two trainees in business administration, however, this area was not inspected. The motor vehicle engineering and catering trainees are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 1. Almost all of them are also working towards wordpower and numberpower qualifications at entry level. Additional occupationally relevant qualifications are offered in both programme areas.

4. The college also has 79 New Deal clients following the full-time education and training option. Most are following accredited courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) or adult basic education. Other areas of training include information technology, hairdressing, business studies, health and social care, art and design and sport and recreation. Clients work towards a wide range of qualifications including NVQs at level 2 and general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs). There are no New Deal clients in engineering and hospitality, which are the occupational areas covered in the inspection. However, much of the evidence on which the generic areas are based relates to the New Deal training.

5. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets covers one of the most varied inner-city areas within the UK. It includes sites of high-technology architectural urban regeneration and commercial importance alongside highly deprived pockets of low economic activity. At many points, the Docklands Light Railway serves as the

boundary between the two worlds. The culturally diverse population of 160,000 is expected to grow significantly at up to 10 per cent per annum until 2006. The community has many needs associated with low income, overcrowding and social exclusion. High proportions of school pupils are eligible for free school meals: 56 per cent in the primary sector and 67 per cent in the secondary school sector (January 2000 school census). There is a relatively high incidence of long-term limiting illness and high levels of socio-economic deprivation. Tower Hamlets is ranked sixth out of 354 local authorities on the scale of deprivation.

6. In 1999, there were 71,653 people from minority ethnic groups forming just over 40 per cent of the population. A substantial resident Bangladeshi community comprises 26 per cent of the population and there are increasing numbers of people from a Somali background.

7. Tower Hamlets has one of the highest unemployment rates in London. This should fall slightly between 2000-05, but is expected to rise further after this period. Unemployment in Tower Hamlets, as defined by the Employment Service claimant count, stood at 6.9 per cent in February 2000 compared with a London rate of 4.5 per cent and a national rate of 4.3 per cent. There were 9,081 people registered as unemployed, 7,197 of whom were men. The unemployment rate for men was 9.4 per cent compared with a rate of 3.4 per cent for women. There are high levels of local unemployment, especially among 25 to 34 year olds and people of all ages from minority ethnic groups.

8. The main employment sectors in Tower Hamlets are financial and business services, accounting for 35 per cent of all jobs. Other services, predominantly public services, account for a further 26 per cent. Significant numbers are employed in the distribution, hotel and catering sectors, and a marginal growth is expected in these sectors over the next few years. The largest reductions in employment are expected to be in the mining and utilities, metals and engineering sectors. The decline in manufacturing is expected to continue as service-based industries grow. Nevertheless, there will be job opportunities in manufacturing created by natural turnover, as workers retire or migrate, as well as by the introduction of new technology and work practices which demand higher level or new skills. The financial and business services sectors are expected to be the fastest growing sectors in terms of output and employment over the next 10 years and this will affect the high proportion of employees in Tower Hamlets who are in clerical secretarial, administrative and managerial occupations. These occupations are expected to grow significantly over the next 10 years, with the fastest growth expected between 2000-05.

9. While there clearly are employment opportunities in the area, these are not easy to access for the resident population. A pronounced skills mismatch exists in the local economy. A high proportion of adult residents have no qualifications, and those with level 1 and/or level 2 qualifications form a lower than average percentage of the community when compared with other areas. There are also lower than average levels of literacy and numeracy. Educational achievement during



compulsory schooling remains very low by national standards. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C and above was 31.1 per cent compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

10. Self-assessment is well developed and forms an integral part of the college's arrangements for planning and quality assurance. The director of quality has overall responsibility for self-assessment in the college, but the assessment of training funded by the TEC and the Employment Service is co-ordinated by the director of programmes and the New Deal projects manager, respectively. Increasingly, the college has ensured that its well-established arrangements for self-assessment in other areas of work are applied equally to TEC-funded and New Deal training. Compared with previous years, the most recent assessment of work in these areas has been conducted more thoroughly and the judgements arrived at are sharper. Staff were directly involved in the process and a number of means were used to take account of trainees' views. The strengths and weaknesses of the training are identified clearly, together with supporting evidence.

11. The Training Standards Council (TSC) inspection of the college took place at the same time as an inspection of Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) provision by the FEFC inspectorate. Inspectors shared facilities and pooled their information during the course of the inspection. A team of four TSC inspectors spent a total of 16 inspection days at the college during March 2000. They inspected the college-based training and also contributed information to the Tower Hamlets New Deal Unit of Delivery inspection which took place in the same week. During the inspection, inspectors interviewed 15 trainees and 20 New Deal clients. They also met 10 college staff and visited three employers. Documents relating to the planning of work and the training were evaluated together with trainees and clients' portfolios. Inspectors also examined a wide range of documents describing the college's policies and procedures and other aspects of the college's work. A number of training sessions were observed. The grades awarded for these sessions are shown in the table below.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Engineering			3			3
Hospitality		3	1			4
Total	0	3	4	0	0	7

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering

Grade 3

12. Tower Hamlets College has 67 trainees on the engineering programme leading to an NVQ at level 1 in vehicle valeting and a vocational exhaust-fitting award. The one-year, full-time, foundation-training programme is designed as a practical introduction to the motor vehicle repair industry to prepare trainees for employment or for progression to higher qualifications. Trainees also follow a designated 'Kick-start' programme, designed to develop basic skills in communication and numeracy and to lead to entry-level accreditation in wordpower and numberpower. Information technology has recently been added to this programme, enabling trainees to achieve accredited units at entry level.

13. Tower Hamlets College employs two full-time staff to provide the engineering training in the college's own vehicle workshops. Both are qualified NVQ assessors. Internal verification is carried out by the college's own qualified verifier, who is also qualified as an external verifier. Staff keep up to date with technology through membership of professional bodies and a well-structured, comprehensive staff development programme. Assessment is undertaken in the college workshop using cars belonging to staff and students for vehicle valeting and training vehicles for the practical tests in exhaust fitting. Towards the end of the training programme, trainees are placed in a garage for a four-week period of work experience.

14. The self-assessment report was appropriately critical. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths identified but considered others to be no more than normal practice. They identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good opportunities for work experience
- ◆ opportunity for additional training in basic servicing
- ◆ independent assessment of exhaust-fitting activities

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate space and resources for large groups in the motor vehicle workshop
- ◆ insufficiently rigorous assessment and verification for the NVQ in vehicle valeting

15. The training programme enables trainees to acquire a broad range of occupational skills at foundation level. The training is well matched to trainees' levels of attainment on entry. The qualification-based programme is enhanced by additional practical training in basic vehicle service and repair. The additional training includes a number of practical tasks designed to give experience in

removing components, inspecting and assessing their serviceability and refitting and testing vehicle systems. The basic skills programme has recently been revised and specialist staff appointed. Basic skills assignments are designed to form an integral part of the motor vehicle programme, but there is some way to go in achieving this. Written feedback from trainees is collected at the end of each term. Of the trainees who responded to the most recent questionnaires, 98 per cent were satisfied and found the courses to be well planned and well organised.

16. The college has a list of garages which it has approved for work experience. A member of the motor-vehicle department visits each garage to check its suitability and the extent to which it complies with health and safety regulations before trainees start their work experience. There is a good range of work placements available, varying from large franchised dealerships to small local garages. Most have good resources and offer trainees wide opportunities for learning. Work-placement supervisors and managers have a sound understanding of trainees' needs. Trainees gain valuable experience and extend their skills by working with a qualified member of staff.

17. The college has agreed with the external verifier to invigilate all written theory tests. The same external verifier has also agreed to undertake some assessment of the exhaust-fitting practical tasks. This is not a contractual requirement but it provides a means of improving the overall quality of assessment for the qualification.

18. In most cases, the college's motor vehicle workshop has adequate resources for practical training. However, there is not enough space for some of the large groups and not enough resources to go round. In these circumstances, learning is adversely affected and there are potential risks to health and safety. Inspectors observed a workshop training session where some trainees were not wearing appropriate safety footwear, and trainees working on vehicle braking systems had a poor understanding of the safety requirements related to asbestos dust.

19. Assessment of the NVQ units in vehicle valeting is not rigorous enough. There are no assessment plans for some units and feedback from trainees is not always recorded. The quality of evidence is poor. Job cards are not fully completed and, in some cases, evidence fails to meet the relevant performance criteria. The internal verification process has only recently been formalised. Verification is inadequately planned. The units to be verified and the methods of assessment to be sampled are not identified clearly enough. Verifiers' signatures are sometimes missing and this makes it difficult to establish an audit trail.

20. Over two-thirds of those who start the programme leave with at least one qualification. In 1997-98, 15 of the 59 young people who started on the programme achieved the full range of qualifications for which they were aiming, including numberpower and wordpower, 28 trainees completed the course with at least one qualification and 16 trainees left with no qualification. In 1998-99, there were 60 starters, of whom 12 achieved the full range of qualifications, 26 achieved at least

one qualification and 19 gained no qualifications. A telephone survey of trainees from 1998-99 identified that one had been enrolled on a national traineeship programme by his work experience employer, 13 per cent had progressed to NVQs at level 2 motor vehicle courses at other colleges of further education, and 13 per cent had re-enrolled at Tower Hamlets College on GNVQ engineering or other courses.

Hospitality

Grade 2

21. There are 10 young people following a two-year training programme in preparation for employment in the catering industry. All the trainees have moderate learning difficulties and some of them have additional behavioural problems. In the first year of the programme, the trainees follow a range of learning activities leading to entry-level qualifications in literacy, numeracy and information technology. They also work towards a basic food hygiene certificate. In the second year, their aim is to achieve an NVQ at level 1 in food preparation and cookery. First-year trainees spend most of their time in the practice kitchen. In the second year, the trainees undertake work placements within the college's catering outlets. The outlets are operated by a contract catering company as a commercial venture. Each trainee spends alternate weeks in a placement over a period of 30 weeks. Assessment is undertaken by the college's staff. In addition to their induction to the college, which takes place at the start of the two-year programme, the trainees are given a work-placement induction at the end of the first year to help them familiarise themselves with their work placements.

22. The self-assessment report understated the closeness of the link between the college and work placements, and the frequency of visits from staff. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ trainees well prepared for work placements
- ◆ good teamworking between tutors and workplace supervisors
- ◆ frequent visits by tutors to the workplace
- ◆ good on- and off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some missed opportunities for workplace assessment
- ◆ lack of short-term achievement targets

23. Training is well resourced. Trainees are based in a well-equipped practice kitchen and develop their technical skills through basic practice sessions and by producing food for the clients of 'Your Taste', the college catering business. The

latter activity provides particularly effective preparation for work under real commercial pressure during the second year. The practice kitchen at the college has a mix of industrial and domestic equipment and there is enough small equipment for each trainee. A computer, readily available to trainees in the kitchen, allows them to develop their basic IT skills alongside their occupational skills. The college provides protective clothing and workplace uniforms. Learning materials are satisfactory and are pitched at an appropriate level for the trainees. The workplaces within the college for on-the-job training are of a high standard and reflect current industrial practice. Trainees have frequent contact with their tutors and enjoy their training. College staff are appropriately qualified. College tutors and assessors work effectively with workplace staff to provide suitable learning opportunities on and off the job. Attendance rates are very high, averaging 98 per cent in the current year.

24. In planning and designing, the programme staff have taken specific account of the trainees for whom it is intended. All trainees enter with very low levels of prior attainment. Almost all of them achieve their first recognised qualifications during their time at college. Of the first intake of 12 trainees, three successfully completed the whole programme. Although 75 per cent failed to complete all the elements, they all gained basic food hygiene certificates and five achieved wordpower, numberpower and entry-level information technology qualifications. These are significant achievements for these young people. The seven trainees in the second intake have all progressed to the second year of the programme and all have achieved the three basic skills qualifications and the food hygiene certificate. A significant number of trainees have progressed to employment or to other training programmes.

25. A college tutor carries out assessments for the level 1 qualification in the workplace over the course of the work placement. The tutor visits trainees every week though not always to assess. The contract catering staff provide witness testimony as part of the evidence accumulated by the trainees. Assessment is fair and consistent, although opportunities to record evidence as it occurs during day-to-day work are sometimes missed. Trainees are not given clear short-term achievement targets for the completion of various aspects of the NVQ. They are not fully aware of what they have already achieved or how far they have to go. The two occupational assessors are still working towards the internal verifier award and practice in this area is underdeveloped. The current internal verifier is not occupationally competent in all units of the NVQ.

26. There are restrictions on the availability of particular types of equipment at different sites and assessments are not planned far enough in advance to ensure that all trainees have the opportunity for realistic assessment using all types of equipment.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

27. The college is active in promoting and upholding equal opportunities. Equal opportunities are promoted through the college's charter, the 'student organiser', course literature and other publications. A member of the senior management team has responsibility for monitoring and developing equal opportunities, and for reporting annually to the governing body. An audit of all aspects of policy was made in 1998 and staff were reported to be keenly aware of equal opportunities issues. An equal opportunities strategic forum advises on and monitors all aspects of policy and its implementation.

28. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and the weakness identified in the self-assessment report. They found additional strengths and awarded the same grade as that recorded in the self-assessment report.

GOOD PRACTICE

New Deal clients on adult learning routes have initial sessions in which they develop their own set of rules for their time in college. As part of the process, the trainees are encouraged to join in open discussion and debate and to formulate individual rules. Cultural differences, for example, are acknowledged and addressed and this leads to a heightened awareness of equal opportunities issues. Individual rules are brought together to form sets of ground rules for each class, which are monitored and revisited over the duration of the training.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good promotion of equality of opportunity by staff
- ◆ effective analysis of equal opportunities data
- ◆ good staff development in equal opportunities
- ◆ effective complaints procedure and analysis of the responses to complaints

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no formal monitoring of employers' commitment to equal opportunities prior to the arrangement of placements in engineering

29. Staff throughout the college actively promote equality of opportunity. Marketing, publicity, information and guidance materials displayed throughout the college reflect the policy of open access for all trainees whatever their background, ability, or ethnicity. Responses to questionnaires show that trainees feel safe in the college and free from harassment.

30. Key documents, such as the college's charter, are prominently displayed. All trainees also receive a copy of the equal opportunities policy and the students' charter in their student organiser. The charter and the college's complaints procedures are translated into Bengali and Somali because 78 per cent of the college's students and trainees speak English as a second language. The contents of the charter and the complaints procedure are discussed at trainees' induction and messages are subsequently reinforced in meetings with tutors. When they visit their work placements, trainees are encouraged to use the checklist, included in their work experience handbook, to see how far employers comply with the college's equal opportunities policy.

31. The equal opportunities subcommittee of the academic board monitors progress towards the implementation of the college's policy. All staff are able to contribute by identifying which areas of their work could be improved in relation to the equal opportunities policy. For example, whether the design of their course encourages a balanced intake in terms of gender and ethnicity. The college collects information about trainees at induction. Data are analysed and used to monitor the ethnicity, gender, disability, age, language and post code profile of each intake of trainees. Few women enter the engineering programme. Their number has fallen from 12 per cent in 1998 to 4 per cent in the current year. Repeated attempts to reverse this trend have been unsuccessful.

32. There is easy access to the college's main entrances for trainees using wheelchairs. The main entrance to the Poplar site has a ramp, and a scissor lift provides access from the street to the Arbour Square premises. There are automatic doors and speaking lifts with Braille buttons. Toilets are provided on all floors for people with disabilities. Showers or bathing facilities with a hoist are also available. Each major site has dedicated prayer rooms for both men and women.

33. Staff come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. Following the equal opportunities audit in 1998, targets were set to try to raise the percentage of staff from minority ethnic groups. Currently, for example, there is a plan to attract additional teaching staff of Bengali origin.

34. In line with the college's strategy, which requires all staff to undertake training in equal opportunities, there is a planned programme of staff development in equal opportunities, linked to the organisation's business plan. There are guidelines on dealing with culturally sensitive issues and staff are provided with support and opportunities for consultation, when requested. External specialists are invited to train staff, most often in relation to the management and support of trainees with specific learning problems or forms of disability. A staff training session has been designed to develop awareness and understanding of the range of disabilities which students and staff might have. All front-line support staff also receive training in disability awareness.

35. Trainees understand the formal complaints procedure. An acknowledgement letter must be sent to the complainant within five working days. Where a complaint is either fully or partially upheld, the investigating manager always offers a formal apology and, if possible, explains how the college has learned from the experience and how it will put it right in future. Complaints are recorded on computer and there is an annual analysis of the types of complaint, programme area, action taken and future action to prevent recurrence.

36. Employers offering work experience for motor vehicle trainees are given a handbook, which includes the college equal opportunities policy and the framework of the motor vehicle programme. However, there is no reference to equality of opportunity in the contract with employers. There is an understanding developed over many years, that employers will follow good practice in upholding equal

opportunities, but this is not formalised. There are no checks on employers before trainees start their placements to see whether practices in the workplace are in line with the college's equal opportunities policy.

Trainee support

Grade 2

37. All trainees and New Deal clients are interviewed before being accepted on one of the training programmes or options. An initial assessment of their basic skills, using standard tests, is part of the interview process. English language skills are also assessed, where appropriate. All those starting programmes receive an induction. Additional learning and support needs are identified at an early stage and appropriate support is provided. All trainees have a personal tutor who regularly monitors trainees' progress and acts as the referral point for other college support services. In an attempt to improve retention levels, a member of the student services team is attached to each full-time programme to provide additional pastoral support. New Deal clients have two dedicated personal advisers, one of whom is a Bengali speaker. Personal counselling and welfare advice is available within the college and there are close links with external agencies over issues such as drugs, childcare, housing and hardship.

GOOD PRACTICE

Details of each trainee's support needs are recorded on the college's intranet service. Staff access the information to assist them in designing lesson plans to meet these individuals' needs.

38. The self-assessment report provided a clear analysis of the support available to trainees and New Deal clients. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths identified, but found an additional weakness. Generally, the self-assessment report undervalued the quality of trainees' support. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ systematic assessment of, and support for, basic skills and language skills
- ◆ extensive range of professional support
- ◆ broad range of enrichment activities

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of rigour in conducting progress reviews
- ◆ inadequate individual training plans for New Deal clients

39. Initial assessment is thorough and systematic. The results are used to ensure that trainees and New Deal clients embark on suitable programmes. Many New Deal clients do not speak English as their first language. In cases where the development of language skills is the first priority, a well-designed diagnostic assessment is used to determine the appropriate level of work for the individual client. The assessment covers reading, writing, speaking and comprehension. Where necessary, arrangements are made to ensure that trainees have translators

to explain the purpose of the assessment and to help them through their initial interview. Induction is well organised and provides the information which trainees and clients require. The 'student organiser' reinforces much of this information and acts as a point of reference.

40. The college has put considerable effort into establishing a comprehensive support service. The service works efficiently and helps to ensure that issues affecting trainees' progress are addressed in a timely way. There are weekly group tutorials, regular portfolio-building sessions and opportunities for individual trainees to meet their tutor at the instigation of trainee or tutor. The college has a nursery on the site used by the children of most New Deal clients. There are places available for the children of all clients who need this facility. The college provides advice and guidance on careers and the Employment Service is on site two days a week to give information and advice on employment and to provide specialist help. Current job vacancies are advertised in the advice and guidance centre. Use is also made of a local newsletter to find information on full- and part-time job opportunities. The New Deal clients are given help with jobsearch using these resources and the services provided by the college's employability unit. Jobsearch courses have also been held in the college's half-term breaks. The last of these was attended by over 80 per cent of clients and the content was pitched at an appropriate level for those involved.

41. Trainees with learning difficulties are able to take advantage of an external support service which helps them to settle into their work placements. Among the range of support available is the identification of, and help with, travel arrangements, and the provision of a workplace 'buddy' to familiarise the trainee with the workplace. Work placements are of a good standard. However, too many New Deal clients do not participate in work experience.

42. There is an extensive range of activities aimed at encouraging trainees to broaden their experiences beyond their particular training programme. The motor vehicle trainees are organising a trip to a car factory in Spain and many trainees take advantage of organised sports activities, visits to exhibitions and social events. Trainees' involvement in organising such activities is recognised by awarding them college certificates. The same activities are also open to New Deal clients. They are particularly useful to those who have recently arrived in the country in helping them to start to build a social life for themselves.

43. Trainees have regular progress reviews. However, many of these reviews fail to produce clear targets for improving trainees' performance. The most recent motor vehicle reviews did not go much beyond identifying targets related to attendance and punctuality. There is insufficient co-ordination of the different types of review for New Deal clients.

44. Some individual training plans fail to reflect the individual's training requirements. The individual training plans of New Deal clients are partly completed for them by their tutors. These sections of the plans take no account of

the differing training needs of individual clients. The plans are not used as a working document. Two clients who had changed programmes still had the original qualification for which they were aiming shown on their plan. It is difficult to build up a specific picture of what each client is doing, or the overall progress they have made, from the paperwork available.

Management of training

Grade 2

45. Tower Hamlets College operates from four centres. TEC-funded trainees are based at the major site at Poplar. Most New Deal clients are distributed between the Poplar site and the Arbour Square site, although they can follow the full-time education and training option at other locations. The college has a three-year strategic plan which is updated annually following broad consultation within the organisation. The college holds the Investors in People standard and was successfully re-assessed for this in January 2000.

46. The management of TEC programmes was reviewed in July 1999. The new structure is overseen by the director of programmes. The role of TEC contract manager has been redefined. The manager now has administrative control of contracts and supports the heads of programme for engineering and business studies, who have direct responsibility for the quality of training. The TEC contract manager is supported by an administrative assistant, based in the finance section.

47. The New Deal manager reports to the director of outreach and partnership. New Deal was placed within the outreach and partnership section to reflect the ideals of the programme and to ensure that information on all the training and education in the borough can be shared and used to good effect. Contractual and working relationships with other training providers are also managed through this section. The New Deal team includes an administrator, two advice workers and an information technology trainer. All staff in the team have job descriptions.

48. The college's support and supervision arrangements apply to all staff. Every member of staff has a line manager who is responsible for providing individual support and supervising their work. Staff have a minimum of two formal meetings a year with their line manager. In the New Deal team, these meetings take place at least once a term, and more often if there is a need.

49. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report and identified other strengths. They also identified two weaknesses. They awarded a grade higher than the grade given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ open, collaborative and responsive management
- ◆ well-structured and active staff development strategy
- ◆ excellent working relationships with external partners
- ◆ strong staff input into the management of training
- ◆ good use of relevant data in developing and reviewing programmes

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped arrangements for work experience
- ◆ inadequate co-ordination of clients' training and reviews in New Deal programmes

50. The college values good communication between staff and goes to considerable lengths to try to realise its commitment to open and responsive management. A 'New Ways of Working' project has seen the introduction of a range of initiatives designed to improve communications and take open management a step further. The college principal has moved into an open-plan administration office with other staff. The New Deal team is based in an open-plan office which makes it easy for staff to communicate and share ideas. The ongoing development of the college's management information systems also contributes to openness and effective communication. The college intranet holds key data which can easily be accessed and used by staff. Staff have a clear understanding of the college's mission and see managers as approachable and supportive. They are fully aware of operational targets and the contribution they make to the achievement of these.

51. The college has an annual staff development plan which identifies key issues in training and development, establishes priorities and sets out the budgets. Staff development is a standard item for discussion in support and supervision meetings between staff and their line managers. Staff applying for training and development are required to say what they expect to gain and how they will evaluate any opportunity for development. There is a standard evaluation form for in-house courses and participants in other forms of staff development are expected to evaluate the activity and provide feedback. Staff training records are held centrally and the take-up of training and development is monitored and reported to senior management and heads of programme. There is an annual analysis of all training and development activity. The college arranges two staff development weeks each year to supplement the ongoing programme. Staff select the activities in which they wish to engage. Some relate specifically to their job role; others provide an opportunity to enhance their understanding of college programmes or processes. Staff in the New Deal team have opportunities for training and development which enable them to adjust to changes in the organisation of New Deal training in the college. Ninety three per cent of staff have teaching qualifications.

52. The New Deal team works closely with its partners to develop and improve the full-time education and training option. For example, the new employability unit gives the opportunity to work closely with the Employment Service and a local job brokerage agency to improve the employment prospects of New Deal clients. Partners find the college responsive and flexible. They value the college's approachability and their ability to identify weaknesses and take action. There is close liaison and regular meetings between the college and its key partners at both strategic and operational levels.

53. All team members contribute to the development of policies and procedures for the full-time education and training option. Temporary members of staff attend staff meetings and their contribution is welcomed. As changes are made, team members update their skills and competences to reflect new aspects of their role. The TEC contract manager has regular meetings with the heads of programmes responsible for motor vehicle work, and hospitality and catering, which helps shape training and the management of training. The TEC team is also part of a twice-yearly NVQ forum at which representatives from all NVQ programmes in the college share information and experience.

54. The college intranet provides comprehensive data for managers and staff. Before the start of a course, tutors can use the intranet to analyse the gender, age, ethnicity and disability of groups and tailor materials and schemes of work accordingly. In 1999, the management information system was used to identify problems with achievement, retention and attendance in the motor vehicle programme. The programme was subsequently restructured and the impact of the changes is now being monitored. The percentage of those leaving programmes early has decreased from 28 per cent in 1998-99 to 9 per cent in 1999-2000. A target of has been set for a 10 per cent increase in achievement rates.

55. The New Deal team make extensive use of the management information system to produce reports on starts, leavers and completers. In 1999, an identified problem with attendance was addressed by linking the payment of travel expenses to the handing in of attendance sheets. There is now more accurate information on clients' attendance and speedier action to deal with non-attendance. The team maintains records of all clients referred to the full-time education and training option by the Employment Service. The records include information about whether the client attended the initial interview and what the current status is of all referred clients who have yet to start on the option. When the Employment Service needs to know the current status of clients, the college can search the database and provide it with an immediate response.

56. By July 1999, 207 New Deal clients had completed the full-time education and training option. Of these, 62 had undertaken work experience as part of their training. Seventy clients on ESOL or adult basic education programmes and 75 clients attending other forms of training had had no work experience. The college plans to ensure that all clients for whom work experience is feasible have the opportunity to gain such experience. The new employability training unit is a key

part of this strategy. A secondee from the Employment Service spends two days a week in the unit working primarily with New Deal clients. She gives them advice on the type of work they should be looking for, provides up-to-date vacancy information and keeps clients' CVs on file for distribution to potential employers. A member of a local job brokering agency's staff is in the unit for one day a week, working with clients and matching clients to job vacancies locally and in the city. Access to customised training and short courses, designed to offer trainees additional qualifications and enhance their employability, has now been extended to New Deal clients.

57. Co-ordination of the various strands of New Deal is underdeveloped. For example, there is little attempt to link the reviews conducted by members of the New Deal team and those conducted by course tutors, although the records of both reviews are in clients' files. There is an informal system for recording clients' comments between formal reviews but there is no record of these comments in trainees' files. The long periods between formal reviews means that some clients may have needs or problems which are being missed. There is insufficient co-ordination of different parts of New Deal training. Although tutors' understanding of the New Deal is improving, there are instances in which clients find themselves doing the same work on their main learning programme as in other training sessions which they attend, including those at the new employability unit. For example, there are no links between the information technology sessions at the employability unit and the other information technology sessions that form part of some client's programmes. This applies both to the content of the sessions and the materials used.

58. In July 1999, only 40 per cent of clients attended the two-week intensive jobsearch session at the end of their programme. Clients are now required to attend jobsearch during the college's half-term breaks as well as at the end of their programmes. Tutors have also been asked to emphasise jobsearch and employability at appropriate points of their programmes.

Quality assurance

Grade 2

59. The college has a planning and review manual describing its quality assurance and planning procedures and the ways in which these interrelate. The interconnection of the procedures are illustrated by a flowchart which sets out the timetable for review, audit and self-assessment and demonstrates how these are integrated with business planning. All curriculum areas, and services such as the advice unit or learning resources centres, have charters setting out the standards which apply and the indicators to be used in measuring performance. Standards and performance indicators are reviewed as part of annual self-assessment. Each programme area and service also has an annual development plan and performance targets, drafted following the previous cycle of monitoring and review, against which progress is reviewed twice a year. Feedback from students is collected twice

a year through college-wide questionnaires. Trainees and New Deal clients are fully involved in monitoring and review. The college has an internal quality review group which looks at each programme area in turn over a three-year period. It also has an external advisory panel which advises on quality assurance issues. External audits are conducted by the TEC and the Employment Service.

60. The self-assessment takes place between July and October. A college-wide self-assessment review group is used to verify evidence and confirm grades. Separate self-assessment reports were compiled for TEC-funded and New Deal work. Inspectors agreed with most of the findings in the two reports but drew attention to additional strengths and weaknesses.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective integration of planning with quality assurance
- ◆ robust and accurate self-assessment
- ◆ significant improvements to training stemming from programme reviews
- ◆ effective arrangements for feedback from trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate analysis of trainees' and clients' destinations

61. The quality assurance system is well designed and reliably implemented. There are clear links between quality assurance, the monitoring of performance and overall business planning. Responsibilities for quality assurance activities are clear. Managers are self-critical and determined to drive up the quality of the training being given. The TEC-funded training has clearly benefited from being brought into line with mainstream college systems during the last year. As a result, staff are more self-reliant and the area is less dependent on external agencies to establish priorities or to provide feedback on the training.

62. Self-assessment is well established and conducted thoroughly. It is an intrinsic part of the quality assurance system. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified and most of the grades were realistic. The college uses a wide range of appropriate data to support its self-assessment including data on achievement, progression, retention, the views of staff and trainees, internal reviews, and observation of training. Classroom observation has played a part in assuring the quality of both the motor vehicle and catering programmes. It is an integral part of a wider internal review of quality which focuses on the whole experience of a group of trainees rather than on individual training sessions. This approach has worked well for both the occupational areas inspected. The college's assessment of its New Deal work has also helped to identify a number of areas which require immediate or longer-term action. Work has already commenced in some of these areas.

63. Quality assurance has been very effective in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the TEC-funded training. The programme review of the motor vehicle work identified a number of areas for improvement. An action plan was subsequently developed and implemented with success. For example, attendance at basic skills sessions, which had previously fallen below acceptable levels and was having an adverse affect on achievement, has been improved substantially. Steps have also been taken to integrate basic skills more effectively with occupational training.

64. Feedback from trainees on the TEC-funded programmes is thorough and shows high levels of satisfaction with the training. Employers' opinions are collected through workplace reviews. Arrangements for gathering the views of New Deal clients are less systematic. It is difficult to single out specific information about New Deal clients from the overall feedback based on each of the programme areas. The clients' reviews, which form the basis for collecting more specific information, have only been analysed on one occasion so far.

65. In the past year, not enough has been done to track the destinations of trainees, particularly those who leave early. Strenuous efforts are now being made to track the destinations of TEC-funded trainees. The tracking of New Deal clients is also improving from a fairly low baseline. It is now more systematic and information is recorded more fully.

66. There are several areas in which the college does not explicitly comply with the requirements of the programmes or options which trainees and clients are following. Many New Deal clients have not received work experience. Although this includes a large number whose language skills are extremely limited and who would find it very difficult to function in an English-speaking workplace, little has been done to develop alternative arrangements until very recently. The frequency of reviews for both trainees and clients has also fallen outside the required timescales.