

INSPECTION REPORT

Ruskin College

24 October 2003



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 learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** 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

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.

INSPECTION REPORT

Ruskin College

Contents

Summary

Description of the provider	1
Scope of provision	2
About the inspection	3
Overall judgement	3
Grades	4
Key findings	4
What learners like about Ruskin College	9
What learners think Ruskin College could improve	9
Key challenges for Ruskin College	10

Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	14
Equality of opportunity	16
Quality assurance	17
Humanities	19
Community learning	22

INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Ruskin College (the college) is a small residential adult education college in Oxford. The college was founded in 1899 with two main purposes: to enable working class people to fulfil their potential and have access to university education; and to train the actual and potential leaders of the working class movements. Initially it admitted only men; female learners were admitted in 1919. The current mission of the college is to continue to provide educational opportunities to the excluded and the disadvantaged, and through education, transform their lives. The college has a long history of contributing to lifelong learning, widening participation and social inclusion. It has strong historical links with the trade unions and labour movement and the local community.
2. The college was one of six residential colleges in England designated, under section 28 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, as eligible to receive financial support from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). During this period it was inspected by the FEFC. Since April 2001, the college has been funded by the Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). It has also received funding from a number of external sources including the European Social Fund and the Community Fund.
3. The college is based on two sites, three miles apart, at Walton Street close to the city centre and at Ruskin Hall, Headington, on the outskirts of the city. There are teaching and residential facilities on both sites. The main administration centre and the college library are located at Walton Street. The college has strong links with Oxford University and learners have access to a range of facilities at the university, including the Bodleian Library.
4. Courses are available from level 1 through to level 5. The inspection included the one-year full-time certificate of higher education which is the largest single programme funded by the LSC. The inspection also included a range of part-time community learning programmes and work developed in partnership with the trade unions, including the General Federation of Trade Unions and Prospect. The trade union partnership work was not graded, although evidence from this part of the inspection contributed to judgements for leadership and management. Some programmes at level 4 and 5 were not in the scope of this inspection. At the time of inspection the acting principal and the general secretary formed the senior management team.
5. Learners are recruited nationally and from the local community. There are also international students. In 2001-02, there were 3,269 enrolments in the college, of whom 174 were full time and 123 were residential. Learners studying full time for the one-year certificate of higher education are normally eligible for an adult education bursary which covers tuition, examination and validation fees and a maintenance grant. Some learners receive scholarships from trade unions and other organisations. At the time of the inspection there were 132 learners enrolled on the certificate of higher education

RUSKIN COLLEGE

programme and 203 learners enrolled on the short-course programmes. Seventy-five learners were enrolled on non-LSC-funded programmes.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Humanities

6. The college offers the certificate of higher education programme. This is the equivalent of the first year of a university degree. It is a modular programme and includes a wide range of subjects, including courses in history, law, English and creative writing, studying society, youth and community work, and computing. In addition, women's studies are available as a part-time block residential programme. The programme is validated by the Open University Validation Services. The programme is offered full time over one year, or part time over two years. Learners complete six modules in order to be awarded the full certificate. Each module offers five hours' tuition each week and tutorials are an important component of the provision. Most learners are full time and reside at the college during the programme. The course is delivered on both college sites.

7. The programme is designed to attract adults with few or no qualifications. In the current year there are 132 learners on the programme, of whom 64 are women. Twenty-five per cent of learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds. In 2002-03, 57 per cent of learners attracted the widening participation funding factor.

8. A senior teacher is responsible for co-ordinating the programme. Currently, there are 22 teachers in the humanities team. Fourteen are full-time members of staff, the remainder are employed part time. Teachers also teach in other areas of the college curriculum which were not in the scope of this inspection.

Community learning

9. The community learning programme consists of a short-course programme and community development outreach projects. The short-course programme comprises 40 residential short courses, 44 residential Easter and summer courses, and 45 courses of between six and nine weeks' duration. These courses cover a range of topics including art, black history, changing directions, computers for beginners, creative writing, interpersonal skills, journalism for beginners, social psychology, sociology for beginners, preparing for interview. Short residential courses last two or three days. Learners on other short courses attend for up to four hours each week, but evening courses are two hours each week. All courses are accredited at level 1, 2 and 3. The community development projects are managed with local community partners and are capacity-building projects. Training programmes include the training of volunteers and provide a continuous professional development programme for community workers. There were 203 learners on short courses at the time of inspection. All learners come from groups that have suffered educational disadvantage or difficulties. Learners on residential courses are provided with accommodation and canteen facilities; some daytime short-course learners can also use the canteen and stay for lunch. Forty members of staff teach on the short-course programmes, and most are part time.

10. The inspection did not include observations of the community development outreach projects.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	7
Number of inspection days	35
Number of learner interviews	146
Number of staff interviews	66
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	2
Number of partner/external agency interviews	2

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

11. The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Leadership and management, including quality assurance arrangements are unsatisfactory. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The provision in humanities and community learning is satisfactory.

GRADES

grade 1= outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	4

Humanities	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

Community learning	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

12. **Achievement rates are consistently very good on all programmes.** On most courses, learners are able to gain nationally recognised accreditation. Pass rates on the certificate of higher education are above the national average for access programmes, although these rates are decreasing. On trade union courses and residential short courses achievement rates are excellent. **Community learning courses offer learners good opportunities to achieve accreditation and extend their ambitions.**

13. Retention rates are satisfactory or better on all courses, although there is a small decline in rates on the certificate of higher education programme.

14. **Learners achieve a wide range of personal and intellectual skills.** They develop skills in critical analysis and discussion, gain confidence, and become enthusiastic and highly motivated learners.

15. **Learners progress well, in to and out of programmes.** Progression opportunities are clearly outlined and in 2002-03, 60 per cent of learners completing the certificate of higher education went on to higher education. Procedures are well developed for progression within the trade union studies programme. The college does not formally monitor learners' destinations sufficiently.

Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Humanities	0	6	3	8	4	1	0	22
Community learning	4	3	2	1	0	0	0	10
Total	4	9	5	9	4	1	0	32

16. Teaching is very good on the community learning short-course programme.

Learners participate well in lessons, teachers make good use of stimulating materials and learners demonstrate very good levels of commitment and application.

17. The range of teaching methods on the certificate of higher education is limited.

Some lessons are dominated by teacher presentations and **there is not enough planning and monitoring of learning to meet the diverse needs of learners.**

18. The programme is ambitious, challenging and standards of debate are very good. Learners attain very good standards of work and in the more effective tutorials, develop study skills. However, tutorial feedback is often verbal and written records are not consistently kept.

19. Resources are satisfactory, although buildings are shabby and in some classrooms, the acoustics are poor. Library resources are good on one site. Only a small percentage of staff teaching the certificate of higher education have teaching qualifications.

20. Assessment is satisfactory and there is a good range of relevant assessment practice. The assessment strategy for the certificate of higher education Prospect programme is not sufficiently linked to learning activities carried out during the residential part of the course.

21. Courses have been organised to meet learners' needs and to take account of national priorities to widen participation and promote social inclusion. The certificate of higher education has been reorganised into separate pathways, and effective partnerships with a number of trade union organisations have been developed. These have led to the development of courses to improve the performance of trade union representatives in the workplace and to attract learners not usually associated with education. The community learning short-course programme provides good opportunities for learners.

22. The college's outreach strategy for community learning is inadequate. Although there are some productive local partnerships, developments are not based on a clear strategy, and community development projects are not sufficiently linked to main college activities.

23. Learners receive good levels of support. The residential facilities provide a very

RUSKIN COLLEGE

supportive learning environment which is very much appreciated by the learners. The tutorial system provides close support. The needs of learners with dyslexia are well understood and supported by specialist staff. Learners on the short-course programme receive particularly good support.

24. Literacy, numeracy and language support is inadequate for learners on the certificate of higher education course. Assessment is limited and many classroom activities do not take account of learners' diverse needs. Initial assessment is not used as the basis of individual learning for all learners. Currently, it is only used to identify specific learning difficulties.

Leadership and management

25. **Target-setting, is effective for recruitment, retention and achievement.** The college has consistently met or exceeded its targets.

26. **The college has effective partnerships with trade union organisations.** Provision is jointly planned with trade union education officers and courses provide good progression opportunities.

27. **Financial management is weak.** The college has not taken sufficient action to resolve the current financial situation.

28. **Performance management arrangements are inadequate.** The governing executive does not adequately monitor progress. College policies and procedures are not sufficiently integrated to support the management of staff performance. There is no handbook for staff, and policies and procedures are not regularly updated or reviewed.

29. The staff development policy is not effectively linked to the college strategic and operating plan and priorities and resources have not been clearly identified.

30. **The management structure is inappropriate.** The principal has too many line management responsibilities. Some staff are not clear about line management responsibilities and community development projects are not sufficiently managed or monitored. **Programme management for community learning is weak.**

31. **The college makes a significant contribution to equality of opportunity. All college activities contribute to the college's promotion of inclusion and widening participation.** Twenty-three per cent of learners are from minority ethnic groups. The revised curriculum takes account of national priorities and there has been a significant expansion of community learning and trade union provision.

32. Equality and diversity debates are an intrinsic aspect of the course content. Many programmes are an expression of the historical links with the trade unions and labour movement.

33. **Equality of opportunity and diversity are not monitored and evaluated sufficiently.**

The results of data collection are not used as the basis of action-planning for equality issues.

34. Many parts of the college buildings have restricted access for learners with mobility difficulties.

35. **Learners make a good contribution to quality assurance.** Learner surveys are used to make improvements and there is good representation of learners on college committees.

36. **Quality assurance is not used adequately to improve teaching and learning. Monitoring of quality assurance is incomplete.** Arrangements to record the progress of action plans are inadequate. The observation of teaching and learning is not sufficiently thorough and does not identify training to improve standards.

37. The self-assessment process is not thorough enough. Inspectors' judgements matched some of those in the self-assessment report, but many of the strengths in the self-assessment report were over-estimated and inspectors gave lower grades in most cases. Progress has been slow in resolving some weaknesses identified in the last self-assessment report. **Staff providing the community learning programme are not sufficiently involved in the self-assessment process.**

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- effective target-setting
- effective partnerships with trade union organisations
- good contribution by learners to quality assurance
- particular importance of equality of opportunity to all college activities

Weaknesses

- weak financial management
- inadequate management of staff performance
- inadequate assessment of the quality of teaching and learning
- inappropriate management structure
- incomplete performance monitoring arrangements by governors
- insufficient monitoring and evaluation of equality of opportunity policies and practice
- incomplete monitoring of quality assurance

Humanities

Strengths

- good pass rates
- good progression
- very supportive environment to develop personal and intellectual skills

Weaknesses

- limited range of teaching methods
- insufficient attention to learners' diverse needs
- inadequate use of quality assurance to improve standards of teaching and learning

Community learning

Strengths

- good achievement levels
- very good standards of teaching and learning
- good opportunities to achieve accreditation
- good opportunities for learners to extend their ambitions
- good training and pastoral support

Weaknesses

- weak programme management
- inadequate outreach strategy
- insufficient staff participation in self-assessment process

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT RUSKIN COLLEGE:

- the residential experience which gives them time and space to concentrate on studying
- the enthusiasm, expertise, support and attention from teachers
- the environment which encourages the development of strong peer support
- the opportunity to 'get my brain working again'
- the quality and quantity of the food
- 24-hour, seven-day access to the Walton Street library
- the flexibility of the trade union certificate of higher education programme
- progression opportunities from the short-course programme
- the positive, life-transforming experience
- the environment where they are able 'to dare to be wrong'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK RUSKIN COLLEGE COULD IMPROVE:

- the support for those who find the sessions difficult
- the transport available to move between sites over the lunch break
- the return of marked work - should be more prompt

KEY CHALLENGES FOR RUSKIN COLLEGE:

- identify and implement clear leadership and management responsibilities
- improve quality assurance arrangements
- improve financial management to ensure viability of college activities
- improve and widen range of teaching and learning methods to meet diverse needs of learners
- provide literacy and numeracy support for wider group of learners
- provide better physical access for learners with restricted mobility
- identify and develop a community learning outreach strategy and provide clear management for the programme
- improve self-assessment process

Language of the Adult and Community Learning Sector

Terminology varies across the range of education and training settings covered by the *Common Inspection Framework*. The table below indicates the terms appropriate to Adult and Community Learning

Single term used in the framework	Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning	
Provider	Provider	Any organisation providing opportunities for adults to meet personal or collective goals through the experience of learning. Providers include local authorities, specialist designated institutions, voluntary and community sector organisations, regeneration partnerships and further education colleges
Learner	Learner	Includes those learning by participating in community projects, as well as those on courses. Learning, however, will be planned, with intended outcomes.
Teacher / trainer	Tutor	Person teaching adult learners or guiding or facilitating their learning.
	Mentor	Person providing individual, additional support, guidance and advice to learners to help them achieve their learning goals.
Learning goals	Main learning goals	Intended gains in skills, knowledge or understanding. Gains may be reflected in the achievement of nationally recognised qualifications. Or they may be reflected in the ability of learners to apply learning in contexts outside the learning situation, e.g. in the family, community, or workplace. Learners' main goal/s should be recorded on an individual or, in some cases, group learning plan. Plans should be revised as progress is made and new goals emerge.
	Secondary learning goals	These may include planned-for gains in self-confidence, and inter-personal skills. These should also be included in learning plans where appropriate.
Personal and learning skills	Personal and learning skills	These include being able to study independently, willingness to collaborate with others, and readiness to take up another opportunity for education or training.

Other terms used in Adult and Community Learning

	Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning
Unanticipated, or unintended learning outcome	Adults often experience unanticipated gains as a result of being involved in learning. These include improved self-esteem, greater self-confidence and a growing sense of belonging to a community. Gains of this kind should be acknowledged and recorded in any record of achievement.
Subject-based programme	A programme organised around a body of knowledge, e.g. the structure and usage of the French language or ceramic glazing techniques. Students could be expected to progress from one aspect of the subject to another, to grasp increasingly complex concepts or analyses or to develop greater levels of skill or to apply skills to a new area of work.
Issue-based programme	A programme that is based on the concerns, interests and aspirations of particular groups, for example members of a Sikh Gurdwara wanting to address inter-faith relations in their town, or parents worried about the incidence of drug abuse in their locality. Issue-based learning tends to be associated with geographically defined communities, but the increasing use of electronic means of communication means that this need no longer be the case. Progress is defined in terms of the group's increasing ability to analyse its situation, to access new information and skills which will help it resolve its difficulties and generate solutions and its growing confidence in dealing with others to implement those solutions.
Outreach provision	Provision established in a community setting in addition to provision made at an organisation's main site(s). Outreach programmes may be similar to courses at the main site(s) or be designed to meet the specific requirements of that community.
Neighbourhood-based work	The provider's staff have a long-term presence in a local community with a specific remit to understand the concerns of the local residents and develop learning activities to meet local needs and interests.
Community regeneration	The process of improving the quality of life in communities by investing in their infrastructure and facilities, creating opportunities for training and employment and tackling poor health and educational under-achievement. Community regeneration requires the active participation of local residents in decision-making. Changes and improvements are often achieved either directly or indirectly as a result of the adult learning activities which arise from this.

Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning	
Community capacity building	The process of enabling local people to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to take advantage of opportunities for employment, training and further education and to become selfmanaging, sustainable communities.
Active citizenship	The process whereby people recognise the power they have to improve the quality of life for others and make a conscious effort to do so: the process whereby people recognise the power of organisations and institutions to act in the interests of the common good and exercise their influence to ensure that they do so. Adult learning contributes to active citizenship.

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- effective target-setting
- effective partnerships with trade union organisations
- good contribution by learners to quality assurance
- particular importance of equality of opportunity to all college activities

Weaknesses

- weak financial management
- inadequate management of staff performance
- inadequate assessment of the quality of teaching and learning
- inappropriate management structure
- incomplete performance monitoring arrangements by governors
- insufficient monitoring and evaluation of equality of opportunity policies and practice
- incomplete monitoring of quality assurance

38. Target-setting for recruitment, retention and achievement is effective. The college has accurately set and reported on the achievement of targets for the past five years. During this time there has been an eight-fold increase in learner numbers. College staff have a good awareness of the importance of achievement of these targets. Targets are set for each programme at programme board meetings and are carefully monitored by the quality assurance committee. The governing executive receives regular reports and pays particular attention to performance against these targets. The college has consistently met or exceeded the enrolment, retention and achievement targets.

39. College and trade union organisation partnerships are effective. This is recognised as a strength in the self-assessment report. The college's short-course trade union provision is jointly planned with trade union education officers. The education officers regard the partnerships as essential to their organisations' training strategies and value the college's shared values and the beneficial effects on their members. The certificate of higher education programmes allow trade union learners to progress from the short-course programmes to higher education. There are well-integrated collaborative procedures for recruitment to the programmes and effective joint delivery, involving college teachers and trade union staff.

40. The management of resources is satisfactory. Arrangements ensure that learners have access to an extensive range of learning resources. They have good access to information and communications technology (ICT) to support their learning. Teaching

accommodation is satisfactory, but some classrooms are inadequate for the learners, and some are shabby. Teachers are very well qualified academically, but many are not qualified teachers.

41. The current information needs of managers are adequately met. Regular reports are produced to inform managers of recruitment, enrolment and retention and achievement trends. Although desktop access to information is not yet available to all staff, it is readily available on request.

42. According to the local LSC, following a review, the financial management of the college is unsatisfactory. Over the next three years the financial health of the college is expected to further deteriorate. Very high teaching costs, rising running costs of premises and subsidised accommodation and catering are identified as key weaknesses in the three-year development plan. Governors have a good awareness of what needs to be done to resolve these weaknesses, although there has been insufficient action to resolve the current financial situation.

43. The arrangements for the performance management of staff are inadequate. The key policies and procedures are not set out in a staff handbook, and are not subject to a regular cycle of updating and review. Many of the college policies and procedures are not dated and there is no indication to users whether they are up to date. Staff are unclear as to how these arrangements support their work. The arrangements do not adequately form part of the system to manage staff performance. Line managers are responsible for the induction of their new staff, but the college has no procedures to ensure that the induction programme adequately meets college requirements and the needs of new staff. The staff development policy is not linked sufficiently to the college strategic plan, annual operating plan, or development plans associated with self-assessment. Apart from a priority to support teachers in achieving an appropriate teaching qualification, no other priorities have been clearly identified, or resources allocated. The college staff appraisal programme for full-time teachers includes a very detailed discussion of their forthcoming workload, their development needs and personal objectives. There is a different scheme for support staff. The appraisal programme does not include all part-time teachers. Some staff appraisals are not frequent enough.

44. The college management structure is inappropriate. It identifies the principal as having direct line management responsibility for 19 staff, including managers and full-time teachers. This arrangement does not ensure that there is adequate time to safeguard academic standards and working practices within the curriculum during a time of rapid growth. Line management responsibilities are unclear to some staff. Two co-funded community learning initiatives commissioned in early 2003 are not monitored adequately and the management arrangements are unclear.

45. Although the provision in the areas of learning is satisfactory, a number of significant weaknesses were identified. The range of teaching methods on the certificate of higher education is limited, and although pass and retention rates are very good, they have started to decrease. Literacy, numeracy and language support is inadequate and many classroom activities do not take account of learners' diverse needs. The use of initial

RUSKIN COLLEGE

assessment is only used to identify specific learning difficulties. Quality assurance arrangements are not used adequately to improve teaching and learning. Progress has been slow in resolving some of the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. The outreach strategy for community learning is inadequate and community development projects are not sufficiently linked to main college activities.

46. Governors' monitoring of college performance is inadequate. The governing executive receives appropriate planning documents, including three-yearly strategic plans, annual operating statements and development plans. However, the governing executive does not receive regular progress or monitoring reports, or evaluations of the outcomes of these plans. The governing executive received a progress report on the college's current business plan at its meeting in July 2003. Governors evaluated their own performance in July 2002. The arrangements are not established sufficiently to ensure a regular cycle of monitoring activities.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

47. Equality of opportunity is central to the college mission and its activities. The mission highlights the college's contribution to the promotion of inclusion and widening participation for both learners and stakeholders. All college activities relate to this agenda. The college recruits learners with few or no qualifications and those with disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds. It also recruits a significant number of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds. Twenty-three per cent of current learners are from minority ethnic groups. Over the past few years the college has revised and developed a curriculum which takes account of national priorities and the imperative to widen participation to all groups. The programmes offer an ambitious curriculum which successfully raises the aspirations, confidence and intellectual skills of learners. The college provides a safe environment for learning and where there is considerable mutual tolerance and support.

48. Equality of opportunity is highly valued in the college. Many of the full-time programmes are an expression of the historical links with the trade unions and labour movement and equality and diversity debates are an intrinsic aspect of course content. Lessons frequently include appropriate consideration of issues of equality and diversity and the college's guidelines for the community short courses include an accessible introduction to equality of opportunity.

49. The residential setting provides a community experience in which learners benefit from the close residential support networks. Financial support includes a hardship and access fund, scholarships, childcare support, as well as some family accommodation. More hardship funds are being allocated to learners. These include donations from staff and a Trust fund. There is an effective counselling service. Oxford University offers its library and recreational facilities, and Union membership to learners.

50. The college operates a learning support service and dyslexia support is particularly effective. However, there is insufficient support to meet some of the less specific learning needs. Currently, initial assessment is used to identify specific learning

difficulties, but is not used as the basis for individual planning of learning for all learners. Learning support needs of a more general nature have been highlighted in external examiners' reports over a number of years, but have not been met effectively. At the time of inspection, three weeks into the start of courses, the results of initial assessment have not been analysed and recorded in individual learning plans. The college has yet to develop a literacy, numeracy and language skills strategy. Access is restricted to many parts of college buildings for learners with restricted mobility.

51. The college does not conduct sufficient monitoring and evaluation of equality of opportunity and diversity policies and practice. The college's self-assessment report recognised this weakness. Currently, responsibilities for equality of opportunity are shared by the principal and general secretary. There is a variety of equality of opportunity policies and statements. These include a race equality policy, a policy statement on HIV/Aids, an equal opportunities policy for employees, and guidance on recruitment and selection for employees. There is a complaints procedure for learners. Although these offer a range of intentions, they are not supported by the allocation of clear responsibilities for implementation, action plans and equality targets. The college has guidelines on disciplinary procedures for support staff and within the terms and conditions of service of academic and academic-related staff. However, there is no staff handbook.

52. The college has no specific equal opportunities committee and no standing agenda items about equality issues within the business of the governing executive or other committees. Data to contribute to equality issues are collected, but no action plans have been formulated as a result of analysis of the data. For example, although minority ethnic learners' performance was shown to be below that of white learners, there have been no actions to resolve this issue.

53. The college has recognised the need to increase representation from minority ethnic groups on the council and governing executive and a new appointment has been made. Equality and diversity awareness has been recognised as a priority area for staff development, although there is no programme and no targets or timescales have been set. Staff have recently had Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (part 4) awareness training.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

54. The college quality assurance committee co-ordinates the monitoring of performance of all courses. There are good arrangements to ensure that learners contribute to the improvement of the college courses. Staff and governors pay particular attention to the results of learner surveys. Detailed reports analyse these surveys but do not always contain recommendations or action plans. There is a thorough learner and teacher review at the end of each module of the certificate of higher education. The outcomes of these reviews are reported at curriculum board meetings. There are good strategies for ensuring adequate learner representation on internal committees. Learners make a valuable contribution to the work of the committees they attend. The college makes good use of external advisers in each subject area. The quality assurance

RUSKIN COLLEGE

arrangements are enhanced by the validation requirements of each programme and the need to use external examiners.

55. The quality assurance monitoring arrangements are incomplete. The college has an overall quality assurance policy which identifies a number of key quality assurance processes. The policy does not identify how these coherently bring about improvements in quality of programmes. College managers do not have sufficient arrangements to ensure that quality assurance processes are completed in an appropriate and timely manner, and that good practice is effectively shared and developed throughout the college. All support teams have service standards; the standards have not been monitored, reviewed or evaluated. For some support teams these are not developed sufficiently and rely heavily on the results of learner surveys. The college has an appropriate structure of committees, each with their own terms of reference. The arrangements to record the progress of action points agreed at staff meetings are inadequate. There is no guidance about how quickly an action point should be completed, and progress or outcome of actions are not effectively recorded.

56. Assessments of the quality of teaching and learning are inadequate. In 2001, a new programme of assessments was introduced. This programme is not complete. It has not yet included tutorials, or part-time staff on the community learning programmes. Where grading has taken place all teaching has been graded good or better. During inspection, over 37 per cent of lessons were graded satisfactory or worse. Although the assessments enable good individual feedback to teachers, the programme is not thorough enough and does not effectively identify cross-college training that will improve standards.

57. The self-assessment report is not thorough enough. Although inspectors' judgements matched some strengths and weaknesses in the report, inspectors considered that many of the strengths identified in the report were statements of satisfactory performance. Part-time staff who teach adult and community learning courses and trade union studies are not sufficiently aware of, and have insufficient involvement in, the college's self-assessment report. Inspectors gave the same grade as in the self-assessment report for one area of learning, but they gave lower grades for all other aspects of the inspection. Progress has been slow in resolving some of the weaknesses identified in the previous self-assessment report.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Humanities

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	132	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good pass rates
- good progression
- very supportive environment to develop personal and intellectual skills

Weaknesses

- limited range of teaching methods
- insufficient attention to learners' diverse needs
- inadequate use of quality assurance to improve standards of teaching and learning

Achievement and standards

58. Pass rates are consistently good on the certificate of higher education programme. In 2000-01, 2001-02 and 2002-03, the pass rates were 74 per cent, 69 per cent and 67 per cent, respectively. Over the same period the retention rates were 91 per cent, 88 per cent and 80 per cent, respectively. The self-assessment report recognised this strength. However, these rates are slowly decreasing. Learners make good and rapid progress, and although they were only in week three of their course at the time of inspection, some learners produced work which was well argued and analytical. Learners remarked on the confidence they have gained in the short time on the course. Many learners reach a standard equal to, or above, the norm for first-year undergraduates by the end of the programme.

59. Learners progress well in to and from the certificate programme. Progression opportunities are clearly outlined and well used by learners. Almost 50 per cent of current learners have joined the certificate programme after attending the college's short-course provision. The current college diploma of higher education enrolled 13 learners from the certificate course. In 2002-03, 60 per cent of learners completing the certificate programme went on to higher education. However, there is insufficient formal monitoring of learners' destinations and for 2002-03, the destination of some 37 per cent of learners is not yet known.

Quality of education and training

60. The very supportive environment effectively promotes the development of a range of personal and intellectual skills. Learners value the intellectual stimulation, the challenge of an ambitious curriculum and the support and encouragement offered by teachers and peers. Learners develop skills in critical analysis and discussion, gain confidence and become enthusiastic learners. The tutorial system is an important aspect of the close support. Learners value highly the residential aspect of the programme. The provision of meals and safe accommodation means that learners can concentrate on their studies. Residency also supports the development of strong peer groups. These are very effective in promoting mutual support and very good standards of learning and achievement. The needs of learners with dyslexia are well understood and supported by specialist staff. Learners with dyslexia can borrow laptops and portable dictating machines. However, ongoing support, particularly for literacy and numeracy is inadequate. External examiners report on some poor presentation and standards of literacy.

61. Teaching is satisfactory. Forty-one per cent of lessons observed were good or better, 36 per cent were satisfactory, and 23 per cent were unsatisfactory. The better lessons are stimulating and challenging, with a good variety of learner activities. Teachers encourage learners to contribute and apply their knowledge and experience to develop an understanding of theories. Often the task involves working with a small group or in a pair and then presenting their findings to the larger group. This often results in a lively debate in which all points of view are explored and examined. This is linked to an assignment in which critical thinking is a key skill.

62. In the more effective tutorial sessions learners develop study skills and their progress is closely monitored. However, tutorial feedback is often verbal and written records are not consistently kept.

63. Resources are satisfactory. Learners speak of the good quality of the accommodation and food, although many learners feel that the need to constantly travel between the two sites for lectures and tutorials limits the time they have available for private study. Most classrooms are adequate for the size of groups, but in some rooms the acoustics are poor. Learners have access to a good library on the Walton Street site, with a good stock of textbooks. Library facilities are far less well developed on the other main site. Many learners make good use of the access they have to the Bodleian Library and Oxford University faculty libraries.

64. Assessment processes are satisfactory. Most pathways have a good range of assessment methods. Learners receive feedback about assignments, some of which is excellent in depth and scope and most is adequate. Learners also receive termly reports.

65. A large proportion of unsatisfactory lessons have a narrow range of teaching methods. This was recognised in the self-assessment report. Some lessons are

dominated by teacher presentations and there is too much emphasis on talking by the teacher and note-taking by learners. Some teachers do not fully engage the learners. There is insufficient differentiation in class activities and some ineffective use of teaching aids. The quality of lesson planning varies and many plans are simply lists of topics to be covered, they do not indicate methods to ensure effective learning and how learning is to be monitored and evaluated. In some lessons there is not enough checking of learning and understanding.

66. The college does not take sufficient account of learners' diverse needs. Initial assessment takes place during induction week, but is not thorough enough to identify the diverse needs of learners. Emphasis is placed on identifying needs relating specifically to dyslexia, but the needs of learners with wider literacy and numeracy needs are not sufficiently assessed. Staff are not sufficiently aware of individual learner's needs and many classroom activities do not take account of learners' individual learning styles and experiences of learning. Lesson plans do not incorporate planning to meet a range of needs. Individual learning plans are only used to support learners with specific learning needs. Learners who are not identified as having specific learning needs, but who may need additional support with literacy, numeracy or language are responsible for referring themselves to learning support.

Leadership and management

67. The leadership and management of the programme are satisfactory. The curriculum is relevant and meets learners' needs, interests and academic aspirations. The programme has recently been reorganised into separate pathways and a co-ordinator has been appointed to develop the strategic direction of the work and to monitor teaching practice. At present, subject teams tend to concentrate on their own subject area, and the sharing of good practice between pathways is limited.

68. Quality assurance is not used adequately to improve teaching and learning. A schedule of observations exists, but not all staff have been observed. Learner feedback is collected, but there is insufficient use of this feedback to instigate improvements. However, recent changes to the programme have taken place in response to the learners' need for easier progression to higher education. Course evaluation of the programme is through programme boards. Clear action-planning is not always evident and there is insufficient monitoring of actions completed. The concerns of the external examiners about quality of provision are discussed, but not always dealt with effectively. Only a small percentage of staff have teaching qualifications, or are working towards them. The college does not provide sufficient support for new staff to acquire basic teaching skills.

Community learning

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	203	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good achievement levels
- very good standards of teaching and learning
- good opportunities to achieve accreditation
- good opportunities for learners to extend their ambitions
- good training and pastoral support

Weaknesses

- weak programme management
- inadequate outreach strategy
- insufficient staff participation in self-assessment process

Achievement and standards

69. Achievement levels for learners on the short-course programme are good. Ninety-five per cent of learners on residential courses obtain accreditation and 55 per cent of learners on short courses obtain accreditation. Learners acquire a good level of knowledge and skills. They contribute to discussions and gain a good deal of confidence. Learners complete a reflective diary at the end of their programme in which they evaluate their learning and record their plans for the future. They demonstrate motivation and conviction to pursue further learning opportunities.

70. Retention and attendance rates are satisfactory. The combined retention rate for residential and short courses was 93 per cent in 2001-02 and 94 per cent in 2002-03. The attendance rate on residential short courses is 99 per cent, while the attendance on short courses varies between 58 per cent and 78 per cent.

Quality of education and training

71. The standard of teaching and learning on the short-course programme is very good. Ninety per cent of lessons observed were good or better. Lessons are well planned, with clear learning objectives. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods to encourage learner participation. They make good use of stimulating learning materials which give learners information, while also stimulating group discussion. Learners demonstrate very good levels of concentration in class as they apply themselves to challenging tasks. Teachers give learners a lot of individual attention and feedback during lessons. They

also encourage peer group support.

72. The college offers good opportunities to achieve accreditation. All learners on short courses can have their learning accredited at level 1, 2 and 3. Learners completing more than one short course can achieve a certificate of learning in humanities, social sciences, or general studies, if they complete four subject area courses, an information technology course, and study skills. This accreditation is nationally recognised and can help learners to access further education and training opportunities.

73. Learners have good opportunities to extend their aims and objectives. The short courses enable learners to understand that education is available to them. The teachers make academic study accessible for learners and give them the opportunity to make informed choices. In studying on the short courses learners explore issues, gain a better understanding of the society in which they live and develop strategies to deal with their personal situations better. Those on residential courses benefit from living in a residential community setting.

74. Learners receive good support. Teachers provide a good deal of individual attention to support learning. Each learner is given a course handbook at the start of their course. This gives them information about their course and about the range of support systems available, including study skills and learning support. Learners can also access the college counsellor. A study skills handbook is available free. Learners also benefit from peer support.

75. Resources are satisfactory. Teachers are well qualified and have good subject knowledge and experience. Teaching accommodation is satisfactory, although art classes take place in rooms without access to running water. Learners have good access to ICT and to the library.

76. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. The assessment tasks which are set for learners are relevant. They require learners to reflect on their learning, while also giving credit for work produced. On a journalism for beginners course, learners are required to write a story after having completed a small piece of research. Teachers give learners detailed written feedback and recommend the appropriate level of accreditation. Internal moderation procedures are thorough and the internal moderator responds to comments from the external moderator and awarding body.

Leadership and management

77. The leadership and management of community learning are weak. There is no strategic planning and development to support the recent substantial growth of this programme. The short-course programme is perceived as a group of activities separate from the community development projects. The inspection did not include observation of the community development projects, as the college did not include two projects as part of its community learning programme. The management and quality assurance arrangements for community development projects are inadequate. There are no dedicated staff with responsibility to support the delivery of these projects. There are no

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quality assurance systems in place to ensure that targets are achieved and that training is delivered to the required standards.

78. The short-course programmes do not have sufficient internal course approval arrangements to support effective planning and resourcing of courses. Some part-time teachers provide the teaching resources from their own funds. Art teachers have purchased their own videos, books and slides. There are no formal procedures for the recruitment of staff or contractors. Once part-time short-course staff are engaged, they do have a lot of informal support. They receive a comprehensive information pack, including practical information, information on accreditation, and sample letters. Staff do not have sufficient formal opportunities to share good practice in team meetings.

79. The outreach strategy for community learning is inadequate. To recruit learners to the residential short courses, leaflets are sent to libraries and organisations throughout the country. This results in many learners accessing courses. A recent project has resulted in the development of a learning centre for people with mental health problems. Despite this the college does not build strategically on its local community contacts, developed through its social work and youth and community work courses. Most developments arise from informal contacts, rather than through the college's participation in local partnership initiatives. However, there is good progression from these outreach activities to the college's short- and full-time courses. It is not possible to gauge progression from other community initiatives.

80. Staff were not sufficiently involved in the self-assessment process. Staff working in the community learning programme have no knowledge of the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report gives a contributory grade for community learning, but does not identify the strengths and weaknesses of this area of learning separately.