

INSPECTION REPORT

London College of Beauty Therapy

07 October 2002



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

| SEVEN-POINT SCALE | FIVE-POINT SCALE |
|-------------------|------------------|
| grade 1 | grade 1 |
| grade 2 | |
| grade 3 | grade 2 |
| grade 4 | grade 3 |
| grade 5 | grade 4 |
| grade 6 | grade 5 |
| grade 7 | |

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
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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.

Overall judgement

In those cases where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

- more than one third of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

The London College of Beauty Therapy is a private training company based in the central London borough of Westminster. It provides training for clients on the New Deal 18-24 in hairdressing and beauty therapy. There are currently eight clients on New Deal 18-24 training programmes.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, training in hairdressing and beauty therapy are satisfactory. Leadership and management are good. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory and quality assurance is good.

GRADES

| Leadership and management | 2 |
|---------------------------|---|
| Contributory grades: | |
| Equality of opportunity | 3 |
| Quality assurance | 2 |

| Hairdressing & beauty therapy | 3 |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Contributory grades: | |
| New Deal 18-24 | 3 |

KEY STRENGTHS

- good professional development of staff
- good use of information technology
- good promotional activities
- good quality assurance procedures
- good training in beauty therapy
- good client support
- effective jobsearch activities

KEY WEAKNESSES

- inadequate equal opportunities policy
- no formal review of training programme
- poor retention rates
- ineffective initial assessment

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more consistent equal opportunities training at induction
- more consistent written feedback on assignments

THE INSPECTION

1. Three inspectors spent a total of nine days with the London College of Beauty Therapy in October 2002. All clients were interviewed. Four portfolios of evidence, other assessed work and 12 clients' files, including individual learning plans, were examined. All key staff connected to the New Deal training were interviewed. Inspectors observed and graded six learning sessions. They examined a range of documentary evidence, including business plans, management information, minutes of meetings, staff details, appraisals, the college website, staff intranet and client feedback. Inspectors studied the self-assessment report which was produced in May 2002 and updated in September 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

| | Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Grade 5 | Grade 6 | Grade 7 | Total |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Hairdressing & beauty therapy | 1 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Total | 1 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. The London College of Beauty Therapy (the college) was established in May 1995 to provide beauty therapy training. In October 2000, the college moved to a new location in the West End of London. Hairdressing training was added to the curriculum at this time. The college employs 28 full-time and eight part-time staff. Fourteen staff members are employed as trainers and assessors, with four qualified as internal verifiers. The college recruits clients from Greater London and the surrounding counties. The college has good access to tube, bus and mainline railway stations. The college is open throughout the year, and has a monthly enrolment across most NVQ training programmes. It is working with the cosmetic and fragrance retail sector to develop relevant qualifications. The college is a major subcontractor in a franchise arrangement with a large further education college, providing full-time national vocational qualification (NVQ) training in hairdressing and beauty therapy for further education students. New Deal clients attend NVQ classes alongside these clients. The college contracts with the southern region of Jobcentre Plus for New Deal 18-24 and has had its own contract since August 2001. At the time of inspection, there were eight clients.

3. Westminster contains major retail trade centres, including Oxford Street and Regent Street. The proportion of the local population from minority ethnic groups is 21.4 per cent, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent. In May 2002, the unemployment rate in Westminster was 0.8 per cent, compared with the national average of 3 per cent. The unemployment for London as a whole was 3.6 per cent. The proportion of young people achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above in 2001, in Westminster, was 39 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

New Deal 18-24

4. College staff are appropriately qualified and experienced to teach hairdressing and beauty therapy. Clients receive good support while attending the college, with close monitoring of attendance, punctuality and progress. Teaching is satisfactory. The physical resources available to clients, with the exception of a shortage of hairdressing models, are good. Clients acquire useful skills in information technology (IT) and enjoy the organised, well-taught jobsearch activities. IT is particularly well used in training. Retention rates are poor, as some clients take time off or are dismissed because of funding rules. Retention rates have improved in the past few months, however.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

5. The college is a private training organisation. Its work is overseen by a charitable trust. Its major source of income is through a partnership arrangement with a local further education college. It also has income from relevant businesses used by the general public. The college is run by a management team comprising the principal, the directors of quality assurance and operations, two programme area managers and the financial controller. One of the programme area managers is responsible for New Deal clients. In total, the college employs 28 full-time and eight part-time staff. Fourteen of the staff are employed as trainers and assessors, with four qualified as internal verifiers. Other staff members include a team of finance and administrative staff, and staff employed to support the commercial activities of the college. The college is accredited with the Investors in People standard, which is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. The college has a written departmental quality assurance procedures manual. There is a separate New Deal quality assurance manual and both a student and a staff handbook, which include the equal opportunities policy statement. All documents are available to all staff on the college intranet, and are regularly updated. The college produced its current self-assessment report in May 2002. This report was updated in September 2002 .

STRENGTHS

- good professional development of staff
- extensive industrial links
- good use of IT
- good promotional activities
- prompt and effective action on complaints
- good quality assurance procedures
- good collection and use of client feedback
- effective self-assessment process

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate equal opportunities policy
- no formal review of training programme

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more consistent management of meetings
- more consistent equal opportunities training at induction
- clearer targets in development plan
- better use of internal verification feedback forms
- better document control

6. There is good professional development of staff. The induction programme is good, a strength acknowledged in the self-assessment report. It ensures that new staff understand how the organisation operates. Teachers are given good support to develop their competence in the use of teaching aids, such as the interactive whiteboards available in the main teaching rooms. New staff are able to shadow experienced staff. Training plans for new staff include teaching and other professional qualifications, as well as qualifications in assessment, verification and health and safety. Appraisals are used effectively to monitor staff performance. They include self-assessment, constructive feedback on performance and the agreement of objectives and staff development for the coming year. An assessment of the contribution of individual staff members to the overall performance of the college is also included. Teaching staff are responsible for ensuring they update their occupational competence to meet national training organisation development requirements. Although there is no college training plan, all staff are encouraged to develop their relevant skills. Staff are encouraged to broaden their occupational competences by attending courses offered by the college.

7. The college has extensive links at both strategic and operational level with key organisations within the hair and beauty therapy industries. Staff participate in the development of national standards and have a good awareness of future changes in training and assessment. Clients are able to participate regularly in commercial and charitable activities which help their development of occupational competence. Employers regularly visit the college to meet with clients to demonstrate industrial practice and provide careers information. A recently introduced job shop in the college is used by employers to recruit clients at the end of their training.

8. The college makes good use of IT and has invested in the use of IT as both a management and a training tool. This strength was acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Appropriate software is used to record individual client records. These data files are used systematically by staff to record client information and monitor client progress. The college regularly uses reports on individual client records to monitor the impact of marketing on client recruitment, and inform other organisations of college performance. The college makes effective use of the college intranet to provide staff with a range of information, including handbooks and quality assurance manuals. Teaching resources developed by staff are shared effectively with all staff. The intranet is also used effectively to support teaching, learning and assessment activities and provide careers information. Staff make good use of e-mails. The college has introduced client assessment software that tests clients' background knowledge at level 2 NVQ.

9. There is no current formal contract with the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Some funding issues with a local further education college have not been resolved. However, there are clear strategic objectives which are communicated effectively to staff. These include plans to open another campus and to work with a new sector steering group to develop new training programmes and courses. Organisational performance is focused on the achievement of demanding targets for retention and achievement rates. There is an annual 10 per cent salary bonus for all staff based on the

achievement of these targets. Other financial and non-financial data are used to monitor and evaluate business performance.

10. The college has clear lines of responsibility. The principal meets with all staff twice each year to review business performance and to communicate college priorities and objectives with key targets for retention and achievement rates. The college managers meet regularly. There are regular meetings of the curriculum and departmental teams. Other meetings are held as and when required. Agendas are not used at all meetings. Meetings generally focus on day-to-day issues and do not always allow staff to discuss wider college business. For example, action plan updates, health and safety and equality of opportunity are not identified as standing agenda items. Some minutes of meetings do not contain sufficient detail, and the use of action-planning from points raised at meetings is inconsistent.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

11. The college has an equal opportunities policy that outlines requirements and commitments and recommends procedures. The staff handbook contains information about equal opportunities and disciplinary and grievance procedures. Clients receive a handbook at induction that contains a student charter and an equal opportunities policy statement. The training manager has overall responsibility for equal opportunities. The college is situated in a listed building and has recently commissioned a feasibility study relating to access for people with restricted mobility. Currently some areas of the building do not have adequate access for people with restricted mobility. There is a toilet with disabled facilities.

12. Promotional activities are good. Detailed records are kept of all clients. Staff monitor client recruitment by age, gender and ethnicity, and use these data to assess the impact of promotional activities. All clients are referred by Jobcentre Plus. Personal advisers regularly attend the college and promotional literature is distributed to jobcentres. Recruitment and promotional literature is good and uses images that promote equality of opportunity. Information is organised well. There is good promotion of training to clients from under-represented groups. Clients who have completed their training programmes are used in the promotional literature. The college has a website to match clients with appropriate qualifications to suitable employers. Clients also use it to give feedback about the training. They can also complete a job preferences survey. The website contains a section on how to complete a curriculum vitae. Interview advice is also provided, as well as handouts used in jobsearch activities with clients. Information on the website contains similar text and images to that displayed in the promotional literature. A large number of employers are registered on the website and advertise a wide range of jobs. There are currently over 200 job vacancies on the website. A computer linked to the website has been installed in the reception area of the college for jobsearch. There are good learning materials for clients with literacy difficulties. Clients with English as a second language who are working towards NVQs at level 3 in beauty therapy have support workers to write their course notes.

13. There is an effective and clearly defined complaints procedure for staff and clients. Detailed records are kept of complaints, which are dealt with effectively. For example, one client complained to Jobcentre Plus about an initial interview. This was dealt with quickly and effectively after liaison with the personal adviser, and a further interview was organised. Clients unhappy with their work placements have been given work placements in salons at the college. Issues of concern and unacceptable behaviour are dealt with quickly and effectively and are well documented through the college disciplinary procedure. For example, following well-implemented disciplinary procedures with one client, the client went on to achieve an NVQ at level 2 in beauty therapy. Complaints relating to assessments and internal verification are investigated thoroughly and feedback is given to clients.

14. Staff have been consulted about equal opportunities as part of the self-assessment process. Although equal opportunities is regularly discussed at staff meetings and staff

have a good awareness of relevant issues, there has been no recent formal staff training in equal opportunities. The equal opportunities policy for staff and clients contains information relating education, training, recruitment, promotion and development. There are clear procedures for complaints, disciplinary and grievance matters and gross misconduct. However, the policy does not contain information in relation to recent relevant legislation. Staff and clients are not always aware of recent additions relating to harassment, discrimination and disability awareness. The policy is not dated and does not highlight when it will be monitored, analysed and reviewed by managers. Clear priorities and targets are not set to improve the implementation of equal opportunities across the college. Equal opportunities is not discussed in a consistent way during inductions. Not all clients have a good understanding of relevant issues. Equal opportunities is not included on the induction checklist.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 2

15. The quality assurance process comprises a series of written procedures that cover all key training processes. The training manager is responsible for all quality assurance arrangements in the college. There is a range of mechanisms to collect and analyse feedback from clients and employers. These are used effectively to improve provision. A system of feedback questionnaires is used for key stages of the training programme. Points raised by clients are acted upon quickly. For example, as a result of client feedback the college has created a job shop, which ensures clients have individual appointments with the careers adviser to follow up job leads, online and directly with employers. The careers adviser also teaches jobsearch to clients and collects information relating to the six-week quality assurance questionnaire. Clients complete questionnaires after induction, six weeks into the training programme, and at the end of the training programme.

16. There is effective action to ensure continuous improvement. The college takes prompt action to rectify weaknesses. Client files are well organised and maintained. Monthly audits of these files identify any improvements needed. Checklists are maintained for the completion of clients' timesheets. Any corrective action identified in audits by Jobcentre Plus is quickly implemented and documented. College evaluations identified a high level of leavers on the New Deal programmes. The college provides further in-depth information about courses to personal advisers and has introduced individual advice and guidance sessions for applicants. Further sessions with the careers adviser are also provided. There is ongoing observation of training sessions. The college has used external consultants to help improve the hairdressing and beauty therapy training. In particular, consultants recently identified issues relating to insufficient client involvement in teaching sessions. The college organised training days for staff to discuss and resolve this. New lesson plans have been produced to ensure that there is small and large group work, and more role-play to reinforce teaching activities. These are currently in use and work well. There is close monitoring of staff activities. The internal verification process identified problems with a tutor relating to assessment decisions and class management. These issues were fully documented and action followed up to minimise the impact on the clients.

17. Employer feedback is collected informally in relation to use of the website and the standard of service provided by the college. It is used in jobsearch sessions with clients to ensure that qualifications match future job requirements. Employers also liaise with college staff to inform them of clients' progress when on work placements. College procedures are in place for interviews and for initial assessment. Checklists are used for induction. Tutors use a detailed checklist to monitor their course activities and ensure that clients work towards a number of NVQ units, complete tests and practical activities within specified periods of time. The college also has standard specifications for beauty therapy NVQs at levels 2 and 3. This ensures that all tutors teach key treatments in the same way. Staff also ensure consistency in teaching by developing shared resources. One tutor has developed resources for a role-playing exercise, which were shared with the rest of the team. Resources are also shared between hairdressing and beauty therapy

staff. Destination data are also collected and analysed to monitor clients' career progression. Internal verification is generally thorough, and involves observation of assessment and monitoring of portfolios of evidence. Awarding body guidelines are followed.

18. The self-assessment process is effective. It has been in place since 1998 and has involved all staff. Ongoing constructive discussions between staff emphasise sharing good practice. For the current self-assessment report, members of the curriculum teams worked through a series of questions related to the 'Common Inspection Framework' in order to analyse strengths and weaknesses of their training provision. These were discussed and analysed at a series of team and management meetings. The self-assessment report accurately identified the key strengths and weaknesses, and is used effectively to promote continuous improvement.

19. There is currently no training programme review in place to benchmark annual performance. The college does not look at the performance of the hairdressing and beauty therapy programmes at a particular time of year. Courses are continuously monitored. However there is no annual review to compare training programmes. There is no link of an annual review to the self-assessment cycle. Formative records for internal verification are not always signed and dated by the internal verifier and assessor. Some procedures, such as those relating to internal verification, are dated and others are not. It is sometimes difficult to ascertain when versions of particular documents, such as feedback from clients, have been updated. Targets on the development plan do not systematically give specific actions that should be followed through with definite timescales. An example of this was a target to 'improve understanding'.

Good Practice

All staff are given their own training budget of £500 to support training consistent with college business objectives. Using this fund, staff have attended trade exhibitions, demonstrations, courses on hairdressing, advanced make-up and reflexology, and training in the safe use of electrical equipment.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 3

| Programmes inspected | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| New Deal 18-24 | 8 | 3 |

20. There are currently eight clients working towards NVQs at level 2 in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Clients may join the training programme at any time of the year. Most clients complete their NVQ at level 2 in approximately six months. All clients attend the college for two days each week for training with a further two days for work experience, currently provided in the college salons. Training comprises theory, portfolio-building, practical training and assessment, and weekly jobsearch activities. The college has extensive links with employers throughout London. Clients come from all over London and are referred by Jobcentre Plus. They receive an interview at the college before starting training. Inductions are held at the start of the training programme, and includes course requirements, appeals procedures, health and safety, equal opportunities and NVQ requirements. There is a new initial assessment procedure. The college operates from its training centre in London, close to Oxford Street and Regent Street. All staff have or are working towards appropriate assessment qualifications. Four staff are internal verifiers.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

| New Deal 18-24 | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---------|-----|---------|---|---------|---|-----------|---|---------|---|
| New Deal 18-24 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2002-03 | | 2001-02 | | 2000-01 | | 1999-2000 | | 1998-99 | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | 6 | | 24 | | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | | |
| Planned learning completed | 0 | 0 | 2 | 8 | | | | | | |
| Gained job | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | |
| Still in training | 6 | 100 | 2 | 8 | | | | | | |

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

STRENGTHS

- good training in beauty therapy
- effective and innovative use of IT in training
- good teaching resources
- good client support

- effective jobsearch activities

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention rates
- inadequate numbers of hairdressing models
- ineffective initial assessment

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more consistent written feedback on assignments

21. There is good practical and theory training in beauty therapy. Training sessions are well planned, with clear aims and objectives that are communicated effectively with clients. Where possible, clients' experiences are used during training. Clients contribute effectively during training. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards to summarise key points. Handouts and verbal and written tests are used to monitor learning. Good use is made of demonstration to help clients prepare for working on their own models. Professionalism in the workplace is reinforced throughout the training programme. This includes the dress and behaviour of therapists, as well as safe working practices. Hairdressing training is good or satisfactory. Theory and practical training is good. Many clients take their NVQ at level 3 once they have qualified at level 2. Clients are able to take part in outside activities such as photo shoots and fashion shows. They also attend trade shows and training from major product manufacturers.

22. There is effective innovative use of IT in training. All tutors use interactive whiteboards effectively. These enable tutors to save key notes for other clients who have missed a training session. The boards also enable images and other resources to be displayed directly on the board. Tutors effectively combine the use of these boards with appropriate handouts. Assessments at level 2 NVQ are available online. These provide clients with instant feedback on their performance, without having to wait for a tutor to mark work. Teaching resources are available for staff in electronic form and clients are provided with paper versions. All clients have timetabled computer sessions to produce assignment work, and use electronic training packages. Clients are able to use computers for jobsearch activities.

23. Teaching resources are good. The college is kept to a high standard. Hairdressing and beauty therapy salons are to commercial standards. There are training rooms for clients to practise techniques before they work in the college salons. Beauty products are made specifically for the college, while hairdressing products are from one of the

major commercial manufacturers. Resources such as skeletons and anatomical models are available for clients. Professionally printed course booklets have been produced by the college. These are given to clients to support their training in the theory of hairdressing and beauty therapy. Although there is no wet area in beauty therapy, there are arrangements with a nearby commercial spa for clients to carry out training and work there if necessary.

24. Client support is good. One member of staff, who is a qualified beauty therapist and hairdresser with qualifications in teaching English to speakers of other languages, works as a learning support specialist. She carries out initial assessments of clients' reading and writing skills as well as their IT skills. Good individual support is currently being provided for one client. The support sessions are based on the needs of each individual client. A room is set aside to provide individual and confidential client support. Relevant help is provided with written tests if necessary. Clients' individual problems and issues are dealt with promptly and effectively.

25. There are effective regular jobsearch activities, which include interview techniques, curriculum vitae preparation and other relevant activities. Tutors follow up promptly any non-attendance or poor punctuality of clients. Accurate and comprehensive client records are kept. Towards the end of the clients' time with the college, a letter is sent to their home clearly detailing what is required to complete their NVQ. Effective and well-recorded progress reviews are held with clients. Most clients have had insufficient contact with their personal advisers. This is outside of the control of the college. Internal verification is satisfactory. It is planned in advance, covers all assessors, and samples all elements and NVQ units. Portfolios contain appropriate evidence.

26. Retention rates are poor. The college has carried out action to rectify this weakness. Clients are dismissed from the training programme if they have problems with punctuality and attendance. However, many clients have valid reasons such as childcare problems. Some clients do not want a career in hairdressing or beauty therapy, a weakness acknowledged in the self-assessment report. The interview process has been improved to rectify this problem and retention rates are improving. Retention rates are consistently above 90 per cent for the college's franchised provision.

27. There are inadequate numbers of hairdressing models for New Deal clients to work on and experience a realistic working environment. There is often only one model to work on in a practical session. There are insufficient models for perms. Some clients find it difficult to achieve their NVQ in the tight timescales due to these problems. The time period allowed for completion of an NVQ at level 2, particularly in hairdressing, is very difficult to achieve. Clients are encouraged to work on customers in their work experience in the college salons.

28. There is ineffective initial assessment. Insufficient account is made of clients' prior experience in hairdressing when planning training programmes. Although clients receive extensive verbal feedback on their assignment work, they receive insufficiently detailed written feedback.

Good Practice

The college has introduced client assessment software that tests clients' background knowledge at level 2 NVQ in both hairdressing and beauty therapy. A programme of assessments is scheduled into individual learning plans. Clients are given instant feedback on their performance and how it can be improved.