

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT
NOVEMBER 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION
DECEMBER 2001

College of North West London



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 **learn**direct 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 the College of North West London was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for foundation for work, 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 foundation for work, 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).

The College of North West London provides satisfactory training in construction and engineering. These two areas are well resourced. At the original inspection, training in foundation for work was less than satisfactory, with poorly planned training and inadequate recording of activities. This training is now satisfactory. Learners on programmes of English for speakers of other languages receive good initial advice and guidance and many are able to progress to training programmes. Equal opportunities practices are good in the college but do not extend to the workplace. There is good pastoral and learning support for learners. Some individual learning plans, however, are still insufficiently detailed and some reviews of learners' progress are not carried out well. Management of training is now satisfactory, with a comprehensive and widely used management information system. The quality assurance arrangements have a beneficial effect on the training carried out in the college, but, at the original inspection, did not assure the quality of training in the workplace. There are effective measures to promote continuous improvement, but quality assurance does not focus sufficiently on training in the workplace.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	3
Engineering	3
Foundation for work	4

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Foundation for work	3

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality off-the-job training in construction and engineering
- ◆ good initiative to enhance training and employability in construction
- ◆ good promotion of equal opportunities in the college
- ◆ well-planned and effective induction

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor planning and recording of on-the-job training
- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ equal opportunities policies and procedures not specific to work-based learning
- ◆ poor individual learning plans

INTRODUCTION

1. The College of North West London (CNWL) is a large general further education college with three sites (Willesden, Wembley Park and Kilburn) situated in the borough of Brent. At the time of the original inspection, the college had approximately 13,000 students. At the time of the reinspection, the college had approximately 14,000 students and 1,000 full-time and part-time staff. It has provided government-funded, work-based learning since 1996 through the European, Training and Enterprise division (ET&E) which is based at the Wembley Park site. ET&E manages the college's training provision. The teachers in the relevant curriculum faculties provide the off-the-job training and assessment. The college provides training in construction, engineering and foundation for work. The business administration area of work was not inspected owing to the low number of learners. However, this occupational sector was inspected in the context of the New Deal full-time education and training. At the original inspection, there were 101 learners on training programmes, of whom 28 were modern apprentices, 44 were work-based learners and 10 were on other training programmes. At the time of reinspection, there were 94 learners on training programmes, of whom 32 were advanced modern apprentices, 46 were foundation modern apprentices and 16 were on national vocational qualification (NVQ) training programmes. At the time of the original inspection, learners were working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in electrical installation, plumbing, carpentry, refrigeration and air-conditioning, and automotive engineering. At the time of the reinspection, learners were working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in business administration, information technology and early years care and education. At the time of the original inspection, there were also 19 learners on the Life Skills programme of the Learning Gateway, the government's training initiative for 16 and 17 year olds. These included 10 learners on a programme entitled 'Fast Forward' which offers taster courses in craft and building services, and four on a similar programme related to motor vehicle maintenance. At the time of the reinspection, there were 13 learners on the Life Skills element of the Learning Gateway. The college also has a contract for work-based learning for adults, but at the time of the inspection there were no learners. There are now 16 adults on work-based learning programmes, but they did not come within the scope of reinspection. At the original inspection, there were 44 clients on the New Deal full-time education and training option working towards qualifications in information technology (IT) with a local subcontractor and five clients on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) programmes at the college. At the time of reinspection, there were 24 clients on the full-time education and training option of New Deal. Nine of these clients were working towards qualifications in IT, business administration, leisure and tourism, accounting and hairdressing. There were also 15 clients on ESOL courses.

2. The vice-principal for partnership and development is responsible for ET&E. A manager runs the division. At the time of the original inspection, there were 12.5

full-time staff in the division, and this figure had decreased to 11.5 staff by the time of the reinspection. The college receives 82 per cent of its income from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The remaining 18 per cent comes from a variety of sources, including tuition fees, the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), Fusion, the college's commercial training company, the contracts with the training and enterprise councils (TECs) at North West London and Hertfordshire and the Employment Service. By the time of the reinspection, the contracts with the former TECs had been taken over by the London West and the Hertfordshire Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs), respectively.

3. CNWL serves the local community and areas to the north and west of London. Its specialisation in construction and engineering attracts learners from a wider catchment area. The borough of Brent, in which the college is situated, has a population of 243,051. In Brent, people from minority ethnic groups form almost half the population, an estimated 45 per cent of the community, compared with Inner London at 25.6 per cent, and the national average of 6.2 per cent. At the time of the original inspection, about 19 per cent of the population were of Asian origin. By the time of the reinspection, this proportion had risen to 25 per cent. There are over 15,000 refugees and 1,900 asylum seekers in the borough. Some areas in the south of Brent, such as Harlesden, South Kilburn and Stonebridge, experience high levels of social deprivation, including high unemployment rates and poor housing. Since experiencing high unemployment levels in 1993, the local economy has expanded, with additional jobs and major employment growth occurring in high technology, manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, leisure and tourism and service industries. In August 2000, the unemployment rate in Brent stood at 5.5 per cent, compared with London at 4 per cent and the national average at 3.3 per cent. By the time of the reinspection, in September 2001, unemployment in Brent had risen slightly to 5.7 per cent, while unemployment in London had fallen to 3.3 per cent and in England, to 2.9 per cent. In 1999, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above in Brent was 43 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. In 2000, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C and above in Brent had risen to 47.3 per cent, and the national average had increased to 49.2 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. ET&E conducted its first self-assessment process in 1999 to prepare for the Brent area inspection in May 2000. A revised self-assessment report and action plan was produced in preparation for the Training Standards Council's inspection in November 2000. A draft report was prepared, taking into account annual performance data, surveys, changes in funding and contracts. Employers, faculties in the college and learners had little involvement in the process. The draft was then circulated to all ET&E staff for comment and amendments. This process was repeated until a consensus was reached among the ET&E team. The final draft was presented and agreed at an ET&E staff meeting. The report was forwarded to the vice-principal for curriculum and quality assurance who took up any relevant issues with the relevant heads of curriculum faculties. Self-assessment was carried out in June 2001, as part of the CNWL's annual quality assurance and self-assessment process. A self-assessment report was written for reinspection in November 2001.

5. The original inspection was carried out by a team of six inspectors, who spent a total of 30 days at CNWL in November 2000. The team worked jointly with a team of FEFC inspectors during this time, sharing information and each other's findings. The occupational areas inspected jointly were construction and engineering, as well as the generic aspects of training. Inspectors met with a total of 43 learners and 12 work-based supervisors. Twelve employers were visited. Inspectors carried out 35 interviews with CNWL staff, including senior managers, middle managers, curriculum staff and ET&E staff. Thirteen portfolios and 28 learners' files were reviewed. Both teams saw a comprehensive selection of college documents.

6. The reinspection was carried out by a team of five inspectors, who spent a total of 15 days at CNWL in December 2001. Inspectors met 29 learners and seven work-based supervisors and managers. They visited six employers. Inspectors interviewed 24 members of CNWL's staff, including senior managers, middle managers, curriculum and ET&E staff. They looked at six portfolios and 27 learners' files and a range of documents including the records of assessors and of internal and external verification, minutes of meetings, management information, development plans, quality assurance files, policies and written procedures.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the original inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction	1	3				4
Engineering			2			2
Foundation for work		1	1	1		3
Total	1	4	3	1	0	9

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at reinspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Foundation for work		1	1			2
Total		1	1			2

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 3

GOOD PRACTICE

Much of the equipment used in plumbing, gas and electrical has been sponsored by leading equipment manufacturers. For example, combination boilers, instantaneous water heaters, unvented cylinders for plumbing, gas and cable conduit, and fittings for electrical installations. This results in learners having access to the latest industry-standard materials and equipment for training.

7. There are 25 trainees on training programmes in construction. On the youth programme training covers brickwork, electrical installations, plumbing, painting & decorating, and carpentry & joinery. There are four national trainees, two are in plumbing and two in carpentry and joinery. There are 14 modern apprentices; nine are in electrical installations and five in plumbing. There are seven trainees on other training; all are in electrical installations. In addition, there are ten trainees on the Life Skills sample programme, which is part of the Learning Gateway. This provides them with the opportunities to experience the occupational and craft skills required in the industry, prior to their employment. At recruitment, all trainees undergo induction and initial assessment to identify any additional learning needs. A combination of on- and off-the-job training follows. Off-the-job training is carried out through day release training at the Willesden campus of the college.

8. Trainees receive training in practical skills and instruction in theoretical knowledge. Additional support in basic skills is offered to those with identified needs. Trainees gain on-the-job experience with their employer. These employers range in size from sole traders to large companies, local authorities and housing associations. Retention and achievement on the programmes is satisfactory. A member of the ET&E staff carries out trainees' progress reviews. Curriculum staff hold appropriate vocational qualifications, have suitable industrial experience and have achieved assessor and internal verifier qualifications.

9. Inspectors did not agree with some of the strengths cited in the self-assessment report, which they considered to be normal practice. Inspectors verified the weaknesses and identified additional strengths and weaknesses, which were not in the report. The grade awarded was the same as that in the self- assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ wide range of training opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ trainee-led assessment in electrical installations
- ◆ good initiative to enhance training and employability in construction

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no planned on-the-job training
- ◆ poor understanding of NVQ process and procedures by most employers
- ◆ no work-based assessment
- ◆ failure to register plumbing trainees with awarding body

10. Trainees are given day release by their employers to attend college where they receive training in practical skills and instruction in theory related to the training programme they are following. The programmes are well written. The college's staff explain assessment procedures to trainees during their induction. Training workshops have recently been re-sited and refurbished and there is now a good range of training facilities, with extensive practical resources available for training and assessment. Trainees benefit from a supportive and professional approach by the college's staff. This creates a positive environment for learning.

11. Employers are supportive of training and trainees have the opportunity to gain effective occupational experience through their employers using job rotation to create sufficient varied opportunities. The encouragement and opportunities given to trainees enables them to produce work of a high standard. Trainees also recognise the relevance of the off-the-job training in relation to their workplace experience. One trainee in carpentry and joinery was working on a major construction project which involved finishing the joinery in top quality apartments in Central London.

12. At the start of their training, tutors give trainees in electrical installations books containing competence-assessment tasks, which cover details of the units and elements of their NVQ. Following training and experience in the workplace, trainees are encouraged by their tutors to identify their own competency, using as a guide the assessment task in the book provided. Trainees are encouraged to seek opportunities for assessment when they feel that they have the skills and abilities to demonstrate their competence. A system of booking-in for assessment is used; at this point, discussion with the tutor confirms, or otherwise, a trainee's readiness to complete the assessment process.

13. The college, working with the TEC, opened a one-stop shop dedicated to construction, called the Building One-Stop Shop (BOSS). The BOSS is a project funded through the Single Regeneration Budget and is based in the college. It links with a range of partners in the area with the objective of providing training in construction and opportunities for employment. ET&E has established effective

links with the BOSS and a wide range of training opportunities have been developed. These include a construction skills certification scheme, courses in health and safety awareness, bursaries for the purchase of tools and equipment, updating electrical skills and training in gas installation. BOSS supports the 'Fast Forward' project which provides an initial programme of 12-weeks' training in construction crafts. Trainees have access to short programmes to give them experience of carpentry and joinery, painting and decorating, plumbing, plastering, brickwork and electrical installations. Trainees who complete the programmes are offered further training in the trade of their choice and are put forward for employment with local construction companies.

14. Trainees are placed with supportive employers who provide a wide range of workplace training opportunities. However, these placements are not planned in such a way as to link with the training which takes place off the job at the college. ET&E's advisers visit trainees in their workplace to conduct progress reviews. Some trainees have had reviews carried out by different advisers. Advisers have little knowledge and experience of the construction industry and the range of qualifications currently available. Trainees' reviews are irregular and many are missed. Those that take place set few NVQ-related targets. The targets which are set are too general and are neither robust nor sufficiently detailed to guide trainees' progress.

15. Although employers support trainees by providing training with a good range of opportunities, many are not aware of the range and requirements that the NVQ demands and the requirements to be met in the apprenticeship frameworks. Employers are unaware of the content of the off-the-job training. Opportunities to co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training are missed. Some trainees are not clear about NVQ requirements or whether it is the modern apprenticeship, or the national traineeship framework which applies to them.

16. Currently, assessment of trainees takes place in simulated off-the-job conditions. The college recognises this weakness and some trainees have been encouraged to use witness testimony to support their assessment. However, trainees are often unsure about how to collect evidence which will satisfy the requirements of the awarding body. There are no support mechanisms to address this failing. Many opportunities for work-based assessment and/or evidence collection are being missed.

17. Upon registration on the scheme, the awarding body provides trainees in plumbing with a portfolio containing information about the requirements to be met if they are to be successful. However, trainees starting the second year of their programme at CNWL are still not registered with the awarding body and are still awaiting this important programme record book. Under the awarding body's regulations trainers are unable to start assessments on their trainees' programmes.

Engineering

Grade 3

18. CNWL offers training in engineering in the occupational areas of motor vehicle, and refrigeration and air-conditioning. Trainees are recruited through a variety of routes. Many, having applied for and gained employment, are referred to the college for training by their employers. Some are referred by the careers service following enquiries by the young people about training and employment opportunities in the area. There are currently 48 trainees working towards level 2 and 3 NVQs in refrigeration and air-conditioning; 12 are modern apprentices, 33 national trainees and three are other youth trainees. CNWL is one of only three centres in the UK able to offer training and qualifications in air-conditioning and refrigeration. Trainees spend two years working towards the achievement of NVQs at level 2 and are able to achieve the level 3 award within a further period of two years. There are 13 trainees working towards motor vehicle qualifications. Seven are national trainees, one is working towards motor vehicle body repair at level 2, and the remainder are working towards the award in vehicle mechanical and electronic systems, also at level 2. There are two modern apprentices working towards level 3 vehicle mechanical and electronic systems. Four trainees are following a special motor vehicle training 'taster' programme which offers them the opportunity of sampling the different aspects of motor vehicle training, body work, paint and mechanical over a period of six weeks. All other trainees attend CNWL for their off-the-job training, generally through day release or evening class attendance.

19. The self-assessment report identified one strength and one weakness with which the inspectors agreed, but failed to identify other strengths and weaknesses that were found during inspection. The inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ flexible assessment procedures in air-conditioning and refrigeration
- ◆ additional qualifications taken and achieved
- ◆ good retention and achievement in air-conditioning and refrigeration

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ poor planning and recording of on-the-job training
- ◆ little knowledge of NVQs by most employers

20. Trainees receive off-the-job training at the college in well-equipped workshops and classrooms. However, the motor vehicle workshop at one site is poorly decorated and cluttered with old equipment. Curriculum staff are well qualified and experienced in their occupational fields. The off-the-job training is good, with good planning of sessions and a comprehensive system of internal

verification. As part of the quality assurance procedures, college staff observe each other's sessions. All assessments for air-conditioning and refrigeration are carried out at the college, while some assessment at the workplace has recently been introduced in motor vehicle engineering. Witness statements from the workplace are sometimes used as assessment evidence for both awards.

21. There are flexible assessment procedures in air-conditioning and refrigeration for first-year trainees. The awarding body requires that a number of assessments be carried out during the first year. Tutors ensure that these assessments are carried out only when they feel that the trainee is competent in the particular tasks to be assessed. Sometimes it is found that some trainees have not carried out the number of assessment required to progress to the second year. If tutors feel that there are genuine reasons for this omission, periods of illness for example, and that the trainee has demonstrated a good standard of work throughout the year, arrangements are made to carry out the assessments during the early part of the trainees' second year. These trainees attend additional evening sessions from September to December in their second year to make good the deficit.

22. Trainees in air-conditioning and refrigeration are able to achieve additional awards while working towards their NVQs. The awarding body requires trainees to achieve certain additional awards before the NVQ can be awarded. The college tutors ensure that trainees achieve certificates in refrigerant handling, fire fighting, first aid and site safety early in their programme. These awards are considered essential by the awarding body, and the industry generally, to ensure that trainees have the necessary basic competencies needed to carry out work-based training in a safe and responsible manner. Achieving these basic competencies at an early stage in their training is particularly important for trainees in this industry, since most of the work that they undertake is on site in a wide range of industrial situations.

23. There are high rates of retention and achievement for air-conditioning and refrigeration trainees. Seventy-nine per cent of those trainees targeted to achieve their qualification during the last academic year achieved NVQ level 2 or 3. The college is a recognised centre for air-conditioning and refrigeration training and the trainees' results compare well with the overall achievement results for the college which show over 80 per cent achieving levels 2 and 3. The retention rate for motor vehicle trainees is 80 per cent with an achievement rate for NVQ level 2 at 60 per cent. One trainee has achieved a full modern apprenticeship, completing all NVQ and key skill requirements in the vehicle body and paint operations award at level 3. Another trainee has one more unit to complete in heavy vehicle mechanical and electronic systems to complete his apprenticeship.

24. There are missed opportunities for work-based assessment on both programmes. Evidence from work-based activities in motor vehicle engineering usually consists of completed job cards of tasks carried out at the work placement. All assessment for air conditioning and refrigeration takes place at the college. Tutors are aware that both awarding bodies have changed their assessment

requirements and that some on-the-job assessment by direct observation is now required. One motor vehicle tutor has started some assessment at the workplace but this is a new initiative and does not cover the assessment needs of all trainees.

25. Most trainees are working with good employers who offer a wide range of training opportunities and possibilities for assessment at the workplace. For example, some trainees work for a company specialising in air-conditioning servicing and installation based at a large airport. Trainees are required to work to the high standards required by the British Airports Authority. Another trainee is employed by a company which is responsible for the maintenance of all engineering services for a division of a major airline housed in several large office blocks and aircraft hangars.

26. On-the-job training is poorly planned and recorded. While there is good on-the-job training taking place, there is no co-ordination with the off-the-job training. Individual training plans are poor and do not reflect the wide range of training being undertaken. Employers do not contribute to the planning of the training programme and have little influence on the content. Most are not aware of optional units of competence where these are applicable, and are not involved in deciding which units their trainees will pursue.

27. Most employers have little knowledge of NVQs and are unable to assist the trainees with the identification of assessment opportunities and/or evidence that may be used towards the achievement of the NVQ. Employers recognise the importance of good training in the industry and most would welcome the opportunity to ensure that their trainees obtain a good training experience. Some employers in the air-conditioning industry are willing to assist with the assessment process and have undertaken training to equip them to carry out this function. ET&E, in conjunction with the technology faculty at college recently organised a presentation for employers to explain the new assessment procedures and the implications for the college and for employers.

Foundation for work

Grade 3

28. At the time of the original inspection, there were 21 learners on government-funded foundation for work programmes. At the time of the reinspection, there were 28 learners on these programmes. In September 1999, the college extended its provision for young people to include the Life Skills option of the Learning Gateway. Thirteen young people are now on a Life Skills programme. The programme is designed for young people, aged 16 to 17, who are unsure about their employment choices or future training and would benefit from additional support to develop their social and key skills. At the time of the original inspection, the Life Skills programme provided a series of vocational sample courses and a programme of personal development for a minimum of 16 hours a week. Learners may now remain on the programme for up to 20 weeks. Vocational sample courses are provided in construction, engineering, hair and beauty and IT.

The personal development workshops include sessions on the preparation of curriculum vitae, presentation skills, communication skills and interview techniques. The college offers a combined programme of ESOL and computer training within the New Deal full-time education and training option, for young people between 18 and 24 whose first language is not English. Fifteen learners are now following this option. Young people participating in the Life Skills programme, are referred to the college by their personal adviser in the careers service. Personal advisers are responsible for agreeing on an individual development plan with the young person entering the Learning Gateway. Learners referred to the college have an initial interview during which their individual development plan is discussed and the options available within the Life Skills programme are explained. Learners receive an induction to the programme and have a second interview during which staff work with them to produce an action plan which builds on the activities outlined in the individual development plan. Learners receive monthly progress reviews, and additional reviews if they need them. ESOL learners are referred to the college by their New Deal personal adviser. They are given a basic skills assessment before starting at the college. On joining the college they have an interview and further initial assessment to determine the level of their ability in English. CNWL currently has two ESOL groups, at foundation and elementary level, respectively. Life Skills learners work towards a certificate in personal development, and ESOL learners take an externally marked test in literacy.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poorly planned training
- ◆ poor recording of training activities
- ◆ some poor attendance and punctuality

29. Since the original inspection, both the Life Skills and the ESOL programme have been extensively redesigned. The Life Skills element of the Learning Gateway, in particular, now has a different structure and content. Training is now planned carefully, with the exception of the vocational taster component of the Life Skills programme which is not well organised. Learners now have good workshop sessions timetabled into their programme and trainers record activities in these carefully. Learners keep their work and action plans in portfolios. The attendance rate has improved and is now 74 per cent. Learners' timekeeping has improved but some learners arrive late for 20 per cent of training sessions. The strengths identified in the original self-assessment report related to the good guidance and supervision learners receive, and the well-structured induction programme, and they remain features of provision. Inspectors agreed with the grade and many of the judgements given in the revised self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ success of many learners in progressing to training programmes
- ◆ good personal development activities on the Life Skills programme

- ◆ good initial advice and guidance for ESOL learners

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inappropriate learning and assessment materials for Life Skills learners
- ◆ insufficient planning of vocational tasters

30. In 2000-01, 53 per cent of learners on the Life Skills programme, compared with 40 per cent in the previous year, took up training in a wide range of vocational areas, including IT, construction and engineering. Life Skills training has been extended from 12 weeks to 20 weeks. The retention rate for Life Skills learners is high so far. In the 15th week, only one learner out of 14 has withdrawn. This retention rate contrasts favourably with the rate in previous years. In 1999-2000 and 2000-01, the proportions of Life Skills learners who left early were 60 per cent and 48 per cent, respectively.

31. The Life Skills programme has been redesigned with the aim of providing learners with a broad range of learning opportunities. Learners benefit from having their own base room where the group spend three days each week in well-structured personal development activities and also learn computing skills. Learners can spend the remaining two days on vocational courses at the college. Learners make good progress, especially in gaining confidence and maturity.

32. The staff who initially guide and advise ESOL learners are exceptionally experienced in identifying individual needs. They assess learners language skills and ensure that the learners are placed in the group most appropriate for them. Staff have devised their own initial assessment for ESOL learners, which involves the use of specially prepared visual materials to stimulate oral and written responses. Learners are part of a discrete group in which they can openly discuss and share issues with other job seekers.

33. The learning pack, used by Life Skills learners working towards the certificate in personal development, is unsuitable. The learning pack has a repetitive format, which the learners find boring. It asks questions of learners which require abstract and subjective responses. Learners find these questions hard to answer. They cannot identify easily answers which relate to their own circumstances or experience. Trainers also find the pack difficult to use. The training room is bare and uninviting, and there are few visual aids displayed on the walls.

34. Only four of the current Life Skills learners are benefiting from vocational 'tasters'. These learners joined these vocational tasters at the start of their programme. Other learners have not been found a suitable vocational 'taster', although they would like one. The vocational element of the Life Skills programme is not planned thoroughly. Some learners want to try out a vocational programme part way through the academic year, but it is difficult for staff to arrange this for them. It is the college's aim that all learners will join vocational programmes, once they have completed their personal development programme.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

35. Responsibility for equal opportunities lies at a senior level with the vice-principal for partnership and development. There is an equal opportunities sub-committee of the academic board which meets every three months and reports its findings to the academic board. A co-ordinator is responsible for the promotion of equal opportunities in the college. Across the college as a whole, six equal opportunities advisers give support to students, trainees and staff on harassment, discrimination and other areas involving equal opportunities. Responsibility for equal opportunities is clearly understood by the staff and is included in job descriptions. The college has a detailed and comprehensive equal opportunities policy, which is widely disseminated. The college charter, a copy of which is given to all trainees at induction, includes reference to the college's support for equality of opportunity for all. Handbooks for both staff and trainees contain relevant information, including details of the complaints and grievance procedures. Arrangements for equal opportunities meet the TECs' contractual requirements and those of legislation. The college is committed to the identification of, and provision of support for, those with special needs, including specialist assessment and appropriate equipment and facilities to meet the individual needs of trainees. Most areas of the college are accessible for trainees with mobility problems. Data are collected on the ethnic background of trainees, their gender and whether they have a disability. It is collated and analysed to produce statistics which also include consideration of retention and achievement. People from minority ethnic groups are well represented on the staff; 52 per cent come from a minority ethnic background.

GOOD PRACTICE

Following the findings of the Macpherson inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence, the college is committed to the elimination of institutional racism and its root cause. The definition of institutional racism is now contained in the college's up-dated equal opportunities policy.

36. The self-assessment report identified three strengths and two weaknesses. The inspection team agreed with two of the strengths and one weakness. The inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses. The college failed to identify its responsibility for promoting equality of opportunity to employers. The grade awarded was lower than that identified in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-written policies and procedures for use in the college
- ◆ multi-agency projects to improve recruitment of under-represented groups
- ◆ good promotion of equal opportunities

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no policies and procedures specific to work-based training
- ◆ equal opportunities not monitored in the workplace

37. Written policies and procedures give detailed and comprehensive guidance to staff and trainees, and are subject to continuous review and amendment. The equal opportunities policy is well written and includes reference to direct and indirect

discrimination. The college has developed a range of policies and guidelines relating to harassment and disability. Policies and procedures are formally reviewed regularly. An equal opportunities operational plan is drawn up annually to drive improvements. All curriculum faculties and ET&E must ensure that equal opportunities are addressed in their annual operational plans.

38. Equal opportunities are promoted successfully throughout the college. Dedicated staff with a remit to promote equal opportunities are effectively deployed. Staff and trainees are able to recall the equality issues included in their induction programme and details of the policy. The equal opportunities co-ordinator has taken the lead in the production of an induction pack for the use of tutors which contains materials and clear guidelines relating to equal opportunities. Trainees are aware of the complaints procedure and are provided with sufficient information. There is a breadth of training on issues relating to equality of opportunity. This includes training on women in manual trades and working with disaffected youth. Equal opportunities weeks, with guest speakers in attendance, are held annually. They include training on discrimination in the workplace and a talk from a member of staff from the low pay unit. Students' focus groups have been established which includes equality of opportunity on the agenda, although a work-based trainee has yet to be included as a member. These meet twice a year to discuss areas relating to equal opportunities, for example the production of the disability statement.

39. Across all programmes, 23 per cent of the current trainees are from minority ethnic groups which is substantially lower than the percentage in the population of Brent as a whole. However, the average number of young people from minority ethnic groups participating in training in construction and engineering over the last three years has increased from 13 per cent to 44 per cent. This is the result of the projects in which the college takes a leading role, including the BOSS initiative. The college has initiated a wide range of projects with the involvement of other agencies. These are targeted at community groups, including minority ethnic groups, women and those people living on deprived housing estates. One multi-agency-funded scheme initiated this summer drew over 700 young people to the college to take part in vocational taster programmes, fun days and basic and key skills development programmes. Over 20 per cent of the young people were committed to undertaking education or training at the college. At the time of inspection the exact number who took up places is unknown.

40. Policies and procedures for equal opportunities have been developed primarily for college-based training and are not specific to on-the-job training. Arrangements for ensuring equal opportunities within work placements and with employers are weak. Management control of equal opportunities at work is through signed employers' agreements. A requirement for adherence by employers to the college's equal opportunities policy if they do not have their own is not explicit in these contracts. Agreements emphasise the employers' need to be aware of equal opportunities issues and their compliance with statutory requirements. Presently, the monitoring of employers' equal opportunities arrangements is insufficient and

not rigorously and routinely carried out within a formal framework.

Trainee support

Grade 3

41. Learners are referred to ET&E by employers, the careers service, by word of mouth or recruited through marketing activities. Prospective learners are interviewed and given details of the training courses available. Before being recruited onto a specific programme, learners now undergo a vocational skills assessment to ascertain the most suitable level of training for them. All required paperwork is completed and learners take an initial assessment of their basic skills. Learners with ET&E, have access to a wide range of specialist learning support and counselling services through the college. The former TECs' and now the local LSCs' contracts require that learners on foundation for work, traineeships and apprenticeships are reviewed every 12 weeks. Unemployed learners are referred to an employment placement officer who identifies suitable job opportunities for them.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor initial assessment practice
- ◆ additional support not always offered
- ◆ extremely poor individual training plans
- ◆ insufficient and ineffective reviews for most trainees

42. Following the original inspection, a detailed action plan was implemented following a review of current procedures relating to support for learners. All learners now undergo an assessment of their vocational skills in order to find out which programme is most suitable for them. This is followed by a basic skills and a key skills test to ascertain learners' needs for additional learning support. There are now a considerable number of ET&E learners who receive learning support. At the time of the original inspection, there were often delays in referring learners for additional learning support. Learners are now usually referred within two weeks of being diagnosed as needing support. Although some training plans and reviews have improved in quality since the original inspection, most are inadequate and incomplete. Inspectors agreed with the grade and many of the judgements given in the revised self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good pastoral and learning support
- ◆ good training to further learners' personal development
- ◆ well-planned and effective induction

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor individual learning plans

◆ insufficient and ineffective progress reviews for some learners

43. Learners are actively encouraged to attend additional training sessions designed to assist them in developing personal skills such as effective communications, motivation and study skills. Many of the sessions are designed to give practical information and support to enable learners to prepare for, and find employment. The sessions are well planned with clear aims and objectives. The session on job search covers a range of topics from how the individual should market and present themselves to prospective employers, completion of application forms and help and advice on interview techniques. During the original inspection and the reinspection, attendance at these sessions was good, with in excess of 200 individual attendances at the sessions in the period between July and October. Learners complete an evaluation at the end of each session, which is analysed and used to improve them where necessary. The programme has been further developed following the original inspection to include budgeting, business planning and health and fitness programmes, including those for specific groups like Moslem women. Good collaborative arrangements have been made with a local health action zone to fund personal development activities. During their progress reviews, learners identify personal development workshops they wish to attend.

44. Over a third of current ET&E learners have been referred to learning support staff for additional initial assessment. Learning support staff keep college staff informed when learners do not turn up for specific assessments. Many of these learners now receive effective support either individually or in groups, and this is recorded carefully. Learning support tutors are carefully matched to the learners and their programme. Many have a sound knowledge of the subject areas that learners are following. An effective innovation has been the introduction of breakfast classes in key skills for learners. Learners can also receive additional help with key skills from tutors in the classroom. All learners benefit from pastoral reviews with a member of staff who does not train them and with whom they feel confident when discussing issues not related to their programme. The families of learners are also encouraged to become involved in helping to resolve issues which affect training and development.

45. This year, the induction programme was increased from one to two days. It is well planned and learners benefit from it. Learners provide an evaluation of the induction they receive. There are centrally written schemes of work for induction and plans for each induction session. Learners are involved in induction activities. There is a strong emphasis on health and safety, in particular relating to the college workshops. Learners are given a good introduction to their programme. Learners who are absent from the group induction, are given individual induction sessions by their tutors. Trained staff observe trainers giving induction sessions, and identify areas of good induction practice and those requiring improvement.

46. Key information is often omitted from learning plans. Some learning plans contain the qualification title and number and a list of NVQ units all of which have the same target date for achievement, which is the date on which the learner is due

to complete the course. There is a discrepancy in some learning plans between the date specified for the achievement of key skills certification and the date given to the whole group. If learners fail to meet target dates, they are not given revised dates. Most learners are given additional target dates by which they must complete assignments. Little recognition is given to learners' prior achievements in key skills. Learning plans do not record any additional courses that the learner undertakes on the job. Learning plans do not always reflect what the learner is doing on their programme. Training in the workplace is not covered in many learning plans and learners' attendance for this is not recorded adequately.

47. Many learners have not received enough formal reviews of their progress. Some learners, however, have received reviews which are informal and unstructured. Few specific targets are set during reviews, and some action points are insufficiently precise. Issues identified during a review are not always followed up effectively at subsequent reviews. Staff carrying out reviews do not challenge the decision of some learners to decline an offer of additional learning support, even though they are experiencing difficulties in their work. Employers are not involved in reviews.

Management of training

Grade 3

48. CNWL has established a discrete division within the organisation, ET&E, to manage its contract work. ET&E also manages the New Deal full-time education & training option and other initiatives supported by European funding. There is a divisional manager who reports to one of the college's vice-principals who has ultimate management responsibility. These key personnel represent ET&E at various levels of the college's management, sitting on several committees and working groups. Prior to the original inspection, there had been significant changes in the staffing structure. Since then, the staffing establishment has been reduced by one, and there are now 11.5 full-time staff in the ET&E team, a couple of whom are on temporary contracts of employment. At the time of the original inspection, managers had been focusing on developing New Deal and on establishing an entry level scheme to attract learners from minority groups within the local community into the construction and engineering industries. There is one subcontract agreement, with a private training provider for training in computing for the New Deal clients. The college has a specific business plan for ET&E. There are written procedures for the recruitment of staff, induction, appraisal and their professional development. Staff receive an annual appraisal during which their training needs are identified, and then taken account of in their personal action plan. At the original inspection, inspectors agreed with the grade and many of the judgements given in the original self-assessment report.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poorly managed training programmes
- ◆ roles and responsibilities unclear

◆ ineffective management information system

49. CNWL has rectified fully two of the weaknesses identified during the original inspection. A post-inspection action plan was drawn up and implemented. There are now regular meetings of staff. Staff also have one-to-one discussions with managers each month. ET&E staff now work in the faculties to develop the links with faculty staff. There are now service level agreements between ET&E's management and the college faculties. Job descriptions detail the key tasks each member of the team will carry out. ET&E's management information system is now a strength. Some progress has been made in improving the management of training programmes. Nevertheless, some aspects of the management of training remain poor. Inspectors agreed with the judgements and the grade given in the revised self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-structured, diverse and appropriate staff development activities
- ◆ comprehensive and widely used management information system

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some poor aspects of the management of training programmes

50. ET&E has a staff development plan, updated annually, which demonstrates clear links to the college's strategic objectives and the division's operational plan. The division has planned an effective course of action to prepare staff for the forthcoming changes in the training and assessment qualifications of persons involved in work-based learning. The college holds four well planned days of staff development each year which all members of staff attend. ET&E invited representatives from local organisations, including those from the local LSC and Employment Services, to this year's training event, which was on ways of raising the standard of work-based learning. One of last year's themes was institutional racism. Staff attend many internal and external training events that are highly relevant to their jobs. Training covers a broad range of topics including, for example, basic skills training, racial harassment, developing skills in IT, identifying learning needs and developing key skills, and also helps staff to obtain teaching qualifications. Information on training opportunities is published in bulletins circulated regularly to all staff who take good advantage of them. All personnel are encouraged to join any college course they wish, at no cost to themselves, to develop either their professional or personal skills.

51. The ET&E management information system is now linked effectively with the college's management information system. All staff use the ET&E management information system regularly to obtain up-to-date details about their learners and teaching groups. At the original inspection, managers had no hard facts about performance and data were not used when making management decisions or setting targets. Managers now use the data available to them to plan ways of improving training and learners' performance. Within departments, staff use the

management information system to monitor their learners' attendance and achievement. Good practice in the use of the system is shared among staff and faculties. For example, ET&E staff, in conjunction with members of the construction faculty, devised a system for monitoring and recording the performance of learners, and this is now being used across the college. Staff spoke well of the management system and of its benefits to them and the learners.

52. Some aspects of the training programmes are still poorly managed. There are good links with employers, but these are not used to full effect to co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training. Although work-based assessment has been introduced for most learners, this is still at a very early stage. Some learners have only recently been given guidance on how they can record evidence in the workplace of their acquisition of NVQ competences. The college has been trying to recruit work-based assessors, but there are still not enough assessors for all the learners in the workplace. Learners recruited before the beginning of the current academic year are still being introduced to key skills training and none has yet achieved certification in key skills.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

53. The college has detailed written procedures for quality assurance. ET&E manages the work-based learning contracts and has additional informal quality assurance arrangements. The college aims to improve its performance through an annual structured programme of self-assessment. The results of self-assessment are used to set divisional targets and strategic objectives. ET&E has a set of standards and measurable targets that are determined by all the divisional staff during an annual development day and structured meetings. The divisional manager is responsible for quality assurance within ET&E. ET&E and faculty staff participate in structured quality assurance meetings and members of the work-based learning 'quality steering group' attend these.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ inadequate quality assurance arrangements
- ◆ poor use of key performance indicators
- ◆ quality assurance arrangements not fully co-ordinated
- ◆ insufficient critical analysis in self-assessment process

54. Since the original inspection, major changes have been made to the quality assurance systems for work-based learning. ET&E has established quality assurance criteria and now has clear quality assurance procedures for most of its activities. The divisional manager manages and co-ordinates these effectively. Key performance indicators have been established. The management information system has been improved. Data are collected systematically. The quality assurance of work-based learning, including self-assessment, is an integral part of the college's overall quality assurance arrangements. Self-assessment is now

thorough and effective. At the reinspection, inspectors agreed with some of the judgements in the revised self-assessment report but awarded a grade lower than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good arrangements for the quality assurance of off-the-job training
- ◆ effective arrangements to promote continuous improvement

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient focus of quality assurance system on the workplace

55. The college has comprehensive and effective arrangements to improve the learners' experience while they are on the college's premises. There are systematic opportunities for learners, employers, staff and other stakeholders to offer their views on the college's performance, through evaluation questionnaires and focus groups. Findings are analysed and appropriate action is taken. The college's staff are fully engaged in the organisation's self-assessment process. There is a college charter which explains what levels of service should be provided. Teaching sessions are systematically observed and graded. There are clearly written procedures for the observation of teaching sessions. Working parties manage the observation process, deal with issues which arise and implement any necessary changes. Learners evaluate the teaching they receive and their views are discussed at staff meetings. There is a programme of internal audit. All ET&E staff participate fully in the quality assurance process.

56. ET&E now has an effective quality assurance system which is an integral part of the college's quality assurance system. Since the implementation of this system, real improvements in work-based learning have occurred. The system is still being developed and further changes have been made to it since the start of the academic year in September 2001. All staff take part in the quality assurance process with enthusiasm and are keen to ensure the continuous improvement of training. Employers are encouraged to do all they can through innovative but effective measures, to ensure learners benefit fully from their experience in the workplace. For example, the college held an 'information day' for employers at which they discussed ways in which the promotion of equal opportunities could also enhance business and lead to new business opportunities.

57. ET&E and faculty staff make visits to learners in the workplace regularly, and more recently they have done so in order to carry out internal verification. During these visits, however, they do not carry out quality assurance of learners' experience in the workplace. During learners' progress reviews, weaknesses in aspects of training are identified and action is usually taken to rectify them. Such action, however, is reactive and is not part of a strategy for the improvement of workplace activities. Although the college has well-written quality assurance policies and procedures, there is little reference in them to learners in the workplace. The CNWL internal verification procedures do not explicitly include

arrangements for internal verification in the workplace. ET&E have recently compiled a draft set of quality criteria which, in theory, cover all aspects of training. There is, however, no reference in these criteria for training in the workplace. Each faculty maintains 'programme logs'. These set out the quality assurance processes and give details of the paperwork they entail. The logs are also a record of the action needed to improve the programme. The log, however, does not include the findings from workplace audits, such as those which have been carried out of health and safety practices and internal verification procedures.

58. The self-assessment report for the reinspection was detailed and clear. All staff were fully involved in the self-assessment process. The revised self-assessment report was evaluated and approved by the work-based learning 'quality steering group.' Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses and all but one of the grades in the most recent self-assessment report. They identified additional strengths and weaknesses not mentioned in the self-assessment report.