



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JUNE 1999

Newcastle College

SUMMARY

Newcastle College offers TEC-funded and New Deal training programmes in a wide range of occupational sectors. Training in manufacturing is outstanding, and trainees receive high-quality training and assessment in the workplace. Business administration provision is good, and training in the remaining sectors is satisfactory. Overall, there are excellent learning resources in the college, including open learning and information technology facilities. There is insufficient assessment in the workplace and employers are not sufficiently involved in the programme. The college works hard to ensure that all trainees are treated fairly, and promotion of equality of opportunity is good. Trainees are well supported, although the initial assessment and progress review processes are not sufficiently rigorous in some areas. The management of training is satisfactory, but there are weak links between college and workplace activities. The college is thorough in its self-assessment process. The internal verification procedure is not systematically followed in all sectors.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	3
Manufacturing	1
Business administration	2
Leisure, sport & travel	3
Hospitality	3
Hair & beauty	3
Health, care & public services	3

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ flexible programme design and delivery
- ◆ high-quality learning resources in college
- ◆ high priority given to equality of opportunity by staff and trainees
- ◆ effective employment development workshop for New Deal clients
- ◆ good range of learning support for trainees
- ◆ strong commitment to staff development
- ◆ honest and consultative self-assessment process

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ not enough work-based assessment
- ◆ poor key skills provision
- ◆ weak initial assessment in some areas
- ◆ some ineffective progress reviews
- ◆ insufficient links between college and work activities
- ◆ some outdated college policies
- ◆ internal verification procedure not systematically followed

INTRODUCTION

1. Newcastle College is a large general college of further education, with currently over 35,000 students. It has four main sites in the city of Newcastle, and three outreach centres, in Cramlington, Hexham and Blaydon. The college itself is a major employer in the city of Newcastle, with over 1,000 employees. Seven hundred and fifty are directly involved in teaching or supporting learning.

2. The college contracts with Tyneside Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) to offer training for young people and adults, modern apprenticeships, national traineeships and work-based training programmes. In addition, the college, as part of a consortium with two other local colleges, is a main provider of training under the full-time education and training option of New Deal. Training is offered in nine occupational sectors. These are construction, engineering, manufacturing, business administration, leisure, sport and travel, hospitality, hair and beauty, health, care and public services and media and design. At the time of inspection, there were 126 TEC-funded trainees and 159 New Deal clients. These figures include the engineering and media and design areas which were not inspected. Trainees on TEC-funded and New Deal programmes are mainly taught in classes alongside mainstream college students. TEC-funded trainees work towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3, plus key skills units for those on modern apprenticeship and national traineeship programmes. New Deal clients work towards a range of awards, including NVQs and national certificates and diplomas.

3. The region served by Newcastle College covers Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham, Cleveland and North Yorkshire. The region's industrial base is changing rapidly. Traditional industries such as shipbuilding and coal mining have declined to the point of extinction and are being replaced by automotive, electronics and telecommunications industries. Labour market surveys predict a future demand for additional trained staff in engineering, customer services (especially call centres), health care, tourism and leisure.

4. The unemployment rate in Newcastle is high at 16 per cent, compared with the national rate of 5.2 per cent. Within Newcastle there are some areas where the unemployment rate is even higher. For example, the Scotswood ward has 29 per cent unemployment. In 1998, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 31.25 per cent, compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent. The percentage of people from minority ethnic groups in the region is also low, at 1 per cent of the population, although in Newcastle the figure is 4 per cent. There are some parts of the city which have even higher numbers of specific minority groups. Examples include Elswick and Wingrove where the proportions are 25 per cent and 16 per cent respectively.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. The college's strategic plan 1997-2000 includes a requirement for annual self-assessment for all teams, both academic and support. One month prior to inspection, the college had undergone an inspection carried out by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). A culture of self-assessment is well established within the college. In preparation for self-assessment, training sessions were held for all staff involved in the provision of TEC-funded programmes, to explain the differences between the Training Standards Council (TSC) and FEFC inspection frameworks. Heads of schools self-assessed their departments after discussions with all their staff. Some feedback from employers and trainees was used. New Deal provision was not included in the self-assessment. Grades in the self-assessment reports are based on TEC-funded provision alone.

6. A team of eight inspectors spent a total of 24 days at Newcastle College in June 1999. The engineering sector was not inspected, as there were fewer than ten trainees. The media and design sector was inspected, but as there were no TEC-funded trainees the findings have been excluded from publication, and held as evidence towards the Employment Service unit of delivery inspection. All other occupational sectors were inspected. Inspectors interviewed 51 trainees, 64 staff and 25 workplace supervisors. They observed learning sessions and two progress review interviews. They examined a wide range of documentary evidence including trainees' files and NVQ portfolios, contract documents, awarding body reports, and management information records.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 3

7. The 47 trainees in this area are undertaking NVQs in plumbing, carpentry and joinery, painting and decorating, and brickwork. There are 21 modern apprentices working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 plus key skills units. There are also 23 New Deal clients. Additionally, three young people on the work-based training programme are working towards a national certificate in civil engineering. Three of the trainees in construction are women. All TEC-funded trainees are employed. Trainees are visited in the workplace by college staff to monitor their progress. Off-the-job training is provided on the Rye Hill campus in the centre of Newcastle. College staff are occupationally qualified and hold appropriate assessor and verifier awards. Trainees have access to a curriculum development workshop, which includes access to learning packages which are completed under supervision from staff. Those on the New Deal programme attend an employment development workshop as a scheduled part of their 30 hours college timetable. Other trainees use the centre on a drop-in basis. Employers range from large contractors involved in new building developments to sole-traders undertaking property maintenance. New Deal clients carry out projects within the community to develop practical skills. Data for the past three years show that achievement rates are average for

this sector, with 58 per cent of those trainees who started the programme achieving an NVQ. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ high-quality learning resources in college
- ◆ valuable community project experience for trainees
- ◆ effectively used open-learning materials
- ◆ well-planned and competent off-the-job training
- ◆ trainees motivated by enthusiastic and dedicated staff

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient workplace evidence used for assessments
- ◆ no assessment by direct observation in the workplace
- ◆ poor key skills provision

8. Resources at the Rye Hill campus are of a high standard. Workshops are spacious, well lit and equipped with modern tools and equipment. Staff maintain and develop the workshops continually to provide a realistic working environment for trainees. Real work experience is also provided within the college. Painting and decorating trainees carry out necessary work in the college, and the wood occupations trainees carry out commercially sponsored work, where they are able to undertake tasks installing kitchens, bathrooms and staircases. Trainees spend part of their time at college in a learning resource centre designed for the construction sector. Learning packages to support occupational knowledge requirements of the programme have been developed by staff. A full-time member of staff manages the centre, supported by occupational specialists timetabled to provide support in specific trades.

9. Trainees benefit from well-planned off-the-job training sessions. Tasks for skill development are carefully designed and there is a comprehensive training plan. Trainees' progress in college is well recorded. All trainees are clear about which parts of the NVQ they have achieved so far, and which tasks they need to do to complete the award.

10. Trainees work on projects in the local community. These are arranged by the college. Two New Deal clients on a wood occupations programme worked on a project at a home for people with physical disabilities and learning difficulties. They constructed a viewing platform so that residents, some of whom use wheelchairs, can view an ornamental garden. The project was well managed by the college and the work was of a high standard. The project allows trainees to develop valuable communication and interpersonal skills as well as benefiting from the chance to use their occupational skills in a real work environment. College staff work hard to ensure that trainees successfully complete their learning programme. Clients on the New Deal scheme cite the commitment of staff as

instrumental in enabling them to gain employment and, in some cases, achieve their first ever qualification.

11. Trainees undertaking valuable and responsible tasks in the workplace are not always encouraged to present job cards, photographs or witness testimonies as evidence towards assessment. Assessment of simulated work takes place in college. This causes unnecessary repetition of tasks which have already been carried out competently in the workplace. Visits to trainees in the workplace concentrate on pastoral issues and only involve the employer to discuss attendance. Demanding targets for achievement are not set during reviews. The relevance of tasks carried out in the workplace and their potential use as evidence for assessment are not discussed.

12. Key skills are given a low priority. Key skills form part of the modern apprenticeship framework, yet trainees who have been on the programme for, in some cases, over three years, have not heard of key skills and have accumulated no evidence in their portfolios which relates to key skills competencies.

Manufacturing

Grade 1

13. There are 23 trainees in total in this area. All are working towards NVQs in laboratory operations at levels 2 and 3. Two trainees are employed and the remainder are on work placement. Employers are three large local chemical and pharmaceutical companies. Trainees attend Newcastle College for one day each week to support their NVQ and work towards a national certificate in science. This qualification covers the occupational knowledge requirements of the NVQ. Qualified college staff carry out all off-the-job-training and assessment. Some work-based supervisors are working towards NVQ assessor awards. They observe trainees carrying out tasks at work and provide witness testimonies towards NVQ assessment. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths highlighted in the self-assessment report. Others were considered to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors found additional strengths and awarded a grade higher than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ high-quality work-placements
- ◆ enthusiastic and well-motivated trainees
- ◆ excellent teamwork among trainees, workplace trainers and college staff
- ◆ good use made of assessment opportunities at work
- ◆ high quality of NVQ portfolios
- ◆ good learning resources
- ◆ high retention and achievement rates

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ few job opportunities on completion of the training programme

14. Three local companies provide work placement and employment opportunities for trainees in manufacturing. One provides placements for 20 trainees and employs one. They provide excellent opportunities for high-quality work-based training in the pharmaceutical industry and are fully committed to the training and development of their trainees. This commitment is recognised by the trainees who highly value their training programme. All trainees are highly motivated. This is equally the case for those trainees who are due to leave the programme and have not found a job. There are excellent working relationships among the college, employers and trainees. The college works hard to strengthen these links. College staff help the main employer with the recruitment and selection procedures for new trainees, and are represented on the interview and selection panel.

15. Throughout the programme, employers are regularly informed of trainees' college attendance, and their progress towards completing their qualifications. Opportunities for assessment at work are plentiful and the process is carried out rigorously. The college has successfully encouraged one employer to have one workplace supervisor qualified to carry out NVQ assessments. Another workplace supervisor is currently working towards assessor qualifications. One employer does not wish its workplace managers and supervisors to pursue formal assessor qualifications, but college staff regularly visit the company and carry out training in assessment activities to ensure that work-based evidence is gathered in an acceptable manner. All trainees are observed carrying out tasks by workplace staff, and records are used for assessment purposes. Where the range of activities carried out by trainees is narrow, work-based projects are set to cover additional parts of the NVQ. Alternatively, trainees are moved to other departments to gain additional experience. The college has designed documents for effective recording of assessment. These are clearly linked to elements of the NVQ and demand comments on performance from the work-based observer. Overall comments are also requested. Trainees identify on this document where the task cross-references to the NVQ and use it as part of their portfolio of evidence. A member of college staff has observed work-based observers in practice and ongoing training and development are carried out to support them. Employers are committed to NVQs and value them. All are keenly supportive of trainees and readily provide help and guidance on all aspects of their studies, including theory work.

16. The standard of NVQ portfolios is high. They contain ample good-quality evidence from the workplace. Trainees are proud of their portfolios and know exactly at what stage they are in the assessment process, and what they have yet to complete. All portfolios are clear, well organised, and all evidence is readily accessible. Achievement is accurately recorded on personal training plans and individual review forms. Progress review interviews are held monthly. Trainees value the process, viewing it as a motivating and supportive tool for progression.

17. Learning resources in college are of a high standard and include a range of well-equipped workrooms, a well-stocked library and good information technology

facilities. Resources in the workplace are also very good, providing access to technical libraries and excellent information technology facilities. One company has a comprehensive internal training programme for all staff. Trainees are included in this and receive some additional training for parts of the programme. Trainees record this learning in their company training file and are also encouraged to make full use of their national record of achievement. Trainees' retention and achievement rates are high, with 90 per cent of trainees completing their programme and achieving their awards.

18. Trainees are fully aware from the beginning of their training that there is no guarantee of employment as vacancies only exist for approximately 10 per cent of those who complete the training programme. This limits their employment prospects to some extent but they are actively encouraged by their work placement to seek employment. Job-search facilities are provided by both the work-placements and the college and trainees are granted paid leave to attend interviews. The knowledge and qualifications achieved through their training programme enables most trainees to find similar employment with other companies, or to progress to full-time higher education.

Business administration

Grade 2

19. There are currently 42 people training in business administration. Thirty-nine are New Deal clients working towards a range of vocational qualifications in administration, information technology and accounting. All New Deal clients attend college 30 hours each week for lectures, workshops and tutorials. During the training programme, all clients undertake a minimum of 20 days' work experience in appropriate placements. Eighty-four per cent of the New Deal clients have external work placements and the remaining 16 per cent have work experience within the college. During the past year, 119 New Deal clients have started the programme. Eighty have left, and of these, 43 achieved an NVQ. Half of those New Deal clients who completed the programme have secured full-time employment.

20. There are also three modern apprentices, who are employed by the college, working towards NVQs in administration at level 3 plus key skills units. Modern apprentices are offered weekly off-the-job training, covering occupationally specific topics and portfolio-building sessions. There is also a key skills summer school held towards the end of their training programme. Six members of the college staff, who are occupationally experienced and hold appropriate teaching and assessor qualifications, support modern apprenticeship trainees and New Deal clients. Inspectors awarded a grade higher than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ highly competent and enthusiastic staff
- ◆ good access to additional qualifications

- ◆ excellent learning resources in the college
- ◆ effective use made of open-learning materials
- ◆ realistic and achievable targets set for trainees
- ◆ high quality of NVQ evidence in portfolios

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ ineffective use of individual training plans
- ◆ late introduction of key skills for modern apprentices
- ◆ not enough workplace evidence used for assessment purposes

21. All staff are highly committed to ensuring participants achieve their qualification aims and get a job. This commitment is particularly important for New Deal clients, many of whom start the training programme lacking self-confidence and requiring a professional, but friendly approach. All trainees are given a thorough and comprehensive induction at the start of their training. This gives them a clear understanding of the programme's aims, and their rights and responsibilities while in training. Trainees are fully aware of the NVQ requirements and are able to use the services and resources available, both within the college and work placements, to develop their skills and knowledge to achieve their qualification. They are encouraged to work towards additional qualifications, to broaden their knowledge and understanding, and most do so. These include certificates in information technology, word processing and first aid, which are highly valued by employers.

22. The college has high levels of both physical and staff resources available to support its training programmes. All participants have open access to modern information technology facilities, fully equipped with powerful computer hardware and a full range of up-to-date industry-standard software. Participants are provided with textbooks to support the knowledge requirements of the NVQ. Staff are all well qualified, occupationally experienced, and relate well with the course participants. Off-the-job training is well planned and delivered, and a carefully prepared scheme of work has been designed to address the 'roll-on roll-off' nature of the programme which allows trainees to start at any time in the academic year. Staff have developed some excellent open-learning material which clearly matches the theory part of the programme and provides participants with a clear description of the NVQ unit requirements and suggested sources of evidence. Modern apprentices and New Deal clients meet with their tutors regularly to discuss progress. During these meetings, tutors and course participants agree on realistic and achievable targets for progression through the qualification. Tutors also provide clear guidance on evidence collection and portfolio development, resulting in well-structured portfolios, clearly cross-referenced and containing a range of appropriate evidence which clearly meets the NVQ requirements.

23. Individual training plans are not used effectively. They fail to take into account the individual needs of trainees, or give credit for prior achievement. In the case of modern apprentices, they do not cover the training done at work. They

are not used as a working document to monitor progression and are not updated. The college has been working closely with its local TEC and has recently developed a document and clear guidelines which will enable it to address this issue. Modern apprentices are disadvantaged by the late introduction of key skills. All three apprentices have been on their programme for over two years and have only recently been informed about the key skills requirements of their programme. Opportunities to develop and assess key skills have been missed, leading to unnecessary duplication of work at the end of the programme. College staff do not exploit the workplace as an environment for gathering evidence of competence, and there is little workplace observation of trainees for assessment purposes. This has necessitated an over reliance on paper-based evidence and has slowed progress for some trainees.

Leisure, sport & tourism

Grade 3

24. There are a total of 17 trainees in this area, of whom 10 are TEC-funded trainees on the work-based training for young people programme. Three are working towards NVQs at level 2 in travel services and seven towards the level 3 award, having already achieved the level 2 qualification. All trainees are employed, working full time in retail travel agencies. Most training and assessment takes place at work. There are opportunities for additional training and tutorial sessions, and assessments within Newcastle College's own on-site travel agency. In addition to the NVQ, trainees work towards traditional examination-based travel agency qualifications. These awards cover the occupational knowledge requirements of the NVQ, as well as giving the trainees an additional widely respected qualification within the travel industry.

25. There are seven New Deal clients in this sector. Two are working towards a national certificate in travel and tourism, three are on a GNVQ programme and two are working towards a sports award. Clients attend college for 30 hours of study each week, consisting of a mixture of planned teaching sessions, and assignment and course work. On the TEC-funded travel services programmes, one trainee has left the programme out of 11 starters. The remainder are working towards the completion of their qualifications. On the New Deal programme to date, there have been six leavers, one of whom got a job. Some of the strengths claimed in the self-assessment report represent normal practice. Inspectors agreed with the remaining strengths, the weaknesses and the self-assessment grade given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ excellent travel agency in college
- ◆ additional relevant qualifications enriches trainees' experience
- ◆ high degree of programme flexibility

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient assessment in the workplace
- ◆ some poor record-keeping
- ◆ insufficient involvement by employers

26. The college operates a fully commercial travel agency, sited in an ideal location on the campus. It is run on a full time basis by an experienced travel manager, who is also a qualified NVQ assessor. The agency has a highly sophisticated computerised system for booking, administration and advertising of holidays. Trainees normally assessed in their workplace use this facility to fill any gaps in their experience. This recently happened in the case of a trainee who was working towards an NVQ unit relating to organising advertising material in a window. As his employer does not have a shop front, the material was prepared, displayed and assessed at the college agency. New Deal clients on GNVQ programmes use the agency for the work experience part of their programme. Confidence is clearly gained by exposure to sympathetic training and the opportunity to increase communication and other skills by dealing with people, either face to face or over the telephone.

27. The college's travel agency has an adjoining study area, where assignment work and portfolio-building can be carried out with access to information technology equipment and reference material. The library is also available and contains a good selection of books and publications to support trainees' learning. Trainees following the NVQ programme are offered the opportunity of working towards additional travel agency examination-based qualifications. These qualifications are well respected within the travel industry, benefiting the holder by enhancing career opportunities for the future.

28. NVQ and GNVQ candidates can start the programme at any time throughout the academic year. The programme is designed in a modular form to ensure that there is flexibility, and that the needs of all trainees, irrespective of the time of the year they join the programme, are met. This flexibility is particularly beneficial to New Deal clients. Employers also commented that the reason for choosing Newcastle College was because of the flexibly organised programmes and the willingness of staff to accommodate trainees and employers' needs in terms of attendance patterns. Staff working on the travel, sport and leisure programmes are all well qualified, holding NVQ assessor and internal verifier awards.

29. College staff visit trainees at work to carry out assessments and review their progress through the NVQ. These visits are infrequent. There are not enough assessments carried out, and this hinders trainees' progress. Some trainees are demotivated through lack of contact with their assessor, and do not receive sufficient guidance on how to gather evidence for assessment purposes. The review process is not used to drive trainees' progress, with few targets set or recorded. Employers are not sufficiently involved in the trainees' learning. Communication between the college and employers is poor. Employers have little

knowledge of NVQs, and the ways in which they can become more involved in the training and assessment processes.

Hospitality

Grade 3

30. At the time of inspection there were 24 TEC-funded trainees. Thirteen are working towards NVQ level 2 in bakery and the remainder towards NVQ level 2 in food preparation and cookery. There are 11 young people on a national traineeship programme, six are modern apprentices and seven are on work-based training. In addition, there are 13 New Deal clients. As well as the NVQ, all trainees undertake a basic food hygiene certificate. Trainees attend college for one day each week, during which time they have practical skills training and theory sessions. Most trainees are employed and work for a variety of companies in the area including restaurants, hotels, contract caterers and large and small bakeries. In total, there were 37 trainees.

31. The college has a number of on-site catering facilities providing realistic work environments. These include an 80-seater restaurant, which is open to the public four lunchtimes and two evenings each week, and a bistro, which is open five days a week for lunches. In addition, the stores area and a practice kitchen are used for training and assessment when required. Most NVQ assessment is carried out on the college premises by lecturing staff. Staff are vocationally experienced and qualified, and hold NVQ assessor and verifier awards. In 1997-98, seven trainees achieved a level 2 NVQ. Inspectors agree with two of the strengths claimed in the self-assessment report and two weaknesses. They identified a further strength and weakness and agreed with the self-assessment grade given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ excellent learning resources in college
- ◆ effective development of trainees' practical skills
- ◆ good teamwork among employers, trainees, clients and staff

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient use of workplace evidence for assessments
- ◆ poor key skills provision
- ◆ insufficient individual programme planning

32. College staff and employers have frequent contact, both through visits and telephone conversations. Work-placement officers' contact with employers tends to focus on pastoral issues. Full discussions take place with employers regarding trainees' attendance, punctuality, attitudes, relationships with colleagues etc. Contact between tutors and employers concentrates on the actual training programmes, and ensures that the range of activities required by the award are met. Most of the employers have worked with the college for many years, and have

well-established links with staff. The college has a good range of work placements, and is readily able to find suitable placements for trainees. The college invites employers' staff to workshops and demonstrations are provided for learners. The college's work-placement officer works with employers to jointly deliver the workplace induction programmes. However, this close teamwork and regular contact fails to focus on opportunities for trainees to gather assessment evidence, or be assessed in the workplace.

33. The college has a wide range of resources used by trainees during off-the-job training. There are well-equipped training kitchens one of which has recently been refurbished to allow a higher degree of flexibility for training. Within the kitchen, individual trainees work on a range of tasks. There is also a lecture theatre, which has a video link allowing practical food preparation demonstrations to be viewed by a large audience. At the Sandyford campus, where the hospitality department is based, there is a library/resource centre specifically for hospitality trainees. Staff in the resource centre help trainees in a variety of ways, including providing guidance on how to access the Internet and the college's Intranet, and research methods. The resource centre has private study rooms which may be booked by trainees. In addition to the scheduled one day a week in college, trainees use the learning resources whenever they need to. The college's variety of facilities offer trainees the opportunity to experience aspects of the industry different to their place of work. There is a good range of NVQ learning packages which support the theoretical part of the programme. These are particularly valuable if trainees are absent from college. Trainees quickly develop a wide range of practical skills to a high standard. The style of individual coaching for trainees is informal, and the quality of instruction is high. Trainees are motivated and develop confidence through their rapid acquisition of skills.

34. Most assessment takes place in college, usually towards the end of the programme. Evidence of competent performance in the workplace is not used for assessments. One work placement has a qualified NVQ assessor who is willing to assess trainees, but is not doing so. College staff prefer to assess in-house. In another work placement a supervisor working towards an assessor award is also not involved in workplace assessment. The development of key skills and their integration into the learning programmes has yet to begin. Trainees who have been on a programme for many months are unaware of key skills and the part they play in their programme. Training programmes are not designed to suit individual needs. Many of the individual training plans in trainees' files are very similar, in some cases, incomplete and rarely updated. With the exception of some of the bakery trainees, none of the trainees have a plan of the training to be carried out in the workplace.

Hair & beauty

Grade 3

35. In total, there are 18 trainees in this area. There are currently 16 modern apprentices working towards NVQs in hairdressing at level 2. Apprentices are at work for four days each week in local hairdressing salons and attend college for

one day. During day-release at college, trainees receive practical training in the college's salon which operates on a commercial basis. They also attend theory sessions in classrooms and the resource centre. There are also two New Deal clients who attend college for 30 hours each week and are working towards NVQs in beauty therapy at level 2. In 1997-98, the proportion of trainees completing their learning programme was 41 per cent, which is around the national average. Of those who completed their programme, all achieved their NVQ and remained within full-time employment within the hairdressing industry. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses for this sector and the self-assessment grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ rigorous initial and ongoing assessment of trainees' basic skills
- ◆ excellent range of learning resources at college
- ◆ flexible programmes to suit individual needs
- ◆ good access to additional qualifications and NVQ units

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient work-based assessment
- ◆ few links between college studies and training at work
- ◆ failure to integrate key skills with the NVQ programme

GOOD PRACTICE

This college organises a series of presentations each year, when well-known hairdressers and product suppliers demonstrate new styles, techniques and products. The events are well attended by employers, trainees and college staff.

36. On entry to the programme hairdressing trainees complete a college-based initial assessment of their competence in basic skills to identify individual additional learning support needs. They then complete a customised hairdressing initial assessment package to assess their occupational skills. At regular intervals during the programme there are further ongoing assessments to monitor their progress and maintain the correct level of additional support.

37. A diverse range of resources is available for all trainees, enriching their learning. Highly qualified hairdressing and beauty therapy staff provide practical and theory training to a good standard. A spacious and busy learning centre provides hairdressing trainees and the New Deal client with access to comprehensive computerised programmes with good visual effects to aid learning. For example, there are clear diagrams of the structure of hair showing the medulla, cortex and cuticle, which trainees can use to test their knowledge on semi-permanent and permanent colour processes. A specialised library contains a comprehensive collection of hairdressing and beauty therapy reference materials. Quiet rooms may be booked where trainees can prepare for presentation work using overhead projectors and other visual aids. A telephone is available to arrange job interviews. Additional support and student service staff members are based within the learning centre. Trainees have use of a scanner and a digital camera to creatively present assignments and project work and photographic evidence from competitions. Computer-based training software for hairdressing may be booked, allowing trainees to complete written tests and check their knowledge prior to the final assessment.

38. All practical training sessions take place within a large, commercially operated hairdressing salon. Full-time and day-release students completing qualifications at all levels, are in mixed groups. Trainees are encouraged to operate and develop their own client base. Trainees can attend extra hairdressing practical sessions if needed to complete their assessments. Some trainees attend the early evening sessions after work. The resource centre's opening hours allows trainees with a variety of needs to drop in and gain access to valuable resources and additional support sessions. A key lecture timetable is made available to all trainees in order for them to attend sessions on specific hairdressing topics. Trainees take responsibility for ensuring that they attend relevant lectures and, in some instances, may attend a topic on several occasions if required. A number of additional qualifications and units in related subject areas are made available and many trainees have taken this opportunity. Examples include beauty therapy qualifications such as manicure and holistic therapies, and gents barbering units. Some trainees are developing their computing skills and working towards a basic certificate in information technology.

39. There is little use made of work-based assessment, with most assessment taking place on college premises. The collection of workplace evidence is not actively encouraged and trainees are missing some valuable opportunities to gather assessment evidence. These include examples of one-off situations such as colour corrections, which are rarely experienced in the college salon.

40. Employers are not sufficiently aware of the work trainees are covering during their day release, and the two parts of the programme are not linked. In some cases, this inhibits trainees' progress and prevents employers from offering additional planned training at work in a timely fashion. Telephone conversations with the work placement occur as necessary, but concentrate on pastoral issues rather than focusing on linking the two parts of the training. Key skills are not integrated into the hairdressing programme, and are planned to be provided upon completion of the NVQ.

Health, care & public services

Grade 3

41. There are 33 trainees altogether in this area. There are 26 TEC-funded trainees in this sector, working towards physiological measurement and dental nursing qualifications. There are 16 modern apprentices working towards an NVQ at level 3 in physiological measurement in either audiology, cardiology or neurophysiology. They are all employed in a local hospital. In addition to the NVQ, apprentices are working towards key skill units and a national certificate. Apprentices receive training and are assessed at work. They attend college for one day every three weeks for theory sessions, training in key skills and guidance on portfolio-building.

42. There are 10 young people on work-based training working towards a certificate in dental nursing. Trainees attend college for three hours each week and

work in dental surgeries. The current group of trainees was transferred from another training provider in July 1998. The college has a contract with the TEC for one year, to enable the trainees to complete their programme. The certificate is assessed through formal examination which takes place at a local dental hospital.

43. There are seven New Deal clients in this sector, six of whom are working towards the first diploma in caring. They attend college for two days each week and are on placement for the remaining three days. One further New Deal client is undertaking a three-year dental technicians programme. The self-assessment report claimed a number of strengths, which are considered by inspectors to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors found additional weakness to those identified by the college and awarded a grade lower than that given by the provider.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ high quality of learning resources
- ◆ good attendance and achievement of trainees on the physiological measurement programme
- ◆ well-planned and expertly delivered theory sessions
- ◆ good individual coaching for trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some weak assessment recording
- ◆ modern apprentices' poor awareness of key skills
- ◆ few links between college sessions and workplace activities for dental nurse candidates
- ◆ low exam pass rates for dental nurses

44. Trainees have access to a good variety of equipment at college to support the learning sessions. The library contains a wide selection of relevant books and there are sufficient copies for the number of trainees on the programme. The computer suite is extensive and is well used by trainees. Resources at work are good, with surgeries well equipped with the latest tools and machinery. Workplace supervisors are skilful, and support and coach trainees with enthusiasm. Trainees' attendance on the physiological measurement technicians' programme is high, and all trainees who complete their programme achieve an NVQ award. All trainees who have completed their programme since 1994 have secured a job in the health service.

45. The programme of theory sessions for the physiological measurement programme is devised jointly by college and hospital staff. Workplace supervisors and lecturers have extensive occupational experience and use this to ensure that theory sessions link well to practices at work. Theory sessions are well structured, challenging and informative. Trainees value these highly and see the direct relevance of the topics taught. Feedback between lecturers and trainees is frequent.

46. There is some variation in the assessment records and procedures on the physiological measurement technician programme. Recording of assessment plans and written feedback from assessors to candidates is weak in some cases. Assessor practice varies and the internal verification system does not provide sufficient opportunities to share good practice between assessors. Modern apprentices are unaware of the key skill requirements of their programme, and learning and assessment opportunities are being missed. The college plans to address the key skill requirements at the end of the programme. Trainees on the dental nurse programme are isolated in their workplace, with little teamwork between the college staff and workplace supervisors to link the two parts of the programme. Employers are not fully aware of the requirements of the programme. The examination pass rate for dental nurses is poor, at only 50 per cent.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

47. The college has an equal opportunities policy, which was produced in 1994. There is an equal opportunities advisory group, comprising managers, students, staff trade union and students' union representatives. The role of this group is to devise, implement and monitor the policy. There are also policies covering student admissions, complaints, learning support, sexual and racial harassment and a disability statement. There is an equal opportunities officer who works in the role part time to promote equality issues throughout the college. However, the college recognises that promotion of equality is the responsibility of all staff and is included in all job descriptions. The college collects information on all students, in terms of ethnicity, age, gender and any disabilities. The information is analysed and reported upon annually. Inspectors broadly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses highlighted by the college. They found an additional strength and awarded a grade higher than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ regular training and awareness-raising sessions on equality issues
- ◆ high level of awareness of equality of opportunity by trainees and staff
- ◆ action taken to recruit trainees from under-represented groups
- ◆ effective use made of data on trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak monitoring of employers' on-going commitment to equality
- ◆ out-of-date equal opportunities policy

48. The college's staff development programme includes regular sessions on equality issues. Attendance is good. Many staff have undertaken recent training sessions to update their knowledge. Sessions include a range of topics, including

access for all, and disability, inclusive learning and working with visually impaired people. The college's equal opportunities officer devotes part of her time to running an equal opportunities interest group, open to all member of the college community. It meets monthly during term time and provides a forum for debate and information sharing. Staff and trainees are acutely aware of equal opportunities issues such as discrimination, stereotyping and bullying. Equal opportunities is well covered during trainees' induction, and most trainees interviewed demonstrated a good recollection and understanding of the topic.

49. The college is taking action to recruit trainees from under-represented groups. An 'English for Employment and Training' programme has been devised for New Deal clients from minority ethnic groups. It includes language skills, study skills and information technology. College staff work with local minority ethnic community leaders to recruit suitable trainees. Open learning materials and images on college leaflets and marketing materials have been specifically designed to present a wide range of individuals in a variety of settings. These are intended to prevent trainees from making gender-based stereotypical training decisions. There has been some success in recruiting under-represented groups in the construction sector, where three women have been recruited onto the painting and decorating section.

GOOD PRACTICE

To promote equal opportunities within the college, a quarterly newsletter has been introduced. It provides an update on the activities of the equal opportunities interest group and is distributed widely to all trainees.

50. While reference to equal opportunities is made in the handbook given to employers, little is done to ensure that employers demonstrate an ongoing commitment to equality. The work-placement contract requires college staff to check that employers have a policy of their own, or agree to adopt that of the college. Once this is done, no further checks are made. The college's equal opportunities policy was produced in 1994 and needs updating. The equal opportunities advisory group has been working on this for the past six months. At the time of inspection, the work was not complete.

Trainee support**Grade 3**

51. New Deal clients are referred to the college by the Employment Service. TEC-funded trainees are mainly referred by the careers service, with some direct recruitment of trainees by a major employer for the manufacturing programme. Recruitment in construction, and for dental nurses in the care sector, is also often direct through employers. Most trainees have their basic skills assessed at the start of training, and are offered additional support if needed. All trainees undergo induction, the duration of which varies according to individual needs. During induction trainees are given a guide to the colleges' student charter, which outlines their rights and responsibilities. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and the one weakness claimed in the self-assessment. They found additional strengths and weaknesses and award the same grade as given by the provider.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ wide range of learning support
- ◆ high level of personal support for trainees
- ◆ effective employment development workshop

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient initial assessment in some areas
- ◆ ineffective reviews
- ◆ poor co-ordination of job-search training

52. In terms of the college induction, all New Deal clients have an induction as part of the employment development programme. The standard college induction is provided for all TEC-funded learners. This occurs alongside mainstream students for those starting in September. Otherwise, induction is provided for small groups and individuals throughout the year. There is an induction policy which outlines each learners' entitlement. It includes topics such as health and safety, equal opportunities, introduction to the college support services and a tour of learning resources. Each learner is given a copy of the students' charter which outlines their entitlements and the complaints procedures. There is a student advice centre, offering advice and support for trainees on a wide range of issues, including careers, finance and welfare. A counselling service is also provided. Uptake of these services for students is monitored and data show that TEC-funded and New Deal clients use the resources to a higher degree than the student population as a whole. Trainees have access to an extensive range of learning support facilities, including the library, learning workshops and information technology open learning facilities. All trainees are given plenty of personal and learning support by college and work-based staff. Lecturers provide extra help outside of scheduled teaching sessions, and trainees use this resource extensively. Where trainees have difficulties in their personal lives, help is available from college staff, both formally and informally. Whatever help trainees need is easy to access. Similarly, employers are helpful, supportive and willing to invest time and resources to support trainees.

53. New Deal clients initially attend an employment development workshop for a period of between two and six weeks. The purpose of this is to provide an introduction to the college and the programme, and to support clients through what, for many, is a daunting transition from unemployment into training. The workshops take place in a dedicated, well-resourced centre. The environment is welcoming, informal and purposeful. Staff work with trainees to help them understand and adjust to the requirements of the programme, and deal successfully with those whose motivation is poor. Group dynamics are managed well to ensure that there is a positive learning atmosphere.

54. Individual training programmes are developed with New Deal clients during their time at the employment development workshops. For TEC-funded trainees, it happens at the end of the induction programme. In most cases, the process is very

much one of negotiation, with learners given plenty of opportunity to influence the programme. The quality of individual training plans varies - overall, however, they are satisfactory. Initial assessment arrangements vary from one occupational area to another. In some areas it is ineffective, with little effort made to establish prior learning. There is no systematic initial assessment of key skills for modern apprentices. The formal review process does not involve employers and excludes a crucial part of the learning programme. In some sectors, progress reviews are poorly recorded, giving only superficial information. Progress reviews are not used to drive the trainee forward, setting challenging targets for completing parts of the programme. Instead, they focus purely upon attendance and general pastoral issues. While job-search training is part of the New Deal programme, some clients have not started this part of the learning programme and are not clear when they are scheduled to do so.

Management of training

Grade 3

55. Newcastle College is currently undergoing a major re-structuring. Co-ordination of TEC-funded and New Deal training is administered separately from FEFC-funded college provision, but most of the learning takes place in mixed groups, irrespective of learners' funding source. There are individual co-ordinators for TEC-funded and New Deal training, who are both responsible to the head of full-cost and international programmes. The college has recently established a cross-college work-placement unit, to develop a standardised approach for all learners. This replaces a previous service, operated independently by three college faculties. The Investors in People Standard was achieved in 1997. Inspectors broadly agreed with the self-assessment judgements for this aspect, and with the self-assessment grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ carefully planned summer training programme
- ◆ good staff development opportunities
- ◆ effective target-setting for staff teams
- ◆ strong links with external agencies

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak subcontracting arrangement with employers
- ◆ some poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ insufficient use of management information

56. Newcastle college has produced a plan of activities for New Deal clients for the summer months. This involved a series of meetings, where heads of school discussed the best way to ensure continuity of training. The schedule for the summer varies from one sector to another, but includes formal scheduled classes, work experience and supported open learning. In construction, work projects have

been carefully devised for clients to carry out under supervision during the summer months. Staff involved in New Deal training meet regularly to ensure that the needs of clients are being met. The college provides substantial staff development opportunities. These include both formal training programmes and opportunities for individual study. A series of staff development workshops have been held on the New Deal programme, to provide information and guidance on how the programme should operate. Some lecturers have participated in a recently introduced mentoring system, which is part of their annual staff review process, whereby they are observed teaching by one of their colleagues. Constructive feedback is given by the mentor and used to improve the lecturer's teaching practice.

57. The college sets targets for staff teams and courses in terms of student numbers, achievement and retention rates. The aim is to secure continued improvement against national targets. TEC-funded trainees and New Deal clients are included within the overall targets. The college works hard to secure and develop links with external agencies, with a strong emphasis on employers.

58. While overall relationships with employers are good, there is not enough ongoing monitoring of workplace activities for individual trainees. A formal written agreement exists between the college and employers, but little is done to ensure that contractual requirements are met. With the exception of the manufacturing sector, there is not enough discussion with employers regarding individual trainee's learning programmes.

59. In most sectors, there are not enough links between work done by trainees in college and tasks they do at work. Lecturing staff do not, as a rule, visit the workplace, and have little direct contact with workplace supervisors. The team of work-placement officers has recently been re-organised, and there are currently two vacant posts. The team has not yet effectively established its liaison role with the college. The college's management-information system does not efficiently supply staff with accurate data on trainees. This is a particular problem for New Deal training, where the turnover of trainees is rapid. The system for monitoring New Deal clients' attendance is onerous, requiring the individual to obtain signatures from lecturers at each session. This is different from the college's registering arrangements for other students. New Deal clients expressed their dissatisfaction at having to use this system.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

60. Newcastle College has a written quality assurance system, which meets the requirements of the TEC. It has a 'quality unit', the head of which has overall responsibility for quality assurance throughout the college. The college's mission statement places the student experience at the core of its activities and the quality assurance framework is one based on self-assessment to inform the improvement of that experience. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses claimed in

the self-assessment report, and awarded the same grade as that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ consultative and rigorous self-assessment process
- ◆ strong commitment to continuous improvement
- ◆ comprehensive evaluation system

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ failure to fully implement the internal verification procedure
- ◆ no regular review and updating of some policies
- ◆ insufficient sharing of good practice

61. As part of the annual quality assurance cycle, Newcastle College carries out regular self-assessment and action-planning. This is a rigorous and consultative process driven by the 'quality unit', and carried out by staff teams within each curriculum area. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and contains the key strengths and weaknesses identified by the inspection team. Inspectors supported most of the self-assessment grades given by the college. At the time of writing the self-assessment report, the college had not been informed that New Deal provision would be included in the scope of the inspection. However, once this became known, the college set out to produce a position paper to evaluate this part of its provision.

62. The college has a comprehensive evaluation system for its programmes involving trainees, staff and managers. There are two separate processes for obtaining feedback from trainees. Where TEC-funded trainees or New Deal clients are being taught alongside mainstream college students, they are asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire twice each year. This information is analysed and taken into account when staff complete their formal programme evaluations. This involves managers and staff. TEC-funded trainees receive an additional annual questionnaire generated and analysed using a computer-based system for analysis of the data.

63. Procedures for internal verification vary from one programme to another. In some sectors, there is no ongoing internal verification and the process consists only of portfolios being checked when they are complete. There is a lack of ongoing feedback to assessors and candidates. Where assessors are working towards their NVQ assessor awards, they are observed by internal verifiers, who carry out assessments. With this exception, there is little regular observation of assessments nor is much formal feedback given to assessors. Trainees are not interviewed as part of the internal verification process.

64. The college has a wide range of policies and procedures covering key areas of work. Many of the policies have not been reviewed for some time and are in need of updating. This has been exacerbated by the recent major reorganisation, which



has resulted in changed roles and working practices for many staff. There is insufficient sharing of good practice among curriculum teams involved in the TEC-funded and New Deal programmes.