

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION
REPORT JANUARY 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION MAY
2001

Furness College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- ◆ work-based training for all people over 16
- ◆ provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- ◆ the University for Industry's *learndirect* provision
- ◆ adult and community learning
- ◆ training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Grading

In summarising their judgements about the quality of provision in curriculum or occupational areas and about the quality of leadership and management, including quality assurance and equality of opportunity, inspectors use a five-point scale. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- ◆ grade 1 – outstanding
- ◆ grade 2 – good
- ◆ grade 3 – satisfactory
- ◆ grade 4 – unsatisfactory
- ◆ grade 5 – very weak.

SUMMARY

The original inspection of Furness College was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for trainee support, management of training and quality assurance. These areas have been reinspected against the requirements of the *Common Inspection Framework* by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, which replaced the Training Standards Council on 1 April 2001. The sections of the original report dealing with trainee support, management of training and quality assurance have been replaced with the findings of the reinspection. Also, the report summary, report introduction and introduction to the inspection findings have been updated and reflect the findings of the reinspection. Sections of the report, dealing with areas which have not been reinspected, have been left in their original form. The amended inspection report is published on the Adult Learning Inspectorate's website (www.ali.gov.uk).

At inspection in January 2000, Furness College provided good training in foundation for work and hair and beauty. Training in motor vehicle engineering was satisfactory. Equal opportunities were satisfactory, but there was little follow-up action to strengthen trainees' awareness of this in the workplace. Arrangements for trainee support, management of training and quality assurance were unsatisfactory. At reinspection, trainee support has improved significantly and is now satisfactory. Trainees receive initial assessment of basic skills and key skills and training plans now support their individual needs. Good individual teaching support is given to trainees in literacy and numeracy. A wide range of activities are available to trainees and many gain additional vocational qualifications. In management of training and quality assurance, some significant weaknesses have not been resolved. Links with employers are still poor. There is weak management of key skills across most curriculum areas. Quality assurance measures remain unsatisfactory. There is no overall, structured quality assurance system or long-term planning.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	3
Hair & beauty	2
Foundation for work	2

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Trainee support	3
Management of training	4
Quality assurance	4

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good response to feedback from trainees
- ◆ well-planned deployment of assistant tutors
- ◆ good management of physical resources
- ◆ good support for trainees

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no long-term strategy or leadership for quality assurance
- ◆ weak management of key skills
- ◆ insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ poor employer awareness of NVQs and college policies
- ◆ weak assessment and internal verification practices

INTRODUCTION

1. Furness College was established in 1901 as a college of science, technology and arts. Since the original inspection, in January 2000, there has been a great deal of instability at the college, which has been restructured four times. At the time of the original inspection in January 2000, there were 437 academic and support staff. At reinspection, in May 2001, the number of academic and support staff has declined to 242 with 94 part-time lecturing staff. The college has now moved to a purpose-built site at Channelside in Barrow-in-Furness. There have been significant changes to the team responsible for the management of government-funded, work-based training. The team is now led by a work-based training co-ordinator who manages a team of assistant tutors. The assistant tutors maintain contact with trainees and employers. The training co-ordinator reports to the director of quality and curriculum. Staff from departments within the college carry out off-the-job training, assessments in college and internal verification. Some of the vocational and key skills assessments are now carried out by assistant tutors in the workplace. The work-based training co-ordinator is also supported by a health and safety officer.

2. In the academic year 1999-2000, there were over 6,100 students on full- and part-time courses. For the academic year 2000-2001, the figure is 5,500. Approximately 8 per cent of the college's courses are in higher education, provided in partnership with Central Lancashire University. Approximately 2 per cent of the college's work relates to contracts with the Local Learning and Skills Council (LLSC) for Cumbria. This represents a decrease of 0.3 per cent since the original inspection in January 2000.

3. At the time of the original inspection, 122 trainees were in government-funded work-based training. There are now 104. Ten trainees are endorsed as having special learning needs. Ninety-two trainees are employed. At the time of the original inspection, engineering, hair and beauty and foundation for work were inspected. There were very few trainees in construction, business administration and hospitality and these areas were not inspected. There are now trainees in each of the above occupational areas, apart from foundation for work, and these areas were covered in the reinspection. The college no longer offers the full-time education and training option of New Deal. The college has five clients on the employment option.

4. In January 2000, the district of Barrow-in-Furness had a population of 71,000. The naval shipyard at Barrow was a major employer but jobs in the shipyard have declined from over 14,000 pre-1990 to around 4,500 in 1997. In January 2000, the employment rate in Barrow was 59.5 per cent, compared with the national average of 78.1 per cent. Barrow had the fourth highest unemployment rate in the Northwest. At the time of reinspection, unemployment rates have changed to 5.5 per cent compared with a national average of 3.5 per cent.

5. At the time of the original inspection, Barrow was the 55th most deprived district in England. It is now the 24th most deprived district in England. The proportion of people in the local population from minority ethnic groups is less than 1 per cent.

6. The proportion of school pupils staying at school after the age of 16 has improved significantly in Barrow over the past few years, but remains below the national average and the average for Cumbria. In 1999, 37 per cent of pupils stayed on at school or entered sixth-form colleges. Twenty-eight per cent of school leavers entered further education colleges, while 20 per cent gained a job or began work-based training. Nine per cent of young people were unemployed and the destinations of the remaining 6 per cent were unknown. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was approximately 37 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

7. In Barrow in 2000, 36 per cent of pupils stayed on at school or entered sixth-form colleges. Twenty-nine per cent of school leavers entered further education colleges, while 22 per cent gained a job or began work-based training. Eight per cent of young people were unemployed and the destinations of the remaining 6 per cent were unknown. In 2000, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was approximately 49.8 per cent, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

8. Since the FEFC inspection in 1996, Furness College has undergone four self-assessment cycles. Up to May 2001, the college had produced separate self-assessment reports and action plans to meet the requirements of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and Training Standards Council (TSC) inspectorates. The self-assessment process for the original inspection in January 2000 involved all relevant staff and was supported by the college's quality assurance unit. Personnel from the college management team and appropriate managers and staff have attended self-assessment training sessions held by Enterprise Cumbria. Each occupational area team has produced its own self-assessment report, following guidelines based on *Raising the Standard*. Each area report was produced by a panel comprising the principal or vice principal, a member of the college management team, academic board members, governors and other colleagues. The self-assessment report, dated February 2001, only dealt with the weaknesses identified at the original inspection. Reinspection was carried out by a team of inspectors from the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI).

9. The original inspection was carried out by a team of five TSC inspectors who spent a total of 15 days at the college in January 2000. Inspectors visited 12 employers, interviewed 33 trainees and 12 workplace supervisors. They also interviewed 24 teaching, management and training-support staff. They looked at 23 trainees' portfolios, 32 trainees' files, assessment records of trainees' progress reviews and external verifiers' reports. Inspectors observed two assessments and six training sessions.

10. The reinspection was carried out by three inspectors from ALI who spent a total of nine days during May 2001 at the new college campus in Channelside. Inspectors visited 10 employers, where they interviewed nine workplace supervisors. Eighteen trainees were interviewed and 12 portfolios of evidence were examined. Eight individual learning plans were examined, along with assessment and internal verification records. Twenty-four interviews were held with college staff, including one governor who is chair of the quality assurance committee. Five lessons were observed in the college. Two learners' progress reviews were observed in the workplace and judged to be satisfactory.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

INSPECTION	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Engineering			1			1
Hair and Beauty	2		1			3
Foundation for Work	1	1				2
Total	3	1	2	0	0	6
REINSPECTION	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction			1			1
Engineering			2			2
Business Administration		1				1
Hospitality		1				1
Total	0	2	3	0	0	5

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering

Grade 3

11. There are 45 trainees on motor vehicle NVQ programmes, comprising 29 modern apprentices, nine national trainees and seven on other youth training programmes. In addition, there are three New Deal clients working towards an NVQ. All modern apprentices and other trainees are employed. All 29 modern apprentice trainees are working towards NVQs at level 3, nine national trainees are working towards NVQs at level 2, and of the seven other trainees, six are working towards NVQs at level 2 and one towards an NVQ at level 1. The motor vehicle team provides day-release and off-the-job training at the Channelside campus, where the premises are purpose-built and have been equipped to meet the needs of industry and NVQ standards. Trainees attend college for one day per week for off-the-job training and theory sessions. College staff are responsible for carrying out assessment and internal verification and for supervising trainees' portfolio building. They are qualified as assessors and have appropriate vocational qualifications. Training staff are vocationally qualified as trainers and assessors. Two staff are qualified to accredit trainees' prior learning and experience. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that identified in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-written course policies and procedures
- ◆ effective introduction to NVQ programmes for trainees
- ◆ strengthening of workshop resources through good links with employers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little assessment to enable trainees to obtain NVQ units progressively
- ◆ trainees' poor management of portfolios
- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates

12. Course teams have well-written policies and procedures for the management of the NVQ programmes. Schemes of work, lesson plans and off-the-job training plans are detailed and well developed. Staff work as a team and have a formal meeting once a term. There is daily informal contact between staff in the staff room. Meetings are minuted and action plans developed from the minutes. The course team identifies good practice within the motor vehicle area and shares this with all other motor vehicle staff. Recent procedures have been established whereby the director of teaching and learning is kept informed of good practice in an occupational area. It is the responsibility of the 'good practice co-ordinator' in the college to disseminate details of good practice throughout the college.

13. Trainees are recruited to the motor vehicle programme through the careers service and some apply directly to the college. Some trainees join the programme after completing a full-time motor vehicle course leading to an NVQ at level 1. Other trainees learnt about the programme at school when they were on a link course with the college. The college staff are successful in finding work placements for trainees. Some trainees, through previous work taster programmes and personal connections within the motor vehicle industry, obtain placements on their own initiative. Applicants for the training programme are interviewed, undergo initial assessment of their numeracy and literacy skills, and take a test to ascertain their aptitude for motor vehicle work.

14. The motor vehicle section of the college has developed strong links with local employers. Employers are invited to motor vehicle team meetings and are encouraged to help with the planning of training. Local firms have given, or have sold at nominal sums, resources to the college and these have helped to ensure that the trainees use up-to-date equipment. The motor vehicle workshops are adequately resourced, well maintained and kept in a clean condition. There are high maintenance standards within the department. On completion of off-the-job training in a workshop, trainees and trainers devote the last 15 minutes of the activity to a question-and-answer session on the exercise carried out. This reinforces the practical learning earlier in the session.

15. NVQ assessment is mainly carried out through use of job cards and witness testimony from the employer or his nominee. Witness testimonies are signed and held in the trainees' files. Assessments are not carried out on a continuous basis. Trainees' achievement of NVQ units is not recorded in their portfolios or in the records of the motor vehicle department. Reviews of trainees' progress are usually carried out every 13 weeks. During the reviews, trainees' individual training plans are not updated to show details of their progress. They are unclear about their short-term and medium-term targets and they are not aware of the extent of their

progress and attainment.

16. Trainees lack skills in building well-presented portfolios. Portfolios consist of job cards and witness testimonies of trainees' achievement of requisite NVQ competencies but these are not substantiated by sufficient evidence. At college, all trainees are expected to work at the same pace. Insufficient account is taken of the needs and aptitude of the individual trainees. NVQ training in the workplace is not planned systematically. Opportunities for work-based assessment are missed, and links between on- and off-the-job training are weak.

17. Employers do not fully understand the purpose of the individual training plan. The college keeps its own version of an individual training plan in the trainees' files. This is insufficiently detailed and it is not updated in the light of trainees' progress and changes to the training programme.

18. Internal verification is recorded in course team files and meets the requirements of awarding bodies and their external verifiers. Internal verification is not carried out progressively and only takes place towards the end of the level 3 NVQ programme. Dates when internal verification took place are not always recorded systematically. Some members of staff were unsure of the scope of internal verification.

19. The self-assessment report highlighted that trainees' achievement and retention rates were below the national average and the evidence supplied confirmed this. Trainees on the modern apprenticeship programme are not subject to continuous assessment. Most of their assessment, and its internal verification, take place towards the end of the trainees' final year. Similarly, assessment for NVQ level 2 is carried out at the same time. Trainees are not, therefore, credited with NVQ units until they are near the end of their programmes. Key skills are not fully integrated with the content of the motor vehicle programme. Trainees miss opportunities to gather evidence of their attainment of key skills in the workplace. They only gather evidence of their competency in key skills towards the end of their programme and it is derived from their performance in practical exercises and theory work during off-the-job training. In the past three years, the trainees' achievement rates have declined. In 1996-97, all trainees achieved their NVQs. In 1997-98, the achievement rate fell to 75 per cent and in 1998-99 it decreased further to 44 per cent.

Hair & beauty

Grade 2

20. There are 21 trainees on hairdressing programmes. Eighteen trainees are working towards an NVQ in hairdressing at level 2 and three are working towards NVQ at level 3. There are seven modern apprentices, five national trainees and nine on other youth training programmes. They attend off-the-job training at the college on one day a week and the rest of their time is spent in salon placements. Trainees initially apply to join programmes directly, or are referred by employers.

They learn about the programmes through careers conventions and the careers service. After completing an application form, trainees are interviewed by a hair and beauty tutor and matched to local salon vacancies or found a salon placement by the college. An initial assessment of the applicant's basic skills is carried out and an individual training plan is agreed. An induction programme follows. All trainees are employed. The programme is managed and carried out by a programme manager and three trainer/assessors. The trainer/assessors also visit the trainees in their salon placements to carry out quarterly progress reviews. Trainees also receive a tutorial session in the college each term. The off-the-job training consists of both practical and theory sessions with key skills training in information technology and guidance on building portfolios. Assessment takes place mainly at the college. Inspectors agreed with the grade in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good progression for most trainees
- ◆ realistic working environment in college
- ◆ trainees' career prospects enhanced through acquisition of additional qualifications
- ◆ good and varied off-the-job training sessions
- ◆ high standard of trainees' portfolios

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for workplace assessment
- ◆ failure to keep employers systematically updated about trainees' progress
- ◆ trainees' poor retention rates

GOOD PRACTICE

This is an example of good practice in ensuring that key skills training is an integral part of programmes. Some trainers are qualified to teach not only hairdressing but key skills as well. They provide training in the key skill of information technology within a clear occupational context. The trainees recognise the relevance of their training in this key skill and are motivated to succeed.

21. Trainees attend off-the-job training on one day each week. The programme is well planned and includes theory sessions, information technology key skills training, practical workshops, demonstrations and guidance on building portfolios. The information technology sessions are carefully planned and carried out by the hairdressing trainers qualified in information technology who give the trainees hairdressing-related assignments. The evidence which trainees produce meets both the computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) qualification and information technology key skills level 1 requirements. The theory sessions are well planned. Trainees carry out a varied range of activities, which they find motivating, stimulating and demanding. Trainees take a keen interest in their training and work with enthusiasm. Both staff and trainees are able to keep up to date with new products and changing techniques by attendance at manufacturers' seminars. Manufacturers' technical seminars are also included to ensure that both staff and trainees are kept up to date with new products and changing techniques.

22. The college's salon provides trainees with a realistic working environment where they can develop their skills and have them assessed through work on

clients. Clients book appointments through a central reception facility and are allocated on arrival to trainees, according to their assessment needs. Trainees work on reception on a rota basis, where they are assessed in their reception skills. Some salon equipment needs to be replaced. The college plans to relocate its hairdressing facilities to new premises in the near future.

GOOD PRACTICE

The NVQ level 3 trainees offer coaching in practical skills to NVQ level 2 trainees in an integrated practical session. They also contribute to theory sessions and gain level 3 units in presentation and assessment skills.

23. On four days each week, trainees attend their salon placements, where employers provide on-the-job training. Some salon placements are good and offer planned on-the-job training ranging from supervised work on clients to more structured training sessions. Employers report that they are not frequently updated on their trainees' progress and rely mainly on trainees' own accounts of progress made at the college.

24. There are missed opportunities for assessment in the workplace, especially where trainees participate in training sessions or have their own clientele in their salons. Although employers and trainees are occasionally requested to complete client consultation sheets relating to prescribed activities in their salons, they are not used as a form of evidence for the purposes of NVQ assessment. The college has encouraged salon owners to become qualified assessors and has offered assessor training. It has also established a salon owners' review group which meets regularly to discuss programmes. Employers are invited to attend meetings of the group where their trainees' progress can be discussed informally. Only four employers attend regularly. There is one salon with a qualified work-based assessor who currently does not assess trainees.

25. Trainees make good progress on their programmes. All agree on an individual training plan that allows one year for achievement of an NVQ at level 1, two years for level 2 and a further year for level 3. Most trainees achieve their level 1 qualification within their first 10 months and level 2 within 20 months. Some have transferred to modern apprenticeship programmes during their second year and progressed work for NVQ level 3 over a further 12 months.

26. Trainees begin working on clients within the first month of training and are assessed against NVQ standards. Trainees are unfamiliar with their individual training plans. They do not possess a copy and the plans are not referred to during progress reviews. Together with their assessors, trainees monitor their progress through all aspects of their programmes including practical activities and theory work assignments. They are aware of the extent of their progress towards their qualifications and are familiar with the NVQ assessment process. Trainees' progress is discussed at both quarterly reviews in their salons, which involves their employers, and also at the termly individual tutorial sessions in college. Decisions taken at progress reviews are not recorded with consistent thoroughness. Some records of progress reviews include clear targets for the achievement of NVQ units while others are more general and less detailed.

27. Many trainees undertake work for additional qualifications relevant to the industry. These include basic information technology and NVQ units in men's

hairdressing, shaving, facial massage, beauty therapy and customer service. One third year trainee is undertaking the full NVQ at level 2 in beauty therapy simultaneously with the NVQ at level 3 in hairdressing. Trainees also participate in local fashion shows and competition work, their participation in which generates evidence which they include in their portfolios.

28. First-year trainees are on either national traineeship or modern apprenticeship programmes. The second and third year trainees are on a combination of modern apprenticeship and other youth programmes where there is no key skills requirement. All trainees are encouraged to undertake information technology training. More recently, training in communication and application of number has been introduced into the programme. As yet, methods of assessing trainees' key skills through their occupational tasks are not fully developed. There is little cross-referencing of evidence gathered for the purposes of NVQ assessment to key skills specifications. Trainees are encouraged to use the key skills of communication and application of number when completing the client consultation sheets. Trainees ask clients questions and record replies; they also calculate percentages and ratios related to the use of chemicals.

29. The standard of trainees' practical work is appropriate for the NVQ level. Portfolios of evidence are well constructed. They contain good evidence, well referenced to the NVQ specifications. Until recently, internal verification has been carried out sporadically. New schedules for internal verification have been introduced with the aim of making the internal verification process more rigorous. Internal assessment is now carried out more regularly and the samples of work in portfolios that the verifiers check have been increased. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these new arrangements.

30. In recent years, the number of trainees starting programmes has increased. The number of early leavers has fallen over the past two years. In 1998-99, 45 per cent of trainees left the programme early, compared with 20 per cent during 1999-2000. During 1997-98, 53 per cent of trainees who completed their programmes achieved their qualifications, compared with 84 per cent in 1998-99.

Foundation for work

Grade 2

31. Most trainees are referred from the careers service although some come after being on the school link programme run by the college or local training providers. Many trainees have behavioural problems. At the time of inspection, there were 41 trainees following the work skills course. The work skill programme consists of work experience and vocational training and lasts up to two years. Most trainees start in September but they can start at any time. Most trainees are working towards numberpower and wordpower qualifications at entry level and level 1. Eight trainees are working towards an NVQ in distributive operations at level 1 and one trainee is working towards an NVQ in brickwork at level 1. Trainees may also work towards an NVQ in motor vehicle maintenance at level 1. All trainees

work towards the basic food hygiene certificate and develop computer literacy and information technology and life skills. Trainees have the opportunity to work towards other qualifications. Vocational modules are offered in areas such as hairdressing, care, plumbing, painting and decorating, and computers and there is a health and safety module. In the first year, the trainees' placement is usually between one to three days each week. In the second year, it may be for up to four days each week. All but one of the 14 second-year trainees are on placement. Six of the first-year trainees have a placement. There is a wide range of employers in terms of size and occupational area. The team leader's post for this programme area is currently vacant. The trainers are all vocationally qualified. They are all qualified assessors but have no qualifications in teaching basic skills. There is a designated room for the teaching of life skills. Training also takes place in specialist workshops. Inspectors agreed with two of the strengths and with one of the weaknesses stated in the self-assessment report. They found both strength and weaknesses the college had not identified and agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training sessions
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ opportunities for trainees to increase their employability by working towards additional qualifications
- ◆ planning of training to meet trainees' individual needs
- ◆ trainees' success in obtaining jobs

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some trainees' slow progress
- ◆ trainees' poor retention and achievement rates
- ◆ missed opportunities for workplace assessment

32. Off-the-job training sessions are taken by tutors with a variety of occupational experiences who engage trainees in imaginative and varied activities. Trainees develop a wide range of skills through projects and assignments. Trainees participate fully in the sessions and complete a learning log at the end of them. The session plans are detailed and specify how activities relate to NVQ units and the methods of assessment to be used. Tutors are regularly observed and assessed against set criteria and they are given feedback on their performance. Assessments are carried out well. The report of the external verifier for the wordpower and numberpower awards makes special reference to the imaginative and wide-ranging assessment activities. In one session, trainees demonstrated their ability to meet the requirements of a unit in numberpower through the use of key skills in information technology which were, in themselves, a valuable form of life skill. Vocational tutors are now involved in the design of wordpower and numberpower exercises.

33. All trainees have work placements arranged for them which meet their stated preferences. If trainees request a change of placement, they are responded to quickly and effectively. The placements are organisations with a commitment to training. At all the placements, the workplace supervisors have knowledge and understanding of the NVQ process and, where relevant, knowledge of the NVQ standards the trainee is working towards. Some supervisors are qualified assessors. One supervisor, in particular, ensures that the training at the workplace is relevant to the training provided in the college. The placements meet trainees' needs and placement staff support trainees who encounter problems. Employers are extremely happy with communications and arrangements with the college over placements. They are invited to a yearly meeting of placement providers at the college. All trainers are responsible for finding new placement providers.

34. Trainees work towards a wide range of qualifications. They develop general and specific occupational skills and carry out relevant and appropriate assignments. They have a wide choice of occupational modules, some of which lead to certification. Trainees can cover all the options on offer or concentrate on a few. Some trainees who are ready for the workplace take up a work placement at which point off-the-job training relevant to their work-based tasks is arranged for them. Emphasis is placed on the development of team working skills and life skills. Outside speakers take sessions on such issues as family planning, drug abuse, youth justice and career planning. Trainees speak very positively about their programme and are able easily to identify the skills they feel they are developing.

35. The outcomes of the trainees' initial interviews and tests are taken into account when drawing up their initial training programme. In addition, any previous knowledge of the trainees gained, for example, through the schools link programme, is taken into account. The trainees' performance in initial tests determines whether they work towards the wordpower or numberpower qualification at entry level or level 1. One trainee with a grade D in GCSE mathematics was given the opportunity to attend classes to improve her grade, in order to meet the entry requirements for her preferred occupation. Trainees take up placements when they are ready for them. In the first year, the time trainees spend at a placement can vary considerably. Although there is a structured timetable for the work skills programme, the trainees can pick and mix particular modules to reflect their preferences and needs. All aspects of the trainees' needs are taken into account during their training. There are individual and group tutorials during which trainees can discuss any issues that may affect their programme. Parents are regularly invited to discuss trainees' progress and staff visit a trainee's home if necessary. Trainees' achievements are entered in a national record of achievement.

36. Trainees take up to two years to achieve their wordpower or numberpower qualification. During the first year they develop and practise skills and some assessment is carried out. In the second year, they develop portfolio-building skills and undertake more assessed work. Little assessment in the workplace takes place. There are plans, however, to introduce more work-based assessment. Trainees miss opportunities to collect evidence in the workplace for their numberpower and

wordpower portfolios. Some trainees make slow progress towards achievement of their wordpower and numberpower awards. They rarely know the level they are working towards or the extent of coverage of their units. Some trainees who spend several months working towards achievement of these awards do not ultimately obtain them. They are offered full-time employment at their work placement and are then unable to attend college to complete work for wordpower and numberpower awards.

37. The proportion of early leavers is high at 74 per cent although retention rates have risen over the last three years. The percentage of those leaving with NVQs has remained steady over the last two years, at 25 per cent. This proportion does not include those who achieved qualifications such as numberpower and wordpower. There is no systematic analysis of data on early leavers. Trainers report that trainees leave for a variety of reasons.

38. Employers are not given a written training plan for trainees on work placements. College staff, however, discuss the trainees' needs with employers before the trainees take up their placements. Workplace supervisors understand the arrangements for assessment for the NVQ in distributive operations at level 1 and how they can support this process. Some workplace supervisors are qualified assessors but their expertise has not been utilised by the college.

39. Trainees are visited regularly at the workplace. Workplace supervisors take part in the trainees' progress reviews. There is no set procedure for the reviews. Recording of reviews is often superficial, and, in some cases, unclear. Trainees sign a record of their review but keep no copy of it. During the reviews trainees are set few clear targets and their progress towards reaching targets set previously is not reviewed.

40. Most trainees are unable to recall what was in their individual training plans and are uncertain what the purpose of the plans was. Many plans contain little more than a statement of the qualifications to be achieved and the dates by which they must be obtained.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

41. The college has a published policy, which is stated in the student and staff handbooks. There is a college charter, a copy of which is issued to all trainees at induction. The promotion of equal opportunities is a feature of the college's strategic plan and in the services that it provides. The college encourages employment of people with disabilities and advertises all vacancies accordingly. Currently, less than 1 per cent of staff have a disclosed disability and less than 1 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. Thirty-seven per cent of the total staff are male and 63 per cent are female. Sixty-five per cent of all managers are male

and 35 per cent are female. There are no trainees from minority ethnic groups. Sixty-nine per cent of TEC-funded trainees are male and 31 per cent are female. On engineering programmes, all trainees are male. On hairdressing programmes, all trainees are female. On the foundation for work programme, 70 per cent of trainees are male and 30 per cent are female. Eleven per cent of trainees have disabilities. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses stated in the self-assessment report but they found others the college had not identified. They agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive and well-written equal opportunities policy and procedures
- ◆ effective equal opportunities panel
- ◆ systematic monitoring of the effectiveness of the college charter

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no systematic monitoring of the promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ no action to strengthen trainees and employers' understanding of equal opportunities
- ◆ no promotion of equality of opportunity in some marketing literature

GOOD PRACTICE

Trainees who are on foundation for work programmes working towards an NVQ in distributive operations at level 1, have been given a checklist and background understanding of equal opportunities issues which they may come across in the retail trade. When dealing with customers, trainees are able to recognise the various barriers, which the general public may face when they are shopping. They learn, for example, how to deal with elderly disabled people.

42. Furness college has a well-written equal opportunities policy, which encompasses all aspects of equality of opportunity, for both college staff and students. This is summarised in a statement, which appears in the staff and student handbooks, and an abbreviated version is given to trainees during induction. The procedures cover how to recognise and deal with the incidence of discrimination, harassment, physical or sexual abuse, disability and gender stereotyping. The complaints procedure and recording system are also used to good effect. The student charter also includes a statement of the college's commitment to guarantee all students and trainees' equality of opportunity. All college students were sent an evaluation form on which to provide feedback on the colleges services. This form referred back to the promises made in the charter and asked students to comment on the level of support they were receiving and whether these promises were being kept. The feedback was analysed and improvements were made to college services as a result.

43. The college staff, at all levels, demonstrate a strong commitment to upholding equal opportunities and care is taken to treat all trainees as equal. The college promotes equality of opportunity through its staffing arrangements by employing female staff in occupational areas where men have been in the majority, and vice versa. For example, there are two female tutors in the construction programme area, a female motor vehicle lecturer and a male tutor on the early years childcare programme. Although funding for training in equal opportunities is available to staff through staff development, few staff members have received such training and in key areas such as student services, no staff have received any. Having said that, 20 key front line staff have attended an internal session on inclusive learning

and widening participation. The Furness College bulletin has an equal opportunities section, which contains interesting information presented in a reader-friendly style.

44. There is an equal opportunities panel group, which meets regularly and is chaired by the college principal. The group membership includes representatives from student support, senior management, student services, the outreach manager, the team leader for resources, construction and social care lecturers, two student representatives and the equal opportunities co-ordinator. The newly appointed co-ordinator has recently collected feedback from relevant staff on the current position of equal opportunities within the college. 'Milestones' have now been developed for each area to work towards although action to achieve them has yet to be fully implemented. An action plan has been developed for the monitoring and improvement of the promotion of equal opportunities in the college. Although monitoring is taking place, it is not systematic and has not led to any improvements. The effectiveness of this monitoring has not been reviewed. There are no systematic arrangements for collecting and analysing data relating to equal opportunities, in order to identify trends that may be taken into account when planning improvements in the promotion of equality of opportunity.

45. When trainees attend off-the-job training sessions at the college, they receive the same extent of help and support in relation to equal opportunities as full-time students. There are, however, no procedures to ensure that equality of opportunity is upheld for trainees in the workplace. There is no monitoring of the employers' equal opportunity policies to make sure that they are in existence and are adequately comprehensive. There is no attempt to check the employers' understanding of equal opportunities or their responsibility to the trainee in this respect. They do not necessarily receive a copy of the college's policy and procedures. Similarly, although equal opportunities awareness is included in the trainees' induction, there are no systematic arrangements for strengthening it during the remainder of the trainees' programme. Some trainees, particularly those who have been on the programme for some time, have a poor understanding of issues related to equal opportunities.

46. The college produces marketing literature in the form of information leaflets and course brochures, aimed at potential students and trainees. Neither refer to the college's arrangements for promoting equal opportunities. A small number of leaflets contain the statement that the college is an equal opportunity employer. The glossy brochure promoting, for example, hairdressing courses and the modern apprenticeship and national traineeship schemes, contains photographs of young people that reinforce gender stereotyping. The publicity material does little to counter the popular but erroneous notion that hairdressing is a profession for women and construction work is only for men. Although marketing and teaching staff are committed to upholding open access to training programmes and welcome applications from men and women for any occupational area, there is no systematic monitoring of the extent to which inclusivity is promoted through all aspects of provision, including the college's marketing literature.

Trainee support

Grade 3

47. Learners are referred to the college from the local careers services, school careers officers, employers and by current or former learners. All applicants are interviewed and given information which helps them to choose the appropriate training. Initial assessment of basic and key skills is carried out and the results are used to identify learning support needs and to develop individual training plans. Additional support is available for those with learning difficulties or disabilities. Most learners take part in an induction programme on their first day at the college. A work placement is organised for those learners who are not employed. Assistant tutors review learners' progress in the workplace every 12 weeks. Learners can use the support services within the college, including the learning centre. They can also consult the college's counsellors and the careers advisers.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ lack of clarity over delegation of responsibility for trainee support
- ◆ insufficiently comprehensive initial assessment
- ◆ ineffective use of individual training plans
- ◆ unsatisfactory process for reviewing trainees' progress
- ◆ little monitoring of trainees' induction to the workplace

48. The college now has clearly defined and allocated responsibilities for trainee support. Initial assessment procedures have been revised to include basic skills and key skills assessment for all learners. In occupational areas, such as motor vehicle maintenance and engineering, an occupational skills assessment is also carried out. The use of individual training plans is still ineffective. Accreditation of prior learning and achievement is carried out when appropriate. Learners' induction to the workplace is now closely monitored and learners sign an induction record, listing the activities undertaken as part of their full induction. The process for reviewing learners' progress is still ineffective. Some progress reviews are not completed in sufficient detail, particularly relating to key skills and personal effectiveness and no clear targets are set. At reinspection the inspectors noted that some of the actions taken by the college to deal with weaknesses have been effective. They identified two significant strengths and two weaknesses and agreed with the grade proposed in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good individual support for learners
- ◆ wide range of additional activities and qualifications available

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor achievement of targets in individual training plans
- ◆ inadequate process for progress reviews

49. Support for individual trainees is good. All trainees have an assistant support tutor who visits them in the workplace, usually every three weeks. Trainees who are identified as potential early leavers, or those requiring additional support as a result of initial assessment, are put on to a close-monitoring list. They are then visited each week to make sure that they are coping with their training. Trainees' support is detailed on a specific document and staff are made aware of the support given. Initial assessment has been improved and is more effective. Trainees who require additional learning support have a support plan and can have one-to-one tuition. Nineteen per cent of work-based trainees are currently receiving regular one-to-one learning support and another 15 per cent have been placed on the close-monitoring list. A wide range of support is available for trainees with disabilities. Specialist equipment include: laptop computers, voice activated computers, a personal computer which incorporates a Braille facility and a closed-circuit television which enlarges text. Staff adapt course information and teaching materials to meet the needs of trainees with physical barriers to learning, such as dyslexia, impaired vision and hearing difficulties. Specialist counsellors and advisers are available within the college throughout the year. A qualified counsellor, a mental health worker and a college chaplain provide personal help and guidance and also take part in group tutorial sessions. Clearly produced leaflets and posters advertise the range of welfare services available and work-based trainees are using these services. The college also has effective links with specialist counselling agencies.

50. Many trainees undertake additional activities. Business administration modern apprentices achieve additional qualifications which include information technology. Trainees in catering can visit hotels and observe demonstrations by visiting chefs. A professional racing driver has visited trainees studying motor vehicle maintenance and they can also take part in building a go-cart. Additional, optional NVQ units are also available. Trainees can take part in a range of sports and leisure activities including fell walking, football, discos and visits to various locations.

51. Statistics since 1997-98 show poor achievement of targets on individual training plans for foundation and advanced modern apprentices in all occupational areas. Although there have been marked improvements to the numbers of modern apprentices staying in training during the past six months, it is not possible to judge the impact that this will have on achievement rates for this year. However, at reinspection, there are early indications that trainees are making good progress in achieving NVQ units. There is less evidence of trainees achieving key skills units. Individual training plans are prepared after discussions between the learner, the assistant tutor and the classroom tutor. The employer is not usually involved in the process. Neither trainees or employers are given a copy of the individual training plan. In general, training plans are used as working documents and are updated as a result of trainees' progress reviews.

52. The process for reviewing trainees' progress is inadequate. Assistant tutors

usually carry out the progress reviews with the trainees and workplace supervisors, every 12 weeks. Important aspects of the progress review process are omitted. For example, trainees understanding of equal opportunities is not routinely checked or reinforced. Although regular health and safety checks are conducted in the workplace, trainees' understanding is not checked at the time of the progress review. Inspectors agreed with the grade.

Management of training

Grade 4

53. The college's management team has been restructured four times within an 18-month period. The college has been without a principal or acting principal for a significant period of time. A newly appointed principal joined the college in April 2001 and has introduced a series of changes to management roles and responsibilities. The new management structure is not yet established. Staff morale is low, owing to a series of redundancies and a lack of strategic direction. Co-ordination of TEC-funded work-based training has been changed, to incorporate a team of assistant tutors who are primarily responsible for conducting work-based assessments and trainees' progress reviews. They report to a work-based co-ordinator who has been in post for nine months. Off-the-job training sessions take place in the appropriate occupational area of the college. The college was accredited as an Investor in People in December 1998.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ late integration of key skills with vocational content on all programmes
- ◆ under-developed management-information systems
- ◆ insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ no systematic arrangements for informing employers of college policies, strategies and targets
- ◆ unclear job roles and responsibilities for trainers and assessors

54. The college has made some improvements to the weaknesses identified at the original inspection, particularly in developing the management information systems and introducing the role of assistant tutors. Both actions have had a positive impact on the management of work-based learning for young people. Job descriptions are now in place and responsibilities have been clarified. Three weaknesses remain from the original inspection, regarding key skills, co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training and employer awareness of the college's policies, strategies and targets. Inspectors identified an additional weakness relating to the lack of any planning to raise staff to industry standards in some occupational areas. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-planned deployment of assistant tutors
- ◆ effective lines of communication

- ◆ good management of physical resources

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no plan to raise staff to industry standards
- ◆ insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ no system for informing employers of college policies, strategies and targets
- ◆ poor management of key skills

55. The management of work-based learning has improved to some extent, with the introduction of assistant tutors. Their role is to maintain contact between the college, trainees and employers and this is proving successful in several ways. The retention rate of work-based trainees has increased from 35 per cent to 67 per cent over the past two years. The number of assessments in the workplace has increased in most areas. Both employers and trainees welcome the frequency of visits to the workplace, which take place three weeks. Progress reviews are usually completed with the full involvement of the employer. Assistant tutors are occupationally experienced and are qualified assessors. There are plans to ensure that all assistant tutors take key skills qualifications.

56. The lines of communication between employers and college staff have improved. Assistant tutors meet at least fortnightly to discuss the progress of individual trainees. They also attend relevant occupational area team meetings, where they can discuss problems which have occurred with individual trainees or employers. In some cases, this has had a significant impact on the quality of the learning experience. For example, trainees are now given the opportunity to repeat theory and practical sessions at college before practising the activity at work.

57. There has been a well-managed move to a purpose-built site at Channelside. There are good physical resources and facilities for all trainees.

58. There is a comprehensive policy for staff training and development, but no arrangements for teachers to update their industrial knowledge. Several employers have expressed concerns over the level of basic occupational skills of some of their trainees. In some areas, notably hairdressing and catering, guest speakers are invited from commercial organisations to speak to staff and trainees about industry requirements.

59. Some efforts have been made to improve the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training, but many of the issues which formed the original weakness still remain. The college does not routinely check that an employer can offer sufficient training to enable achievement of the NVQ. Employers are not given the college timetable for theory and practical teaching sessions and they are unable to link work activities with off-the-job training. Work-based training is not recorded or used as evidence for NVQ portfolios. The amount of work-based assessment is inconsistent. In engineering, there are no assessments by observation, but in motor vehicle and hairdressing, a wide range of assessments are taking place. There is

insufficient planning for assessment in the workplace and trainees and employers do not understand the process. This does not help to form good working relationships between the college and employers.

60. College policies, strategies and targets are not made clear to employers. They receive an information pack, but the content is not explained. Areas such as equal opportunities, the status of their learners and the relevant NVQ and key skills standards are particularly confusing. The college does not keep central records to monitor contact with employers.

61. The management of key skills is inadequate across many occupational areas. The college has been slow to introduce key skills training in some areas, particularly for modern apprentices. Key skills have not been an integral part of the learners' vocational training and therefore evidence has not been collected and assessed. Some learners have completed work for the business administration NVQ at level 3, but do not expect to complete key skills until December 2001. Some motor vehicle learners will complete their NVQ at level 3 by June 2001, but are unsure when they will complete the key skills. Where key skills have been completed, learners do not know if they will receive a certificate.

Quality assurance

Grade 4

62. The quality assurance committee is a sub-group of the board of governors. Information about the quality of training is reported to the committee. It is the college's stated aim that the central focus of the quality assurance system should be the learning experience. The day-to-day quality assurance arrangements are the responsibility of the director of curriculum and quality assurance, who works with a quality assurance co-ordinator. The role of director of curriculum and quality assurance is a new appointment. There are two quality audit teams, one for classroom observation and the other for documentation. There are policies, procedures and work instructions which are set out in a quality assurance manual. There are some specific written procedures for work-based learners. Evidence about the quality of training is collected from a variety of sources, including questionnaires, course reviews, learners' groups and forms completed by trainees after teaching sessions. There are records of curriculum team meetings, course review meetings and observations of lessons and assessments. This information is analysed by a quality co-ordinator and used by occupational area managers to develop action plans. Quality assurance is a standard agenda item for all occupational area team meetings.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ no well-established quality assurance systems and procedures for training programmes
- ◆ failure to standardise key training processes across all programme areas
- ◆ lack of rigour in internal verification practices

- ◆ little analysis of trainees' retention and achievement rates
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of TEC contracts

63. Responsibility for quality assurance has changed five times during the past 18 months, which has resulted in a lack of stability and consistency. However, in spite of the unstable environment, there have been some positive developments. For example, assessments are now being observed and focus groups are being used to give feedback to trainees. Some improvements are too new to judge their impact. For example, a new internal verification handbook has been developed, but many staff are unaware of its existence. Some weaknesses remain from the original inspection, including inadequate internal verification and analysis of achievement data. Compliance with contractual requirements is much improved and is now satisfactory. At reinspection, inspectors identified three additional weaknesses.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ routine collection and analysis of trainees' feedback
- ◆ good monitoring process for off-the-job training
- ◆ good monitoring of retention rates

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no long-term strategy or leadership for quality assurance
- ◆ slow progress towards achieving targets on the action plans
- ◆ insufficient monitoring of achievement data
- ◆ poor assessment and internal verification practices
- ◆ insufficient exchange of good practice across occupational areas

64. The process for gathering feedback from employers is satisfactory, although analysis of questionnaires does not result in the follow up of some important issues. Assistant tutors deal with problems effectively when they are raised, but there is no process for reporting individual issues raised by employers to a senior member of staff.

65. The monitoring of teaching in college is well established. A plan for classroom observations is agreed for the college year which ensures that all staff are observed annually. Observers have been trained, but there has been no development of observation methods. The results from classroom observations are used as part of the college's staff appraisal system.

66. Retention rates are now a key issue for the college. They are monitored across the college and this includes work-based trainees. An attendance officer follows up absenteeism from college courses. Records show that there are now fewer trainees leaving courses without qualifications.

67. There is no long-term strategy to improve quality assurance procedures. There

has been no stable leadership at senior management level and there is no structured quality assurance system which operates across the college. The current approach to quality assurance is fragmented and over-reliant on the good working practices of staff in some occupational areas. There is insufficient evaluation of the experience of trainees and the quality of training varies across occupational areas.

68. There has been little progress towards achieving targets on the action plan drawn up after the original inspection. Several significant weaknesses remain. The lack of co-ordination of key skills has affected the success rates of modern apprentices. Employers have only recently received an information pack on college policies and procedures, despite this being identified as a weakness in January 2000. There is insufficient training in quality assurance for college staff. Some teaching staff do not understand the need for continuous quality improvements. The short-term operating plan suggests that quality assurance improvements should be satisfactory, but there has been insufficient action to improve standards beyond a satisfactory level. Not all staff were involved in the recent self-assessment process for work-based learning.

69. The use of questionnaires throughout the trainee's training programme gives valuable information, which is used to make changes. Additional information is also gathered through focus groups using a standard agenda for discussion. The quality assurance co-ordinator is responsible for collating and analysing the information. A summary is then given to occupation area managers, suggesting improvements. An example of one such improvement is the introduction of additional support teachers in the classroom to assist with learning difficulties. There is insufficient analysis of management information relating to work-based training. There has been no collection and analysis of achievement rates. The current management information system cannot produce reports which would allow the work-based co-ordinator to monitor trainees' progress. Senior managers do not receive up-to-date information to allow them to judge the quality of training given.

70. The quality of assessment and internal verification varies across occupational areas. Assessment planning is poor and for many work-based trainees, there is insufficient assessment taking place in the workplace, particularly within engineering companies. A handbook for internal verifiers has been produced recently, but not all occupational areas have been given a copy. Internal verifiers use sampling plans, but they are poorly completed and sampling ratios differ across occupational areas. Internal verifiers not give adequate feedback to assessors. The college does not always ensure that internal verifiers have sufficient time to carry out their role adequately. External verifiers have expressed concern over the poor internal verification procedures in some occupational areas.

71. There is little exchange of good practice across occupational areas. Where good practice exists, it is not identified or shared. Assessors and internal verifiers do not regularly meet to share problems and standardise practices within the college.

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT: FURNESS
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REINSPECTION MAY 2001