

Thames Valley University

Inspection report

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

The descriptors for the four grades are:

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

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body; and where appropriate the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on students and their achievement over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management
- specialist provision in: health, social care and childcare; engineering; information and communication technology (ICT); hairdressing and beauty therapy; visual arts; literacy and numeracy; English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); and business, administration and law.

Description of the provider

1. Thames Valley University (TVU) is an educational provider of both higher education and further education (FE). In 2004, it merged with Reading College and School of Arts and Design. Of approximately 8,000 students on FE programmes enrolled at the university in 2008/09, some 60% are studying on a part-time basis. Around one third of the students are under the age of 19. Just over half the cohort of FE students is White British. Nearly a third of the 16-18 year old students and around half the adults are from minority ethnic groups. The university has 'Centre of Vocational Excellence' (COVE) status for both hospitality and health and care.
2. Most of the university's FE provision is based in Reading but there are also courses at Ealing, Brentford and Slough. The students are drawn mostly from the three unitary authorities of Reading, Wokingham and West Berkshire. FE programmes are offered at all levels and in 14 of the 15 sector subject areas. The FE provision is located in university faculties that also deliver higher education programmes, as well as in one discrete academic unit, entitled the 14-19 Academy. This unit manages and delivers approximately a third of the university's FE provision and it includes a sixth form academy that primarily offers General Certificate of Education (GCE) AS and A level programmes.
3. Over 250 apprentices are enrolled on work-based learning programmes, almost half of whom are in construction. The others are in motor vehicle studies, hairdressing, catering, care and engineering. Some 294 learners are enrolled on Train to Gain programmes. TVU is involved in a number of vocational partnerships relating to provision for students aged 14 to 16 including the delivery of five of the new diploma lines.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Inadequate: Grade 4
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Inadequate: Grade 4
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Inadequate: Grade 4
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Satisfactory: contributory grade 3</i>

Sector subject areas

Health, social care and childcare	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Engineering	Good: Grade 2
Information and communication technology	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Visual arts	Inadequate: Grade 4
Literacy and numeracy	Satisfactory: Grade 3
English for speakers of other languages	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Business, administration and law	Inadequate: Grade 4

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Inadequate: Grade 4

4. The overall effectiveness of the university's FE provision is inadequate. Although there are pockets of satisfactory and good provision, achievement and standards are inadequate. Success rates on long courses have risen steadily but not at a sufficiently fast or consistent pace to keep up with the rising national average. Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses remain low. Achievement and standards for students aged 14 to 16 and for learners on work-based and Train to Gain programmes are satisfactory.
5. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Inspectors agree with TVU's self-assessment report (SAR) that 'too much teaching is satisfactory'. In effect, not enough teaching is good or better. Much is mediocre, failing to inspire and to take sufficient account of what students already know or can do. However, the extent to which the overall curriculum offer meets the needs and interests of learners is good. Provision is extensive and particularly responsive, both to local needs and national priorities. Courses embrace all levels and provide good progression opportunities for students. Links with employers have improved and are good in most areas of the FE provision, and are outstanding in health and social care. Partnership arrangements with local schools are very good and the university and its partners have been successful in introducing several 14-19 diplomas. Links with statutory and voluntary agencies, and with community groups, are also good. Many of these partnerships have the furtherance of inclusion at their core. Guidance and support are satisfactory. TVU caters well for students' welfare but the quality of academic support, through tutorials and target-setting, is not of a consistently high standard. Educational and social inclusion is satisfactory, as is equality of opportunity.
6. Leadership and management of the FE provision are inadequate. Oversight of the quality of FE, as the university acknowledges, has not been sufficiently rigorous. Although FE leaders recognise that the pace of improvement has been too slow and inconsistent over the last few years, it remains the case that not enough has been done by the university to improve some provision that has been persistently poor. Value for money is inadequate.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

7. The university's FE provision has satisfactory capacity to improve. Quality assurance procedures are comprehensive. Self-assessment at all levels is broadly accurate, although some judgements are based on superficial interpretation of evidence. University leaders are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the FE provision. They have identified the barriers that are impeding progress and appropriate plans are in place to address the need for rapid and sustainable improvement. These plans include significant changes to

the academic structure, with a view to sharpening the lines of responsibility and accountability associated with the FE provision.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the university to promote improvement since the last inspection

8. Improvement since the last inspection and re-inspection has been inadequate. Although students' success rates have risen, they remain below the national average overall with significant areas of poor performance. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory but has not improved sufficiently quickly. The quality of provision in engineering has improved but in visual arts, business and literacy and numeracy it has declined. Students' attendance at lessons has improved and is now satisfactory.

Key strengths

- very productive employer, community and school links
- wide range of provision, offering choice and progression
- highly inclusive environment.

Areas for improvement

The university should address:

- low success rates on many courses
- too much mediocre teaching that fails to motivate and engage students
- slow pace of improvement, exacerbated by complex line management arrangements.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Inadequate: Grade 4

Contributory grades:

Work-based learning

Satisfactory: grade 3

Train to Gain

Satisfactory: grade 3

Students aged 14 to 16

Satisfactory: grade 3

9. Achievement and standards are inadequate. Too many students are not succeeding on their programme or achieving as well as they should. Success rates for long courses have improved gradually over the last few years, from a low starting point, but they have not kept pace with the rising national average. Consequently, much of TVU's provision remains below average when compared to general FE colleges. Success rates for long courses at levels 1 and 2 improved in 2007/08 and are broadly in line with 2006/07 national average. Although GCSE success rates have continued to improve, the proportion of high grades declined in 2007/08 to 40%.
10. On level 3 long courses the success rates in 2007/08 remain low. Only 66% of students aged 16 to 18 were successful in completing and passing their level 3 courses in 2007/08. Performance on national diploma and certificate programmes is variable across different curriculum areas, with several courses well below the national average. On GCE AS and A-level programmes, too many students fail to achieve as well as they should, given their GCSE grades and the proportion gaining high grades declined in 2007/08. Success rates for National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) programmes in 2007/08 were around the national average for 2006/07, with mostly higher success rates for adults than for younger students. Black Caribbean and Black African learners aged 19 or over on level 3 courses have not been as successful as white students for three years in succession.
11. Achievement and standards for students aged 14 to 16 are satisfactory. In 2007/08, retention improved but a lower proportion achieved a qualification. On the 'increased flexibility' programme not all students gained a qualification but success rates were particularly good at 100% in plumbing, engineering, construction, health and social care and catering.
12. Work-based learning is satisfactory with most trainees developing good workplace skills. Overall framework success between 2005/06 and 2007/08 was around 60% with good and improving provision in hospitality. Train to Gain programmes are satisfactory, with good success rates in health and human sciences, construction and catering. Entry to Employment learners gain valuable skills; for example in brickwork, carpentry and kitchen-fitting and make good progress into education, training or employment.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

13. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Stringent attention has been given to improving how students learn. Lessons are well planned and this ensures that a wide range of activities are employed to motivate and engage students. The tracking and monitoring of students' progress is good in some areas, such as engineering, but less effective elsewhere.
14. The very best teaching is dynamic, illuminating and fun. For example, in an adventurous lesson on working relationships with a group of level 1 painting and decorating students, the teacher drew in quick succession on drama exercises, graphical illustrations, role play and a cleverly devised speed test to enable students to experience directly the consequences of different facets of inter-personal communication in the workplace.
15. Weaknesses remain, however, in the quality of teaching and learning. Not enough teachers are skilled in modulating their lessons to ensure that all students from a wide spectrum of ability learn as effectively as they should. Too many teachers still have limited expectations of what their students might understand or do and so fail to create enough opportunities for them to contribute to lessons by exploring knowledge or rehearsing skills themselves.
16. In many subject areas the use of information and learning technologies (ILT) in lessons remains underdeveloped, although the university has good electronic resources to support learning outside the classroom or workshop.
17. Students who need additional learning support are well catered for and their recognition of the value of the support they receive is reflected in their good levels of attendance at these sessions.
18. TVU's response to meeting the needs and interests of students is good. The university offers a wide range of provision, at all levels, offering considerable choice and progression opportunities. Working relationships and partnerships with local schools are very good. TVU actively engages with the community and is at the centre of many local initiatives to improve access to learning. TVU is fully involved in initiatives for students aged 14 to 19. Growing numbers of pupils follow courses at TVU and make good progress to higher level courses. TVU has been pivotal to the successful introduction of all five Diploma lines of learning locally.
19. Work with employers is extensive and highly effective, both strategically and through curriculum partnerships. It is particularly productive in health and social care and in catering. Employers believe that their expertise could be better used in providing professional updating for TVU teachers.
20. Students do not have a good awareness of the enrichment activities that are available. The students' union organises a range of sporting activities and clubs and there are many course related enrichment activities. Enrichment for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for ESOL learners is good.

21. The guidance and support of students are satisfactory. Their initial advice and guidance are thorough. A central admissions service provides impartial advice and guidance for full-time applicants. Induction is sound and embraces comprehensive initial testing to check for any additional support needs in literacy and numeracy. Students' profiles are provided in a timely fashion to programme managers but the profiles do not sufficiently influence teaching.
22. A good range of services effectively support students during their studies. Study skills support is well organised. The number of students accepting support has increased significantly over the last three years, from 52% in 2005/06 to 71% in 2007/08. Students receiving support are often more successful than those not receiving it. Disability support services are good. The care and guidance of looked after children are good.
23. Tutorial arrangements for full-time students are satisfactory. The consistency and effectiveness of tutorials have improved, with the introduction of common tutorial programmes and schemes of work and with the work of specialist personal tutors. Tutorials are increasingly used to provide effective target-setting and tracking for students, but there are still inconsistencies in effectiveness across curriculum areas. TVU's approach to the Every Child Matters themes within tutorials is satisfactory. TVU has noted the early withdrawal of too many students as an area of concern. Efforts to better guide and support students are having some positive impact with fewer students leaving early in this academic year. Advice and guidance on employment and progression to higher education are thorough and effective.
24. TVU's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. Provision is extensive and particularly responsive, both to the needs of students and the community, including employers. TVU provides a supportive and highly socially inclusive environment for students and they feel safe. However, in terms of educational inclusion, too many students are still not successful in their examinations and assessments.

Leadership and management

Inadequate: Grade 4

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Satisfactory: grade 3

25. Leadership and management are inadequate. Although leaders recognise most of the current weaknesses in the provision, they do not always give them sufficient weight. Despite the rise in overall success rates over the last three years, students' outcomes remain unsatisfactory in too many key areas of the FE provision and targets for success rates have not been met. Efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning have had too little impact. Managers have had success in improving some areas of provision, for example, engineering, but improvements overall have been slow and inconsistent. Inspection grades for sector subject areas have not improved

since the last inspection, with the exception of engineering, and in some cases have declined.

26. Quality assurance arrangements are comprehensive. Course reviews and curriculum area SARs are detailed, and these provide the basis for the cross-university self-assessment report for FE provision. Although the content of these reports is usually evaluative, the use and interpretation of data are insufficiently rigorous in some instances. As a consequence, judgements made are on occasion overly generous. The internal lesson observation scheme has been successful in identifying many of the key characteristics of teaching and learning, and findings have been used to inform staff development. However, these arrangements have had limited success in bringing about improvements in the quality of teaching and the grades awarded to lessons are sometimes generous.
27. Curriculum management is satisfactory in most of the areas inspected. A good range of reliable management information reports is used effectively in some areas to monitor and improve provision, although in other areas the use and analysis of data are underdeveloped. The effectiveness of efforts to tackle weaker performance has been slow, and in some cases negligible, for example in relation to raising standards on GCSE and A-level courses. FE leaders have made determined efforts to bring about improvements, but complex line management arrangements across the institution have exacerbated the slow response to areas of weak performance.
28. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory. The overarching framework laid down by the university meets legislative requirements in respect of race, disability and gender equality and FE leaders are committed to promoting equality and diversity. Equality of opportunity is included in student and staff induction and care is taken to ensure that equality and diversity are incorporated into the curriculum. The university is highly socially inclusive and links with minority ethnic community leaders are productive. However, managers have been slow to recognise the importance of analysing the performance of different groups of students, staff training on the implications of equalities legislation has not taken place in recent years and the extent to which diversity is promoted in lessons is not clearly evaluated. Arrangements for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults meet government requirements, and managers are assiduous in ensuring that appropriate checks are carried out for all staff who may be in contact with young people or vulnerable adults. Students feel safe on the main FE campuses.
29. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory. Most students benefit from a good learning environment. Most teachers are suitably qualified or are undergoing training and many benefit from a wide range of training opportunities. However, not all research and development time is used on projects that directly benefit students. As a consequence of low success rates in key areas of the university, value for money is unsatisfactory.

Sector subject area

Health, social care and childcare

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

30. TVU offers full-time courses in health, social care and childcare at levels 1, 2 and 3. At level 1, health or childcare pathways are available within the foundation programmes taken by 32 students. At levels 2 and 3, some 53 students aged 16 to 19 study childcare and 45 study health and social care. Over 100 learners are enrolled on access courses. Part-time provision includes NVQ at levels 2 and 3 in health and social care, childcare and education and a registered managers' award at level 4. About 100 students are studying at level 2, 400 at level 3 and 104 at level 4. The majority are adult learners. Thirty-three students aged 14 to 16 are part of the school link programme.

Strengths

- high success rates on access to health
- much interesting and challenging teaching
- good resources to enhance learning
- outstanding range of productive links with employers and other partners
- good management of adult and part-time provision.

Areas for improvement

- consistently low success rates on the diploma in childcare
- insufficient planning in some lessons to meet the needs of students
- ineffective management of full-time childcare courses.

Achievement and standards

31. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates on the majority of courses have improved and are now at the national average. Access to health has high success rates, whereas the diploma in childcare has had consistently very low success rates. Standards of work are good. Many students are articulate in expressing complex ideas and work well independently. Work by full-time childcare students is satisfactory but the development of professional skills, such as display work and observation, is slow. NVQ portfolios contain a good range of diverse evidence. Progression from one level to another is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

32. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Much teaching is good with effective links of theory to practice. Many lessons are interesting and challenging and students make good progress. Some lessons, however, fail to meet the needs of all students or to challenge the more able. Additional support needs are identified but not always used to inform the planning or delivery of lessons.

The use of ILT is satisfactory. In health and social care the resources, including the two simulation suites, are outstanding and are used effectively to enhance learning.

33. Assessment and monitoring are satisfactory. Work is marked thoroughly with clear feedback to ensure that students know how to improve. Electronic portfolios have been successfully developed to support distance learning, including for students in prisons.
34. The programmes and activities effectively meet the needs of students and employers. Links with employers and other partners are very well developed and courses are provided in a responsive manner to meet training needs in a wide range of contexts. The provision for 14-16 year old students, particularly on the young apprentice programme, is successful. Enrichment is satisfactory. Students undertake work experience and gain a range of additional qualifications such as first aid and health and safety. Advice guidance and support are satisfactory and group and individual tutorials are effective.

Leadership and management

35. Leadership and management are good for the adult and part-time provision and unsatisfactory for full-time childcare courses. The self-assessment reports are broadly accurate. Most courses are well managed. New courses have been successfully developed and introduced. Staff development is comprehensive. Problems associated with the full-time childcare have not been addressed. Internal verification is sound. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory.

Engineering

Good: Grade 2

Context

36. TVU offers a range of full- and part-time programmes from entry to level 3 in engineering and motor vehicle studies. Of the 311 students, 130 are on engineering programmes and 181 on motor vehicle courses. Some 24% are adults and 22% are aged 14 to 16; the rest are aged 16 to 18. In September 2008 the new advanced diploma in engineering replaced the national diplomas. TVU are delivering all three levels of the diploma to full-time students and to pupils from partner schools on a part-time basis. There are 55 students on the foundation, higher or advanced diploma and 8 of the students are from partner schools. In motor vehicle studies, 42 students are on apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship programmes.

Strengths

- high success rates at levels 1 and 2
- wide range of effective teaching strategies
- good monitoring and tracking of students' progress
- good progression by engineering students
- very effective actions taken to improve success rates.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates at level 3
- low success rates for motor vehicle apprentices
- insufficiently clear plans for the delivery of some aspects of the engineering diploma.

Achievement and standards

37. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates improved at levels 1 and 2 in 2007/08 and were above the national average. Although they also improved at level 3, they remain below average, particularly on the national diplomas. The standard of work is satisfactory and students pay due attention to health and safety in the workshops. Provision for 14-16 year old students is satisfactory. Work-based learning success rates for apprentices in motor vehicle were low at 48% in 2007/08.

Quality of provision

38. Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons a wide and interesting variety of activities are used to explore and explain engineering principles, often with different tasks to accommodate a range of abilities. Good use is made of a well-structured handbook in motor vehicle lessons. Teachers draw very effectively on their industrial knowledge and experience.
39. Assessments and the monitoring of learners' progress are good. For those on motor vehicle courses, progress is carefully recorded centrally and on wall

charts in the workshops. An academic tutor closely monitors the progress of level 3 students in engineering, encouraging them to work towards higher grades.

40. Programmes and activities meet the needs and interest of students well. In 2007/08 an entry level 3 course in motor vehicle studies was added, providing a suitable progression route on to level 1. The number of work-based learners is increasing, including advanced motor vehicle apprenticeships. On the new engineering diploma, there is a lack of clarity around the contribution that employers will make to the principal learning units.
41. Guidance and support are satisfactory for those students aged 16 or over. A more thorough recruitment and selection process is being developed for those students aged 14 to 16 starting a diploma in engineering.

Leadership and management

42. Leadership and management are good. Effective actions have been taken to improve provision. The curriculum offer has been reviewed to provide suitable options and progression routes. The recruitment of work-based apprentices has been improved to ensure that learners successfully complete a probationary period with their employer. Staff make good use of management information on attendance and punctuality to monitor progress and inform planning. Training and development activities have led to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. The SAR effectively identifies most of the strengths and areas for improvements. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Information and communication technology

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

43. TVU's full-time provision includes GCE A levels, Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) qualifications and the new diploma at three levels. These courses, with mainly 16-18 year old students, account for around half the 300 learners. Part-time provision includes European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) courses for adults, and ICT embedded in foundation level pathway programmes and ESOL courses.

Strengths

- consistently high success rates for ECDL part 1 courses
- high GCE AS-level success rates
- good foundation pathways and ESOL ICT provision
- good liaison with employers
- very effective management of improvements in foundation, ECDL, ESOL and GCE A-level ICT programme areas.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates in 2007/08 on BTEC national and diploma programmes
- low GCE A-level success rates
- insufficient good or better teaching in the IT and computing curriculum area
- cramped accommodation and insufficient staff cover for sickness and development work.

Achievement and standards

44. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates for ECDL part 1 courses have been high for three years. Success rates for GCE AS level courses were good in 2006/07, improving to a very good level in 2007/08. Students' work on the current BTEC and diploma courses is satisfactory. Retention on the foundation and advanced diploma courses is good. Students on foundation pathways show good levels of understanding of computer applications. The BTEC national diploma and award were unsatisfactory in 2007/08. GCE A level success rates remain low. Nearly 600 learners enrolled on an Information Technology Qualification (ITQ) programme in 2006/07; this was a particularly unsuccessful venture with a success rate of just 13%. TVU has withdrawn this provision.

Quality of provision

45. The overall quality of provision is satisfactory. Foundation pathways and ESOL ICT courses are well structured. Tutors provide both support and challenge and tracking of progress is good leading to appropriate help for those who need it. ECDL courses have a good mix of well-taught sessions and supportive workshops. In the ICT and computing curriculum area, TVU has identified that

the quality of teaching and learning is not of a consistently high standard. This was confirmed on inspection; in weaker lessons there are convoluted explanations, a lack of challenging material and insufficient contextualisation.

46. TVU offers an appropriate range of courses and the new diplomas have recruited well. A satisfactory proportion of students progresses from one level to another and then to higher education. TVU has good relations with some local employers providing students with interesting projects for their courses. Support for students is satisfactory with regular, helpful, teaching and pastoral support in the smaller programme areas.

Leadership and management

47. Leadership and management are satisfactory. In four of the curriculum areas, managers accurately identify areas of concern and have implemented changes that have had a positive impact on students. In the fifth, the ICT and computing area, the impact of recent changes is not yet clear. The three SARs that cover this provision are generally accurate and match inspection findings. There have been improvements in most areas since the previous inspection, though in one of the areas there are persistent problems with success rates and standards of teaching and learning. Several rooms are too cramped for the number of students. Managers are not covering teaching and tutorial absences effectively from current resources and development work for the new diplomas adds an extra challenge. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

48. TVU offers programmes in hairdressing and beauty therapy at levels 1, 2 and 3, holistic therapies at levels 2 and 3 and sports and fitness therapies at level 2. Part-time courses include wig-making and Swedish body massage. Enrolled on these programmes are 267 students aged 16 to 18 and 148 students aged 19 or over. In addition, there are 43 students on apprenticeship programmes.

Strengths

- high success rates on beauty therapy and hairdressing level 3, combined hairdressing and beauty therapy at level 2 and the certificate in holistic therapies
- good standard of student work on level 3 hairdressing and beauty therapy
- good individual support to develop skills in most practical lessons
- productive links with employers.

Areas for improvement

- consistently low success rates on level 1 hairdressing and beauty therapy courses
- inappropriate level 1 provision in hairdressing
- insufficient checking of learning in many lessons
- slow pace of improvement.

Achievement and standards

49. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates are high on hairdressing and beauty therapy at level 3, on the combined hairdressing and beauty therapy course at level 2 and on the certificate in holistic therapies course. The success rate for level 2 beauty therapy improved significantly in 2007/08 to well above average. The success rate for level 2 hairdressing is satisfactory as is the completion rate for apprenticeship frameworks. In 2007/08 success rates were low on the certificate in Swedish massage and they have been consistently low on level 1 hairdressing and beauty therapy courses. Success rates for 14-16 year old students are high in beauty therapy and low in hairdressing. The standard of students' work on level 3 hairdressing and beauty therapy courses is good. Students carry out complex tasks well. Most are confident and demonstrate good health and safety practices in salons. Attendance is good.

Quality of provision

50. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students receive good individual support to develop skills in most practical lessons. Teachers take account of students' individual needs and provide systematic monitoring and coaching which helps them to improve. However, in many lessons, there is insufficient checking of learning. Teachers sometimes provide too much information and

miss opportunities to effectively engage students throughout lessons. Formal assessments begin at an appropriately early stage for students on courses at levels 2 and 3. Assessment at level 1 is too slow.

51. The curriculum offer is satisfactory. Course related enrichment activities are satisfactory. Links with employers are productive. All students at levels 1 and 2 have appropriate work experience. Feedback from employers is used well to refine the curriculum. However, provision in hairdressing at level 1 is inappropriate. Students develop practical skills at level 2 but they do not cover the associated theory. Students are assessed at level 1, often when assisting their own group who are providing level 2 services to clients. Consequently, students' attainment of higher level skills is not always appropriately underpinned with essential knowledge.
52. Advice, guidance and support are satisfactory. All students have an assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills and additional learning support is taken up by most students who would benefit from it.

Leadership and management

53. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There has been a strong focus on improving teaching and learning over the last two years, with a weekly meeting to share good practice. Staff are well qualified. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The pace of improvement, though, has been slow with some weaknesses from the re-inspection in 2005 still outstanding. These include insufficient clients and underdeveloped plans to increase the recruitment of male students.

Visual arts

Inadequate: Grade 4

Context

54. The provision includes a range of vocational courses from levels 1 to 3 as well as GCE A level and AS in fine art, graphics, textiles and photography and access to higher education. Part-time courses, mainly in photography, are offered in the evening. In total, there are 437 students most of whom are aged 16 to 18 and are studying full time.

Strengths

- high standard of drawing on first diploma programmes
- good technical resources in photography, 3D workshops and digital media
- good progression.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on most courses
- slow rate of quality improvement
- slow pace of many lessons
- weak critical reflection in sketchbooks and journals.

Achievement and standards

55. Achievement and standards are inadequate. Success rates for some courses including national diplomas in art and design, 3D design and media have improved and are at or above the national average. However, for most other courses the success rates remain below average and some declined in 2007/08. Retention rates are poor and declining for the national diploma fashion and clothing, and are below average for introductory and first diplomas and AS art and design. Pass rates are high on a few courses and were 100% for the national diploma art and design, 3D design as well as most GCE A levels. However, not all students achieve as well as expected, given their GCSE results. Standards of observational drawing on level 1 courses are high and some conceptually engaging and experimental work is evident at level 3. Attendance and punctuality are good.

Quality of provision

56. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Some lessons are good but there is too much uninspiring teaching. Lessons often lack sufficient pace, due in part to the fact that in focusing too much on dialogue with individual students, teachers sometimes neglect the momentum of the whole group. Most students, though, enjoy lessons, work productively and contribute in a supportive manner to debates with their peers. The standard of critical reflection in sketchbooks and journals is inconsistent and some is weak. Assessment is accurate and systematic.

57. Students benefit from a wide variety of educational visits to museums, exhibitions and locations, often providing exotic and dramatic locations for their work. Cultural and commercial links are good. Students value highly the insight into professional practice they gain from working with staff who are themselves practitioners.
58. There is a good variety of courses from levels 1 to 3 and the wide range of specialist diplomas offers varied routes to higher education. Progression from one level to the next is good. Short courses are effectively embedded into some full-time programmes. For example, students on the national diploma in 3D design undertake a short award in computer-aided design and this enhances their practical skills and progression opportunities. Support for students is good.

Leadership and management

59. Leadership and management are inadequate. The pace of improvement has been slow and inconsistent. Various initiatives are in place to raise standards. There is some evidence of the impact of this on the national diploma in fashion and clothing where, with revised recruitment arrangements, curriculum adjustments and access to specialist resources, the proportion of students progressing into the second year is significantly higher in 2008/09 than it was in 2007/08.
60. Specialist accommodation is mostly good, particularly in photography, 3D workshops and digital media. Equality and diversity are promoted well in curriculum themes and assignments, for example, first diploma students explore cultural histories through a mask project.

Literacy and numeracy

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

61. TVU offers a range of discrete basic skills courses from entry to level 2 and this includes the Remix programme aimed at young people with few or no qualifications. Some 27 students aged 16 to 18 and 160 adults are enrolled on discrete basic skills courses. Key skills programmes are offered on all sites and delivered through discrete and embedded sessions. Of around 3,000 students enrolled on key skills programmes in 2008/09, approximately 1,340 are adult learners. Key skills teachers at the Reading campus are teaching functional skills following a small pilot with 30 students at level 1 in 2007/08.

Strengths

- good success rates for 16-18 year olds at level 1
- good teaching and learning on discrete basic skills programmes
- good support.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on many courses
- slow impact of action taken to improve success rates.

Achievement and standards

62. Achievement and standards are inadequate overall but clear and detailed strategies are now in place to ensure sustained improvements. Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 at level 1 are now high, and above the national average in both certificates in adult literacy and numeracy. Key skills provision has improved year-on-year from a very low starting point. Success rates for communication at level 1 were above the national average in 2007/08 but the certificates in adult literacy and numeracy, for adult learners at level 2, remained below average, as did application of number level 2 for both age groups. The standard of students' work is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

63. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching of discrete basic skills is good. In the best lessons observed, teachers plan carefully and use a good range of teaching strategies to motivate and challenge students. Students enjoy their lessons and become confident in their ability to further develop their skills. Key skills tutors work effectively with vocational tutors and use materials contextualised to the students' main programme of study. The Every Child Matters themes are incorporated well in both basic skills and key skills. The quality of teaching and learning in key skills is variable but generally satisfactory.
64. The range of provision in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Learners receive good support to enable them to succeed and to progress. Initial

assessment for both full- and part-time students is good. Individual learning plans identify appropriate targets. In the best practice, students benefit from regular feedback on their progress and this enables them to reflect thoughtfully on their own learning. Effective literacy and numeracy support, as well as help with study skills, is offered in the learning resource centres. Good specialist support is provided for those with dyslexia and hearing impairments.

Leadership and management

65. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The draft SAR for 2007/08 identifies the majority of areas for improvement, acknowledging some poor success rates. Some, although not all, of the strengths identified at the last inspection in relation to literacy and numeracy, have been sustained, and there have been measurable improvements in key skills. Management information is now timely and accurate and used to review performance but there has been little interrogation of data relating to the performance of different groups of students. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Continuing professional development has a high priority and most staff are well qualified.

English for speakers of other languages

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

66. Some 225 students are enrolled on nationally accredited ESOL courses offered at entry to level 2, with a further 20 students on pre-entry internally accredited courses. Most are on part-time programmes offered in the day and in the evening.

Strengths

- good development of communication skills
- imaginatively contextualised content of lessons
- skilful creation of learning communities
- very responsive curriculum offer
- very good personal support for students.

Areas for improvement

- low success rates on many programmes
- insufficient target-setting with students
- too little focus on language correction.

Achievement and standards

67. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Students develop good communication skills within short timescales, despite little prior formal learning or knowledge of English. Learners are confident and effective communicators. They can self-assess clearly and their new skills enable them to lead more independent lives and communicate more effectively with colleagues. Success rates have improved significantly over the last three years and, overall, are broadly in line with the national average.

Quality of provision

68. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Learning is placed in meaningful life and work contexts, regularly adjusted to reflect the experiences and interests of students. A wide range of teaching and learning methods is used, supported by particularly good resources.
69. Teachers provide a secure and very supportive learning environment. Course representatives are encouraged to give constructive feedback on their experiences. Students are allocated partners to ensure that they all interact with each other, regardless of gender, age, linguistic background and learning needs. Lessons are well planned. Younger students contribute well to discussions and remain attentive. Students work collaboratively and are very keen to share knowledge, ideas and viewpoints. Where students are not sufficiently accurate, teachers fail to systematically correct errors. Targets set are not sufficiently time-bound or measurable and progress reviews do not

always identify what is expected of students as they move through their courses.

70. The curriculum offer responds well to the ever changing local context. Attendance modes have been redesigned to match needs. Employer engagement is good. ICT, citizenship and literacy and numeracy are all effectively embedded in ESOL courses.
71. Personal support for students is very good. Learners attend well and punctually despite heavy day or night work-shifts and childcare responsibilities. Strong links with social services, together with a well-established team of volunteer tutors, provide timely support to vulnerable learners.

Leadership and management

72. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Self-assessment is reflective and addresses most of the areas for improvement. Staff are increasingly discussing and sharing good practice. Retention and attendance have improved. Success rates have risen over the last few years, albeit from a low starting point. The internal lesson observation process is helpful and developmental, although some judgements are overly generous. Equality and diversity are well promoted.

Business, administration and law

Inadequate: Grade 4

Context

73. TVU offers a broad range of full- and part-time courses from levels 1 to 3. Full-time provision includes the following courses: first diploma business, access and AS and A2 business and law. Most of the 434 on these courses are aged 16 to 18. The 144 part-time students are mostly adults following administration, accounting and management courses.

Strengths

- good standards achieved by full-time vocational students
- very effective teaching and learning on administration courses.

Areas for improvement

- consistently low success rates
- underdeveloped higher level skills on GCE A level and AS courses
- much ineffective teaching
- ineffective marking of student work
- insufficient action to improve provision.

Achievement and standards

74. Achievement and standards are inadequate. Success rates are consistently low on a majority of courses. In 2007/2008 the success rates on AS law and AS accounting were below the national average. Most GCE A level business, A-level law and AS law students fail to achieve as well as they should, given their GCSE results. They do not sufficiently develop higher level skills of critical analysis and evaluation. Full-time business vocational students demonstrate good standards of work. Administration students' work demonstrates high levels of competence, in applying a range of office applications. Many vocational students present well structured business reports that show effective research skills. Most students are making satisfactory progress towards achieving their individual learning aims. Attendance is generally satisfactory but low in a minority of lessons.

Quality of provision

75. Teaching and learning are inadequate. Teaching and learning on administration courses is particularly effective. However, most teaching on full-time academic and Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) accounting courses does not sufficiently meet the needs and abilities of students. Excessive exposition and didactic instruction are still too dominant in lessons at the expense of students being helped to think for themselves or take risks with ideas and actions. Their capacity to solve problems, both individually and in teams, is not adequately exploited. Marked work on these courses does not sufficiently explain how students can improve.

76. The range of business, administration and law courses is appropriate. A majority of students benefit from relevant work experience placements. Good use is made of visiting speakers and links with industry. Good links with schools has led to the development of the new diplomas in business and finance. Parents are kept well informed of students' progress. Guidance and support for students are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

77. Leadership and management are inadequate. Managers have not taken enough action to improve consistently low outcomes on the majority of programmes. They do not sufficiently analyse data and trends to challenge underperformance. Good practice is not identified and shared. The promotion of equality and diversity within the curriculum is satisfactory.

Learners' achievement

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 long qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, compared to the national rates for providers of a similar type. 2007/08 data was provided by TVU.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
All Long - Level 1	05/06	858	58	69	-11	2084	54	65	-11
	06/07	906	61	74	-13	1660	53	70	-17
	07/08	802	71	n/a		691	69	n/a	
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08	...	...	n/a		...	...	n/a	
NVQs	05/06	103	69	72	-3	34	97	74	23
	06/07	86	81	75	6	24	88	75	13
	07/08	125	74	n/a		12	100	n/a	
Other	05/06	755	56	69	-13	2050	53	65	-12
	06/07	820	59	74	-15	1636	52	70	-18
	07/08	677	71	n/a		679	68	n/a	

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 long qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, compared to the national rates for providers of a similar type. 2007/08 data was provided by TVU.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
All Long - Level 2	05/06	1606	61	66	-5	1882	60	66	-6
	06/07	1696	67	70	-3	2552	48	69	-21
	07/08	1484	71	n/a		1168	67	n/a	
GCSEs	05/06	570	71	68	3	157	66	67	-1
	06/07	774	73	71	2	218	73	70	3
	07/08	733	78	n/a		118	69	n/a	
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	17	82	69	13	...	...	...	...
	06/07	7	57	73	-16	1	100	71	29
	07/08	...	...	n/a		...	...	n/a	
NVQs	05/06	407	63	65	-2	699	62	68	-6
	06/07	337	66	68	-2	1209	41	69	-28
	07/08	270	61	n/a		467	63	n/a	
Other	05/06	612	49	66	-17	1026	57	65	-8
	06/07	578	59	70	-11	1124	51	69	-18
	07/08	481	67	n/a		583	70	n/a	

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 long qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, compared to the national rates for providers of a similar type. 2007/08 data was provided by TVU.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
All Long - Level 3	05/06	2146	64	71	-7	2313	62	64	-2
	06/07	2172	65	73	-8	2426	62	68	-6
	07/08	2218	66	n/a		2291	65	n/a	
A/A2 Levels	05/06	272	78	87	-9	175	73	72	1
	06/07	367	83	87	-4	117	74	76	-2
	07/08	304	81	n/a		124	90	n/a	
AS Levels	05/06	1074	60	67	-7	258	48	55	-7
	06/07	918	57	69	-12	230	60	59	1
	07/08	868	63	n/a		94	67	n/a	
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	41	71	66	5	28	68	57	11
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08	...	...	n/a		...	...	n/a	
NVQs	05/06	110	79	71	8	405	66	63	3
	06/07	90	80	74	6	527	63	69	-6
	07/08	125	66	n/a		488	70	n/a	
Other	05/06	649	63	65	-2	1447	62	64	-2
	06/07	797	63	70	-7	1552	60	69	-9
	07/08	921	64	n/a		1585	61	n/a	

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning apprenticeship programmes managed by the provider 2004/05 to 2007/08

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	71	37	...	6	...
		timely	56	27	...	5	...
	05/06	overall	16	38	9	0	44
		timely	16	31	...	0	...
	06/07	overall	3	0	8	0	56
		timely	3	0	...	0	...
	07/08#	overall	...	...	...	...	...
		timely	...	...	...	...	...
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	227	21	...	11	39
		timely	193	7	...	9	22
	05/06	overall	71	17	6	61	52
		timely	68	9	...	62	34
	06/07	overall	25	4	5	68	60
		timely	25	4	...	68	42
	07/08#	Overall	106	1	...	64	...
		timely	110	2	...	56	...

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** College/provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the Individual Learning Record (ILR)

When available and validated by the LSC

Table 5a

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain NVQ programmes managed by the provider 2006/07 to 2008/09

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	college/provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain NVQ	2006/07	overall	26	93
		timely	26	93
	2007/08	overall	161	70
		timely	161	70
	2008/09 (3 months)	overall	83	35
		timely	83	35

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first three months or greater of the LSC contract year

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** NVQ qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the college/provider prior to inspection

Table 5b

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain skills for life programmes managed by the provider 2006/07 to 2008/09

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	college/provider skills for life rate**
Train to Gain (skills for life)	2006/07	overall	0	
		timely	0	
	2007/08	overall	3	18%
		timely	3	18%
	2008/09 (3 months)	overall	1	20%
		timely	1	20%

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first three months or greater of the LSC contract year

- * Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned
- ** Skills for life qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the college/provider prior to inspection

Table 6

Outcomes on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes managed by the provider 2005/06 to 2007/08

Year	Number of leavers in the year	Achieved objectives rate* (%)	Progression rate** (%)
2005/06	98	58%	59%
2006/07	81	60%	64%
2007/08	86	61%	52%

- * These are key objectives identified for each learner following an E2E programme
- ** Progression is measured in terms learners' movement to further education, education and employment, during or at the end of their training period.

Note: E2E 'achieved objective' and 'progression' rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the provider prior to inspection

Equality and diversity

2007/08	All Ethnic Groups	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Chinese/ Other	Mixed	Not Known	White
Enrolments	12855	1596	1374	180	474	375	8492
Completion rate (%)	83	85	79	92	80	87	83
Achievement rate (%)	86	82	79	84	83	89	88
Success rate (%)	71	69	63	77	67	78	73

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