



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT MAY 2000

the Sheffield College

SUMMARY

The Sheffield college offers good training in hairdressing, construction and media. Hairdressing trainees follow a new and effective programme and receive their training in hairdressing salons. New Deal clients receive well-structured training in construction and media. Training in engineering is satisfactory. Training is also satisfactory in hospitality and that provided by one subcontractor is particularly good. Trainees and clients receive less than satisfactory training in care, business administration and leisure. Resources are poor for trainees working towards qualifications in early years care and education. In most occupational areas, opportunities to assess trainees in the workplace are missed. In general, trainees' achievement and retention rates are poor. The college has a variety of initiatives for promoting equal opportunities but these do not extend to the workplace. There is a well-equipped job-search room for New Deal clients. In most occupational areas, reviews of trainees' progress are not carried out with sufficient thoroughness and trainees are not set clear targets. The college is systematic in its selection and management of subcontractors. Its use of management information data is poor. Feedback from trainees is collected, analysed and used in decision making. The college's quality assurance systems do not extend to training or assessment in the workplace.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	2
Engineering	3
Business administration	4
Leisure, sport & travel	4
Hospitality	3
Hair & beauty	2
Health, care & public services	4
Media & design	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	2
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	4

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ innovative and effective salon-based training in hairdressing
- ◆ good training in construction and media for New Deal clients
- ◆ wide range of initiatives for promoting equal opportunities
- ◆ careful selection and good management of subcontractors
- ◆ effective action on feedback from trainees by management

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate resources on early years' care programme
- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment in most areas
- ◆ trainees' poor achievement and retention rates
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace



- ◆ ineffective progress reviews for most trainees
- ◆ inadequate management information systems
- ◆ failure to apply quality assurance system to training or assessment in the workplace

INTRODUCTION

1. *The* Sheffield college is a large tertiary college based on five sites spread across the city of Sheffield. It has over 34,000 students, and more than 2000 staff. Work-based training within the college is managed by the business development unit. The unit was set up in September 1995 to manage Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) contracts, to find and monitor work placements for all college students, and to manage franchising arrangements. The New Deal unit, part of the business development unit, was established in January 1998 to offer the full-time education and training option through an Employment Service contract.

2. The college is contracted by Sheffield TEC and the Employment Service to offer training towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in hospitality, health, care and public services, hairdressing, sport and recreation, business administration, engineering, construction, and media, as well as foundation for work programmes. Foundation for work was not inspected, as it is subcontracted in its entirety to a local provider which had only recently been inspected by the Training Standards Council (TSC). The college also offers training leading to qualifications in manufacturing and retailing but these programmes have only a few trainees on them, and were consequently not inspected. At the time of inspection, the college had 234 modern apprentices, 98 national trainees, 99 trainees following other training programmes, and eight people on the work-based learning for adults route. In addition, it had 171 New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option in a range of occupational areas.

3. The business development unit has the same status in the college as the five curriculum schools, and is managed by the business development manager, who reports to the director of curriculum and operations, a member of the college's senior management team. The unit has 31 staff, including a principal training co-ordinator and three senior training co-ordinators, responsible for business development, work experience and the co-ordination of training. The business development unit was on the college's main administrative site in the centre of Sheffield until January 1999, when it moved to its current premises, about half a mile away. The premises comprise meeting rooms and administrative offices. Off-the-job training takes place on other college sites, and is provided by college lecturers. Most trainees join groups of full-time students, who are not necessarily taking the same qualifications as they are, but are studying in the same occupational area. Other trainees are taught in discrete groups.

4. Sheffield is a predominantly urban area. In the past, its industry centred on the production of metals. As this has declined, so has the region's overall industrial and economic base. Economic forecasts for the short- and medium-terms are poor, but the TEC predicts longer-term growth in business services and communications. Health and education are currently the largest occupational areas in the city.

5. Sheffield has a population of just over 500,000. Unemployment rates in the



area have been above the national average for the past two decades. Currently, 6.6 per cent of the local population are unemployed, but the unemployment rate is as much as 14.5 per cent in some parts of the city. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in the local population averages 6.6 per cent, but rises to 25 per cent in some parts of the region. This compares with the national average of 5.7 per cent. In 1999, the number of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 37.6 per cent compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. The self-assessment report was compiled by the business development manager, the business development officer and the principal training co-ordinator, in consultation with other members of the business development unit and the college lecturers who provide off-the-job training. Key staff attended several training events arranged by the local TEC, as well as nationally organised workshops. Senior college managers examined the report, and amended some of the grades given by business development unit staff.

7. A team of 11 inspectors spent a total of 41 days at the business development unit. They visited 52 workplaces and interviewed 148 trainees and 48 work-based supervisors. Eighty-six interviews were held with members of the college's staff. Inspectors observed 13 training sessions, 12 of which were awarded grades, and examined the records of 12 training sessions observed by inspectors from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). They examined a range of documents, including trainees' portfolios of work, trainees' files, policies and procedures and contracts.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction		2	4			6
Business administration			1			1
Hospitality			1			1
Hair & beauty	2	1				3
Health, care & public services			1			1
Total	2	3	7	0	0	12

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 2

8. Construction is a new programme area for *the* Sheffield college. Training was first offered in 1999 and *the* Sheffield College currently has 69 trainees on construction programmes. Twenty-six of these are on New Deal. Training leads to NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in carpentry and joinery, plumbing, and construction technician qualifications. There are eight carpentry and joinery modern apprentice trainees, 17 plumbing modern apprentice trainees and two gas installation careership trainees. There are 16 construction technician trainees who are working towards a national certificate in building studies. The New Deal clients attend college for the whole week, and follow the full-time education and training option

across the range of construction trades. The breakdown of clients in terms of the occupational qualifications towards which they are working, is as follows; four clients in carpentry and joinery, two clients in plumbing, five clients in brickwork, seven clients in electrical installation, eight clients in painting and decorating. NVQ trainees attend *the* Sheffield College on a day-release basis where training and assessment for trainees in building crafts is carried out by a team of 10 college tutors. All these tutors have appropriate occupational and assessor qualifications, and eight have verifier qualifications. Some assessment is carried out in the workplace. Modern apprentices and careership trainees have employed status, and New Deal clients are on work placements in different local companies. The self-assessment report provided little factual information. Numbers of trainees and New Deal clients were not given. The self-assessment report listed strengths which inspectors considered to be no more than normal practice, together with some strengths and weaknesses which related to generic aspects of provision. Inspectors identified further strengths and weaknesses were identified. They awarded a grade higher than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ particularly good work placements
- ◆ effective building studies programme
- ◆ good training resources in gas installation and plumbing
- ◆ good training for New Deal clients

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no work-based assessment in carpentry and joinery
- ◆ some trainees' uncertainty about NVQ requirements

9. *The* Sheffield college has well-established links with a number of local companies, who provide a wide and appropriate range of work placements and employment opportunities. Employers are strongly committed to training and recognise the importance of providing trainees with support, and learning opportunities, in the workplace. Trainees gain good occupational experience through company job rotation opportunities. They welcome the opportunities they are given to acquire good craft skills and they take pride in the work they produce. Trainees are well motivated and, where appropriate, are able to work without direct supervision.

10. Training programmes have clearly written specifications. There are good systems for recording trainees' progress. Learning support materials and assessment packs have been produced which enable trainees to compile good portfolios of relevant evidence. Building technician trainees follow a well-established building studies programme. This provides them with a broad-based learning experience in construction across a range of disciplines, including, architectural studies, draughtsmanship and structural engineering. Employers in

this sector have a high regard for the effectiveness of the programme. Trainees have access to good resource materials. Plumbing and gas installation tutors have good links with local companies. Several companies have given the college a range of useful equipment for use as learning resources. Trainees on all construction programmes value the quality and range of the off-the-job training opportunities available to them.

POOR PRACTICE

The carpentry and joinery workshops are potentially hazardous working environments where safety equipment must be worn. However, New Deal clients in the carpentry and joinery workshops were not given the required footwear.

11. New Deal clients are well motivated. They are assessed regularly and they negotiate assessment opportunities with their trainers. Trainers are successful in finding good opportunities for clients to have work experience in painting and decorating, brickwork and electrical installation. The work placements help clients to achieve their qualification aim, and to progress into employment, where they can work towards further NVQs.

12. Trainees are encouraged, with the help of their employers, to acquire more evidence from the workplace of their acquisition of the requisite NVQ competencies. Trainers in plumbing and gas installation are now working with employers to identify more opportunities for trainees to be assessed in the workplace. This practice is recent and innovative and it is not yet established on all programmes. There is still no work-based assessment in carpentry and joinery. All assessment in carpentry and joinery takes place in simulated work-based conditions in the college workshops. Retention rates are poor in this area. No trainee or client has yet obtained a qualification in carpentry and joinery. Employers receive information from the college about the NVQs that trainees are following. However, some employers still lack awareness of the requirements and structure of the NVQ system. Although employers of construction technicians have some knowledge of the programme their employees are following, they are not given details of the programme structure. Trainees' work-based supervisors often have little knowledge of the requirements and range of the NVQ or the requirements of the technician programme. Trainees receive reviews of their progress regularly. These reviews, however, do not focus sufficiently on trainees' personal development and trainees' progress towards achievement of the NVQ. During the reviews, trainees are not set targets. Individual training plans are not updated to take account of trainees' progress. Some trainees do not understand what their programme requires of them and some do not understand the nature and purpose of work-based assessment.

Engineering**Grade 3**

13. The college provides engineering training in mechanical production, fabrication and welding, and motor vehicle engineering training in motor vehicle repair and maintenance and vehicle body repair. In engineering, there are 111 modern apprentices, 13 national trainees and 13 other trainees. In motor vehicle engineering there are 12 modern apprentices, eight national trainees and nine other trainees. All are employed or on work placement in small to medium-sized local garages and engineering firms. Some engineering trainees have a period of block-release training at the start of their programme, but the majority of them, and all

motor vehicle trainees, attend off-the-job training on one day each week. Assessment is carried out partly in the workplace, by work-based supervisors, and partly in college. The college's engineering staff all possess relevant occupational and assessor awards. The self-assessment report for this area lacks detail and clarity, and many of the strengths claimed represent no more than contractual compliance. Inspectors confirmed the grade given by the provider.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective partnerships between employers, college staff and business development unit staff
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ good system for planning workplace training
- ◆ good equipment and resources

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow progress by some trainees
- ◆ some missed opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ low achievement rates by motor vehicle trainees

14. *The* Sheffield college has an employers' liaison group which was set up four years ago to launch the NVQ programme. A number of local companies are involved in it. They are invited to termly meetings, held over breakfast. These minuted meetings have dealt systematically with the development of the NVQ programme. They have made college's engineering staff fully aware of the importance of continuous improvement and have given employers a better understanding of aspects of training such as assessment in the workplace and key skills. In addition, they ensure that the college remains accountable to employers for the training it provides.

15. Work placements are varied, and through them, trainees receive thorough and relevant on-the-job training. Employers offer a productive work environment in which trainees can develop many of the skills they need in order to obtain their NVQ. If they are unable to provide trainees with work that enables them to acquire the necessary competencies, employers liaise with college staff to ensure that alternative arrangements are made for them. Trainees receive good support, both in the workplace and off the job. They cite many examples of personal or training-related problems, including financial difficulties and additional learning needs, which have been effectively dealt with by a partnership involving college tutors, training co-ordinators and employers. Communication between these three parties is regular and constructive, and they work together to ensure that trainees' problems are appropriately resolved, in order that trainees may have every chance of success.

16. The motor vehicle and engineering training facilities at the college were

moved to a new, purpose-built site two years ago. On this, there is well-laid-out accommodation with good, modern equipment. Trainees are able to produce quality work in which they take pride.

17. Over the past four years, the college has introduced new arrangements for work-based training and assessment. In engineering, there is no assessment in the workplace for NVQs at level 2, but level 3 trainees gather evidence in the workplace for assessment by their work-based supervisor. College lecturers visit workplaces once every four to eight weeks to provide guidance for trainees and their supervisors, to test trainees' knowledge and understanding, and to carry out some assessment by observation. After the first of these visits, a training plan is produced, relating to units of the NVQ, and this takes into account the job role and ability of the trainee. At subsequent visits well-structured action plans are drawn up for the trainees. Motor vehicle engineers benefit from a similar process. It is comprehensive and highly effective and it makes both trainees and their employers fully aware of the importance of organising workplace activities to enable trainees to cover all elements and units of their NVQ.

18. This new system for work-based training and assessment has been introduced very slowly, however, and so far, little assessment or action planning has happened in the second year of training. Most assessment has been concentrated in the third year. Many opportunities for work-based assessment in the earlier stages of training have been lost. The new system has not been used with level 2 trainees at all. They have missed opportunities for workplace assessment, and are required to repeat at college tasks in which they have already demonstrated their competence in the workplace. A number of trainees have made very slow progress, particularly towards their level 3 qualification, and have had to have their target date for achieving it extended. In engineering, of trainees starting in 1997-98, 55 per cent of national trainees and other trainees and 71 per cent of modern apprentices have so far achieved a level 2 NVQ. Five per cent of modern apprentices have achieved an NVQ at level 3, and 60 per cent remain in training. In motor vehicle, of the trainees commencing their programme in 1997-98, three per cent of national trainees and other trainees, and 10 per cent of modern apprentices, have achieved an NVQ at level 2. No modern apprentices have achieved a qualification at level 3. Only two of that group remain in training. There are high numbers of early leavers on the motor vehicle programme, and retention rates are low, at around 40 per cent.

Business administration

Grade 4

19. There are 14 modern apprentices at *the* Sheffield college working towards NVQs in administration at levels 2 and 3. Sixteen national trainees and 15 young people on other training programmes are working towards an NVQ in administration at level two. Thirteen modern apprentices are undertaking NVQs in accountancy at levels 2 and 3. All national trainees and modern apprentices are employed in a wide range of companies and organisations throughout Sheffield, including media companies, engineering companies, the fire service and local

universities. Trainees on other training are unemployed, and receive a training allowance while placed with employers for the duration of their training. Seven qualified and experienced tutors carry out administration training. Most level 2 trainees attend the college for off-the-job training on one day a week. Level 3 trainees attend the college for one-to-one tutorials every three to six weeks. Off-the-job training takes place at four different college sites, including one dedicated to information technology training. A training co-ordinator carries out progress reviews with all administration and accounting trainees, every six to eight weeks. This training co-ordinator has assessor qualifications and occupational experience and qualifications in administration. The college has 32 New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option, working toward information technology diplomas, key skills units, and word-processing certificates. Some are placed with employers for a minimum of two weeks to gain work experience in administration roles. The college subcontracts additional New Deal provision to four local training providers. Subcontractors providing New Deal are responsible for all aspects of recruitment, training and assessment. They conduct progress reviews with clients every week for the first four weeks and subsequently every month. New Deal clients based at the college have the same arrangements for progress reviews, and these are carried out by three college training co-ordinators. The college was insufficiently rigorous in its self-assessment of training in this occupational area. Inspectors considered some of the strengths stated in the self-assessment report to be no more than normal practice. They found weaknesses the college had not mentioned in its self-assessment report. Inspectors awarded a grade lower than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective on-the-job training
- ◆ effective and flexibly arranged training leading to NVQs in administration
- ◆ good training opportunities in information technology

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ late introduction of key skills training in administration programmes
- ◆ college's inaccurate framework document for trainees and modern apprentices
- ◆ little use of work-based evidence for accountancy
- ◆ some poor assessment practice
- ◆ some trainees' slow progress

20. Employers have a clear commitment to on-the-job training, are supportive of trainees and help them to gain their qualifications. Many trainees have well-planned training programmes which give them wide experience in different departments within the company. Most employers have up-to-date office equipment and computer software. Trainees are given opportunities to develop their skills in using office technology, even though they do not use these skills in their normal job role. Many employers offer additional training courses to trainees

which allow them to gain extra qualifications, such as those in desk-top publishing, customer care, and supervisory skills. Trainees are well supervised, but are also given extra and demanding responsibilities. Some employers offer good additional support to their trainees. For example, one employer who is unable to offer the trainee a permanent job at the end of her training course, has arranged a programme of job-search training using expertise from within the personnel department of the company.

21. The college makes flexible arrangements for off-the-job training in administration. Level 3 trainees meet with tutors for one-to-one guidance on their NVQ work. Trainees make appointments with college tutors every three to six weeks according to their individual need. This arrangement allows them to give priority to gathering evidence from the workplace, rather than attending off-the-job training which does not necessarily meet their needs. The college has a procedure whereby trainees who have not attended for six weeks are contacted, to ensure that they are on track with their evidence-gathering, and that they are receiving the support they need. Most level 2 trainees attend college for one day a week, but flexible arrangements are made for those who are unable to attend weekly. The college offers a good range of training in information technology. All level 2 trainees undertake basic computer literacy and word processing qualifications. Higher qualifications, such as the European computer driving licence and information technology diplomas are also offered. Computer suites are spacious with good lighting. There are ample computers with up-to-date software. Trainees have access to training on e-mail and the Internet. Subcontractors offer good information technology training to New Deal clients.

22. Some trainees, who have been on programme for considerable periods of time, have not yet started to collect evidence of their competence in key skills. Trainees' understanding of the five key skills units is poor. Many are unaware that they are a mandatory part of their programme. There is little integration of key skills training with the training leading to the NVQ. Trainees are not encouraged from the start of their programme, to cross-reference evidence for their NVQ units to all key skills units. Trainees attend sessions to develop their communication skills, but not all trainees use these as an opportunity to gather evidence of their competency in key skills. Although level 2 trainees all have additional training in using computers, they do not gather evidence through this of their ability to demonstrate the key skill of using information technology. Trainees have not been told the standards in key skills they have to attain. They are uncertain what constitutes valid evidence of competency in key skills. Level 3 trainees, some of whom have almost completed work for their NVQ, have not yet been registered for their key skills, and face a further wait until September 2000.

23. Trainees, employers, and some college tutors are unaware of the requirements of the national traineeship and modern apprenticeship frameworks. Modern apprentices have been given a framework document, devised by the college, but this does not specify the additional training they are required to undertake. Some national trainees have details of the full framework, but there has been no discussion with the trainee, and employer on which extra training will best suit the trainees' needs. Training plans do not specify the additional training required of

trainees if they are to complete a full national traineeship or modern apprenticeship.

24. Accountancy trainees have job roles well suited to their qualification aims. They gather little evidence for their portfolio of their competency in the workplace. Trainees derive most of their portfolio evidence from their work in assignments, produced by the awarding body, which they carry out under simulated work-based conditions. Trainees provide some additional paper-based evidence from the workplace, but this makes up only a small proportion of the total evidence. Assessors do not visit the workplace to assess trainees' practical competence. Modern apprentices complete assignments and projects to demonstrate their competence in key skills. They are not encouraged to gather evidence of their competence in key skills through their performance of work-based tasks even though they use key skills regularly in the workplace. In administration, tutors visit the workplace on occasions to assess the trainees by observing their use of practical skills. These visits are not well planned. Although trainees and employers are alerted when these visits are about to take place, no discussions are held with the trainee to ascertain which tasks he or she feels competent to be assessed on. Arrangements are not made with employers for trainees to carry out specific tasks at these visits. Some tutors do not record workplace assessments properly. Some records merely consist of a tick-sheet with few comments added. These do not clearly show the context of the assessment or give details of the practical tasks that were observed. Assessment records do not show which specific competencies have been assessed, nor do they indicate the extent of trainees' knowledge and understanding of theory, in relation to the tasks that have been observed.

25. While level 3 trainees generally make good progress towards their NVQ, some level 2 trainees make slow progress. Level 2 trainees are often required to complete assignments during off-the-job training, which they find undemanding and repetitive. Some trainees have sessions on portfolio work they find unproductive. They often have to wait for individual attention from the tutor before being able to progress with their work. Tutors sometimes find it difficult to sustain trainees' interest during these sessions. Opportunities for evidence-gathering in the workplace are sometimes missed. For example, one trainee, who does not handle mail at work, has been waiting to complete the mail-handling unit in the college office. College tutors have not asked the trainee's employer to arrange for the trainee to deal with mail in the company. Trainees who submit units for assessment do not always receive prompt feedback and sometimes find they have to gather additional evidence at a much later date. Many trainees take two years to achieve their NVQ at level 2. Some trainees, nearing the end of their second year, have completed less than half their work for the NVQ. Out of 35 administration trainees who started work at level 2 or level 3 in the year 1997-98, only eight achieved an NVQ at level 2. Two achieved an NVQ at level 3. Of 36 trainees who started working towards an NVQ at level 2 or level 3 in the year 1998-99, one has achieved an NVQ at level 3. None of these trainees has yet achieved NVQ at level two and nineteen are still working toward their NVQ. In accountancy, only 25 per cent of trainees who started in the year 1997-98, achieved an NVQ. Of seven trainees who started in the year 1998-99, three have so

far gained an NVQ at level 3. Six of these are still in training, either working toward an NVQ at level 3 or an NVQ at level 4.

Leisure, sport & travel

Grade 4

26. There are five trainees and eight New Deal clients following programmes in sport and recreation at the college. The trainees are working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in activity leadership, operational services and operations and development. Two are national trainees, one is a modern apprentice, and three are following another youth training programme known locally as careerships. All are either employed or on work placement as leisure attendants, golf assistants or professional rugby or football players in private leisure facilities across Sheffield. Off-the-job training is provided by the college's two leisure tutors at one of two college sites. Assessment is undertaken by a qualified college assessor, and takes place during off-the-job training and visits to the workplace. The college first offered a training programme leading to NVQs in sport and recreation in 1998. Difficulties have been encountered in finding work placements for trainees on this programme and the college will discontinue it when the present trainees have completed work for their awards. New Deal clients are all on the full-time education and training option, and are integrated into full-time leisure courses for mature students, and they are taught and assessed by college staff. Each client works towards a leisure and recreation qualification and they can choose to take short courses leading to vocational qualifications. Six New Deal clients are on the football in the community scheme, working towards their coaching and instruction level 2 award. Training and assessment on this scheme are subcontracted. Staff from the college carry out reviews of trainees' progress and observe training. The self-assessment report lacked detail, particularly about the workplace. Many of the strengths identified by the provider represent no more than contractual compliance, and statement of both strengths and weaknesses lack clarity. The inspection grade is lower than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ opportunity for clients to work towards additional qualifications
- ◆ frequent and constructive reviews of trainees' progress
- ◆ effective integration of New Deal clients into college courses

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for assessment
- ◆ no achievement of NVQ units by trainees
- ◆ trainees, clients and employers' poor understanding of the NVQ process

27. Trainees and clients are encouraged to attend a range of occupationally

relevant additional courses, such as national pool lifeguard, first aid, customer care, health and safety, and single pitch climbing award. These courses motivate them and help to develop their confidence and self-esteem. They also provide them with good theoretical and practical knowledge to help them complete NVQ units and progress to further training courses or to employment. The additional qualifications are also highly valued by the employers.

28. Trainees' progress reviews are carried out regularly in the workplace by training co-ordinators. All aspects of personal and occupational development are discussed during reviews. During the reviews, pastoral and employment issues are discussed, trainees are set short-term targets and their progress in reaching them is monitored at subsequent reviews. In some instances, the reviews lead to action plans, which are complemented by additional weekly action plans developed by college tutors. Trainees find the reviews beneficial and that they help them focus their efforts.

29. On-the-job training occurs in the workplace, but is incidental rather than planned. Trainees do not gather evidence of their competencies for their NVQ portfolio through naturally occurring situations in the workplace and opportunities for work-based assessment are missed. There is only one work-based assessor, so for most trainees assessment is carried out by college assessors when they visit the workplace. These assessors can only undertake workplace visits at specific times of the week, when they are timetabled to do so. The visits take place at the same time each week and the assessor usually observes the trainee carrying out the same routine task. Additional assessment sessions then have to be arranged during college time. Trainees do not gather evidence for their NVQ portfolios through their work on additional courses they undertake.

30. Few employers understand the requirements of the programmes undertaken by their trainees. They do not have copies of the NVQ standards, or personal experience of the NVQ process. Although employers value trainees as employees, they are not involved in the NVQ process and are unable to further trainees' progress by offering informal guidance. Employers are not involved in trainees' induction, or the construction of individual training plans. They are only infrequently involved in the review process. They have little understanding of the extent of trainees' NVQ progress towards achieving the NVQ. For their off-the-job training, trainees and clients join classes for students on FEFC-funded courses. The tutors do not give priority to helping the trainees and clients understand the NVQ process or their respective framework. Some do not know which NVQ they are working towards. Few can explain the content of their modern apprenticeship or national traineeship framework. Some key skills training in information technology and application of number has taken place but the trainees and clients are not aware of the significance of key skills training, and do not know that there are other key skills units to be achieved.

31. Trainees make very slow progress towards achieving their qualifications. At the time of inspection, no trainee had achieved an NVQ. Trainees are not credited with the achievement of individual NVQ units. Some trainees have left the programme early and have nothing to show in terms of achievement. Five trainees

have moved because of a merger of their employer with another organisation. The trainees began their programme in September 1997 and left the college without having achieved any qualifications. One trainee, after completing the majority of units for her award left to take up employment in Australia but had nothing to show for this. Two of the current trainees have completed 75 per cent of work for their NVQ but have not been accredited with any units.

32. New Deal clients express positive views about the structure of their programme, and the learning opportunities provided by the college. The majority of current clients have gained additional qualifications. Records indicate that previous clients have had good retention and achievement rates and have been successful in obtaining employment. The clients are integrated into the college's full-time leisure programme and extra support facilities are made available to them. All clients are taught in a class made up of mature clients. They appreciate working in an environment which they find supportive and relaxed. They are also complimentary about the support they receive from the job-search team. However, clients are not satisfied with the level of support they receive from the Employment Service staff and college's New Deal staff. Clients' progress reviews have been carried out by college staff instead of the New Deal personal advisers. College tutors have a poor understanding of New Deal, and of how to advise clients appropriately with regard to progression. Rather than encourage clients to seek employment as their primary progression goal, they guide them towards taking further college qualifications. Clients do not receive objective advice. Some clients, who are nearing the end of programme, have not yet received any information on what is likely to happen to them when they do complete it.

Hospitality

Grade 3

33. In this occupational area, five modern apprentices, nine national trainees and four New Deal clients are based at the college. A further five modern apprentices and five national trainees are trained by one of the college's subcontractors. Subcontracted trainees all have employed status. Their recruitment, induction, training and assessment are carried out by the subcontractor. Almost all the training and assessment of this group takes place in the workplace. College-based trainees are recruited and found placements by the college's business development unit. They attend off-the-job training in the college on one day each week. During this day, they work in a simulated working environment, and have classroom sessions for theory work. All assessment is carried out at the college. The college's hospitality staff are all highly experienced in the hospitality industry, and are qualified as assessors and internal verifiers. The subcontractor's training co-ordinator/assessor is occupationally qualified and is a qualified assessor, and their local manager is a qualified internal verifier. Some workplace supervisors have, or are working towards, assessor qualifications. The self-assessment report did not evaluate the hospitality programmes effectively, and failed to identify some key strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the grade given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ particularly good on-the-job training through subcontractor
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ highly effective system for monitoring trainees and clients' progress

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no workplace assessments for trainees at college
- ◆ poor retention rates of trainees at college
- ◆ trainees' slow rate of progress

34. Work placements for all college-based trainees and clients are arranged by placement staff in the business-development unit. During visits to prospective placements, college staff are systematic in ensuring that employers comply with all the college's contractual requirements, and understand key procedures related to the programme. Trainees are matched to an employer on the basis of their aspirations, personal attributes and ability. Work placements include fast-food outlets, restaurants, institutional caterers, pubs and hotels. Employers show a high level of commitment to helping their trainees to succeed. They value them, and further their training and development.

35. The subcontracted trainees are employed by organisations which provide training to very high standards. The subcontractor has successfully encouraged supervisors to achieve assessor qualifications, and ensure that assessment opportunities in the workplace are not missed. The subcontractor has developed a substantial national bank of training and assessment materials. All trainees are issued at the start of their programme, with sets of resources covering the requirements of their training plan. Almost all training takes place at work, and is managed according to a plan agreed between the employer, the trainee and the subcontractor at the start of the programme. Subcontracted trainees achieve a high level of skills. One took part in an international competition for professional caterers, and was mistakenly entered in a senior class intended for qualified, experienced chefs. She was, however, awarded the silver medal.

36. In addition to the contractual progress reviews carried out by the training co-ordinator, the college-based trainees' progress is reviewed by the trainees' tutor during off-the-job training. This tutor has devised his own recording system which shows at a glance, the progress of each trainee towards achievement of the NVQ. It also shows the training received by each trainee during each session at college. This system gives trainees a clear picture of their progress.

37. In 1998-99, 63 per cent of college-based hospitality trainees left their programme early without completing their framework. Early leavers have not responded well to request for information on their destination but comments from their former workmates, and from other trainees, indicate that many have left to seek or take up employment, often outside the Sheffield area. This high drop-out

rate has existed for at least the past three years. The programme review team is examining the problem, and is actively considering ways of addressing it.

38. All assessment of college-based trainees takes place in the college during off-the-job training. The trainees have to spend a considerable amount of time in the college's training kitchen. Trainees join classes with students on FEFC-funded courses, and are expected to follow the same training schedule as them. The trainees have greater workplace experience and many are further advanced, in terms of skill acquisition, than the students. Trainees have to repeat work at college requiring techniques they are already using competently on a regular basis at work. Although trainees respect the high levels of skill demonstrated by their tutors, they are frustrated by what they see as unnecessary duplication of their efforts. No assessment occurs in the workplace, although some work-based supervisors are qualified assessors. Opportunities are missed for assessing trainees in naturally occurring situations in the workplace.

39. Trainees make slow progress towards achieving their qualifications. In their progress reviews, college-based trainees are not set specific short-term targets to spur them on. There is little direct contact between college tutors and the supervisors providing training in the workplace. The training co-ordinators try to liaise with the college. They often lack, however, vocational or training experience. Trainees feel that they should be making faster progress towards achieving their qualifications. Many trainees leave the programme early and the achievement rate is very low. No college-based trainee obtained an NVQ in 1998-99. The trainees' achievement rates on the subcontracted programmes are higher.

Hair & beauty

Grade 2

40. There are 63 trainees working towards hairdressing qualifications at levels 2 and 3. Twenty are modern apprentices, 33 are national trainees, and 10 are other trainees. All trainees have employed status. There are two training routes available for trainees: salon-based training, a pilot scheme in which all training and assessment takes place in the workplace, and college-based training where trainees spend four days a week in a commercial salon and one day a week in the college salons, where most of their training and assessment takes place. The college has four hairdressing salons, including a training salon, and three beauty salons which are open to the public. Fourteen members of the college staff teach and assess on hairdressing programmes. All have occupational and assessor qualifications. A further four assessors are based in the workplace. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and with one of the two weaknesses stated in the self-assessment report. They awarded the same grade as that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ highly effective and innovative training in the salons
- ◆ high ratio of trainers and assessors to trainees in the workplace
- ◆ successful integration of key skills training with hairdressing training

- ◆ good opportunities for trainees to work towards additional qualifications
- ◆ very effective assessment and internal verification system
- ◆ effective co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ narrow range of models in college salons
- ◆ poor retention rates

41. The college has recently designed a salon-based approach to training, which aims to take into account the requirements of both trainees and employers. On the salon-based route, most training and assessment takes place in the workplace with help from college staff. Priority is given to ensuring training and assessment are work-based. Opportunities to assess trainees in naturally occurring situations in the workplace are exploited well. Trainees are able to cover the full range of requisite NVQ competencies. Trainees attend college for theory sessions and key skills training on one day a month. Many employers are committed to supporting this programme, as it offers them considerable flexibility. The college helps to increase the number of work-based assessors by offering training leading to assessor and internal verifier qualifications to employers and their staff, free of charge. For trainees following the college-based route, most assessment occurs during off-the-job training at the college's training salon. However, college assessors also visit the workplace on a regular basis to enable trainees to be assessed in naturally occurring situations.

42. Key skills training is fully integral to NVQ programmes in hairdressing. Key skills training is promoted to trainees and employers as a relevant and important part of the modern apprenticeship and national traineeship frameworks. Key skills learning packs for information technology, application of number and communication have been devised by the hairdressing department. These aim to facilitate the teaching and assessment of trainees through occupational work. Trainees find it easy to cross-reference their evidence of competence in key skills to the NVQ criteria.

43. The college offers all trainees the opportunity to gain additional qualifications. These include an NVQ in customer service at level 3, and a basic barbering course. Training in customer service is offered to help trainees to solve problems, deal effectively with customers' complaints and increase their communication skills. The social skills they learn through training towards this additional qualification complement the technical skills required in hairdressing. The basic barbering course offers two units of the full barbering qualification, cutting and beard trimming. Trainees are also taught the basics of clipper work and the use of specialist equipment, such as flat-top combs for fashion work. The college employs two qualified commercial barbers on a part-time basis specifically for this course. Trainees work towards additional qualifications with the aim of increasing their employability.

44. The assessment and internal verification process is well-planned and effective. Records showing sampling and giving details of trainees' progress are regularly maintained and easy to follow. Trainees are fully involved in the assessment process. Assessors check trainees' understanding before an assessment begins, and ensure that they understand the NVQ criteria and requirements. Feedback on trainees' performance is concise and fair. The internal verification process is rigorous. The internal verifier has set up an assessors' forum to which assessors from the college and work-based assessors are invited. This meets once a term to review and monitor the quality of assessment practice and to update staff on awarding body requirements.

45. On- and off-the-job training is clearly linked. Annual training plans are agreed between college staff and employers, and copies are given to the employers. This ensures that practical training sessions carried out in the workplace complement and relate to the theory sessions at the college.

46. The college training salons are open to the public and operate commercially to some extent. The range of models available to trainees is, however, narrow. It does not meet the needs of trainees working towards an NVQ at level 3, who need to practise on a wide range of models in order to cover the full range of requisite NVQ competencies. They are encouraged to bring their own models into the practical sessions, but for some trainees are unable to do this. The college are aware of the problem and are taking steps, through internal advertising to resolve it.

47. Achievement and retention on hairdressing programmes are below average for the sector. In 1997-8, there were 49 new trainees on the national traineeships and other training programmes. Of these, 14 achieved a level 2 qualification and eight achieved a level 3 qualification. Of 16 new modern apprentices, four achieved a level 2 qualification and one achieved a level 3 qualification. In 1998-99, 55 national and other trainees commenced training programmes. Two achieved a level 2 qualification. Of the 16 new modern apprentices in that year, six achieved a level 3 qualification. In 1999-2000 there were 44 new national and other trainees and none has so far achieved a qualification at level 2. There have been no level 2 achievements so far. Of the 14 new modern apprentices, two have achieved a qualification at level 2, and one a qualification at level 3. A large proportion of trainees, on average 50 per cent per year, leave their programme early.

Health, care & public services

Grade 4

48. The college provides training towards NVQs in early years care and education at levels 2 and 3, and a nationally recognised qualification in dental nursing. There are 21 trainees, of whom 13 are modern apprentices and three are national trainees. There are five New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option. All the modern apprentices are employed and two of the national trainees have employed status. There are 12 dental nurse trainees who are on other work-based training programmes for young people. Seven of these have employed status. They are working towards the national certificate in dental nursing. Early years care and education trainees are employed, or on work placements, in private day nurseries. Dental nurse trainees are employed or placed in dental surgeries or at a dental hospital. Off-the-job training is carried out during term time by college tutors. Early years care and education trainees attend off-the-job training one day per week during the first year and one day per month during the second year. Dental nurse trainees attend a weekly off-the-job training session. They also have the opportunity to gain a first aid qualification and to undertake information technology training. All assessment for early years care and education trainees takes place in the workplace. Training and assessment are organised and managed through a group of local companies who, together with *the* Sheffield college, have formed an assessment centre. There are four early years tutors and three dental surgery nurse tutors, all of whom are occupationally qualified and experienced. Assessment is carried out by four work-based assessors and two college staff who visit trainees in the workplace. The NVQ assessment centre employs five part-time assessors. There is no formal assessment in the workplace for dental nurse trainees. Assessment on this programme is carried out through nationally set examinations. Reviews of trainees' progress are carried out by two training co-ordinators, one with responsibility for early years care and education, who is occupationally qualified, and one who has responsibility for dental surgery nurse trainees and does not have the relevant occupational qualification. Forty-six per cent of the dental nurse trainees who began training in 1997-98 achieved their qualification. Two of the nine trainees who started the training in 1997-98 have completed their modern apprenticeship and three are still completing key skills. Retention rates for dental nurses were 53.8 per cent in 1997-98, 36 per cent in 1998-99, and 33.3 per cent in 1999-2000. In 1998, the retention rate of trainees on the early years care programme was 62 per cent. The self-assessment report provides brief background information on the occupational area. Separate strengths and weaknesses are identified for early years care and education and dental surgery nursing and the programmes were awarded separate grades. Many of the strengths represent no more than normal practice and three relate to quality assurance. Inspectors awarded a grade lower than that given in the self assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-resourced dental surgery nursing suite
- ◆ well-planned training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some poor assessment practice
- ◆ inadequate resourcing of early years programme
- ◆ failure to make key skills training fully integral to the programme

POOR PRACTICE

Opportunities for the assessment of trainees in the workplace are sometimes restricted by assessors' work commitments. In one nursery, the assessor visits infrequently and mainly at the end of the day when the children are leaving. At that time, trainees can only be assessed on a narrowly restricted range of activities.

49. Dental nurse trainees have specific Induction to the structure, content and examination procedures during their off-the-job training. Their weekly training programme is well planned and covers all aspects of the syllabus. It takes place in a modern, well-equipped suite which contains materials and equipment of industry standard, including a high calibre dental chair which allows trainees to develop their practical skills in a very realistic working environment. In the second year of the programme, time is given to examination preparation and the development of examination techniques. Workplace training is good. Trainees are not entered for the external examination until they have had two years' experience in the workplace. One dental nurse trainee gained the highest grades nationally in the external examination and was awarded the gold award by the awarding body.

50. The majority of early years trainees, who have had no previous training or experience in early years work, undertake a three-year programme. During the first year, they attend off-the-job training on a weekly basis and join a college-based course which is designed to give some of the knowledge of theory for the NVQ at level 2. During the second year of the programme, trainees attend off-the-job training on a monthly basis to cover theory work for level 3. There is a planned programme of sessions, which relate directly to the specifications of the NVQ units. Trainees are given a copy of the training schedule. Open learning packages have been purchased to assist the trainee in producing evidence of their knowledge of theory. Employers value work-based training and ensure that trainees receive supervised training guidance on key practices. Many trainees have access to in-house training and receive support from the employer to attend external courses. Some trainees receive first aid training arranged by the employer. However, communications with some employers are poor. Employers are not always fully aware of the requirements of an NVQ programme, and do not receive a copy of the schedule for off-the-job training sessions. They are dependent upon the trainee to provide this information.

51. Early years care and education trainees have no assessment at all during their first year of training. Assessment for level 2 begins in the second year when trainees begin to gather evidence in the workplace. There are good opportunities to assess trainees in the workplace in the first year. There are plans to change the way in which the training programme is organised and to ensure that assessment begins in the first year. Some trainees have poor understanding of the assessment process. They are unclear about certain aspects, particularly the importance of

assessment by observation in the workplace. When an observation has taken place, a copy of the observation record is placed in the trainees' portfolios but is not seen by the trainees. Trainees are not always aware that they have been observed in the workplace and confuse witness testimonies with records of direct observation of their performance. Trainees who have work-based assessors show a clearer understanding of the process and receive better, more detailed feedback following assessment. Some of the assessors employed by the assessment centre visit trainees infrequently and at inappropriate times because of their other work commitments.

52. The early years care and education programme is insufficiently resourced. The second-year trainees have not been allocated a permanent room for their off-the-job training. Their classes are held in the student services area of the college and are subject to frequent interruptions. This situation has existed for last two academic years. Replacement tutors have not been found to cover absent colleagues teaching on the year one of the programme and, on a number of occasions, trainees have had to go home without being taught. There have been similar problems with information technology key skills classes, where there have been several changes of staff and in many instances no member of staff has been available to take the lesson.

53. Key skills training is not a full and integral part of the occupational training programme. Materials and tasks used for information technology and application of number are not occupationally relevant. Trainees complete their work for NVQ level 3 before they being to gather evidence of key skills. They do not receive regular assessment of their key skills. Opportunities for evidence gathering are missed, and trainees' understanding of key skills is poor.

54. Trainees' individual training plans are not individually negotiated with trainees. They contain a photocopy of the NVQ unit specifications, taken from the occupational standards. The plans do not specify targets for individual trainees' completion of occupational or key skills units and plans are not updated to reflect trainees' progress.

Media & design

Grade 2

55. Those following media programmes are all New Deal clients. They take one of two routes. Thirteen are on the full-time education and training option, six of them are training in art and design, one in media access, and six in photography. Art and design clients take either the mature access to higher education qualification, or the 18+ foundation diploma in art and design. Media access and photography clients work towards appropriate vocational qualifications or access to higher education awards, or qualifications offered by the Open College Network. A further 55 clients are following the New Deal option for musicians, working towards the practical music qualification awarded by the Open College Network. This provision is subcontracted to a local company, which provides a music industry expert who offers advice and guidance for clients on the option. Clients

are referred to media programmes by their New Deal personal advisers. They attend taster days held by the subcontractor to help them decide whether the option is right for them. Clients on the full-time education and training option start their training in September, at the beginning of the academic year, or, at the latest, in October. Those on programmes offered by the subcontractor can start at any time of the year. Tutors at the college and the subcontractor all have assessor awards. The self-assessment report does not refer to media as an occupational area in its own right, but covers it in a separate section describing New Deal provision in general within the college. This lacks critical analysis, and the strengths stated represent no more than contractual compliance. No grade was given for the media provision. The grade given by the provider for New Deal provision as a whole was lower than the grade the inspectors awarded for training in media and design.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ highly motivated clients
- ◆ well-resourced facilities
- ◆ flexible use of facilities to meet clients' personal needs

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of relevant work placements
- ◆ some college tutors' poor understanding of New Deal programmes

56. Clients receive good training opportunities on all options. They develop their capabilities and practical skills quickly. They gain confidence, and self-esteem. Clients are enthusiastic about their programmes, and are very keen to succeed. Those based in the college are integrated into groups of full-time, mature students on FEFC-funded courses and enjoy a secure and supportive learning environment in which they feel well supported. They benefit from access to a wide range of college facilities, and are able to approach a range of staff for practical advice and valuable help. Tutors know their clients well and are fully aware of their needs. They help clients to plan their work carefully when they meet with them each week to review their progress. College tutors and the subcontractor's staff attend evening and weekend events in support of clients. They accompany clients to interviews, and help them with transport.

57. The college has a good range of media studios, practical equipment, and information technology equipment. Art and design studios are clean, light and airy, with good storage, exhibition and display areas, ample lecture space and well-resourced practical workrooms. Photographic and media work areas are well laid out. The subcontractor has good-quality music facilities and information technology rooms. Clients can book these, using a rota system, to work on compositions and practical assessment pieces. The studios are open for long periods during the week, enabling clients to use them at times that fit in with their personal and domestic commitments. Clients derive full benefit from the facilities

and use them well. They are highly motivated and produce work of a high standard in which they take pride.

58. The college is constantly seeking appropriate work placements for clients, and has been successful in obtaining a few. However, most of these do not enable the client to carry out demanding work. College media tutors do not liaise with the placement team in the business development unit, or use their expertise to find clients suitable placements. They themselves have few useful industry links, and no experience in securing work placements. The lack of work placements frustrates the clients. Without appropriate work placements, they feel they are not making progress and increasing their employability, a primary goal of New Deal.

59. Although college tutors develop effective pastoral relationships with clients, their knowledge of New Deal is very limited. They do not understand how the programme works, and receive little information from the Employment Service about the operation of New Deal, and about the clients who are referred. Some are not able to offer clients informal advice and general guidance to clients on progression. Some tutors expressed doubt about the worth of New Deal and questioned whether the media department should be involved in the programme. Tutors have few links with the business development unit, and are unclear about the identity and role of training co-ordinators, who visit New Deal clients in the workplace. They do not seek advice from college colleagues, who are familiar with New Deal and able to provide them with valuable, up-to-date information on how the programme works.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

60. The college has an equal opportunities policy and code of practice which meets the requirements of its TEC and New Deal contract. The policy is reproduced in the staff handbook and is brought to the attention of trainees during their induction process. It is included in the student handbook given to all trainees, and is displayed in key positions on all college sites. The policy was last updated in December 1999. Additional procedures also cover harassment, disciplinary and grievance issues. The college has an equal opportunities manager whose role is to advise and support college staff and students in the upholding of equality of opportunity. An equal opportunities forum has been established to monitor the promotion of equal opportunities. An annual action plan is produced and progress in implementing it is monitored. Four per cent of all trainees and clients are from minority ethnic groups. Seven per cent of the local population are from minority ethnic groups. The self-assessment report identified four strengths and one weakness for this area. Inspectors considered three of the strengths to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors agreed with one of the strengths and agreed with the finding that some action had been taken to address the weakness. The

inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses. They agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ wide range of effective initiatives to promote equal opportunities
- ◆ successful action to attract trainees and clients from under-represented groups

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ trainees' low awareness of equal opportunities issues
- ◆ no continuous monitoring of the promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace

61. The college has devised a wide range of initiatives to promote equal opportunities. Equality of opportunity is a standing agenda item at meetings of senior managers in the college and at meetings of the business development unit. The equal opportunities forum has representatives from staff and students. The director of curriculum and operations attends this forum, and reports back to the manager of the business development unit. The college shows a commitment to equal opportunities training, for which there is a specific budget. A number of in-house training sessions and workshops have been offered to staff. An equal opportunities training day is planned for staff involved with New Deal clients.

62. The college's equal opportunities initiatives, although wide-ranging, are not always effectively managed to ensure that senior managerial decisions become fully operational, especially those affecting work-based training provision. A checklist has been written to help staff ensure that teaching methods and materials, and assessment methods, comply with equal opportunities legislation. However, there is no process for ensuring the checklist is used, or that it is effective. An equal opportunities newsletter is produced twice yearly. This gives essential information on relevant legislation and its application and serves a useful purpose in updating staff. It is not, however, circulated to the employers who are contracted to provide workplace training for NVQ trainees and New Deal clients. Publicity materials promote equality of opportunity through appropriate pictures and images. The materials do not, however, state that the college is committed to upholding equality of opportunity.

63. The college takes specific action to attract trainees and clients from under-represented groups. Managers are members of committees and groups within the local area which have a specific remit to address inequality and widen participation, and these include the Commission for Racial Equality. Training coordinators have had involvement with a mentoring initiative, which uses staff from minority ethnic backgrounds as role models for minority ethnic trainees and clients. The business development unit has established a marketing group and part of its brief is to look at ways of recruiting from under-represented groups. Some promotional and information leaflets are available in formats which meet the

specific needs of trainees from different minority ethnic groups and with specific learning needs. The leaflets have been translated into five different languages and are available in Braille and on tape for listening cassettes.

64. Some college sites are more accessible to disabled staff, students and trainees than others. The student/trainee handbook clearly identifies the parts of each site readily accessible to wheelchair users and people with mobility difficulties. On two sites, learning centres are not easily accessible to wheelchair users. The college has facilities for helping people with impaired vision who have guide dogs.

65. Trainees are given a copy of the students' charter and handbook during their induction. The handbook states very clearly what is meant by unacceptable behaviour in relation to racism, sexism, harassment and other forms of discriminatory acts. The handbook is complemented by a code of behaviour. There is also statement of policy regarding substance use and misuse. The handbook outlines the complaints procedure. A leaflet explains the procedure in more detail. However, many trainees have little awareness and poor understanding of equal opportunities issues. There is no attempt to strengthen trainees' understanding of equal opportunities during off-the-job training. Some trainees are unclear about what they should do if they have a complaint about their training, or about a member of staff.

66. All employers are required to sign a subcontractor's agreement when a work placement is established. An employer without an equal opportunities policy is required to sign an undertaking to implement the college's policy. There is, however, no formal system for monitoring the implementation of equal opportunities in the workplace. The promotion of equal opportunities is not discussed on a regular basis with employers. The agenda to be covered during trainees' progress reviews contains an item on equal opportunities. During the reviews, however, equality of opportunity is only mentioned in the vaguest of terms and in a way that neither strengthens trainees' understanding of equal opportunities nor encourages them to discuss any discrimination or unfair treatment they might have experienced.

Trainee support

Grade 2

67. All training co-ordinators at the college are required to liaise with particular schools in the local community. They visit the schools to give talks on careers, attend career exhibitions and give advice to potential trainees. Trainees who are interested in a career in a particular vocational area are invited to information sessions at the college, which are held monthly between March and July. Parents and employers are also encouraged to attend these sessions. Trainees who apply for a place at the college have individual interviews and may undertake numeracy and literacy tests. They then attend interviews with prospective employers. If they are successful in obtaining a work placement, they are offered a place at the college. Unsuccessful trainees are given guidance on interview techniques. New Deal clients undergo aptitude tests and are interviewed at the Gateway stage by

New Deal advisory staff. During their first week, trainees receive an induction to the college. The induction is carried out over a four-day or two-day period, depending on the vocational area involved. Trainees also receive an induction into their workplace. During their training period, trainees are visited regularly at the workplace by college staff who formally review their progress. When trainees are nearing the completion of their training programme, they respond to a leaver's questionnaire and undergo checks to ensure that they have received all relevant certificates. Trainees' future plans are discussed at this stage and trainees receive advice on progression. The self-assessment report is not particularly self-critical. Of the three strengths identified in the self-assessment report, inspectors agreed with one, considered another to be no more than normal practice, and another more relevant to a generic area. They awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ wide range of college facilities
- ◆ well-resourced job-search room for New Deal clients
- ◆ widely publicised celebration of trainees' achievements
- ◆ effective arrangements for providing additional learning support

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate initial assessment process
- ◆ ineffective progress reviews for most trainees and clients
- ◆ poor recreational facilities at Olive Grove site

68. The college has well-resourced learning centres on all its main sites, to which NVQ trainees have access. The one on the Castle site is arranged over two floors and brings together the learning resources of the library, space for private study, and computing facilities. The library has an extensive stock of vocationally relevant textbooks, a wide range of technical journals, and a collection of compact disks. There are 52 general computers which are networked and 12 give access to the Internet. Other equipment includes a digital camera, scanners and colour printers. Similar facilities exist in the learning centres on the other sites.

69. All trainees are automatically enrolled as members of the Students' Union and can use the union's leisure and recreational facilities. Trained and qualified counsellors are attached to each main centre within the college campus. Other support services offered include support for trainees who are dyslexic, mental health link workers and a careers guidance and advice service. College support staff also have links to outside agencies to which they can refer trainees.

70. New Deal clients have access to a job-search room, which they are timetabled to attend for at least one hour per week. The facility incorporates a training access point and information on jobs currently available. Two computerised guidance

programme systems have been installed. One identifies clients' likes and dislikes and suggests possible careers for clients to match their aspirations. The other programme is similar but is aimed at 18 to 24 year old clients in particular. One of the staff in attendance at the job-search room is on secondment from the Employment Service and advises clients on benefits and allowances, in addition to employment techniques and job opportunities. Staff give clients assistance in writing a curriculum vitae and copious records are kept of clients' efforts to secure work. Staff give clients encouraging and constructive advice. At one end of the room, details of clients' success in finding employment recently are displayed.

71. Trainees who have achieved success in the workplace, or in relation to their NVQ, have their achievements celebrated. Extensive coverage is given to trainees' success in TEC and the college's promotional material. Local newspapers recently reported the success of a woman engineer's achievement of an NVQ. The college recently provided training for the first silversmith trainees in the country to gain an NVQ at level 2. The Master Cutler formally presented the certificates to the trainees in Cutlers Hall. Also in attendance at the ceremony were local press, college representatives, civic dignitaries and employers. Other achievements of trainees are regularly recorded in the college's internal news sheet.

72. In some areas, trainees are allocated specialist one-to-one support. When college staff identify a potential problem regarding a trainee they complete a "cause for concern form". This is sent to a senior training co-ordinator who then directs it to the appropriate support section. This form and procedure are also used to monitor and record students' attendance and any discipline problems. There is a college service which provides signing for trainees with hearing impairments and another that provides support for dyslexic trainees. The service, however, is not always used promptly. For example, a trainee with previously identified problems associated with dyslexia who started an early years care programme in August 1999, had to wait until April 2000 before a specialist worker was provided to sit alongside the trainee.

73. Trainees take an initial assessment test in numeracy and communications. Part of the communications section, tests the trainee's ability to write a short essay. The test is used to determine whether trainees need additional support. One-to-one support is then provided for the trainee, and a record of this is entered on the trainee's individual training plan. There is no initial assessment of trainees' key skills or of occupational aptitude. Information on New Deal clients gathered during the Gateway is not always systematically passed on to college staff.

74. Trainees' progress reviews are carried out by training co-ordinators at the workplace every eight to 10 weeks. The reviews focus on pastoral care for the trainees rather than the extent of their progress towards achieving their NVQ. Trainees are not set clear, short-term targets during the reviews. In most cases, the employer representative is not present at the review but reads and signs the record of the review afterwards. There is space on the review form for a comment by the trainee, but this is usually filled in on their behalf by the training co-ordinator. There is no set procedure whereby trainees or employers automatically receive a

copy of the progress review form.

75. There are no refectory facilities and no trainees' car parking facilities at one of the college's five sites, Olive Grove, where engineering, and plumbing and gas training occurs. Trainees are concerned at what they consider to be the high level of risk of having their cars damaged or stolen. They do not have enough time to use the main site refectory facilities and at breaktimes.

Management of training

Grade 3

76. Work-based training at the college is managed through the business development unit. A senior manager, who reports to one of the college's directors, has oversight of all the unit's business activities. She is assisted by one principal training co-ordinator and three senior training co-ordinators, who focus on the management of TEC and New Deal contracts, and the co-ordination of training provided by the employers and the college schools, respectively. Training co-ordinators are responsible for a defined group of trainees and clients, and for liaison with college, schools and employers. Staff activities follow working instructions which have been devised by the business development unit's staff, and these are continually revised and updated. There are regular meetings at various levels within the business development unit. The unit maintains links with external organisations through membership of the local TEC training providers' network, and the New Deal joint venture partnership. The business development manager has regular meetings with the Employment Service district manager to discuss progress in implementing New Deal. Staff represent the college at marketing events. Procedures for staff recruitment are detailed and aim to ensure that equality of opportunity is upheld. Staff receive induction to the college. Staff understand their responsibilities, and their lines of accountability. Teaching staff at the college and managers participate in a staff appraisal programme. There is no formal appraisal system for administrative staff, although one is being developed. In the meantime, all staff of the business development unit have regular one-to-one meetings with their line manager, during which they discuss progress towards reaching targets, as well as personal and professional aspirations and problems. Staff development needs are dictated by the priorities of the business development unit, and the objectives outlined on the business plan. Inspectors agreed with the strengths stated in the self-assessment report but found additional strengths and weaknesses. They awarded a grade higher than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive structures for meetings and communications
- ◆ thorough process for selection and management of subcontractors
- ◆ effective action of managers to ensure improvement of training
- ◆ careful selection of appropriate work placements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little sharing of good practice
- ◆ inadequate management information systems
- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

77. Staff meetings are held at regular intervals at all levels throughout the organisation. The meetings aim to keep staff well informed about college-wide and local factors requiring decision and action. There are good lines of communication between the college and external organisations. Staff report to colleagues on the outcome of external meetings and events. There are effective working relationships with such outside agencies as the local TEC, Employment Service, careers service, local authority and development agencies. The business development unit adopts innovative approaches to engage employers in the planning and development of work-based training. Engineering employers are invited to breakfast meetings and hairdressing salon owners are invited to demonstrations and events by professional hairdressing product manufacturers. Free training is offered to help workplace supervisors become qualified assessors and certificates are awarded to the employers and work-placement organisations most supportive of trainees. The college publishes and circulates throughout its catchment area an informative journal and other publications, which promote the benefits to be gained from education and training.

78. The arrangements for selection and management of subcontractors are particularly thorough. The college requires potential subcontractors to make a submission showing how their proposed programmes of work-based training meet clear college criteria. There are thorough initial checks on subcontractors' premises and resources, health and safety arrangements, policies and procedures, qualifications of staff, performance results, awarding body, TEC and financial reports. Prior to being subcontracted, selected subcontractors are risk-banded in respect of the training activity taking place and the viability of the organisation. The business development unit's quality assurance co-ordinator visits subcontractors considered a high risk, typically every two months. The quality assurance co-ordinator makes visits to subcontractors to audit the quality of their training and ensure it is in accordance with the contract and initial proposal specifications. Subcontractors are then required to draw up an action plan to rectify weaknesses. The college monitors subcontractors' progress in implementing the required action. The college's quality assurance co-ordinator makes monthly reports to the college business development unit. Decisions on

whether to enter into further contracts with a subcontractor are made on the basis of the subcontractor's success in meeting the terms of previous contracts from year to year. The subcontracting arrangements are managed well. Some subcontractors had had their contracts withdrawn or were not used again, on the grounds of poor performance and their failure to comply with the contract fully.

79. Arrangements to find safe and appropriate work placements for trainees and clients work well. The college business development unit holds a data base of over 1000 employers with whom it negotiates for placements for trainees, New Deal clients and full-time students of the college. The work experience co-ordinators are provided with information about trainees and clients gathered at their interviews. They then try to find work placements that suit the trainees and clients' particular need and provide them with the training they require. If they cannot find an employer on the database that meets the needs of a particular client or trainee, they open new lines of enquiry. When necessary, placements of a specialist nature are found such as those related to animal grooming or photography. Before trainees and clients take up a placement, work experience co-ordinators and a college health and safety officer visit the placement premises. Employers are advised of the on-the-job training requirements, contractual obligations and, of the necessity to have employer liability insurance, health and safety certification, and requisite policies such as those on wage structure, working hours, and equality of opportunity. The college will not use employers, unless these criteria are met in full. All employers receive a report from the college following the initial visit. Those who do not come up to the required standard can ask to be re-assessed. Once trainees and clients take up a placement, college work-experience officers monitor its quality when they visit trainees and clients to carry out their progress reviews. Issues of concern are immediately brought to the attention of the work-placement co-ordinators and health and safety officer through written reports.

80. Some good work-based training practices are shared in an informal way by staff from various sections in the college. However, there is no systematic process for identifying best practice. Opportunities are missed to disseminate details of training practices that are particularly successful.

81. In some occupational areas, staff have made a real effort to maintain links with all involved in training. They have tried to ensure that on- and off-the-job training is co-ordinated, assessment is carefully planned, and progress reviews are properly structured. In the main, however, on- and off-the-job training is not co-ordinated systematically. A significant proportion of employers are unaware of training frameworks and the content of the training programme followed by the trainee in placement. Not all employers are left a record of visits by work-placement co-ordinators or tutor/assessors. Records of visits that are left with the employer seldom give clear indications of how the employer can plan trainees' work schedules and skills development in preparation for assessment or learning that takes place at college. Sometimes, trainees are required to demonstrate skills they use in their daily work activities on off-the-job college training days, for the purpose of assessment.

82. Current management information systems in the college are inadequate. Data

is not easily accessible to managers, teaching and support staff to enable them to produce accurate trend analysis or reports to assist decision-making. The business development unit found it particularly difficult to prepare reliable data for inspectors on trainees and clients' retention and achievement rates. A great deal of time is spent converting data into statistics manually. The college has recently introduced management information systems. It is too soon to know whether these are proving effective.

Quality assurance

Grade 4

83. The college's quality assurance systems manager is responsible for quality assurance across the whole college. There are written quality procedures for all the schools in the college. The business development unit has developed its own quality assurance system, which is similar to other systems used in the college. There is a quality assurance co-ordinator in the business development unit whose prime responsibility is to monitor the performance of subcontractors. Until recently, feedback was formally collected from trainees after induction, during the programme, and after they had left. Now, trainees are asked to respond to a questionnaire provided by the local TEC, which is distributed to trainees after induction, at six-monthly intervals, and at the end of the programme. This questionnaire is used with all trainees within the Sheffield TEC region. Staff in the business development unit had no experience of formal self-assessment prior to the writing of the self-assessment report required by the TSC. A senior training co-ordinator was provided with training in self-assessment, and given responsibility for drafting the self-assessment report in consultation with other business development unit staff, and with staff from the college schools which provide work-based training. The self-assessment report for the aspect of quality assurance does not give a comprehensive analysis of quality assurance procedures. Inspectors found weaknesses the college had not identified and they awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective and comprehensive quality assurance of subcontractors' training
- ◆ good use of feedback from trainees in managers' decision-making
- ◆ systematic observation and evaluation of teaching within the college

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no specific quality assurance process for training and assessment in the college
- ◆ no systematic collection of feedback from employers
- ◆ failure to apply quality assurance systems to the workplace
- ◆ weak self-assessment process

84. The feedback from trainees is analysed and taken into account in decision-making by management. The college governors have recently started to use this feedback when monitoring the quality of the college's provision. The business development unit manually collates feedback from trainees, and takes this into account in its management and evaluation processes. The college does not, however, systematically collect feedback from employers involved in work-based training. Employers' views are sought informally by training co-ordinators during regular reviews of trainees' progress, but these usually focus on individual trainees rather than the quality of training. Individual schools within the college hold regular programme review meetings to which employers are invited. Employers' attendance at these, however, is very poor. Some schools have done their best to increase participation in these meetings, altering the timing to early mornings, and coupling meetings with other activities, but such action has had little success.

85. The college has a programme for observation of teaching, which has recently been reviewed and amended. Fifty per cent of the teaching staff are observed each year. Observation is carried out by a team drawn from the teaching staff across the college who have received training for this role. Following the observation, staff receive written feedback on their teaching. If problems are identified, the observer recommends that the member of staff concerned discusses these points with their line manager, or, if appropriate, with another specialist who will be able to provide support and guidance, or advice on good practice. The observations may, with the agreement of the teacher concerned, form part of the staff appraisal process. Observation of teaching will become a mandatory part of the appraisal process from September 2000.

86. The quality assurance co-ordinator in the business development unit has developed procedures for monitoring the quality of subcontracted provision. She visits subcontractors regularly to carry audits. The audits take place at intervals from two to six months and their frequency is determined by the type and size of the contract, and the subcontractor's performance at previous audits. The audit process covers both contract compliance and the quality of trainees' experience, and includes a check of the subcontractor's records, the monitoring of trainees' progress, interviews with at least 10 per cent of trainees and employers in the workplace, and observations of trainees at work. The results of the audit are recorded on standard documents. Action points are agreed with the subcontractor, recorded, and followed up. Subcontractors value the rigour of the audits, and the responsiveness of *the* Sheffield college to their own requests.

87. Prior to the TSC inspection, business development unit staff had had no experience of self-assessment, although this had been a regular process within the rest of the college. The business development unit aims to achieve the continuous improvement of training, but hitherto, it has not carried out systematic self-evaluation. The college's senior manager delegated responsibility for self-assessment of training to the managers of the business development unit, in order that its staff might be fully involved in the production of the self-assessment report. In practice, however, some staff did not play a full part in the evaluation of

the unit's activities though all had a chance to comment on the report. Senior managers moderated one of the proposed grades and asked the unit to reconsider other grades. The report lacks clarity and critical analysis in most areas. Some of the strengths and weaknesses are not clearly stated, and some are not justified in the explanatory text. Inspectors did not agree with many of the strengths and weaknesses. They found many significant weaknesses and strengths which had not been identified through self-assessment. The action plans did not address all the issues identified in the self-assessment report, and contained few specific, measurable objectives or precise target dates by which these must be achieved.

88. The college has a range of quality assurance processes which are applied throughout all curriculum areas. The college, and the business development unit, had assumed that these processes would adequately cover provision for TEC-funded trainees and New Deal clients. The business development unit does not apply the audit procedures it has developed for the monitoring of subcontractors, to the college schools with which it contracts internally to provide off-the-job training. The unit has no specific or specially designed quality assurance procedures to ascertain the appropriateness and effectiveness of training for trainees, many of whom are taught in classes mainly made up of student on FEFC-funded courses. In monitoring the quality of its provision, the college assesses quality according to criteria published by the FEFC and some of these are not adequate for the evaluation of work-based training.

89. Key aspects such as the planning of training to related to that offered in the workplace, trainees' collection of work-based evidence for NVQ portfolios, and the accessibility of college facilities for work-based trainees are rarely monitored through the college's quality assurance procedures. Some weaknesses have been identified, and managers and teams have addressed these. However, emerging problems in trainees' programmes are not addressed promptly enough. The college's internal verification procedures meet the requirements of awarding bodies. In some occupational areas, trainees' portfolios are of poor quality. The range of evidence is narrow and there is lack of imagination in the way the evidence is presented.

90. Except where training is subcontracted, there is no quality assurance of the training carried out in the workplace. Most TEC-funded trainees receive 80 per cent of their training at work, but the college does not systematically evaluate this training. There are no procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of trainees' progress reviews, or, in most cases, of work-based assessment. The only contact maintained with many work-based trainers is through training co-ordinators. Some lack the specific occupational expertise to evaluate the quality of the training on offer effectively.