



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT OCTOBER 2000

West Cumbria College

SUMMARY

West Cumbria College offers satisfactory training in hair and beauty. On-the-job training resources are good. The equal opportunities policy and procedures have not been well managed and trainees and employers' understanding of equal opportunities issues are poor. Trainee support in college and the workplace is effective. Key skills are not systematically assessed at the start of training. Staff are not qualified to teach key skills. The strategic plan provides a sound approach to management of the college. Training and assessment at work are poorly managed. The college's quality assurance system has been restructured and is not yet fully established. There are gaps in procedures, particularly relating to work-based training. The internal verification policy is too new to have had an impact on the consistency and quality of internal verification activities across the college.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Hair & beauty	3

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ wide and effective range of trainee support
- ◆ opportunities for achievement of additional, vocationally relevant qualifications
- ◆ effective reviews for most trainees
- ◆ well-qualified and experienced staff

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ insufficient planning of work-based assessment
- ◆ unsatisfactory retention and achievement rates
- ◆ insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities to trainees and employers
- ◆ late introduction of key skills in all vocational areas
- ◆ insufficiently established quality assurance systems

INTRODUCTION

1. West Cumbria College is a medium sized further education college serving West Cumbria, an area where the population is approximately 160,000. It was formed in 1969 and renamed West Cumbria College in 1975. The college is based on three sites: the main site is at Workington and the other two sites are a short distance away at Lillyhall. A new college building is being constructed and is due to be completed by April 2001. The first students will attend the new college from September 2001. Most of the college's training occurs at the main site, with construction and hairdressing provision at Lillyhall. West Cumbria College has bus links with the outlying areas and is also situated within walking distance of the railway station. This is particularly appropriate as approximately 21 per cent of the population live in rurally isolated areas.

2. West Cumbria College employs 236 full- and part-time members of academic and support staff. The management structure of the college is made up of a governing body, a principal, a deputy principal and five directors. There are six departments in the college, each covering a range of different occupational learning opportunities. The college's business development manager is responsible for the management of government-funded work-based training. She reports directly to the deputy principal. The college has contracts with Enterprise Cumbria Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Seven staff carry out administrative duties and deal with financial claims to support the contract with the TEC. It is the duty of staff from the appropriate curriculum areas in the college to provide off-the-job training, workplace assessment and reviews.

3. Most of the college's work is funded through the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Around 2.3 per cent of the college's funding comes from its contracts with the TEC. There are 27 trainees in TEC funded work-based training. Of these trainees, eight are advanced modern apprentices and 19 are foundation modern apprentices. Eighty-one per cent of trainees are employed. The college is a subcontractor to a national training organisation implementing the New Deal in Cumbria. Currently, eight clients are on the full-time education and training option of the New Deal. Two clients are on the employment option of the New Deal.

4. A key feature of the economy of West Cumbria is its dependence on the activities of a few large organisations in the manufacturing and nuclear fuel sectors. From 1986–1996, 18 per cent of jobs were lost from these organisations.

5. Unemployment rates in some areas of Cumbria are consistently higher than the national average. The unemployment rate in Workington travel to work area is 7.3 per cent, which is the eighth highest in England. In some areas such as Northside, Westfield and Salterbeck, male unemployment is in excess of 13 per cent. Unemployment in the area of West Cumbria has fallen over recent years. At 3.5 per cent, it is similar to the regional average of 3.6 per cent and the national average of 3.5 per cent. Minority ethnic groups make up less than 1 per cent of the local population.



6. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 47.6 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

7. The college started its self-assessment over four years ago in preparation for its second FEFC inspection. The first self-assessment report to include the quality framework of the Training Standards Council (TSC) was submitted to Enterprise Cumbria TEC in August 1999. A second report was submitted in August 2000. The director of human resources and quality assurance oversees the college's self-assessment process. The self-assessment for work-based training involved staff at all levels across the relevant curriculum areas. The college was inspected by the TSC at the same time as the FEFC reinspected management and quality assurance. Trainees' numbers are low in administration, care and hospitality and these were not inspected as separate areas.

8. A team of three TSC inspectors spent a total of 11 days at the college in October 2000. Inspectors visited 10 employers, and interviewed 20 trainees and 10 workplace supervisors. Inspectors also carried out interviews with 28 of the college's teaching, management and support staff. A broad range of documents was examined, including national vocational qualification (NVQ) portfolios and trainees' files. Inspectors also reviewed assessment records, trainees' review documents and external verifiers' reports. Five training sessions were observed and graded in the table below.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Business administration		1				1
Sport & leisure			1			1
Hair & beauty		1	2			3
Total	0	2	3	0	0	5

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Hair & beauty (hairdressing)

Grade 3

9. There are 18 trainees in this area. Twelve foundation modern apprentices are working towards NVQs at level 2 with five advanced modern apprentices working towards level 3. One New Deal client is on the employment option. This client attends college for one-day each week and is employed in a salon on the other four days. She is working towards an NVQ in hairdressing at level 2. Hairdressing training is offered at one of the college's sites at Lillyhall. All modern apprentices attend college for off-the-job training for one day each week. They spend time in

the college's commercial salon to practise their skills. Trainees are also assessed at the salon. Theory and key skills sessions are also included during the day at college. Trainees spend the remaining four days in local commercial salons where they are employed or placed by the college. Some of the trainees receive on-the-job training in their workplace. All trainees have the opportunity to take additional qualifications offered by the college.

10. The self-assessment report was largely accurate and correctly identified three strengths and two weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the grade given by the provider.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ high standard of on-the-job resources
- ◆ effective trainees' progress reviews
- ◆ early assessment opportunities for most trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ unsatisfactory training for advanced modern apprenticeships

11. Trainees are placed or employed in good commercial salons in the local and surrounding rural areas. Salon staff are well qualified and experienced. Some of the salons provide training days, when they often invite experts into the salon. Trainees are given ample opportunity to observe these experts at work. Most trainees also observe and use up-to-date hairdressing techniques in the workplace. Some observe advanced fashion work on a regular basis. Trainees are highly motivated by the standard of work to be attained. Trainees learn new skills which may be used in competition work at a later date. Specific training opportunities are also organised by salons and the college with suppliers of hairdressing products. College staff are well qualified and attend regular seminars and hair shows to update their current working practices. The college's hairdressing tutors maintain their occupational experience by working in the college's commercial salon and spend 25 hours each year working in local salons. The new college building, which will be opened in September 2001, has both a training salon and a commercial salon.

12. Trainees' progress is consistently and effectively monitored through regular reviews carried out by the training manager. Review meetings are booked every eight to 10 weeks, when a thorough discussion takes place between the trainee, employer and training manager. Reviews are held more frequently if required. The next formal review date is always booked before the member of staff leaves the salon. Trainees are fully involved in the process, identifying and agreeing their own short-term targets. Employers help trainees to achieve their short-term targets. In most instances, the review meeting coincides with a planned work-based assessment. The assessor keeps the employer and trainee fully aware of the results of assessments. The review does not, however, comment on progress towards the

achievement of key skills. In addition to the formal review, trainees also discuss their progress in college with their personal tutor. A regular report on trainees' progress in college is sent to the employer and, where trainees are under the age of 18, to their parents or guardians. A feedback sheet is completed and attached.

13. A high percentage of new trainees complete several assessments in shampooing and styling hair in the first month of training. For those trainees on level 3 NVQs, most of the requirements for at least two units of the qualification have been assessed in their first month at college. This includes the completion of detailed assignment work, together with the collection of photographic evidence. All trainees are introduced to the NVQ logbook during their first week at college. These are referred to continually during theory and practical sessions.

14. Opportunities for assessment in the workplace are missed. At the beginning of training, the range of duties at work is not taken into account when agreeing on the individual training plan and targets with the trainee and employer. The targets are based on the college's schemes of work. Some trainees are more advanced in cutting or colouring techniques owing to the work being carried out in their salons, but these skills are not assessed until the college theory training has taken place. For some trainees, progress is slow. The college runs a commercial salon daily but client numbers are low. There are currently no work-based assessors in local salons offering work placements. Several of the work-based supervisors have shown an interest in assessor awards but this training has not yet taken place. Insufficient time is allowed for college staff to carry out assessments in the workplace. Insufficient use is made of naturally occurring evidence at work to support the achievement of key skills.

15. Statistics for trainees on other work-based training show declining achievement rates from 100 per cent achieving NVQs in 1997-98 to 78 per cent in 1999-2000. The latter figure is higher than the TEC's average of 63 per cent achievement of NVQs. The foundation modern apprenticeship training is fairly new with 20 trainees starting since 1999-2000. To date, 12 trainees are still in training, the remainder having left without any qualifications. This represents a retention rate of around 60 per cent. Training for advanced modern apprentices is poor. Out of 26 trainees who started since 1997-98, only five remain in training. Only three of these trainees have completed their individual training plan. NVQ achievement is good, and at 90 per cent is significantly higher than the TEC's average of 74 per cent. The group has been combined with a full-time college hairdressing course and progress is maintained at the same pace as these full-time students. Trainees' portfolios are poor, mainly consisting of a logbook, with very little evidence of individual work.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 4

16. The college has an equal opportunities policy. There are also harassment and disability policies and a disability statement. All policies are available to staff. The equal opportunities policy is included in the student handbook and the students, employers and parents' charters. There are also policies covering student admissions, complaints and learning support. Responsibility for equal opportunities lies with the director of human resources and quality assurance. This is a temporary measure. A recent appointment of a cross-college equal opportunities manager has taken place and a cross-college advisory committee was established in April 2000. An internal audit of the current situation in relation to equal opportunities has taken place resulting in the review of the equal opportunities policy and the development of an action plan. Data in terms of ethnicity, age, gender and disability are collected systematically across the college. Information relating to student admissions is also collated. This information is systematically analysed.

17. The self-assessment report identified two strengths relating to the comprehensive college policy and the objectivity of the college's selection processes. These were not considered strengths by inspectors. The college identified weaknesses relating to weak monitoring of data and the low profile of equal opportunities in the college. Inspectors agreed with these weaknesses and identified an additional one relating to the monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace and agreed with the grade given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ swift response to trainees' complaints
- ◆ active promotion of equal opportunities

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little awareness of equal opportunities issues by trainees and employers
- ◆ late implementation of equal opportunities strategy

18. The college has a comprehensive complaints procedure. It prefers situations to be resolved as early as possible. Issues are often resolved while still at grievance level and personal tutors are aware of their roles. The college tutorial system enables trainees to meet their personal tutors on an individual basis once a month. Concerns relating to training in the classroom are fed into occupational team meetings and problems are dealt with effectively. Complaints of a personal nature are often dealt with during this same process. When the personal tutor system fails to resolve a situation, the complaints procedure is followed systematically with tutors formally registering the complaint with the principal's administrative staff. Complaints are registered within 24 hours, investigated internally in five working

days and a response made within 10 working days. In most cases, a satisfactory result is achieved. Trainees are given information about the complaints procedure during their induction.

19. The college has taken steps to address issues of equality. In the recent restructuring of the college, six new appointments to the student services department have been made. This has provided a team offering impartial guidance to any trainee starting or working on their training. In April 2000, an equal opportunities advisory group was set up. In the first few weeks the group reviewed the equal opportunities policy, and a revised and comprehensive policy is now in place. This is displayed on notice boards around the different college sites. It is also included in the students, employers and parents' charters. Senior management has decided to include equal opportunities as a standing agenda item on the management meetings to discuss concerns or issues and to monitor the progress of the performance indicators. Performance indicators for equal opportunities have been set for the first time together with an action plan. A men's forum was set up 18 months ago and more recently a women's forum, to deal with issues and barriers relating to gender stereotypes and people who work in non-traditional roles. Consideration has been given to disabled access and other equality issues in the development of the college's new site. Examples such as tactile sign posting and colour coding are evident. Good links have been made with external agencies to support those with sight and hearing disabilities. The college has planned a series of equal opportunities awareness workshops and all staff are invited to attend.

GOOD PRACTICE

The construction department has recently completed a survival skills training programme, which was funded by European funds. This training was specifically aimed at single mothers to address everyday DIY situations.

20. Trainees and employers have little awareness of equal opportunities. Trainees are given a charter during their induction, which includes the policy statement. Discussions take place in relation to equal opportunities but do not cover roles and responsibilities of others, use of language or new legislation. Until quite recently there has been no monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace. The trainees' review documents have just been updated to include an equal opportunities box, which the reviewer completes during the review. This is not yet fully operational. Employers confirm this to be a new aspect of the review process and it is too early for the college to measure its impact. More recently, employers have been given an employers' information pack. This includes a copy of the equal opportunities policy. Trainees have little knowledge of the NVQ internal verification or appeals procedure. Assessment-planning documents do not refer to the trainees' right to appeal.

21. The college has started to deal with its equal opportunities strategy although it is not yet fully operational. Some of the policies, such as the admissions policy, are still being developed and not yet included in the quality assurance manual. Although there are selection criteria for each course, there is no procedure to ensure objectivity and consistency across occupational areas. Very little staff development has taken place in relation to the broader issues of equal opportunities. Some training has been carried out to help personal tutors understand different learning styles. For example, one member of the hairdressing team has completed a training activity related to dyslexia. Specialist equal

opportunities training is planned for later in the year.

22. Data on gender, ethnicity and disability are collected about trainees when they join and leave training programmes. As yet this information has not been analysed or used for work-based trainees.

Trainee support

Grade 2

23. Training is promoted to potential trainees through a newly formed business development department. Trainees are given impartial advice from a careers advisor who has recently been employed by the college. All trainees are assessed on entry for basic skills to determine whether additional learning support is required. Those requiring support are interviewed by learning-support staff who discuss and agree on additional training requirements. Trainees receive an induction to the college and to their training. The induction takes place over two days and is carried out by the course tutor. The induction deals with issues of health and safety, fire and evacuation procedures, college policies and the range of support services available. Posters and leaflets displayed throughout the college also promote these services to trainees. Trainees receive a further induction when they are placed with an employer. Professional counselling services are available to trainees throughout their training. Reviews of trainees' progress are conducted according to contractual requirements and involve their employers.

24. Inspectors agreed with one of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They also identified additional strengths and one weakness regarding insufficient career guidance and awarded a grade higher than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clear strategic focus on trainee support
- ◆ access to a wide range of support services
- ◆ good staff resources for trainee support
- ◆ additional, vocationally relevant qualifications
- ◆ good celebration of trainees' success

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate initial assessment of key skills
- ◆ insufficient career guidance

25. One of the strategic aims of the college is to improve the experience and achievement of students and staff. There is clear managerial responsibility for trainee support. The director of student and learning services has overall responsibility. He is assisted by teams of staff in student services who are set clear and measurable targets relating to trainee support. A range of performance

indicators is recorded, including time-bound targets for trainee support issues to be dealt with. All trainees, including those who attend college on day-release from work, are given access to learning resource services, impartial advice and guidance, and initial assessment of basic and key skills. All trainees are interviewed within 15 days from their first contact with the college.

26. All trainees can use a range of support services for their personal development and achievement. Where additional learning support is identified through the initial assessment of basic skills, the course tutor highlights this for the attention of the learning support manager. The trainee is interviewed within one week. An individual programme of additional support is negotiated and is required to be put into place within two weeks. Support is often given by a learning-support assistant during classroom sessions. The occupational expertise of the learning-support assistant is matched to the trainee's vocational programme. Other examples of support available for trainees include workshops for literacy and numeracy, and, in exceptional situations, individual tutorials can be arranged. The college offers financial support to help with travel costs. It also operates a programme which focuses on a range of extra-curricular activities including weight management and aromatherapy.

27. Staff involved in trainee support have an excellent range of qualifications and experience. The college's counselling team is made up of full- and part-time staff who are qualified in counselling skills and come from a variety of backgrounds such as a district nurse and a social worker. Counsellors aim to address urgent referrals within 20 minutes of being notified and within 24 hours for those considered to be non-urgent cases. All counsellors carry a personal pager to assist with response times. An external professional counsellor supervises the counselling service and meets with individual counsellors to enable them to share issues and seek advice and guidance where appropriate. Counsellors make use of external advice agencies where specialist help is required, for example, drug-related issues, eating disorders or sexual abuse.

28. Many trainees achieve qualifications in addition to those detailed in their individual training plan. Examples include administration trainees who have achieved extra certificates in word processing, computer literacy, information technology and audio typing. Hairdressing trainees take additional courses in ear piercing, applying cosmetics and basic health and safety. Care and hospitality trainees have also attended additional short-courses to enhance their NVQ and theory training.

29. Trainees' achievements are widely acknowledged. In the hairdressing department, trainees and their families attend an annual awards evening to celebrate the success of those who have completed their qualifications. Local newspapers publicise the presentation of their certificates. Other examples of recognition of success include clients on the New Deal training whose achievements are acknowledged in college publicity materials and the local press.

30. The initial assessment of key skills conducted by the college is limited to those of information technology and application of number. Existing arrangements fail

to identify the potential level of key skills. The initial assessment of basic and key skills does not influence the training recorded in the trainees' individual training plan.

31. There is no systematic approach to ensure that trainees who are placed with employers receive appropriate guidance on other employment opportunities. The college's careers advisor relies on course tutors to be aware of their trainees' situations, and referral is not systematic. Currently, New Deal clients are not receiving job-search activity or assistance with development of their curricula vitae, interview techniques or completion of application forms and letter writing for jobs.

Management of training

Grade 4

32. The college has a mission statement, strategic plan and a set of key strategic aims. The strategy is translated into operational plans for each area of the college. The college takes account of work-based training in the strategic plan. Before April 2000, TEC-funded training was co-ordinated by a member of the teaching staff with cross-college responsibility. A new post was created as part of the college's restructuring process. The new business-development manager, supported by a small team of support staff, manages work-based training. The business-development team is responsible for developing initial contacts with employers and monitoring the TEC's contracts. Responsibility for providing training and work-based assessment rests with the appropriate curriculum teaching staff. Each trainee has a personal tutor who takes responsibility for the support of his or her learning. Owing to the small numbers of trainees on most of the schemes, trainees fill into courses which are funded by the FEFC. Each course is managed by a course manager who determines how the course is run. Each course manager is responsible for all aspects of the training.

33. The self-assessment report identified one strength and three weaknesses. Two of the weaknesses applied to quality assurance. Inspectors agreed with the weakness about ineffective links with employers. The strength referred to a comprehensive approach to learning. Inspectors found that learning and assessment taking place outside the college are not effectively planned. Inspectors found two additional strengths and two additional weaknesses.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ inclusive strategic planning
- ◆ thorough staff appraisal system

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training and assessment
- ◆ late implementation of key skills training
- ◆ insufficient use of management information

34. Strategic planning in the college has improved radically in the past 12 months. There is a long-term, 10-year plan. The main vision of growth and development is taken into account in the systematic strategic planning cycle. This includes TEC-sponsored training. All staff are encouraged to make a contribution to their occupational area and their department's proposal for the planning process, using a critical self-assessment process. The senior management team takes these contributions into account in the draft strategic plan. All staff are invited to comment on the draft plan and changes are made where appropriate. The final version of the strategic plan is approved by the governing body. All staff are fully involved in the process and are aware of the operational plan for their department. This open style of management is effective.

35. The college has a good staff review, appraisal and development scheme. This was established in 1999 and involves all full- and part-time staff. All probationary staff are involved in a rigorous appraisal conducted by their line manager. The staff review, appraisal and development system operates on an annual cycle with a minimum of three-monthly reviews. This takes account of the college's strategic plan, operational plans and the needs of the individual. Each member of staff has an 'individual action plan' which clearly outlines their targets and objectives for the year. All staff are positive about the plan and are fully aware of their role in the organisation.

36. There is little co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Although there are examples of well-structured training taking place in the college, on-the-job training of many trainees is unplanned and is often not recorded in trainees' portfolios. To date, the college has not involved employers sufficiently in training although there are examples of good long-standing relationships with employers. Attempts have very recently been made to raise employers' awareness of training and their role in the process by the introduction of an employers' pack. Employers are now systematically involved in the formal review of trainees' progress. Most employers are unclear about the requirements of the NVQ and key skills. Many are willing to support the trainee's attendance at off-the-job training sessions, but are not fully involved in the gathering of evidence through witness testimonies or observations. There are a few cases where the college has positively influenced employers to rotate the duties of the trainees to develop evidence for the NVQ.

37. Important management decisions concerning key skills have only been made in recent months. Since 1997-98, only four of the 47 trainees who left training have achieved key skills units to complete their programme. These were in the care and hairdressing occupations. These figures are poor. Senior management have recognised this weakness and new arrangements have been made for an independent key skills teaching unit in the college. Scheduled sessions are now taking place to teach key skills in information technology and working with number. The sessions are poorly linked to occupational areas and attendance is poor. Many trainees do not fully understand key skills. Trainees do not index and cross-reference key skills evidence in their portfolios. Few staff are qualified to teach and assess key skills.

38. The college has reviewed the operation of its management-information systems and computer-services operations in the past year. Data are now readily available to monitor all students in college. There has been slower progress in meeting the needs of work-based training and in tackling the lack of performance indicators to measure trainees' progress, retention and achievement. Data collected from thrice-yearly student feedback are not analysed separately for work-based training.

Quality assurance

Grade 4

39. The college has allocated significant resources to support its quality assurance framework since October 1999 after the appointment of the new principal in the summer of 1999. Significant quality assurance weaknesses were identified against TSC standards. A new quality management system was introduced in October 1999. Fourteen cross-college standards and supporting quality indicators were introduced to cover all aspects of college activity. As part of the college's restructuring activities, a quality assurance team has been established. The director of human resources and quality assurance has overall responsibility for the quality systems of the college. She is supported by a quality assurance manager and a quality assurance administrator, both of whom have other responsibilities in the college. The director is ultimately responsible for establishing, implementing and maintaining the management of quality assurance procedures in line with college policies. In each of the six departments in college, newly appointed quality assurance leaders are training to assume responsibility for supporting quality assurance and internal audit in their occupational areas. Fourteen staff throughout the college have been trained as internal auditors during 1999/2000. There is a quality assurance manual and it is being developed to include work instructions for each occupational area. The quality assurance manual is distributed across the college.

GOOD PRACTICE

West Cumbria College has sought good practice in work-based training from other external organisations, both private training providers and other further education colleges. They have recognised the changes required and begun to implement new procedures to incorporate key training practices.

40. Inspectors found that the two strengths identified in the self-assessment report were observed to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors found another two strengths. The three weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report were broadly accurate, but inspectors found that the quality assurance system did not encompass work-based training. Inspectors awarded the same grade as the one given by the organisation.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ thorough evaluation of external verification reports
- ◆ extensive programme of college-based training observations

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ quality assurance system not fully established
- ◆ lack of focus on work-based training procedures in the quality assurance system
- ◆ incomplete implementation of cross-college internal verification policy

41. External verification reports are rigorously evaluated by the quality assurance administrator. Reports are systematically copied to the principal, the quality assurance manager and the appropriate head of department. A database of action points has been developed. Very clear records are kept to monitor the action points. A summary of the actions taken or still outstanding is reported to the quality assurance committee, which is attended by members of the senior management team. There is very close monitoring of the external verification of qualifications.

42. The college operates a comprehensive system for observing teaching in the classroom. This started in 1999. All staff are observed by their line managers and peers. These line managers have been trained as observers by an external organisation. Observations are graded and fed to the newly appointed staff-development manager who analyses the grading profile of individuals and groups of staff. Individual and cross-college training needs are identified for improvement and fed into the staff individual action plans or team development plans. The staff-development manager has instigated a staff-mentoring scheme whereby new staff are supported by an experienced and capable existing member of staff.

43. The new quality assurance manual is incomplete and there are gaps in procedures for areas such as admissions, although this is currently being rewritten. Work instructions are not yet written for each occupational area or training. All staff are fully supportive of the new quality assurance system, although they are not all aware of the core procedures relating to students, as these are not yet in the manual. Furthermore, where trainees fill into FEFC-funded courses, staff are often unaware of the contractual requirements for trainees. There is an over-reliance on informal and unwritten working practices in occupational areas.

44. The quality assurance system does not include work-based training procedures such as planning of on-the-job training and assessment. There is little evidence to demonstrate that quality assurance procedures or work instructions ensure a level of consistency in work-based training across all occupational areas. The new business development manager is assuming responsibility for continuous improvement in work-based training. Two master files have been developed, one for employers and one for trainees, for training and assessment activities. There are no procedures or work instructions to support these new documents. Few quality assurance procedures or improvement targets are set for such issues as induction in the workplace, initial assessment of key skills and accreditation of prior learning, key skills integration into vocational training, work-based assessment and workplace reviews.

45. The self-assessment report identified inconsistency in internal verification procedures. The quality assurance manager has established an internal verification group to oversee the management of internal verification and to implement good practice. It is too early to see the policy and procedures in practice. At present, each curriculum area is conducting internal verification, but there is little standardisation across the college.

46. The college employs a rigorous system to internally validate the self-assessment process against FEFC standards, but does not fully incorporate the TSC's quality statements. This leads to some instances in the self-assessment report for the TSC where strengths and weaknesses are incorrectly placed in the generic aspects. The director of quality leads a cross-college validation team. The team validates self-assessment reports and systems, practice and documents. The outcomes of the validation process are used to produce local action plans, and validation reports are presented to the college's governing board. The annual college self-assessment report is produced and distributed to departments to share good practice. Inspectors agreed with the grading profile in the self-assessment report, although the strengths and weaknesses were different in some areas.