

INSPECTION REPORT

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

13 October 2006



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based 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 aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**).

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.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

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

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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Contents

Summary

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Key challenges for London Borough of Barking and Dagenham	3
Grades	3
About the inspection	4
What learners like about London Borough of Barking and Dagenham	7
What learners think London Borough of Barking and Dagenham could improve	7

Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	8
Equality of opportunity	10
Quality improvement	11
Information and communications technology	13
Retail and commercial enterprise	16
Languages, literature and culture	19
Preparation for life and work	22

INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. The adult college of Barking and Dagenham (the college) is a medium-sized college maintained by the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (the borough). It provides part-time day and evening adult and community learning in four dedicated centres and in a range of venues across the borough. In 2005-06 the college provided courses in 11 subject-sector areas, the larger of these being preparation for life, information and communication technology (ICT), arts, media and publishing, and languages, literature and culture. There were 5,162 learners and 12,709 enrolments. Forty-six per cent of learners attended accredited courses. Twenty-five per cent of learners on non-accredited courses were from minority ethnic groups, 11 per cent of learners had a learning difficulty and/or disability and 52 per cent were entitled to additional 'deprivation uplift' funding from the Learning and Skills Council.
2. The head of the college has overall responsibility for the management of the adult college. The college has local management status and a governing body with learner and staff representation.
3. The college is located in an area of high social disadvantage. In April 2006 the unemployment rate in the borough was 3.9 per cent, compared with 2.8 per cent in outer London and 2.6 per cent across England as a whole. Literacy and numeracy levels are among the lowest in the country and 23.3 per cent of the population have no qualifications, compared with 13.9 per cent in London. Only 13.8 per cent of the population have qualifications at level 4 and above, compared with 30.8 per cent in London.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** More specifically, the provider's leadership and management and its arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory. The arrangements for equality of opportunity are good. Provision is good in retail and commercial enterprise, and satisfactory in ICT, in languages, literature and culture, and in preparation for life and work.
5. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. With very good success rates in literacy and numeracy national tests, success rates on accredited courses are good and have improved from 59 per cent in 2003-04 to 77 per cent in 2005-06. Some 66 per cent of all learners on accredited programmes were enrolled on skills for life courses. Skills for life is the government's initiative on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. Success rates vary from 67 per cent to 100 per cent in non-accredited provision. There are no significant differences between overall success rates for learners from minority ethnic groups. Retention rates have slightly improved since 2003-04 and are similar for accredited and non-accredited provision. The average retention rate for all provision rose from 81 per cent in 2003-04 to 87 per cent in 2005-06. Attendance was unsatisfactory during the inspection in beauty therapy and languages, literature and culture. Punctuality was poor in some lessons in ICT. The college was not able to identify an overall

attendance pattern for 2005-06. Most learners progress well. Learners improve their skills, produce some imaginative work, gain confidence and enjoy their learning. However, learners' progress and achievements are not recorded sufficiently and there is little information about learners' attainment of personal, social and life skills. Standards of work vary across the curriculum. Learners' attainment is generally satisfactory but some courses do not provide learners with sufficiently demanding work.

6. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Of the 44 lessons observed by inspectors, 48 per cent were judged to be good or better, 43 per cent were satisfactory and 9 per cent were inadequate. This profile generally matches the college's own internal observation profile although the college's assessment does not sufficiently focus on the quality of learning. Courses are well planned and in the best lessons tutors use an appropriate range of relevant resources. Assessment is satisfactory in most areas. Learner profiles provide useful information but are not used routinely as working documents to aid the monitoring of progress. The college has made satisfactory progress to introduce the process of recognising and recording progress and achievement. However, many learning plans are too general and do not adequately record progress, specific learning targets or quantify achievements.

7. The range of programmes is satisfactory at the main college site. Progression opportunities are good on many of the programmes and courses are provided in response to the identified needs and interests of the learners. The centralisation of the service, a high number of course cancellations, and insufficient evening and weekend provision does not enable the college to adequately meet local needs. There is insufficient community development and learning to respond to the significant needs of the community.

8. **Support for learners is very good.** Guidance and advice is effective. The good range of support helps learners to participate and achieve, and provides a caring and inclusive learning environment. Support to meet learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs is satisfactory and the range of adaptive technologies provides good support for learners with specific learning needs.

9. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process is inclusive and the report has improved since the previous inspection. However, the report is insufficiently critical. It does not sufficiently use the findings from the college's internal observation system to make accurate judgements about the quality of teaching and learning. The evidence base for the report is limited and most grades given by inspectors were lower than those in the self-assessment report.

10. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** Since the previous inspection, the borough, through the work of the college, has increased opportunities for accreditation and demonstrated a good focus on improving achievement and raising standards. It has invested in improving accommodation and learning resources to raise aspirations and developed rigorous observation of teaching and learning. Quality improvement is more effective and quality assurance arrangements are now comprehensive, focused on improving the experience of the learner, although they are not yet used consistently. Data is used to manage performance, staff development is focused on key priorities and the college enjoys a record of successful partnership work. The college has maintained standards.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR LONDON BOROUGH OF BARKING AND DAGENHAM:

- further improve standards of teaching and learning
- further improve success rates in all curriculum areas
- strengthen and develop partnerships for community development and learning
- improve effective recording of progress and achievement
- strengthen promotion of the borough's diverse community
- develop a more ambitious agenda to further raise standards

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Grades awarded at inspection

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

Information and communications technology			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
ICT for users			
Adult and community learning	283	3	

Retail and commercial enterprise			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Beauty therapy			
Adult and community learning	94	2	

Languages, literature and culture			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Language, literature and culture of the British Isles			
Adult and community learning	75	3	
Other languages, literature and culture			
Adult and community learning	362	3	

Preparation for life and work		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ESOL		3
Adult and community learning	320	3
Literacy and numeracy		3
Adult and community learning	481	3

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

11. The provider was first inspected, as Barking and Dagenham Local Education Authority, by the ALI in March 2003 and received a quality monitoring visit in September 2005. Seven inspectors visited the borough's adult college over five days in October 2006. The contributory areas of ICT for users, beauty therapy, languages, literature and culture, literacy and numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) were all inspected and graded. Classes in family learning, wider family learning and cookery were also sampled to gain an overview of the full range of provision.

Number of inspectors	7
Number of inspection days	35
Number of learners interviewed	164
Number of staff interviewed	61
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	13
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	7

Leadership and Management

Strengths

- good focus on improving achievement and raising standards
- good investment in resources to raise aspirations of community

Weaknesses

- poor links between strategic planning and curriculum development
- insufficient community development to raise and extend the college's profile across the borough

Information and communications technology

ICT for users

Strengths

- high success rates within good partnership programmes

- very good support for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient range of courses
- insufficient recording of learners' progress and attainment

Retail and commercial enterprise

Beauty therapy

Strengths

- high success rates on Indian head massage and reflexology courses
- good teaching and learning
- good specialist resources support a wide range of courses

Weaknesses

- low success rates on Swedish massage courses

Languages, literature and culture

Strengths

- very effective use of a variety of resources to stimulate learning
- good support to provide inclusive learning environment for learners
- good communication and sharing of good practice

Weaknesses

- poor retention in GCSE English and in BSL
- insufficient use of the taught language by tutors and learners
- narrow range of provision

Preparation for life and work

ESOL

Strengths

- good retention
- good support including childcare

Weaknesses

- narrow range of teaching and learning
- insufficient planning for individual learning

Literacy and numeracy

Strengths

- good and improving success rates
- good support for learners
- good-quality accommodation on main college site

Weaknesses

- inadequate recording of progress and achievement
- insufficient range of provision

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT LONDON BOROUGH OF BARKING AND DAGENHAM:

- getting plenty of support from tutors
- the equipment and décor at main site
- working towards a qualification
- the good facilities - café, toilets, car parking
- the friendly, helpful staff
- the very useful learner resource centre

WHAT LEARNERS THINK LONDON BOROUGH OF BARKING AND DAGENHAM COULD IMPROVE:

- cancellation of courses at the last minute
- the information about facilities for evening learners
- the number of classes in the evening
- the help provided to find alternatives if a course is cancelled
- the pricing of courses - fees are too high

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- good focus on improving achievement and raising standards
- good investment in resources to raise aspirations of community

Weaknesses

- poor links between strategic planning and curriculum development
- insufficient community development to raise and extend the college's profile across the borough

12. Since the previous inspection the borough has improved success rates and maintained satisfactory standards through the work of the college. However, although participation in adult learning is spread evenly across the borough, previously successful strategies to widen participation are compromised by the rationalisation of provision across the borough.

13. The college focuses well on improving achievement and raising standards. Success rates on accredited courses have improved from 59 per cent on average in 2003-04 to 77 per cent in 2005-06. This significant increase is due largely to very good performance in literacy and numeracy national tests. The college places great importance on improving retention and achievement for all courses and reviews performance twice a term to provide effective monitoring of ongoing performance. A detailed set of performance data is collected and evaluated by curriculum teams. Enrolments, retention and success rates are reviewed along with other quality measures including learners' evaluations, outcomes of teaching and learning observations and complaints/compliments for each area of learning. Short-term targets are then set, following thorough scrutiny and discussions at senior management level. This comprehensive and detailed process is carried out at fixed and regular periods in the year, ultimately feeding into the annual self-assessment process and then the subsequent quality improvement plan. This process is incomplete, as a parallel process for leadership and management does not take place.

14. The provider has made significant targeted investment in resources, including physical infrastructure and learning resources. The benefits of this investment are clearly confirmed within courses delivered at the main college site. The good resources at the college help to raise learners' aspirations and support the borough's commitment to the important role of learning in social regeneration. Courses at the main college site operate within a safe, pleasant environment where individuals feel valued and respected. Investment includes improving access for disabled learners, provision of high-quality ICT, improving crèche facilities and upgrading the café to a modern facility offering a wide choice of healthy eating options. Alongside this investment, the college has withdrawn provision from some locations which were considered to be unsuitable. Further investment has included the creation of the post of deputy head of college, whose major responsibilities include equality of opportunity and support for learners. Although these are important duties, the position has no curriculum responsibilities. This does not maximise or exploit the full

potential of the post or the critical links between equality and diversity, support for learners and the curriculum.

15. The borough effectively manages adult and community learning through the adult college. The recent restructuring of the borough now places the adult college within the regeneration directorate. This new position within corporate services provides the college with a strong imperative to support regeneration. This includes raising the level of skills across the borough and contributing to borough priorities for the government's Every Child Matters initiative. Communication with borough staff and within the college itself is effective.

16. The college makes provision for some good specific partnership work. The Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC) project successfully recruits, trains and supports people from the local community to become volunteers as well as providing progression into careers in education. The achievement of volunteers is very good and many are now involved in supporting and delivering learning. The project is making a good contribution to capacity building in the area, although many of the participants are recruited from existing learners. The NLDC project is also making a good contribution to the quality of teaching and learning within the college, including the production of guidelines to support the use of volunteers in lessons.

17. A productive partnership with the borough supports workforce development. The college delivers a number of skills for life courses. These improve the confidence of employees and many learners are now well equipped to gain further vocational qualifications. The college has made an important contribution to changing the culture of the borough's internal training programme, by helping to overcome barriers to the provision of skills for life within workforce development. Work with the borough's catering services includes excellent achievement of a healthier school meals certificate for staff providing school meals. The college also provides a successful programme of skills for life work with children centres, and ICT training for some external organisations. The number of learners in workforce development was 71 in 2002-03, rising to 151 in 2005-06. The college does not sufficiently monitor progression in employer engagement work. It is also difficult to recruit staff to work at times suitable for learners' work patterns, including late nights and early mornings.

18. There is generous and extensive support for staff training and professional development. This strength has been maintained since the previous inspection. Training is clearly linked to key strategic and curriculum priorities and includes training in recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning, ICT and management training. Individual training needs are identified and discussed during the annual staff development and review process as well as through observations of teaching and learning. These are then brought together into a detailed staff learning plan. However, there is insufficient detailed evaluation of training activities to rigorously assess their contribution to key priorities.

19. Arrangements are satisfactory for providing literacy, numeracy and language support. However, the college has yet to integrate skills for life more effectively into the college curriculum to provide relevant and contextualised literacy, numeracy and language skills support. The college is also facing shifts in the funding of skills for life with a higher proportion of funding allocated to meeting level 1 and 2 targets. The college has not

been sufficiently agile in developing a strategy to meet the needs of entry level learners.

20. The college has made a satisfactory response to Every Child Matters through the range of healthy eating options in its café, partnership work with the borough's school meal service and work with vulnerable young adults. All staff are checked by the criminal records bureau.

21. There are poor links between the college's strategic priorities as outlined in its three-year development plan for 2005-06 and its curriculum plans. Critically, the college has not produced a business and operational plan to provide a link between strategic priorities and curriculum development. Long-term priorities and how they support the development of the curriculum are not made sufficiently clear. The three-year development plan contains a range of sound, aspirational statements on the how the college intends to deliver its provision to the borough. Many of the aims are neither quantified nor specific in detail. Where targets exist they are insufficiently challenging. For example, a figure of 3 per cent has been set as the target by which recruitment and retention of men on skills for life courses will be increased over the three-year period. Within the context of very low participation rates within the borough, this only relates to an increase of 36 men. This is neither challenging nor ambitious and will not have a significant effect on the borough's aim to widen participation. These targets are also general targets across all provision. They are not focused on specific geographical areas or further broken down for each area of learning, and some key staff are unaware of these key targets. Although key plans are discussed at senior management meetings and actions taken, some key staff are not sufficiently informed about key targets and the comprehensive reviews of progress of many plans are inadequate.

22. There is insufficient community development and learning to extend the profile of the college across the borough. Funding constraints and the new government agenda present significant challenges and constraints for an already deprived borough. Restrictions on funding have meant that the college is reducing the number of skills for life learners this year. Some funding has been obtained from other sources and the borough is using European Social Fund money to provide some support for ESOL learners. Work with Surestart is also providing support for skills for life courses.

23. The range of work across the borough has been reduced and most provision is now located in four designated sites, with some 80 per cent of provision scheduled to be delivered from one central location in the borough. The strengths identified at the previous inspection for widening participation have not been developed.

24. Local provision to meet local needs is increasingly limited, especially in areas with little or no tradition of participation. There is little evening provision and a narrow range of courses within some areas of learning including ICT and languages. The programme of partnership work, albeit successful, is insufficient. The college has few partnership arrangements with other providers, community organisations and the small voluntary sector in the borough to secure additional resources, offer first steps provision and extend progression opportunities for learners.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

25. The borough's promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Learners with disabilities are supported well. The college's application and assessment process is

inclusive, thorough and provides learners with well-directed, sensitive support. At the time of inspection, 59 learners had received comprehensive interviews to support the management of their specific needs. The range of support includes support workers, appropriate learning materials in a wide range of formats and specialist equipment at the main site where, for example, some teaching rooms have sinks which can be lowered for learners using wheelchairs.

26. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups at college in 2005-06 was 37 per cent. The proportion of staff from minority ethnic groups was 27 per cent. This is considerably more than the 19 per cent in the borough. The performance of learners from minority ethnic groups is monitored and is not significantly different from other groups of learners. Staff have previously identified poor success by Chinese learners studying ICT and in response, a course is now running which combines Cantonese and English instruction with basic computer literacy.

27. There is good crèche provision for 25 children at the main site. This was not full during the inspection, although many individual sessions were full and have a waiting list. Priority is given to children of learners who would otherwise be unable to attend college. Subsidised crèche facilities are available at one other site.

28. There is a culture of respect and tolerance in the college for learners and staff. The language and materials used in classes are appropriate and avoid stereotypes. For example, materials used in a class with Muslim learners includes images of Islamic art and avoids images which could be offensive. Learners are confident that they will be respected. However, the college does not sufficiently promote diversity in the content of lessons and the observation of teaching and learning does not specifically focus on promotion of equality and diversity within lessons.

29. The college has policies and procedures to ensure that all staff and learners are treated appropriately. The equal opportunities policy is based on that of the borough. It is not sufficiently focused on the learners' experience and the attached list of legislation is not up to date, although it is satisfactory when read with the procedures. Policies and procedures for disability, grievance, and harassment are comprehensive. No significant complaints or incidents have been logged in the past two years. Equality for racial minorities is covered in the learners' induction programme but other aspects of diversity are missing. A learners' handbook is distributed. The equal opportunities section of the handbook focuses on racial equality and disability but other equality issues are not described.

30. Twenty-two per cent of learners are men. The college has done some marketing to encourage men into learning, for example by advertising in football fixture lists. This poor representation has not changed significantly in the past three years. Only 13 per cent of staff are men. Nineteen per cent of courses take place in the evening and there are few weekend activities. Some female learners comment that their partners would attend if the classes were at more suitable times for them and others commented that the environment was too female-dominated for some men.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

31. Quality improvement is satisfactory and has improved since the previous inspection. Overall quality assurance arrangements are now comprehensive with a sharp focus on

improving the experience of the learners. The use of data in improving and performance reviews make good use of data to manage key priorities. Data is reliable and accurate, although data on learners' destinations is incomplete. This weakness is recognised in self-assessment. Learners are consulted and the termly learners' newsletter provides good communication about college activities. Learners' views are collected regularly but analysis of feedback is not consistently used to make improvements. For example, learners' feedback on more oral language practice has not been dealt with. The college has established a 'top tutor' forum and shares good practice effectively. It has begun recognising and recording progress and achievement including systems to support the five stages of the process. However, recording of learners' progress and achievement is not sufficient in all areas of learning and is a key weakness in ICT and literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses.

32. The systems and process for observing the quality of teaching and learning are now more rigorous. The quality of teaching and learning has been maintained since the previous inspection but, it has not sufficiently improved overall, with little increase of good and better lessons. All teaching staff are observed at least annually by line managers and receive detailed, evaluative feedback. Observations are graded and highlight developmental needs. Where poor practice is identified, an action plan is agreed and a mentor is assigned. The tutor is then observed again within the same year. Judgements on the quality of teaching and learning are in the main clear and accurate. However, some reports do not identify or make judgements on the learners' experience of learning or learners' attainment, although the inclusion of learners' views provides useful evidence. Some of the weaknesses identified by inspectors during the inspection have not been picked up during the college observations. The results of observations are analysed by the quality team on an ongoing basis and used to guide performance reviews. They are analysed to identify trends within areas of learning and compared with grades in other local boroughs. In addition, there is overall review and monitoring to ensure that prescribed standards of training, teaching and learning are being met and that continuous improvement is taking place.

33. The quality improvement plan is used to manage improvement. However, the plan refers only to weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report and does not identify how strengths will be maintained or further developed.

34. The self-assessment process is rigorous but the report itself does not identify some of the key issues identified during this inspection.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information and communications technology

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ICT for users</i>		3
Adult and community learning	283	3

35. The college provides a range of accredited and non-accredited courses in ICT which account for some 14 per cent of the total college provision. Examination-based qualifications in ICT at level 1 and 2 and basic computer literacy qualifications account for 69 per cent of the total ICT provision. Other courses cover web design and visual programming, courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and a small number of courses with support for Cantonese speakers. The college offers an insufficient range of courses. It has reduced the number of locations offering ICT provision since the 2003 inspection, including the closure of UK online courses. Courses are currently held in three centres and in workplaces. Some courses are designed specifically to support workforce development through partnerships with an employment agency, the borough and Sure Start. Courses range from six to 26 weeks in length. During 2005-06, 988 learners enrolled on 169 courses. Of these learners, 33 per cent were men, 13 per cent were aged over 65, 16 per cent declared a disability and 36 per cent were from minority ethnic groups. At the time of the inspection, 283 learners were attending 32 courses. One full-time, one half-time and eight part-time tutors work in the curriculum area and are supported by a full-time curriculum manager.

ICT for users

Strengths

- high success rates within good partnership programmes
- very good support for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient range of courses
- insufficient recording of learners' progress and attainment

Achievement and standards

36. Success rates are high on courses run in conjunction with the college's partners. Overall in 2005-06, 85 per cent of those who started a course were successful and the success rate was 100 per cent on a number of courses. Success rates are satisfactory on other programmes, and although the data for 2005-06 appears low, with the success rate for accredited courses at 57 per cent, these rates are skewed by very poor retention rates on drop-in courses. The college has now closed these courses. The overall success rate for non-accredited courses in 2005-06 was 67 per cent.

37. The attendance during the inspection was satisfactory at 81 per cent. Punctuality is

poor in some lessons, and although tutors note this as a problem in lesson evaluations, there are no consistent measures to improve punctuality.

38. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory, at a level appropriate to the learners and the programme they are taking. On introductory programmes, learners quickly learn basic operation of the computer, keyboard and mouse and progress to use a word processor and the internet. On accredited courses, learners improve their skills in the use of standard office software applications. Some also learn elements of web page creation, visual programming and the internal workings of a computer.

The quality of provision

39. Support is very good and meets a wide range of learners' needs and interests. Tutors encourage learners, who do not have their own computers, to practise skills and consolidate learning in the learning resource centre. The centre is extensively used, with ICT learners making some 400 visits over the past year. The college employs trained facilitators to support learners in large classes and in classes for learners with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A wide range of adaptive technologies is readily available and tutors are well aware of what is available and how to use it. Hardware such as rising tables for wheelchair users, trackerballs and large-key keyboards enable learners with disabilities to make good progress on courses. Specialist software enables blind and visually impaired learners to participate in lessons. Support is available in classes for learners with literacy, numeracy and language needs. Courses for Cantonese speakers are taught in both English and Cantonese. There is also a range of courses providing good support for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities.

40. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Lesson plans and schemes of work are detailed and often used well to identify changes to the programme based on learners' emerging needs. The best lesson plans take good account of individual learning needs and include self-critical evaluations. Most lessons include an appropriate range of teaching and learning methods. Weaker lessons do not sufficiently involve all learners. In some lessons, some learners do not have enough work and have to wait for the whole class to complete a task before continuing with their learning. There is insufficient review of learning at the end of lessons. Learning resources are generally well written and feature plenty of illustration. However, some learning materials are poorly photocopied and difficult to use.

41. The recording of learners' progress and assessment is insufficient. Some initial assessment is carried out, but it often lacks detail and does not sufficiently guide the planning of learning. In most cases, learners' progress is not recorded against learning outcomes. Although the learners' achievement record enables recording of learners' achievement of tasks, it does not include the achievement of competences. Learners' profiles are not used routinely as working documents to support the monitoring of progress.

42. The college offers an insufficient range of courses to widen learners' participation. It has reduced the number of locations offering ICT provision since the 2003 inspection including the closure of UK online courses and withdrawal of provision from schools in the borough. The number of classes in the evening is very low, limiting provision for learners in employment. This gap in provision is recognised by the college. No courses

are run at weekends, nor are there any very short taster courses. While courses are offered from entry level to level 3, these are nearly all in the office software application field. There is no mapping of total borough provision to support the development of a coherent range of provision by the college.

Leadership and management

43. Communication is regular and supportive. Team meetings are well attended and actions are assigned, although these are not dated. Good practice is shared and learning materials are made available to all tutors on an internal network. Verification of accredited courses is good. Tutors are well qualified in both ICT and teaching and some have relevant vocational experience. A wide range of staff development opportunities is well used. Equipment, learning resources and accommodation are satisfactory. ICT hardware and software are up to date and networks are reliable, with fast internet connections. The college's own classrooms all have data projectors but visual display facilities are poor in employers' premises and there is poor ventilation in one centre. All computer rooms are accessible to learners with restricted mobility.

44. Many learners and tutors are from black and minority ethnic communities. However, tutors do not routinely promote diversity and equality of opportunity in the content of lessons.

45. Internal observations of teaching and learning are well established and annual, with detailed feedback. Observations of teaching and learning include good action-planning and monitoring to support tutors to improve identified weaknesses. However, many judgements do not reflect the observation grades given and the evidence collected during the observation process pays insufficient attention to the quality of learning.

46. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. However, the judgements in the report do not reflect the inspection findings. For example, although the college recognises the area's overly generous grading of teaching and learning in the internal observation system, the self-assessment report does not reflect these weaknesses in its assessment of teaching and learning.

Retail and commercial enterprise**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Beauty therapy</i> Adult and community learning	94	2

47. The college provides a range of accredited and non-accredited complementary therapy courses including reflexology, Indian head massage, Swedish massage, aromatherapy, reiki, homeopathy, non-medical nutrition and exploring chakras. During the inspection only the introductory courses were running. Most courses are delivered at the main adult college site with one course planned at an outreach community centre in 2007.

48. Since September 2006, 94 learners have enrolled on the non-accredited courses. Courses vary in length from one-day tasters to six-week introductory courses and 34-week programmes. A number of courses are offered in the evenings. Ninety-four per cent of learners are women.

49. The area inspected is part of a larger programme including cookery courses. At the time of inspection, the area was managed by a full-time curriculum manager for general education covering for a part-time assistant curriculum manager who is on long-term absence. Three part-time curriculum specialist tutors deliver the courses.

Beauty therapy*Strengths*

- high success rates on Indian head massage and reflexology courses
- good teaching and learning
- good specialist resources support a wide range of courses

Weaknesses

- low success rates on Swedish massage courses

Achievement and standards

50. Success rates have been consistently high over the past three years for the Indian head massage course. Success rates for reflexology are also high and have improved from 82 per cent in 2003-04 to 86 per cent 2005-06. However, success rates for Swedish massage improved from 50 per cent in 2003-04 to 71 per cent in 2004-05 then declined again to 50 per cent in 2005-06. Attendance during the inspection was low at 64 per cent.

51. Learners' portfolios on accredited courses show a good range of work. Files are well organised and clearly indexed. The content of the assignment work is of a good standard. Assignments are word processed or neatly hand written with clear diagrams and some evidence of ICT use.

52. Learners gain confidence and their practical skills are developed well. They enjoy their learning and this is reflected in the end-of-course evaluations. Many learners report an improvement in their wellbeing and are using their skills within the family.

The quality of provision

53. Teaching and learning are good. Most lessons observed were well planned and successfully met the needs of the learners. Tutors are well qualified and experienced as practitioners, and are passionate about their subject area. All tutors have teaching qualifications and are very good at explaining complex movements. Learners enjoy their lessons in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. A number of learners have returned to sample additional courses.

54. The resources for complementary therapies are good. One quiet specialist room has recently been tastefully refurbished. Resources to support the delivery of lessons are very good and there are plenty of anatomical posters and models. Teaching resources are effectively used to support learners' understanding.

55. The assessment of learning is satisfactory. All learners are required to complete an introductory course which offers a planned initial assessment route in preparation for the accredited course. Although the process is well defined, there are inconsistencies in the monitoring of learning and insufficient detail about learning outcomes. Feedback on written assignments is constructive and encouraging, although it does not pick up the need for learners to provide bibliographies to evidence their research work.

56. The college offers a wide range of courses, from one-day tasters and mother and child days to short six-week introductory courses. The number of introductory and accredited courses offered has increased this year, as have progression opportunities.

57. Learners are given satisfactory guidance and support. Learners request support or their tutors identify additional support needs which are then referred to the learner support team. Support provided includes help with coursework and ICT use. The college has produced an attractive brochure, which provides good course and progression information. However, this is not widely circulated and is generally only available in English.

Leadership and management

58. The delivery of the courses is good and staff are active in the absence of their assistant curriculum manager. Weaknesses identified in the previous inspection have been dealt with. Learners are now interviewed before progressing onto accredited courses. The college makes satisfactory use of management information. Annual staff appraisal identifies training needs and tutors have good continual professional development opportunities. The recently formed buddy system provides good support for less-experienced staff. Tutors informally share good practice. The internal observation of teaching and learning provides tutors with good support, and focuses well on improving learners' experience and tutor skills. Internal observation grades closely match inspection findings. Verification reports are good. Tutors receive regular feedback and action points are followed up.

LONDON BOROUGH OF BARKING AND DAGENHAM

59. Course reviews lack rigour. They are mainly based on learners' feedback at the end of courses and are used for updating the termly self-assessment report. This termly report is an effective performance monitoring tool, but some of the targets set for retention, achievement and attendance are insufficiently challenging.

60. Strategies to recruit learners are limited. The marketing strategy is weak and course information does not reach a sufficiently wide audience to maximise enrolments. The programme is largely based at the main college site and only one course has been planned to take place at a community venue.

61. The self-assessment report is clear, although it is insufficiently evaluative. It identifies some of the strengths and one of the weaknesses found by inspectors.

Languages, literature and culture**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Language, literature and culture of the British Isles</i> Adult and community learning	75	3
<i>Other languages, literature and culture</i> Adult and community learning	362	3

62. The college provides 56 courses in French, Spanish, Italian and German. Most courses lead to Open College Network accreditation at entry level, level 1 and level 2. Fourteen courses are non-accredited, mainly at advanced level. There is a small programme of British Sign Language (BSL) courses with accreditation at level 1 and 2, general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) in English and creative writing courses for beginners that are not accredited. The length of courses varies from three weeks for some introductory programmes to 27 weeks for accredited courses.

63. In 2005-06 a total of 755 of learners attended 73 courses. All courses are delivered at the college's main site. At the time of inspection there were 437 learners, of whom 362 were learners on modern foreign languages courses. One full-time senior curriculum manager has overall responsibility for all general education programmes including courses in this area, except for GCSE English which is managed by the skills for life team. Two assistant curriculum managers support the area and there are nine part-time language tutors.

Strengths

- very effective use of a variety of resources to stimulate learning
- good support to provide inclusive learning environment for learners
- good communication and sharing of good practice

Weaknesses

- poor retention in GCSE English and in BSL
- insufficient use of the taught language by tutors and learners
- narrow range of provision

Achievement and standards

64. Retention is poor in BSL and GCSE English courses where, despite a nearly 20 per cent improvement from the previous year, it remains below national averages and significantly below college averages.

65. Retention in modern foreign languages is good and has significantly improved from previous years, alongside a considerable increase in learner numbers. Achievement in modern foreign languages has declined slightly in the past three years, although it remains satisfactory. Success rates have improved and are now satisfactory. They are also satisfactory in GCSE English, but poor in BSL courses. Attendance during the inspection was low at 68 per cent.

66. The standard of learners' written work is generally good. Learners in creative writing classes produce some imaginative pieces of work. Clear progression routes in French and Spanish enable many learners to progress from beginners' to advanced levels. In modern foreign languages classes, learners' attainment in relation to their learning outcomes is satisfactory. Learners develop good reading and writing skills, but their oral skills are sometimes below the level expected for their course. Learners are not sufficiently challenged in some lessons.

The quality of provision

67. Tutors make very good use of a variety of resources to stimulate learning. All classrooms have good audiovisual equipment and information learning technology (ILT) resources. A dedicated language classroom is very well resourced and has ICT facilities for all learners. Effective classroom displays create a positive and engaging learning atmosphere. Skilful use of ICT and integration of ILT into lessons across the subject area often make presentation activities very effective, stimulating learners and encouraging participation. For example, some tutors use presentation software to display language structures in context and, by using text in different colours, encourage learners to identify patterns and formulate rules.

68. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Lessons are well planned and tutors keep comprehensive records of learners' initial assessment and progress against the course learning outcomes. In the best lessons, initial assessment guides planning and individual learning needs are well catered for. However, in some lessons initial assessment is not integrated with the learning process. In these cases, learners are asked to fill in the form without support from the tutor or discussion about individual starting levels and needs.

69. Tutors and learners make insufficient use of the taught language. In language lessons some tutors do not provide enough verbal examples of new language nor do they use the taught language for basic classroom communicative interaction such as instructions, praise and commands. Learners in these lessons have insufficient opportunities to use the language in a practical, meaningful way, as the focus of most activities is on reading, writing or grammar. Too little time is allocated to learners' speaking activities in lesson plans. Course evaluation forms for courses in all four languages show that learners would like more opportunities for oral practice.

70. Good progression opportunities in French and Spanish enable learners to continue their studies to higher levels. Courses are available at different times to suit different needs. Some enrichment activities contribute to learners' enjoyment and achievement and they speak highly about these opportunities. For example, a tutor of French helped a group of learners organise an educational a trip to France. A field trip for all GCSE English learners to attend a performance of Macbeth was funded by the college and was well attended. Progression is limited in some languages as programmes have been reduced or discontinued.

71. Support for learning is good and provides an inclusive learning environment. All tutors create a genuinely relaxed, non-threatening and inclusive atmosphere that encourages active participation from all learners including those with low levels of

confidence. Tutors make time to see learners before or after lessons to provide individual support when necessary. Learners who wish to join GCSE English courses attend a three-hour taster session where their level is assessed by the course tutor and any support needs are identified. If necessary, learners are referred to an appropriate literacy programme. Computers in classrooms have been fitted with adaptive software to improve support for partially sighted learners, who also receive support from classroom assistants. Learners are satisfied with the information available to them to make choices about their courses. They speak highly about the support and information they receive during lessons.

Leadership and management

72. Communication and the sharing of good practice are good. Tutors have frequent opportunities to meet assistant curriculum managers informally or during regular team and curriculum development meetings. All tutors have an annual appraisal to review performance, discuss observation of teaching and learning and identify professional development needs. Many tutors attend training sessions on a variety of general topics, although specific language training has been limited.

73. Materials, extracts and topics for presentation are inclusive, both socially and educationally, and promote learning opportunities for all learners. However, there is no active promotion of equality and diversity in the planning and delivery of teaching. Learners with physical disabilities have good access to classrooms.

74. The annual observation of teaching and learning is rigorous. Where poor practice is identified, an action plan is agreed and the tutor is observed again within the same academic year. Judgements on teaching and learning are often clear and accurate, but some reports do not put enough emphasis on learners' attainment and oral language.

75. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and involves tutors, learners and curriculum managers. Curriculum managers prepare interim reports to feed into the final version of the self-assessment report. The report identifies some of the strengths and weaknesses found during inspection, but does not focus on some key weaknesses. A weakness relating to the insufficient use of target languages was identified during the previous inspection and by learners but has not been dealt with.

76. During the previous inspection the range of provision was identified as an area for improvement. The college has made no progress in this area and programme planning is still narrowly focused on repeating current provision. The range of provision is narrow. There is no outline of a strategic direction for the area of learning, and the college has few strategies to identify needs in the wider community and those of employers. Targets for development are not set. The curriculum offer has slightly decreased in size in 2006-07 with reductions in modern foreign languages, English and BSL.

Preparation for life and work**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ESOL</i> Adult and community learning	320	3 3
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i> Adult and community learning	481	3 3

77. Literacy and numeracy skills levels across Barking and Dagenham are among the lowest in the country. The college provides skills for life provision including literacy, numeracy, family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN), ESOL and wider family learning.

78. At the time of inspection, 280 learners were attending literacy courses, 164 learners were on numeracy courses, 37 learners were in FLLN provision and 22 learners were attending wider family learning courses. Some learners were attending more than one type of programme. There were 320 learners attending ESOL courses, including 56 new learners attending 26 classes.

79. Most literacy and numeracy courses are offered at the main college site which is situated in a ward where 66 per cent of the adult population have skills at entry level in numeracy and 23 per cent have entry level skills in literacy. In 2005-06 FLLN was offered in 17 primary schools. Ninety-nine employees attended skills for life courses designed in conjunction with the local authority. ESOL courses are delivered at the main site and in five community venues.

80. Learners are offered accredited and non-accredited courses from pre-entry level to level 2. Course hours range from one day to 12 weeks in length, with three-hour interview and assessment sessions. In wider family learning, families have the opportunity to develop skills in subjects ranging from healthy eating and nature studies to baby yoga. The service has an open enrolment policy for ESOL learners, who can join at anytime of the year. Seventy-three per cent of the learners are women. Many of these new learners are spouses of people already settled here and from eastern European countries. Many have trade and academic qualifications from their native countries.

81. A full-time curriculum manager, who is a member of the senior management team, manages literacy, numeracy and FLLN provision. One full-time and two part-time assistant curriculum managers manage 19 part-time tutors. A full-time curriculum manager and a part-time assistant curriculum manager manage wider family learning. Tutors who teach on wider family learning programmes come from a range of specialist subject areas. An assistant curriculum manager is responsible for the management of the ESOL provision. Eleven tutors teach on the ESOL programme.

ESOL***Strengths***

- good retention

- good support including childcare

Weaknesses

- narrow range of teaching and learning
- insufficient planning for individual learning

Achievement and standards

82. Retention is good and improving over the past three years, with 93 per cent of learners remaining on their courses in 2005-06 compared with 81 per cent in 2004-05. Overall, achievement of external qualifications is satisfactory and in 2005-06, 50 per cent of total learners achieved qualifications. Achievement for entry 1 and 2 learners was also good in 2005-06 with 80 per cent achieving their qualification. Learners at entry levels 1 and 2 make good progress in achieving qualifications in listening, speaking and reading. Achievement of qualifications at other levels is satisfactory. Most learners make satisfactory progress through various levels.

83. Learners develop listening and speaking skills and make satisfactory progress towards developing their broad personal objectives. They gain greater confidence and use the language learned in the classroom effectively in their daily lives. Learners are now more able to read letters from their child's school and are able confidently to ask questions at the doctors, complete forms accurately and make and answer telephone calls. Higher-level learners are insufficiently challenged in some lessons.

84. During the inspection, the attendance was 83 per cent. Many of the learners attend classes punctually despite experiencing a number of significant challenges.

The quality of provision

85. Good support for learners, including childcare, is effectively used to help learners to stay on their courses. Most of the crèche places are used by ESOL learners. Tutors give good support to the learners in classes, and in some classes additional support tutors offer individual support. Learners use the learning resource centre extensively to support their learning. Learners feel protected and respected as individuals. Staff refer learners to various other support agencies appropriately. Information, advice and guidance are effective. An adviser attends the college every fortnight to advise learners. Many of the learners with overseas qualifications are given a number and website address to help them to compare their qualifications. However, they do not get this information systematically. Induction is satisfactory and introduces learners to the college and courses.

86. Tutors use a narrow range of teaching and learning methods in the classroom, although teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Most tutors use the nationally produced materials, including worksheets, slavishly. They do not sufficiently extend learning to include real-life situations or make use of everyday materials from different cultures. There is insufficient focus on broader skills development. Tutors make insufficient use of tape recorders and mobile technology to extend learning. Learners do not sufficiently engage in role-plays to extend their range of vocabulary and skills. Learners are not sufficiently encouraged to develop independent learning skills.

87. There is insufficient planning for individual learning. Although initial assessment of

learners' language abilities is satisfactory, it does not cover the full range of needs. Tutors concentrate solely on developing language skills of the learners without due regard to their motivation, ability to learn, previous language learning skills and vocational qualifications. Learning plans do not include planning for long-term goals including vocational ambitions. The targets set are not sufficiently specific, timebound or measurable. Progress reviews are informal and are not used to set new meaningful targets.

88. The courses and programmes meet the needs of learners. A variety of levels are available at appropriate times for learners. Courses have been delivered in employability and craft skills such as garment making, in conjunction with other departments in the college, to extend learners' experience. A course for employees at a major local supermarket has also been delivered. However, the college is unable to meet the demand for provision. At the time of the inspection, 85 learners were on the waiting list.

Leadership and management

89. The performance management of staff is effective and all staff actively seek to improve the quality of provision. Tutors are well qualified and appropriately experienced. They conduct course evaluations, and seek learners' views. Many quality improvement systems are in place, although it is too early to judge their effect. Internal observations of teaching and learning are thorough and detailed. However, these are not consistently evaluative and do not fully identify key improvements. Lesson grading within the internal observation system is too generous and inspectors did not agree with the self-assessment grade for this area.

90. The area works effectively with partners to develop new provision. However, progression routes for ESOL learners are increasingly limited as the challenges of funding begin to affect this area.

Literacy and numeracy

Strengths

- good and improving success rates
- good support for learners
- good-quality accommodation on main college site

Weaknesses

- inadequate recording of progress and achievement
- insufficient range of provision

Achievement and standards

91. Success rates are good and improving. In 2005-06, 85 per cent of literacy learners, 87 per cent of numeracy learners and 94 per cent of FLLN learners passed national tests at levels between entry level and level 2. This compares with 72 per cent for literacy, 76 per cent for numeracy and 83 per cent for FLLN in 2004-05. Seventy-five per cent of literacy learners and 67 per cent of numeracy learners progressed from level 1 to level 2 in 2005-06. Attendance during inspection was satisfactory at 78 per cent. Learners attain

a good range of social skills and learning goals. However, individual learning plans do not record learners' attainment of personal, social and life skills goals.

The quality of provision

92. Support for learners is good. A well-structured interview process includes thorough initial assessment and the outline of useful learner profiles which identify additional learning support needs before attendance on course. Twelve trained volunteers give support to learners in classes. Crèche facilities are offered on main sites and in primary schools. Progression routes are identified in individual learning plans. Learners receive clear course guidelines and regular reviews of progress. Friendly and supportive staff quickly establish a non-threatening learning environment.

93. Accommodation on the main college site is good, raises aspirations and provides an inclusive learning environment. The rooms are spacious, well lit and decorated. Furnishings are comfortable. The classrooms are well equipped with ICT and whiteboard technology. A social area is provided in a modern café. This is open during the day and evenings until 20 00 and learners use it to relax and interact in an informal, social context.

94. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Only 50 per cent of observed lessons were judged to be good. Although all observed lessons were planned on a whole-group basis, tutors are aware of their learners' individual needs and circulate well to provide support. Tutors rely too much on worksheets and learners are given handouts and worksheets with boxes to fill in to practise skills they have learnt. Learners mark these worksheets themselves and written feedback is given, predominantly, at progress review times. Tutors are required to conduct reviews every six weeks. This written feedback often lacks specific action points for improvement. Oral feedback, in class, is encouraging and supportive.

95. Resources for learning are satisfactory. The rooms are equipped well with computers but they are not widely used to support learning. Whiteboard technology is often used as a substitute for a blackboard and not as an interactive learning tool or to access stimulating materials in the classroom. Little use is made of a range of multimedia resources and stimulating reading materials.

96. Recording of learners' progress and achievement is inadequate. Although the systems for the individual planning of learning are good, staff are insufficiently trained to use them effectively to record achievement and support progress. Learners' short-term and long-term goals are not sufficiently specific and measurable, and reviews of learning do not identify clear and time-related actions to support improvement. Learners' assessment of weekly progress is often not specific and meaningfully related to the achievement of learning objectives. Learners are not sufficiently trained to develop a more self-critical approach to their own learning to stimulate independent learning. Learners' comments often relate to what has been done, as opposed to what has been learnt. Individual learning plans are rarely used as an integral part of each learning session and are often hurriedly completed at the end of session.

97. The college's response to learners' individual needs and community learning needs is satisfactory. A high proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities attend classes. All learners are treated with dignity and respect. Partnerships

are formed with primary schools for family learning. Skills for life training is offered to employees of the borough and the college has worked with a Sure Start centre to establish literacy in childcare courses. However, the college carries out insufficient partnership work with a wider range of community organisations to develop more targeted, vocationally relevant provision.

Leadership and management

98. The range of provision is insufficient. Most provision is located in the main college site, while most wards across the borough experience similar patterns of low skill levels. There is no strategy for redistribution of provision to meet the needs of residents across the borough. In 2005-06 only 14 per cent of provision was delivered in the evening. Weekend provision is only offered for nature studies in wider family learning. Furthermore there is a planned reduction in the number of skills for life learners in 2006-07. Although family learning is a key strategy for the borough to widen participation, the college is planning to reduce family learning numbers in 2006-07.

99. Curriculum managers are easily accessible through regular meetings, e-mail and the telephone. There are effective processes for the exchange of ideas and good practice. Tutors are paid to attend staff development meetings once a term and enjoy a range of professional development opportunities.

100. Quality improvement processes are satisfactory. Staff are involved in the production of a termly self-assessment report which reflects learners' and tutors' feedback and includes an analysis of attendance, retention and achievement rates. The teaching and learning observation processes are good, although the key judgements often relate to the performance of the tutor rather than the quality of the learning experience. Managers review individual learning plans but this process is not sufficiently improving the quality of recording of progress and achievement.

101. Only 45 per cent of literacy tutors and 50 per cent of numeracy tutors have teaching qualifications, and no literacy tutor has a level 4 subject-specialist qualification. The college is currently dealing with the need to ensure that staff are professionally qualified to teach in their specialist area.

