

# REINSPECTION REPORT

## **Ruskin College Reinspection**

**25 November 2004**



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. 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
- the University for Industry's **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- learning and job preparation programmes 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.

# REINSPECTION REPORT

## Ruskin College Reinspection

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## REINSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Ruskin College Oxford (the college) is a small residential adult education college in Oxford. The college was founded in 1899 and its mission is 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 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. Both sites have teaching and residential facilities. 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.
3. The college offers a range of programmes from levels 1 to 5. The reinspection covered a one-year full-time certificate of higher education at level 4 and a range of short and part-time learning programmes at levels 1 to 3, funded by the Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The college runs programmes developed in partnership with the trade unions, a project for learners over 50 years of age, a Diploma of Higher Education, a foundation degree, a Bachelor of Arts degree and a level 5 Master of Arts programme. These programmes were not in scope for inspection. Learners are recruited locally, nationally and from abroad.
4. At the time of previous inspection in October 2003, the acting principal and the general secretary formed the senior management team. The college was also in a position of financial deficit. Since that time, there has been considerable change in the college position and structures. A financial recovery plan is being implemented, a new principal is now in post, supported by two senior managers, and college line management structures and responsibilities have been realigned. Internally, there are now five programme areas, each led by an academic co-ordinator reporting to the senior management team.
5. Economically, Oxfordshire is a prosperous county with unemployment below the national average. The local economy is varied, including health, manufacturing, bioscience, information technology and publishing businesses as well as higher education. The rate of unemployment in Oxford in October 2004 was 1.5 per cent, compared with the national average of 2.1 per cent. Some areas in the south and east of the city have unemployment levels of around 4 per cent. One of Oxford's 24 wards falls within the worst 10 per cent in England in terms of indices of deprivation. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of people in Oxford from minority ethnic backgrounds is 12.9 per cent, compared with 9.1 per cent for England as a whole.

## SCOPE OF PROVISION

### Humanities

6. In 2003-04, there were 1,530 enrolments in the college on LSC-funded humanities programmes. At the time of the reinspection, 82 learners were enrolled on the full-time one-year certificate of higher education, which is the equivalent of the first year of a university degree. The certificate is a modular programme with a number of pathways, including history, law, social science, English and creative writing. The programme is validated by a distance learning university. In addition, in 2003-04, 1,400 learners enrolled on short-course programmes. These programmes are run as residential short-course programmes lasting two or three days, a large summer programme lasting three weeks, and part-time programmes of between two and four hours a week. Most courses are accredited at level 1, 2 and 3. At the time of the reinspection, 252 learners were enrolled on these courses.

## ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	14
Number of learner interviews	17
Number of staff interviews	23
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	2
Number of visits	3

## OVERALL JUDGEMENT

7. The previous inspection found that the leadership and management of the college and its arrangements for quality assurance were unsatisfactory. Its approach to equality of opportunity was satisfactory. Provision was satisfactory in humanities and community learning. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of provision reinspected were found to be satisfactory or better. The community learning provision included in the previous inspection was a finite project which has now been completed, and so was not reinspected.

## GRADES

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>4</b>
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

### Grades awarded at reinspection

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

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

Humanities	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievement and standards

8. Achievement rates overall are satisfactory. However, achievement rates are poor on the short courses. The college has recognised this weakness and is taking measures to improve achievement rates.

9. **Retention rates are good overall.** They are satisfactory or better on all courses, although they have declined slightly on the certificate of higher education programme since the previous inspection.

10. **Learners continue to develop very good personal and learning skills in writing and researching.** Many learners show evidence of attainment considerably above that which would normally be expected at this stage of their programmes.

11. **Progression of learners remains good.** Most learners who successfully complete the full-time certificate of higher education progress onto university courses, and others go into employment. Some learners on the short courses progress onto the full-time certificate.

## 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	8	4	0	0	0	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18</b>

12. **Most teaching is now good or very good on all programmes.** The percentage of lessons observed that were good or better has increased from 41 per cent at the previous inspection to 78 per cent. No teaching sessions were graded as unsatisfactory or worse at reinspection, compared with 23 per cent at the previous inspection.

13. **Academic tutorials continue to be very effective.** Learners receive thorough advice and guidance on essay-writing, academic conventions and research skills. Tutors challenge learners and provide constructive feedback. Personal support for learners is satisfactory. All full-time learners have a personal tutor and the college provides a confidential counselling service, which learners value highly.

14. The previous inspection found that many lessons on the certificate of higher education had a narrow range of teaching methods. Teachers now use a wide range of teaching methods well. They use challenging questions and skilfully make good use of teaching materials that help to bring subjects to life. Learners are highly motivated and work productively in lessons. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers still spend too much time lecturing to the whole class without checking whether learners have understood, and some learners are not given sufficient opportunity to become actively involved.

15. Resources remain satisfactory. The library has a comprehensive stock of up-to-date books and learning materials. There are multiple copies of key texts and the library subscribes to a wide range of academic journals.

16. Staff are highly qualified and experienced in their academic discipline and many have published books and articles. However, too many tutors still do not have a teaching qualification.

17. Full-time learners receive a thorough diagnostic assessment when they begin their studies. However, learners on short courses initially self-assess their needs. The provision of additional support for those learners with identified literacy, numeracy and language skills support needs is satisfactory. Support for learners with dyslexia is particularly good.

18. Learners' work is assessed effectively. Assessment of formative assignments is thorough and provides learners with individualised support and detailed constructive feedback.



## Leadership and management

19. **The college now has clear strategic leadership and direction.** A new principal has been appointed and management roles have been effectively revised. New governors, including one with specialist financial skills, have been appointed.

20. Governors are now closely involved in monitoring key strategic developments, especially concerning finances and property. The college has introduced a financial recovery plan, which, according to a recent review by the LSC, should lead to a positive financial position during 2005-06.

21. **The college has taken effective management action to implement change.** It has strengthened its operational management through the introduction of academic co-ordinators in all programme areas. It has produced a new staff handbook containing updated staff policies and procedures. Teaching staff have been very effectively engaged in the implementation of change through the inclusive and open management approach.

22. **The college continues to use learners' feedback well to improve programmes.** It regularly and systematically collects feedback from learners and uses this to create clear action plans for programme improvement. Learners' representatives attend formal programme review meetings.

23. **The college has used observations very effectively to raise the quality of teaching and learning.** An external consultant has observed all teaching staff. Observed staff receive detailed feedback which is used to plan well-structured and clearly focused professional development activities.

24. The college's arrangements for staff development are satisfactory. Staff development needs are carefully identified to meet college objectives, and a carefully structured training programme of training has been developed. All staff, including part-time staff, are encouraged to take part in professional training. Training is also provided regularly for governors.

25. The college has satisfactory arrangements in place to identify and support learners with particular learning needs in literacy, numeracy and language. Where needs are identified, specialist staff provide regular individual support.

26. The college has a satisfactory self-assessment process in place. All staff contribute to the production of programme area self-assessment reports, which contribute to the overall college self-assessment report. **Some of the college's monitoring practice is incomplete.** For example, not enough attention is paid to achievement targets on the short courses. The college has not yet evaluated its equal opportunities action plan. It has not yet monitored its revised appraisal system or some literacy, numeracy and language support activities.

## RUSKIN COLLEGE REINSPECTION

*During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:*

### **Leadership and management**

#### **Strengths**

- clear strategic leadership and direction
- effective management action to implement change
- good use of learners' feedback to improve programmes
- very effective use of observations to raise the quality of teaching and learning

#### **Weaknesses**

- some incomplete monitoring practice

### **Humanities**

#### **Strengths**

- good retention rates
- very good development of personal and learning skills
- much good and very good teaching
- good rates of progression
- very effective academic tutorials

#### **Weaknesses**

- poor achievement rates on one programme

## 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	
<b>Provider</b>	<b>Provider</b>	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
<b>Learner</b>	<b>Learner</b>	Includes those learning by participating in community projects, as well as those on courses. Learning, however, will be planned, with intended outcomes.
<b>Teacher / trainer</b>	<b>Tutor</b>	Person teaching adult learners or guiding or facilitating their learning.
	<b>Mentor</b>	Person providing individual, additional support, guidance and advice to learners to help them achieve their learning goals.
<b>Learning goals</b>	<b>Main learning goals</b>	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.
	<b>Secondary learning goals</b>	These may include planned-for gains in self-confidence, and inter-personal skills. These should also be included in learning plans where appropriate.
<b>Personal and learning skills</b>	<b>Personal and learning skills</b>	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
<b>Unanticipated, or unintended learning outcome</b>	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.
<b>Subject-based programme</b>	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.
<b>Issue-based programme</b>	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.
<b>Outreach provision</b>	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.
<b>Neighbourhood-based work</b>	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.
<b>Community regeneration</b>	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.

<b>Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning</b>	
<b>Community capacity building</b>	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.
<b>Active citizenship</b>	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 REINSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

*During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:*

#### **Strengths**

- clear strategic leadership and direction
- effective management action to implement change
- good use of learners' feedback to improve programmes
- very effective use of observations to raise the quality of teaching and learning

#### **Weaknesses**

- some incomplete monitoring practice

27. The college has clear strategic leadership and direction. At the previous inspection, the management structure was judged to be inappropriate. The college has now completed a thorough review of its structures and staffing arrangements. Following the appointment of a new principal, strategic roles at senior management level, including those of the principal, have been effectively revised. The college is implementing clear financial management and governance action plans. The previous inspection found that monitoring arrangements by governors were incomplete. Since then, the annual timetable for the governing executive has been thoroughly reviewed, and a clear schedule has been defined to meet strategic objectives. New governors, including one with specialist financial skills, have been appointed. Governors are closely involved in monitoring key strategic developments, especially concerning finances and property. The college manages its resources effectively. In particular, the previous inspection found the college's financial management to be weak. The college has now introduced a clear financial recovery plan which, according to a recent review by the LSC, should lead to a positive financial position during 2005-06. A revised college strategic plan, major property strategy and revised curriculum strategy are now in preparation.

28. The college has taken effective management action to implement change. Since the previous inspection, the college's management has responded clearly and effectively to rectify the weaknesses relating to staff performance management and quality assurance identified in the previous inspection report. Managers have carefully implemented a comprehensive action plan and changes have been closely monitored throughout. For example, academic co-ordinators have been introduced in all programme areas, and these middle-management roles are clearly aligned. In addition, some operational management responsibilities have been devolved to the academic co-ordinators at programme area level. In addition, the college has produced a new staff handbook, containing updated policies and procedures. Throughout the changes, there have been

highly effective formal and informal communications with staff across the college. Each stage has been accompanied by careful, systematic consultation and negotiation. Teaching staff have been very effectively engaged in the implementation of change through the college's inclusive and open management approach.

29. The previous inspection found that the college's staff development policy was not linked sufficiently to the other college plans. The college now considers staff development needs carefully to support its objectives. For example, it has developed and implemented a carefully structured training programme to improve teaching and learning, in close conjunction with improvements in staff observation. All staff, including part-time staff, are actively encouraged and supported financially to take further professional training and qualifications. The college has also supported an effective training day for the governing executive in January 2004, using an external facilitator. Further training for governors is scheduled for this academic year.

30. The college has satisfactory arrangements in place to identify and support learners with particular literacy, numeracy and language skills development needs. Where needs are identified, specialist staff provide regular individual support. In addition, the college has specialist staff, who provide good support for learners with particular learning needs. For example, in the past year, 18 learners were provided with a very detailed professional report on their dyslexia. Learners also have good access to individual counselling service, and around 20 per cent of college learners routinely use this service. However, insufficient administrative support is provided for the analysis, recording and distribution of the results of initial assessments.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

31. The previous inspection reported that the college's mission is strongly focused on widening participation through the provision of additional educational opportunities for adults. The clear ethos of equality of opportunity remains central to all college activities. Through its open access policy, the college actively promotes opportunities for adults from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds or without formal academic qualifications to progress to higher education. For example, on the current certificate of higher education programme, around 19 per cent of learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and around 48 per cent are unwaged on entry to the programme. Learners at the college have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities in respect of equality of opportunity and diversity.

32. The previous inspection found that the college did not conduct sufficient monitoring and evaluation of equality of opportunity and diversity policies and practice. Since then, the college has completed a detailed evaluation and analysis of equality of opportunity data in areas such as gender and ethnicity. This has been taken forward to a clear action plan for implementation in the current academic year. The college has thoroughly reviewed its equal opportunities policies, although it has not yet circulated the revised policies to staff. Equality of opportunity is now a standing item on the agenda for the governing executive. Academic staff received an update on current equal opportunities legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, at the beginning of the

academic year. Training for governors is scheduled for January 2005.

33. The college has carried out a detailed disability audit of its premises, and has bid successfully for additional funds to improve access for those with restricted mobility. The college is now actively implementing improvements across its sites. However, many areas of the college remain unsuitable or inaccessible to learners with restricted mobility.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Contributory grade 2**

34. The previous inspection found that learners made a good contribution to quality assurance. There remains a very effective system in place, which collects regular and systematic feedback from learners on their programmes and leads to clear action plans for programme improvement. The feedback and review systems operate effectively at module, programme and college levels. At each level, learners contribute fully to the reviews of their programmes. In addition, elected learners' representatives attend formal programme review meetings. The college also makes good use of external advisers, examiners and moderators in each subject area. The college produces an extensive annual college-wide review of learners' feedback, which it uses systematically to support the self-assessment process.

35. The college has used observations very effectively to raise the quality of teaching and learning. At the time of the previous inspection, the college had recently introduced a process for the observation of teaching and learning. An external consultant has now completed a full cycle of observations of all teaching staff, including part-time staff and tutorial staff. Extensive detailed feedback is given to staff observed, and this feedback is also used very effectively to support well-structured and clearly focused professional development activities. The system of observations, individual feedback and closely related training sessions is highly valued by staff, for the contribution it makes to their teaching skills and increased professional awareness. The observation system is being systematically maintained in the current academic year, and a well-structured staff development programme is being run in parallel with the observation process to support the further development of teaching and learning skills. The profile of grades given in internal observations closely reflects the grades given by inspectors.

36. The college has a satisfactory appraisal system in place. Since the previous inspection, a revised appraisal process has been designed and is being implemented progressively. Staff have received appropriate appraisal training, and the appraisal process is now being implemented for all staff.

37. The college has effectively strengthened its quality assurance at operational level through revised quality assurance structures and policies. In particular, it has formed a new committee, the academic quality and standards committee, to take overall responsibility for quality monitoring of programmes. This committee is chaired by the principal, and reports directly to governors. At operational level, academic co-ordinators for long and short courses now have clearly defined responsibilities for the delivery and monitoring of programmes and teaching activities, and for providing support for staff. The college's quality assurance policies have been thoroughly reviewed and updated and



included in a new quality assurance handbook, which has now been circulated to staff

38. The college's self-assessment processes have been improved since the previous inspection and are now satisfactory. All teaching staff, including part-time staff, are fully involved through team meetings in the preparation of a self-assessment report for each programme area. Staff are engaged in the process and feel that their contributions are valued. Programme area reports are used effectively to build the overall college self-assessment report. The strengths and weaknesses identified in the draft self-assessment report, produced in October 2004, matched most of the inspectors' findings.

39. The college has satisfactory quality assurance monitoring arrangements in place for most aspects of provision. However, some monitoring practice is incomplete. For example, not enough attention is paid to achievement targets on the short courses. Although the college now has an equality of opportunity action plan in place, it has not yet evaluated it. Although counselling services are monitored, monitoring practice for some literacy, numeracy and language learning support activities is incomplete. The college is introducing a revised appraisal system progressively, but has not yet monitored it in practice.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Humanities

### Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	334	2

*During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:*

#### Strengths

- good retention rates
- very good development of personal and learning skills
- much good and very good teaching
- good rates of progression
- very effective academic tutorials

#### Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates on one programme

#### Achievement and standards

40. Retention rates are good overall. Managers set challenging targets for retention rates on each programme and monitor progress towards these targets effectively.

41. Learners develop very good personal and learning skills. Learners on the certificate of higher education develop skills in writing and researching social science topics, and many produce well-researched essays which make use of a wide range of sources including academic texts, articles and the internet. In the best work, learners demonstrate evidence of attainment considerably above that which would be expected at this early stage of the course. Learners comment favourably on the opportunities available to them as residents of the college, to develop their confidence, self-esteem and capacity for successful learning. In lessons, they contribute confidently and perceptively. In an English lesson and an English tutorial, learners commented very precisely on the way that a selection of very different writers, including Wordsworth and Raymond Chandler, had used language to create atmosphere and a strong sense of place.

42. The number of learners recruited onto the certificate of higher education programme has been rising for the past three years, but this has been mirrored by a slight decline in the number of learners successfully completing the qualification. However, achievement rates are satisfactory.

43. Achievement rates are poor on the short courses. Although short courses are now

accredited, too many adult learners do not complete the tasks required for accreditation. Achievement rates are below the funding body's targets in all courses except one. The college has recognised this weakness and is implementing measures to rectify it. However, it is too early to judge the effectiveness of these measures.

### **Quality of education and training**

44. Most teaching is now good or very good. At the previous inspection, 41 per cent of lessons observed were good or better, 36 per cent were satisfactory, and 23 per cent were unsatisfactory. At reinspection, 78 per cent of lessons observed were good or better, and 22 per cent were satisfactory. Inspectors did not see any unsatisfactory teaching.

45. At the previous inspection, many unsatisfactory lessons had a narrow range of teaching methods. Tutors now make good use of a wide range of teaching methods. These include successful small group activities and skilful use of challenging and focused questions by the tutor. In history, there is very good use of stimulus material which helps to bring the subject to life. For example, in one lesson, the tutor played a short clip of a dramatisation of the Cable Street riot. The clip had been carefully chosen so that dialogue was minimal, enabling the tutor to talk through the clip, reinforcing key points and identifying the main historical characters. In a sociology class, the tutor helped learners to identify the key characteristics of 'society' by using the analogy of a watch to illustrate the similarities between the internal workings of the watch mechanism and social structures. The tutor then used questions and answers skilfully to direct learners to identify additional similarities as well as differences. All learners were positively encouraged to participate in the discussion and made good progress in their understanding.

46. Learners are highly motivated and work productively in lessons. Many ask perceptive questions. Learners take part in classroom activities enthusiastically, and tutors support and help learners to understand.

47. In a minority of lessons, tutors spent too much time lecturing to the whole class, without checking whether learners had understood. In these lessons, learners were not given sufficient opportunity to become actively involved in the learning process.

48. Resources to support learning are satisfactory. The library has a comprehensive stock of up-to-date books and learning materials, which learners value. There are multiple copies of key texts and the library subscribes to a wide range of academic journals. There are significant reference materials on the labour movement and working-class history which supports learners' research work. Learners have good access to computers. A computer room is available to learners 24 hours a day.

49. Staff are highly qualified and experienced in their academic discipline and many have published books and articles. However, too many of the tutors do not have a teaching qualification.

50. The college uses the assessment of learners' work effectively to promote learning. Thorough assessment of formative assignments provides learners with individualised support and detailed constructive feedback. In a sample of coursework, the tutor wrote extensively on the learners' scripts and on a front sheet, which clearly identified each learner's main strengths and areas for development. The feedback was highly individualised so that each learner could clearly identify the main points arising from their work, rather than being presented with generic comments. Tutors also annotate answers carefully to indicate exactly where improvements can be made or where the learners have applied good techniques.

51. Full-time learners receive a thorough diagnostic assessment when they begin their studies. However, learners on short courses initially self-assess their needs, and do not receive any formal initial assessment of their learning needs. The results of the diagnostic assessment are shared with learners and with their personal tutors. Provision is satisfactory for learners with identified literacy, numeracy and language skills support needs, and particularly good for learners with dyslexia.

52. Most learners who successfully complete the full-time certificate of higher education progress onto university courses, and others go into employment. Some learners on the short courses progress onto the full-time programme. The college does not monitor the destination of learners who complete a community short course.

53. Learners receive a comprehensive induction which covers health and safety, equality of opportunity and an introduction to residential life. A learners' handbook is given to all learners. Learners can study the certificate of higher education programme full time over one year or part time over two or three years.

54. The college provides a satisfactory range of programmes and courses which meet the needs of the local community, as well as learners from other parts of the country. It runs a programme of community short courses and summer schools. The college currently does not provide outreach courses, though it has plans to do so. Evening classes are not offered.

55. Academic tutorials are very effective in meeting learners' diverse needs. Learners receive thorough advice and guidance on essay-writing, academic conventions and research skills. Tutors challenge learners and provide constructive feedback which learners value. In one tutorial, the tutor thoroughly reviewed the learner's essay plan, offering appropriate advice about key texts and reference. Attention was paid to the learner's use of English and to inaccuracies in the work.

56. Personal support for learners is satisfactory. All full-time learners have a personal tutor who is often also one of their subject tutors. A confidential counselling service is available for all learners, and is highly valued. Careers advice and guidance are satisfactory.

## Leadership and management

57. Leadership and management of the area of learning are effective in promoting an academic environment and ethos in which all learners are encouraged and expected to perform well. Managers have a good understanding of the needs of adult returners to education and set high standards of teaching and learning.

58. The college's quality assurance procedures are effective in promoting improvements to meet learners' needs. Programme boards for each of the pathways consider and implement plans to improve the quality of learning. Learners' representation on the boards enables them to contribute to initiatives to improve the way their courses are organised and delivered. Tutors carry out a thorough evaluation of the full-time programme every year. This evaluation feeds into the quality monitoring carried out by the awarding body. Learners' views are sought at the end of each module of the certificate programme and at the end of each course. The results of these initiatives are used to continuously improve the programme.

59. All staff are now fully involved in contributing to the self-assessment report. Staff accurately identified key weaknesses in teaching and learning, for example the poor achievement rates on short courses. The self-assessment report also identifies many of the key strengths found by inspectors. The college's self-assessment grade matched that given by inspectors.

60. Learners have a good understanding of equality of opportunity. They have good recall of equal opportunities advice and information which they received during induction. Learners value the diverse community at the college, which includes people from different parts of the country and from abroad. Learners understand their rights and responsibilities. The college provides a welcoming and friendly atmosphere for learners. The college displays equal opportunities posters on walls and offices and uses positive images of people from diverse backgrounds in its marketing and publicity literature.