



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT FEBRUARY 1999

REINSPECTION APRIL 2000

Farnborough College of Technology

SUMMARY

Farnborough College of Technology provides good work-based training in administration, hairdressing, and motor-vehicle engineering, and a good foundation for work programme. Training in catering and accounting is satisfactory, but at the time of the original inspection, training in electrical installation at national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 3 was unsatisfactory. Achievement rates for NVQs in electrical installation remain low, but there is well-structured off-the-job training and a new and well-equipped training centre and, overall, the programme is now satisfactory. Employers provide good working environments in all occupational areas, but there is very little assessment of trainees' skills in the workplace. Management and staff are committed to improving the quality of training but there is insufficient quality assurance of work-based training. The college has a strong commitment to equality of opportunity, and is taking steps to promote it more among employers. Trainee support is good. Resources for people with special needs are outstanding. Trainees' achievements and retention rates in most areas are improving. At the time of the original inspection, on- and off-the-job training was not being co-ordinated effectively. Since then, the college has overhauled its arrangements for the provision of work-based training, and has involved a wide range of staff at all levels in planning and implementing improvements. In most occupational areas, there are now stronger links between the training provided in the workplace and that provided at college.

As a result of the reinspection, the original published report text for construction and management of training has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings. This summary page, the overall report introduction and the inspection findings introduction have also been amended to reflect the findings of the reinspection. All other sections of the original published report, which have not been subject to full reinspection, have been left in their original form.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	4
Engineering	2
Business administration	3
Hospitality	3
Hair & beauty	2
Foundation for work	2

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Construction	3

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Management of training	3



KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good pastoral support for trainees
- ◆ extensive off-the-job facilities in catering and hairdressing
- ◆ high standard of workplaces, and firm commitment of employers to training
- ◆ good links between motor-vehicle trainers and employers
- ◆ good links between administration trainers and employers
- ◆ excellent staff and physical resources for people with special needs
- ◆ accounting trainees' high achievement of NVQs
- ◆ well-managed communication between Training Enterprise staff and academic schools
- ◆ good implementation of operational improvements

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficiently demanding target-dates for achievement of some NVQs
- ◆ insufficient work-based assessment in catering, hairdressing and accounts programmes
- ◆ failure to adapt most training programmes to suit trainees' individual needs
- ◆ insufficient analysis of trainees' achievement and retention data

INTRODUCTION

1. In April 1996, Farnborough College of Technology (Farnborough College) started providing work-based training under contract to two training and enterprise councils (TECs), Hampshire and Surrey. After one year it stopped contracting with Surrey TEC. It continued to provide training for Hampshire TEC and this work now accounts for some 3 per cent of the college's activity. The college also provides courses for 15,000 students, mainly part-time, and mostly in further education. This report is only concerned with the TEC-funded training programmes. These are offered in construction (electrical installation), engineering (motor vehicle, fabrication and welding, and electronic), business administration (administration and accounts), care, childcare, leisure and sport, hospitality and catering, hairdressing, and foundation for work. At the first inspection in February 1999, inspectors did not inspect the care or childcare programmes, but contributed to the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) inspection of those areas. At the time of the original inspection, there were 192 trainees, of whom 96 were modern apprentices, 21 were national trainees, and 75 were on other work-based training programmes for young people. At the time of reinspection, there were 156 trainees, including 62 modern apprentices, 45 national trainees, and 49 who were on other work-based training programmes for young people. All trainees are employed and pursuing national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 to 4, with the exception of the two young people currently on the foundation for work programme, who are pursuing foundation-level qualifications in basic skills.

2. The section of the college responsible for work-based training is known as Training Enterprise. Training Enterprise is led by the head of community education and training, who is also responsible for the training provided by the college under the New Deal, and all basic skills and other prevocational training. He reports to the deputy principal, who reports to the college principal. The college has contracts with the Employment Service for providing training for two of the New Deal options for young people aged 18 to 24: the voluntary-sector option and the full-time education and training option. It also has contracts to provide particular support services within the Gateway stage of New Deal. These services mainly comprise assessment of clients' literacy and numeracy abilities and needs. These contracts are managed by the Guildford district of the Employment Service. In February 1999, there were 50 New Deal clients, but at the time of reinspection, there were 23 clients on the full-time education and training option, of whom 10 were in training at another college, subcontracted to Farnborough College. There was also one client on the voluntary-sector option, who was training at another subcontractor. There were also two clients on New Deal for people aged over 25.

3. Farnborough College is situated in northeast Hampshire, close to the Surrey and Berkshire borders. Nearly all trainees are local residents. The local economy is very strong, particularly in information technology services, the defence industry and financial services. There is nearly full employment, with an unemployment rate



in January 2000 of only 1.5 percent in the local Rushmoor area, considerably lower than the average Hampshire rate of 1.9 per cent, and the average rate in the Southeast of 2.4 per cent. The unemployment level in the neighbouring districts of Bracknell in Berkshire and Surrey Heath in Surrey are even lower at 1.2 and 0.7 per cent respectively. Although the local workforce is highly qualified, employers report skills shortages in a range of industries. Over 50 per cent of the workforce is qualified to at least NVQ level 3 or equivalent. In 1998, the percentage of school leavers in Hampshire achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 51.3 per cent, somewhat above the nation average of 46.3 per cent. A year later, the corresponding percentage for Hampshire was 53 per cent, still above the national average, which had risen to 47.9 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. Farnborough College produced a self-assessment report for its work-based training in December 1998. The college originally planned this to be an appendix to the full self-assessment report which was produced for the FEFC, the college's principle source of income, but decided that a separate report was more appropriate. The director of corporate services and Training Enterprise's financial and administrative team leader were the chief architects of this report, and supplied extensive documentation to support it. Following the first inspection in February 1999, and the publication of the inspection report in June, the college produced an action plan detailing how it intended to maintain its strengths, and tackle its weaknesses. Over the subsequent months, it tracked its progress towards the achievement of those targets and produced a series of updated action plans. Shortly before the reinspection, staff drafted a full self-assessment report and graded each of their occupational areas and the generic aspects of training.

5. The original inspection was carried out by a team of six inspectors, who spent a total of 24 days at the college during February 1999. Inspectors interviewed 36 staff and met 43 workplace supervisors in 39 companies. They also interviewed 85 trainees, mainly singly, and observed 13 instruction sessions, including two in the college's realistic working environments. Inspectors also observed one assessment and three reviews of trainees, and examined an extensive range of documents, including trainees' portfolios, reports by internal and external verifiers, trainees' individual training plans and progress reviews, management information and documents produced for the TEC, and all the documentary evidence supplied to support the original self-assessment report.

6. Reinspection was carried out by a team of two inspectors, who spent a total of six days at the college during April 2000. They interviewed 16 staff and met eight workplace supervisors in five companies. They also spoke to two other employers by telephone. They spoke to nine trainees, mainly singly, and observed one training session and one progress review. Inspectors also examined an extensive range of records, including trainees' portfolios, reports by internal and external verifiers, trainees' individual training plans and progress reviews, management information and paperwork produced for the TEC, and all the documentary evidence supplied to support the new self-assessment report.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at original inspection in February 1999

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction			1			1
Engineering			1			1
Business administration		1	3			4
Hospitality	1	3				4
Hair & beauty		1				1
Foundation for work		2				2
Total	1	7	5	0	0	13

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 3

7. There are currently 15 trainees in construction, all employed and training in electrical installation. Trainees work for a range of electrical contractors, including many small local firms. One trainee is working towards an NVQ at level 2 and the other 14 are modern apprentices working towards NVQs at level 3 and key skills qualifications, as well as craft certificates in a recognised qualification which tests the theoretical knowledge required by those working in electrical installation. Trainees work towards the level 2 NVQ by undertaking practical activities and written assignments in the college's new electrical installation workshop. Full-time lecturers, who possess both the requisite technical competence and assessor awards, assess the portfolio evidence for NVQs at level 2. At level 3, trainees complete three assignments in the workplace, supported by work-based assessment and monthly portfolio-building workshops in the college. An assessor has recently been appointed to visit and assess trainees in the workplace. Since the original inspection, five trainees have gained an NVQ at level 2 and are progressing to level 3, two are awaiting verification of their level 2 NVQs and have progressed to level 3 and the remainder are still working towards level 2 NVQs and craft certificates. At the time of the first inspection, there were 26 trainees on the programme. Of the 11 leavers, two gained an NVQ at level 2, five gained craft certificates and four left with no qualifications.

The main weaknesses identified at the first inspection were:

- ◆ trainees' poor achievement rates for NVQ level 2
- ◆ underdeveloped management planning for NVQ level 3
- ◆ delayed progression from NVQ level 2 to level 3
- ◆ apprentices' and employers' lack of awareness of key skills

8. The action plan and report drawn up after the inspection detail the measures Farnborough College is taking to address these weaknesses. Some of the weaknesses, such as trainees' delayed progress from level 2 to level 3 NVQs, have already been eliminated. Some other significant measures, however, such as the improvements in key skills training and assessment, have only recently been implemented and have not yet had time to make a difference to the quality of training. Two of the strengths identified at the original inspection, those relating to a wide range of learning opportunities available in most workplaces and the well-structured off-the-job training for level 2 NVQs, have been maintained, and a further strength has been added. Inspectors considered some of the strengths identified in the latest self-assessment report to be no more than normal practice, although they agreed with the weaknesses identified. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report prepared prior to reinspection.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ wide range of learning opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ well-structured off-the-job training at NVQ level 2
- ◆ new, spacious and fully resourced training centre

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ low achievement rates of NVQs
- ◆ insufficient co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training and assessment

9. Since the original inspection, arrangements have been put in place to offer an accredited level 3 NVQ through the electrical contracting industry's national training body. As soon as they have finished the work for their level 2 NVQs, and while they await their NVQ certificates, all apprentices are given their level 3 assignments and the information they need to start collecting evidence of their competence at level 3. There are no longer delays for trainees progressing from level 2 to level 3. Since the last inspection, nine of the current 15 trainees have begun work on level 3 assignments.

10. Employers now have a greater general awareness of NVQ requirements but are not yet fully aware of the details of the work which their trainees need to undertake. Both employers and trainees understand that key skills form part of the modern apprenticeship framework, and most trainees have started to cross-reference their vocational evidence to the requirements of the key skills units. A newly devised monitoring system ensures that trainees can easily identify their rate of progress. This is being further developed to relate the requirements of the NVQ to the evidence produced by trainees in the course of working for their craft certificates.

11. Most trainees benefit from the wide range of learning opportunities available during on-site contractual work. Registered electricians acting in a supervisory capacity to the trainees provide training on the job. Employers are highly motivated to train their developing workforce.

12. During workshop sessions in the college, trainees are given a set of well-planned exercises to develop their skills in preparation for the level 2 NVQ assessment tasks. The tuition and physical resources available to trainees during these workshop sessions are good. A new construction training centre has been completed since the original inspection and this has substantially improved the facilities available. The internal layout of this building has been specifically designed to meet the NVQ requirements. Sufficient space, tools, materials and technical support are available to meet trainees' needs. There is a comprehensive system to help trainees check that the evidence in their portfolios covers all the necessary performance criteria. This system includes the use of a 'field evidence record' and portfolios also include particularly good examples of trainees' performance in the workplace. Workplace supervisors provide written testimonies as to the authenticity of this evidence. There are no qualified assessors in the workplaces. The college's newly appointed assessor is initially concentrating on assessing level 3 trainees on site, but intends to widen his remit to include level 2 assessments once fully established in post.

13. Achievement rates are low, especially at NVQ level 3. Since 1996, 11 of the 45 who have started training have achieved an NVQ at level 2. Seven of these trainees have started the level 3 NVQ, but none has yet achieved this award. Trainees have made slow progress in completing their level 2 portfolios. The off-the-job training is well structured and has a strong emphasis on the achievement of the craft certificates, which are highly regarded by most employers. Most trainees take over two years to record their evidence fully and complete the required indexing. A more detailed progress-review form has been introduced to help address the problem of trainees' slow progress. The form produces carbon copies, one for the trainee, one for the employer, and one for the trainee's file. No trainees have yet completed a modern apprenticeship as the key skills requirements have only very recently been addressed. Key skills support workshops are now under way.

14. Most employers are aware of their responsibilities for training their trainees and understand the implications of trainees' need to generate work-based evidence for their portfolios. There is movement towards co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training and assessment but this is still developing. Employers are involved in the review process, which highlights progress at work and college. College tutors have begun to visit trainees in their workplaces, but employers do not yet have an understanding of the NVQ unit criteria, nor do they have copies of the college's schemes of work so that they can most effectively plan their trainees' work. Electrical installation tutors do not routinely use information about trainees' places of work in their assignment planning.

Engineering

Grade 2

15. Farnborough College holds a TEC contract for work-based engineering programmes through Training Enterprise, and currently has 35 trainees pursuing NVQs at levels 2 and 3. There are 25 trainees on motor vehicle courses, of whom 13 are modern apprentices, two trainees on electronics courses, and eight trainees on mechanical engineering and fabrication and welding courses, of whom six are modern apprentices. Formal training, and most assessment, takes place at the college, which trainees attend on a day-release basis. Trainees are recruited through a number of routes, including the careers service, directly by Training Enterprise, through employers and by referral from other college provision.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ motor vehicle tutors' assessment of trainees on employers' premises
- ◆ high level of trainees' satisfaction with the programme
- ◆ excellent working relations between employers and college staff
- ◆ employers' commitment to training, and provision of good opportunities for work-based training
- ◆ off-the-job training to suit employers' requirements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ opportunities missed for workplace training and assessment
- ◆ placement advisers' lack of awareness of the extent of trainees' progress towards the NVQ
- ◆ no involvement of employers with programme reviews

GOOD PRACTICE

Motor vehicle training staff are training workplace supervisors at one garage to become qualified NVQ assessors, to enable them to carry out assessment of trainees in the workplace.

16. The teaching staff at the college are well qualified and have suitable industrial experience in the relevant specialist occupational areas. Accommodation and equipment are good. Training sessions are well-planned and well-delivered. Key skills training is well established and an integral part of some training programmes, but it is under-developed on others. Tutors in the motor-vehicle section assess trainees in the workplace. Staff on other programmes, however, miss opportunities to carry out work-based training and assessment.

17. Employers, college staff, tutors and placement advisers all co-operate closely and enjoy excellent relationships with one another. They maintain frequent and regular contact with one another by the means of visits, telephone calls and letters. Tutors are also able to customise some off-the-job training, within the scope of the particular NVQ, to suit employers' individual requirements. However, whilst programme reviews are carried out regularly and involve feedback from trainees, employers are not part of this process in any formal way. All prospective employers are subject to a health and safety audit by Training Enterprise staff before a trainee is placed with them.

18. Both employers and trainees welcome the frequent review visits by placement advisers and the pastoral support and advice they provide. During reviews, advisers are able, with the co-operation of both employer and trainee, to change trainees' work placements if this is to the advantage of all parties concerned. However, trainees' progress towards the achievement of their NVQ is not necessarily a part of this review process. Advisers are not always aware of which NVQ units have been achieved at the time of review, and trainees' files are not always updated. Trainees expressed a high degree of satisfaction with both the college's provision and their employment opportunities.

Business administration

Grade 3

19. Farnborough College of Technology has 35 trainees in this area; 28 are learning accountancy at NVQ levels 2 to 4, and seven are following NVQs at levels 2 to 3 in administration. All the accountancy trainees are employed, and 27 of them are on a modern apprenticeship programme. Accounts trainees attend one instruction and one workshop session each week; these sessions are offered during the day and in the evenings. The trainees join other students who attend Association of Accounting Technician (AAT) courses. Placement advisers visit accounts trainees in the workplace to complete the requisite paperwork, and then they revisit after four weeks to review trainees' progress. Some administration trainees are following entirely work-based programmes; the rest attend college one day per week. The allocated placement advisor makes regular visits to trainees in the workplace. There is frequent telephone contact between placement advisers and trainees. Inspectors considered that some of the strengths cited in the self-assessment report were no more than normal practice. They found weaknesses which the college had not identified and they awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective work-based assessment for administration trainees
- ◆ administration trainees' excellent portfolios
- ◆ AAT trainees' high achievement rates
- ◆ particularly well-planned and carefully recorded off-the-job training for accounting trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient assessment of accountancy trainees in the workplace
- ◆ missed opportunities for accountancy trainees to gather evidence of their performance in the workplace
- ◆ insufficient integration of key skills with the content of training programmes
- ◆ no qualified internal verifier for the accounts programme

20. Administration trainees have many opportunities for work-based assessment. The majority do not attend college at all and are assessed entirely in the workplace. Other trainees attend college one day per week, and clearly understand the links between work and college. Portfolios are particularly well organised and they demonstrate that the trainees have achieved a high level of occupational competency. All contain excellent evidence of trainees' competence in the workplace. All trainees, including those who are entirely work based, have access to all facilities of the college.

GOOD PRACTICE

Most trainees are visited and assessed monthly in their workplaces. One trainee who had a considerable amount of evidence available received weekly visits from the assessor and was able to make swift progress.

21. The trainees' achievement rates for AAT central assessments exceed the national averages published by the AAT for all three levels. Planning for off-the-job training on accounts programmes is extensive and thorough. Changes are made to the timetable in direct response to feedback from trainees. All training sessions have clear plans. The devolved assessments developed by the college have all been approved by the AAT. Off-the-job training prepares trainees well for these assessments. It gives trainees opportunities to practise tasks and activities which are similar to those through which they will be assessed. Overall, the standard of teaching on accounts programmes is satisfactory. Trainees are very positive about some sessions, but very critical of others.

22. Assessment for the AAT awards is based on set assignments rather than work-based activity. Trainees' portfolios include little or no evidence of trainees' competence in the workplace. Trainees are required to repeat tasks in the classroom which they perform every day at work. The findings from an internal planning exercise carried out by the college showed that most of the NVQ level 2 assessment could be carried out in the workplace. Trainees are now being encouraged to generate evidence of their competence in the workplace.

GOOD PRACTICE

The School of Business and Finance invites accounts employers to breakfast and supper meetings, to discuss developments in the training programme, and the progress of their apprentices.

23. Accounting trainees at NVQ level 3 and above have not been assessed for key skills, and these are not yet an integral part of their programme. Five accounts trainees have completed their accounting NVQs, but cannot complete their modern apprenticeship until they have achieved their key skills units. Trainees' portfolios do not show clear referencing of evidence to the key skills standards. Trainees present witness testimony without producing evidence of what they have actually done, and they do not show the context in which they meet the evidence requirements. Revised assessment tasks include reference to relevant key skills and are being used effectively with NVQ level 2 trainees. Most of the employers are not familiar with the concept of key skills.

24. There is no qualified internal verifier for the accounts programme. Responsibility for verifying assessment on the accounts programme rests with a Board of Studies. The Board is convened one week after each assessment. It receives the assessors' evaluation of trainees' performance. It also approves new assignments through which the trainees will be assessed and advises on changes which need to be made to them. The Board also deals with assessment problems and gives assessors guidance and support. The Board of Studies intends to set up systematic arrangements for the sampling of assessments.

25. Most employers would like to be more involved in the development of their trainees. Many attend meetings arranged by the college, and find them useful and beneficial. Employers use the information from these meetings to keep up to date with trainees' progress.

Hospitality

Grade 3

26. Training in the hospitality sector is focused on food preparation and cookery at NVQ level 2. A small number of trainees follow other training programmes, including food and bar service at NVQ level 2, and patisserie and confectionery at NVQ level 3. All 24 current trainees are employed, mainly in companies which offer the range of experience required by the NVQ. Some trainees, however, need to take advantage of the college's own realistic working environment in order to gain all the skills required for the qualification. Assessment of trainees' skills takes place almost exclusively within the college, and opportunities for assessing trainees' skills in the workplace are missed.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective co-ordination of training by placement advisers
- ◆ good-quality work placements providing varied opportunities for relevant assessment
- ◆ trainees' strong commitment and enthusiasm for their work
- ◆ trainees' high achievement rates
- ◆ the college's excellent training resources

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ very little assessment in the workplace
- ◆ failure to make key skills integral to the training programme
- ◆ lack of variety of evidence in portfolios
- ◆ no continuous internal verification
- ◆ the undue length of time taken by some trainees in obtaining their qualification

27. The success rate on this programme is high, at 100 NVQs per 100 leavers so far this financial year, compared with 15.8 NVQs per 100 leavers in 1997-98. The college's training resources are excellent. Staff are well qualified and suitably experienced. The structured training programme takes place in the classroom and a realistic work environment. The latter comprises two training kitchens, a comprehensive training restaurant which offers all services from breakfasts to banquets, a bar, a fast-food outlet and a cake and pastry preparation area. There is little or no assessment on employers' premises. In general, trainees do not produce work-based evidence of their competency, despite widespread opportunities for

them to do so. The programme meets the requirements of the awarding body but it is not adapted to meet the needs of individual trainees. Although trainees' achievement rates are high, some trainees take a long time to attain their qualification.

28. The college-based assessors are experienced, well qualified and rigorous in their assessment. However, internal verification is only being undertaken at the completion of assessment, rather than continuously as required. Problems or difficulties concerning assessment are only identified at the end of the training programme. In some instances, the programme has had to be extended in order to resolve such difficulties.

29. Key skills are not an integral part of the training programme. Evidence of trainees' key skills performance in the workplace is not gathered at an early stage. Assessment of key skills is often left until the end of the programme.

30. The work-placement advisers who visit the trainees in their workplaces are a key strength and they co-ordinate training effectively. The advisers help to maintain trainees' and employers' support and commitment to the training programme.

Hair & beauty

Grade 2

31. There are 52 trainees in hairdressing training; 48 are working towards NVQ level 2, and four towards NVQ level 3. Eleven trainees are following the modern apprenticeship framework, 13 are on national traineeships, and 28 are on other training programmes for young people. All trainees are employed in salons where they work four days a week. They attend the college one day a week. Equipment and resources are good. Training in the salons takes place in formal, structured practical sessions, where trainees practise on models under supervision, and through naturally occurring activities in the salon. Some NVQ level 3 trainees have their own group of clients in the salon, with whom they continue to work as they progress. There is no formal assessment of skills in the workplace.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality work placements
- ◆ employers' strong commitment to training
- ◆ well-qualified and suitably experienced training staff
- ◆ stimulating and well-delivered off-the-job training
- ◆ excellent relations between staff, employers and trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for workplace assessment
- ◆ lack of rigour in the recording of trainees' achievements
- ◆ some trainees' slow progress towards achievement of their qualification

32. The workplaces are modern and well equipped, enabling trainees to develop the broad range of skills required by their qualification. Most employers offer additional support by extending the practical training sessions to a day or two days, for the trainees with more opportunity to develop their skills. Employers and trainers encourage trainees to attend manufacturers' technical training sessions and specialist courses and achieve additional qualifications. Off-the-job training sessions were lively, with trainees interested and attentive. Portfolios are good and contain a diversity of evidence. Training is of a high quality, with trainees demonstrating high standards of occupational competency. Some trainees working towards NVQ level 3 have already achieved all the required key skills units of the programme. Trainees are encouraged to further their artistic skills by participating in hairdressing competitions. Their success is promoted both in the college and through the local media. There are good relations between all parties involved in training and problems are quickly resolved. The proportion of trainees who drop-out has fallen from 37 per cent in 1997-98 to 16 per cent so far in the current year. Trainees have a clear understanding of the NVQ process and are well motivated.

33. Opportunities are missed for trainees to achieve their target qualification more quickly by gathering evidence of their performance in the workplace. There is little assessment of trainees' skills in the workplace. The college has recognised this weakness and has taken action to address it but it is too early to judge how effective this is. Many employers do not clearly understand the NVQ process. They are unable to contribute witness testimonies or evidence of trainees' competency. Furthermore, most employers do not understand the concept of key skills and its importance within the modern apprenticeship and national traineeship training frameworks. Employers are not fully involved in the review process. Trainees are unclear about their achievements. These are not being systematically recorded in their logbooks, although the assessment itself is continuous and progressive. After 15 months of training, some trainees' logbooks only showed progress towards the first unit, even though the trainees had completed four or five units of the qualification. The lack of formal recording of trainees' achievements has hindered the review process. Reviews are perfunctory, and specific targets are often not set. Trainees are taking two years to achieve their qualification, even though many have relevant prior experience and knowledge. The proportion of trainees who gain an NVQ is low at 48 per cent, but it is higher than in previous years.

Foundation for work

Grade 2

34. At the time of inspection, there were only seven trainees on the programme, of whom three started during the week of inspection. Foundation Training is a 12-week roll-on roll-off programme, delivered in a small college-owned building in Aldershot, and aims to help unemployed young people to gain employment or further education or training. Trainees are successful in gaining qualifications, and in progressing to further training or employment. The programme includes a period of work placement, as well as literacy and numeracy teaching and assessment leading to qualifications such as wordpower, numberpower and the Foundation Training certificate developed by ASDAN, the Bristol-based Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ trainees' success in obtaining qualifications and employment
- ◆ flexibly arranged programme to meet trainees' individual needs
- ◆ specific recruitment of socially excluded young people
- ◆ well-planned, properly documented and ably taught basic -skills programme

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of comprehensive programme review

35. Staff have good working relationships with the trainees, many of whom have behavioural problems and lack self-esteem, motivation and clear goals. Staff develop their skills either through attending TEC-sponsored meetings where good practice is shared, or through staff development courses arranged by Training Enterprise management. Staff motivate, encourage and help trainees to identify and secure suitable work placements, and to achieve qualifications in literacy and numeracy.

36. Documentation summarising the course content and the procedures for recruitment, assessment, placement and after-care support are weak. The learning programmes are well planned, properly documented and effectively taught. They include thoughtfully produced training material which is relevant to trainees' particular interests and aspirations. Staff have a close working relationship with the careers guidance service. There is, however, no systematic initial assessment of trainees' literacy or numeracy ability, and nearly all trainees follow the same Wordpower or Numberpower programme, irrespective of whether they have identified basic skills needs or not. For the last few years, between 50 and 75 per cent of trainees have progressed to employment or further education. Most of those who gain employment are not given training with it.

37. The management information system is poorly co-ordinated. Records of trainees' progress, achievements and outcomes are kept manually by three different staff on two sites. Information on all other TEC-funded trainees is kept centrally and computerised. There is some discrepancy between the records maintained by the careers service and those of Training Enterprise. Procedures for the evaluation of provision largely follow the requirements of external organisations, notably the TEC and the careers service. There is a lack of detailed action planning to identify and remedy weaknesses, or develop strengths.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

38. Farnborough College's equal opportunities policy applies to work-based trainees as well as to college students. Training Enterprise's management and staff take their commitment to equal opportunities seriously. A comprehensive policy, which is regularly reviewed, is issued to all staff. A summary is included in the student handbook, which is issued to all trainees at induction. There is good wheelchair access. All training in the college takes place at ground-floor level which is easily accessible to wheelchair users. The trainee profile is as follows: 49.5 per cent are male, 50.5 per cent are female, 2 per cent are from minority ethnic groups, and 3.5 per cent are classified as having a disability. These figures are proportionate to comparable groups in the working population in the area. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses in the college's promotion of equal opportunities but they considered that a number of weaknesses were understated. They awarded a lower grade than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ strong commitment of management and staff to equal opportunities
- ◆ comprehensive range of support facilities
- ◆ good resources for promoting equal opportunities
- ◆ use of positive images to promote equality of opportunity
- ◆ effective complaints procedure

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little evaluation of the college's equal opportunities promotion
- ◆ trainees' low awareness of some aspects of equal opportunities
- ◆ insufficient monitoring of employers' equal opportunity policies

39. Equal opportunities training for staff is carried out during their induction and is continuous. Some staff have recently attended an equal opportunities training

workshop organised by the local TEC. These staff passed on what they had learned to colleagues. Staff also participated in a one-day training event which focused on harassment and ways to improve trainees' awareness of equal opportunities. Staff have a good understanding of equal opportunities, and support the promotion of equality of opportunity.

40. Resources are very good. The college houses a wide range of support facilities for people with disabilities, including a Braille embosser, screen-enhancing computer software, radio mikes for the hearing impaired, and a compact minicom system. Adaptation to equipment is available through the college's link with both employment and social services. The college's staff resources are excellent, and include a qualified occupational therapist who offers advice to students and trainees who have physical or learning disabilities or mental health problems. There is a deaf/blind communicator as well as four competent users of sign language. Other resources include the availability of written information about both the nature and impact of types of disabilities, which can be used to brief both staff and potential employers about the best way of supporting individual trainees. The use of positive images on posters and in marketing material has promoted equality of opportunity within the college. Training Enterprise has featured good news stories in the college newspaper about a trainee from a minority ethnic group. The newspaper, which is distributed throughout the college and the wider community, has also carried stories about female trainees working in traditionally male-dominated occupational areas, and vice versa. Training Enterprise has recently introduced its own complaints procedure to complement that of the main college. Complaints are dealt with promptly and effectively.

41. Although some equal opportunities statistics relating to trainees' gender, race, religion and disabilities are kept, these are not recorded comprehensively or systematically. For example, such statistics are not derived from any monitoring of trainees' applications and interviews. The statistics are not analysed in order to identify trends or action needed to improve the promotion of equal opportunities. Through its foundation for work programme, the college is fulfilling its policy of providing a service for all sections of the community. The programme has good links with a project for homeless people and with a Fresh Start programme.

42. The trainees' introduction to equal opportunities is brief and insufficient. Trainees' awareness of issues such as harassment and what constitutes unacceptable behaviour is poor. The provider has recognised and recently addressed this weakness with a questionnaire for trainees to complete at reviews. This questionnaire is designed to assess trainees' understanding and awareness of equal opportunities issues. The majority of trainees are referred to their work-based training programme by their employer. The college has little impact on the extent to which equality of opportunity is promoted on these employers' premises and does not request copies of employers' equal opportunities policies. The college does not check employers' understanding of, and commitment to, equality of opportunity, and has designed a new checklist and procedures for this purpose. These new procedures are not well established and it is too early to judge their effectiveness.

Trainee support

Grade 2

43. Trainees are referred to the work-based training programmes by the careers service, Hampshire TEC, other college departments, and existing and potential employers. In practice, most trainees are already employed at the start of their training programme, and are referred by their employer. All trainees are interviewed, and their literacy and numeracy skills are assessed. Where required, trainees are referred to potential employers. A detailed induction starts once trainees are accepted onto a particular training programme. Inspectors agreed with the grade in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good induction programme
- ◆ availability of additional learning resources
- ◆ employers' support for trainees' training and development
- ◆ excellent pastoral support for trainees
- ◆ good retention rates

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no initial systematic assessment of trainees' occupational skills
- ◆ no initial assessment of trainees' key skills
- ◆ no updating of training plans to indicate trainees' progress towards achieving NVQs

GOOD PRACTICE

A placement adviser liaised successfully between a trainee, her employer, and her occupational skills trainer, after the trainee had ceased attending and lost interest in her training programme. She has now resumed her course, and intends to complete training for the NVQ.

44. In general, the induction process is thorough across all programmes. It includes completion of an individual training plan which specifies the NVQ programme, the trainee's career objective and, where applicable, the details of any previous attendance at college. Trainees are also briefed on their rights and responsibilities, including those pertaining to their health and safety.

45. Trainers assess trainees' reading, writing and mathematical skills using the Basic Skills Agency's assessment. Trainees are exempt from this assessment if they can demonstrate that they are proficient in basic skills or hold, for example, a grade C or above in GCSE English or mathematics. Additional learning support is made available to those trainees who are identified as needing it. The support facilities are well used.

46. There is no systematic trainees' assessment of occupational skills on entry. Often, trainees have gained some relevant experience with their employer before they start the training programme. This is not identified, and is not therefore taken

into account in the training programme or individual training plan. All trainees follow the same NVQ level 2 training programme, irrespective of their previous knowledge, experience or skills. Some have to repeat work they have already mastered and there are no arrangements whereby they can take the qualification over a shorter period of time.

47. The review process for trainees is not occupationally specific, and is carried out by a team of placement advisers. These advisers identify and take action on issues of trainee support, including trainees' concerns about their employment or their occupational off-the-job training. The advisers are very effective in maintaining trainees' motivation. The current system has developed considerably in recent months, and continues to develop. The placement advisers have begun to check trainees' understanding of equal opportunities when reviewing trainees' general progress and welfare. Problems in relation to trainee support are identified at an early stage. Individual training plans are not detailed, and do not specify target dates for the achievement of particular units of the qualification. Furthermore, they are not updated when trainees achieve individual units. In many cases, neither the trainees nor their placement advisers are aware of progress made towards achievement of the target qualification.

48. The college has recognised the need for trainees and employers to become more familiar with key skills and with the process of developing NVQ portfolios. In the summer of 1998, the college created a new post of NVQ co-ordinator to facilitate this process, and has recently launched a series of workshops to address NVQ issues. It is too early to judge their impact.

Management of training

Grade 3

49. The training programmes funded through Hampshire TEC are managed by the college's Training Enterprise section. The management structure of this section and the roles of some staff have been changed since the first inspection. The team of administrators and placement advisers is now led by a team leader, who works closely with a training co-ordinator. These two report to the head of community education and training, whose other responsibilities primarily comprise the management of training provided under the New Deal, community education and basic skills training, and who in turn reports to the deputy principal of the college. There are four placement advisers, one of whom has co-ordinating responsibilities for the other three. The New Deal advisor is supported by an administrator. The placement advisers are responsible for establishing and maintaining links with employers, recruiting trainees, monitoring trainees' overall welfare and progress, and liaising with the college staff who provide the off-the-job training. Off-the-job training is given in college classes which are also attended by part-time students in the college. The Training Enterprise section holds weekly meetings on a wide range of training issues.

The main weaknesses identified at the first inspection were:

- ◆ inadequate co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ employers' lack of information about, and involvement in, the training programmes
- ◆ trainees' reviews lack focus on incremental NVQ targets
- ◆ management decisions not fully informed by systematic analysis of current data
- ◆ insufficient assessment in the workplace

50. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report prepared for the reinspection, and awarded the same grade as that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good implementation of operational improvements
- ◆ well-managed communication between Training Enterprise and college schools
- ◆ good teamwork within Training Enterprise
- ◆ effective staff development and appraisal system
- ◆ particularly effective promotion of equal opportunities through staff recruitment procedures

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient assessment in the workplace in some occupational areas
- ◆ insufficiently demanding target dates for achievement of some NVQs
- ◆ insufficient analysis of trainees' achievement and retention data

51. Since the first inspection, senior managers have taken rigorous action to improve the management of work-based training. They have made changes in key personnel, and the deputy principal of the college now oversees Training Enterprise. The former co-ordinator now has a more senior management role. The college now has a qualified internal verifier for the accounting programme. The responsibilities of the placement advisors have been reviewed and changed. Of all Training Enterprise's staff, the placement advisors have the most contact with trainees, employers and the college school staff who provide the off-the-job training. They are now linked to particular schools, whereas previously this was not been the case. They now have a better understanding of the qualifications and programmes which their trainees are following, and are more able to guide the trainees' development to understand specific points raised by the trainees or their employers, and to discuss these with the teaching staff at the college. They know how far the trainees have progressed with their qualifications and, when reviewing trainees, they now help the

trainees to set specific learning targets. They are a link between the college schools and the employers and, in the schools where it is not usual practice for the teaching staff to visit employers, they co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training effectively. They meet regularly with the college schools, and act as a point of contact for any member of a school who needs to talk to someone in the Training Enterprise section. The communication systems between the schools and Training Enterprise are effective. Since the first inspection, the college has set up a training management group to clarify responsibilities and share good practice.

52. The staff within Training Enterprise are well motivated. They continue to meet weekly, and keep a record of decisions made. They support each other well. The New Deal co-ordinator works as part of the team, and gains help from other staff if she needs to identify a work placement for a client.

53. Each member of Training Enterprise's staff has an annual appraisal meeting with the manager. Through this appraisal, they identify their individual staff development programme and this becomes an integral part of the Training Enterprise team's objectives. Managers are also responsive to informal requests from staff for training. Most staff are currently, or have recently been, undertaking staff training. Recruitment and selection of staff to Training Enterprise are the responsibility of the manager, in conjunction with the college's personnel department. The written procedures and interview guidelines are good and go well beyond compliance with current legislation in order to ensure equality of opportunity for all job applicants. Vacancies are widely advertised, and names and ages are removed from application forms prior to initial consideration to ensure that these do not in any way affect candidates' prospects. Selection panels have a good balance of men and women and consider applicants strictly according to previously agreed criteria.

54. The occupational skills of most trainees in some vocational areas are not assessed in the workplace. Most catering trainees do not have their occupational skills assessed by a qualified assessor in the workplace, and the same applies to some of the hairdressers, and has until recently applied to all the electrical installation trainees. When assessing trainees' occupational competence, college tutors now take more account of the work the trainees have carried out in the workplace than they did a year ago, and employers are more familiar with the concept of witness testimony whereby they provide written confirmation of trainees' competence in particular areas. Employers' testimonies are included in trainees' NVQ portfolios.

55. Nearly all trainees in most occupational areas have a similar target date for the completion of their qualification, irrespective of any previous experience or of the speed at which they learn new skills, or of the amount of work-based assessment they receive, or of the range of learning opportunities available in their workplace. In many cases, the target dates set for the achievement of their qualifications suit the college's academic year, but are not set according to the circumstances of individual trainees. In some cases, trainees could attain their target qualification

more rapidly than in the standard time allotted. In some occupational areas, college managers have not yet addressed this issue. Even where trainees' learning in the workplace is being taken into account, and where employers are closely involved in their trainees' development, this often has little or no impact on the trainees' target achievement dates.

56. Since the last inspection, managers have installed a bespoke database, which is widely used by training providers. This system is designed to keep information about trainees, and facilitates management reports. This facility has not yet been much used to inform either the Training Enterprise staff and management, or the senior management team, of the achievement or retention rates of Training Enterprise trainees. The management of Training Enterprise do not yet know the overall achievement and retention rates of their trainees in different occupational areas. They do not know whether or not their trainees fare better or worse than other students working towards the same qualifications.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

57. Farnborough College of Technology has a clearly documented academic quality assurance policy and meets a number of external quality standards, including Investors in People and those of the TEC with which it has contracts.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ commitment of the whole team to continuous improvement
- ◆ widespread recent action to improve the quality of provision
- ◆ placement advisers' key role in ensuring the good quality of provision

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no systematic quality assurance of work-based training
- ◆ no systematic sharing of good practice
- ◆ no analysis of feedback

58. Training Enterprise is not specifically mentioned in the college's quality assurance policy, and does not have a separate comprehensive set of quality assurance procedures, though it recognises that it holds ultimate responsibility for the quality of training of the trainees. Training Enterprise recognises that its relationship with the college's schools is akin to a sub-contracting arrangement. In the self-assessment report, Training Enterprise recognised that there was some confusion over whether certain responsibilities rested with the college or with itself. It planned to establish agreements to clear up this confusion by September 1998, but these have not yet been made. There are, for instance, no arrangements for the sharing of good practice across all training programmes.

59. The management and staff team have a commitment to identify and address weaknesses. The placement advisers, who have a key role in reviewing trainees' progress on an individual basis, have identified some weaknesses in training. Action taken since Spring 1998 to improve the quality of provision has been widespread and includes the creation and appointment of an NVQ co-ordinator, the implementation of new systems and procedures, and a change in the responsibilities of placement advisers. Some of these measures are proving successful, whereas it is too early to judge the effectiveness of others. There is no formally documented evaluation and review of the quality assurance arrangements of Training Enterprise. The placement advisers have a critical role in ensuring that the quality of provision is good. Part of their role is to visit trainees in work placements. Training Enterprise recently identified that many trainees were not aware of the extent of their progress towards achievement of their target qualification, despite attending the college on a frequent and regular basis. In response to this weakness, management has developed the role of the placement advisers, who now check trainees' awareness of their progress towards NVQs.

60. The placement advisers obtain feedback from individual trainees and then liaise with the trainers in order to act on this and make improvements in provision. There is no system for gaining feedback anonymously from trainees, or for analysing trainees' response in order to identify ways of improving provision. Placement advisers gain feedback from individual employers about the quality of training. They have recognised that employers' understanding of NVQs is weak in many cases, and management has implemented measures to counteract this.