

City of Sunderland College

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- ***May 2002 inspection report***
- ***April 2003 monitoring inspection report***



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION

Inspection report

City of Sunderland College

Dates of inspection: 13–17 and 21–23 May 2002

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	City of Sunderland College
Type of college:	Tertiary College
Principal:	I A Todd
Address of college:	Shiney Row Centre Success Road Philadelphia Houghton le Spring Sunderland DH4 4TL
Telephone number:	0191 511 6000
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Chair of governors:	Don Chroston
Unique reference number:	131347
Name of reporting inspector:	Colin Evans HMI
Dates of inspection:	13–17 and 21–23 May 2002

Part A: Summary

Information about the college

The City of Sunderland College is a large tertiary college with approximately 4,000 full-time and 30,000 part-time students and an annual budget of £36 million. It is the only further education (FE) college in the Sunderland area. In 2000/01, it recruited 3,136 full-time students aged 16 to 18. Some 32% of 16 to 18 enrolments are to courses at level 3, 29% at level 2 and 21% at level 1. Nearly half of the adult enrolments are to courses at level 1.

The college provides an extensive range of courses, and enrolls students in all of the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) 14 areas of learning. Courses are available from entry level to degree level. The college has four main sites, one in each of the four areas identified in the city's unitary development plan; Washington in the north-west, Shiney Row in the south-west, Bede in the south-east and Hylton in the north-east. The Washington site, which is smaller than the other three, is due to be replaced by a new building. In addition, courses are provided in Doxford International Business Park and in 43 community and other centres, libraries and schools across the area. The college has few work-based learning programmes. Within the Sunderland area, there are 13 schools for pupils aged 11 to 16. Three catholic schools and one independent school have sixth forms.

Sunderland, including Washington and Houghton le Spring, covers an area of 13,680 hectares and has a population of 289,500, of whom 1.1% are from minority ethnic groups. It is 15th from the bottom in the list of the 354 local authority districts ranked according to their overall level of deprivation. The unemployment rate in Sunderland in November 2001 was 5.6% compared with 2.9% nationally. The college takes a high proportion of its students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions. As such, its aggregate achievement data have been compared, in table 3, against colleges recruiting from similarly deprived areas. The college recruits 2% of its students from minority ethnic groups. In September 2001, 63% of the area's 16 year olds were in full-time education. This participation rate has increased from 59% in 1998/99. Participation is, however, still below the national rate of 70%. A low proportion of 16 year olds achieve 5 or more higher grade General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSEs): 39% compared with 50% nationally.

The college is managed by an executive comprising the principal; a deputy principal who has responsibility for college growth, the Washington business college and services to business; four vice principals with responsibility for policy analysis, learning resources, quality and audit, and student support; and the director of resources. There are four heads of faculty for the curriculum areas of design and technology, computing and business technology, arts and science, and social and professional development. There are separate management arrangements for the 16 to 18 and 19+ curriculum. In many of these areas, full-time teachers teach on full-time courses and part-time teachers teach on part-time courses.

The mission of the college is 'to promote access to a comprehensive range of quality learning opportunities to residents of, and other stakeholders in, the city of Sunderland and the wider North East region'. In support of this mission, six strategic objectives have been developed to widen participation, provide a broad curriculum, promote quality, support the individual, maintain institutional viability, and provide job security for a workforce which is committed to change.

How effective is the college?

Inspectors judged teaching and learning and students' achievements to be good in nine of the curriculum areas and satisfactory in six. Two of the curriculum areas, mathematics and construction, were judged to be unsatisfactory. The college's key strengths and weaknesses and the areas that should be improved are listed below:

Key strengths

- high pass rates on most courses
- much good teaching in engineering, sport, leisure and tourism, visual arts, programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and some humanities subjects
- strong financial position
- success in widening participation
- accurate and reliable management information
- good learning support and additional support for individual students
- broad range of provision.

What should be improved

- pass rates at the higher grades on GCSE courses
- assessment arrangements on some courses leading to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)
- performance as measured by value added measures
- retention rates on some courses
- provision of a pastoral curriculum which includes formal careers advice and guidance
- provision in mathematics and construction and the early years work-based learning provision.

Further aspects of provision requiring improvement are identified in the sections on individual subjects and courses in the full report.

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum areas and on the effectiveness of leadership and management in the range: Outstanding (grade 1), Good (2), Satisfactory (3), Unsatisfactory (4), Very Poor (5).

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science	Satisfactory. There are good pass and retention rates on General Certificate of Education Advanced-level (GCE A-level) physics and chemistry courses. On some other courses, pass and retention rates are poor. Teaching is enhanced by the provision of good learning materials and there is effective learning support. Some aspects of the accommodation impede learning.
Mathematics	Unsatisfactory. Pass rates are low and students do not do as well at advanced level as their GCSE scores predict. Teaching is often dull and uninspiring. Good use is made of the learning centre and students receive good learning support. Steps are being taken to address the weaknesses.
Construction	Unsatisfactory. Pass rates are high on most construction courses. The college has developed good partnerships and a wide range of provision to meet local needs. The current in-year retention rate is low. Assessment and workshop activities are poorly managed. The monitoring of students' progress is weak.
Engineering	Good. Pass rates are high. Retention rates are satisfactory. Much of the teaching is good. Arrangements for learning support are effective. Specialist facilities are excellent. Some aspects of assessment are unsatisfactory and individual tutorials are too infrequent for some students.
Business	Satisfactory. There is a broad range of provision. Pass and retention rates are high on some courses, particularly those in accounting, but are low on some other courses. Teaching is generally satisfactory and there are good specialist resources for call centre training. Recruitment to some courses is low.
Computing	Satisfactory. Vocational courses are well managed. Pass rates are high. Students develop appropriate practical skills. GCE A-level students do not do as well as would be predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. There is a good progression rate to higher level courses. Teaching is mostly satisfactory. Students do not get enough experience of current industrial practices.

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Information technology in the community	Good. There is a wide range of courses that provide good progression routes. They are available in a large number of well-resourced community venues. Guidance and support for students are good. Pass rates are high. Course management is good. Good use is made of learning materials but some contain errors. There are gaps in the specialist knowledge of a few teachers.
Hospitality and catering	Good. Pass and retention rates on NVQ level 2 programmes are high. Students receive good individual support. Learning resources are good and simulated work environments are realistic and provide appropriate learning and assessment opportunities. Courses are provided in a wide range of community venues. In the present year, retention rates on some courses are low. There is some inappropriate student recruitment.
Sport, leisure and tourism	Good. Teaching is very good. Individual students' needs are met. Staff are well qualified and have relevant industrial expertise. Pass rates are high on most courses. Some opportunities to assess key skills are missed.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Good. Pass rates are high on most courses. Teaching and learning are good. Students receive effective learning support. There are extensive opportunities for full-time students to undertake enrichment activities. Some accommodation is inappropriately used. Some practical lessons do not fully involve all the students. There is no assessment of key skills.
Health, social and childcare	Satisfactory. Much of the teaching is good. There is a wide range of courses and good progression to further learning. Pass rates on many courses are high and course management of the NVQ care programme is good. Management and assessment practices on the NVQ early years courses are inadequate. Retention rates are low on some courses.
Visual arts	Good. There are high pass rates on most courses. Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Support for students is good. Accommodation and resources are excellent. Practical lessons are sometimes too short. Students' knowledge of careers in art and design is limited
Geography, history, politics and religious education	Good. Pass rates are high on GCE A-level courses. Teaching is thorough and good use is made of a wide range of learning resources. Individual students receive good support. Some students make only limited contributions to class discussions. Pass rates are low on some GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) courses.
Psychology, sociology and law	Good. Much of the teaching is good and some is inspiring. Lessons on full-time courses are well planned and managed. Pass rates are high on GCE A-level courses, but are low on some GCSE courses. Planning and teaching are poor on some part-time programmes.

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
English and modern foreign languages	Satisfactory. Pass rates on GCE A-level English language and some foreign language at work courses are high. GCSE English language higher-grade pass rates are low. Many GCE A-level students do not do as well as predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. A broad range of part-time foreign language courses is offered. Full-time students do not get the opportunity to study or work abroad. Teaching is often lacklustre and students make insufficient contribution during lessons.
Basic skills programmes	Satisfactory. The wide range of programmes is well matched to community needs. Teaching on the family learning programme is effective and innovative. Community-based centres provide good accommodation and are well resourced. Teaching on some foundation programmes and courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) is unsatisfactory. Teaching is insufficiently linked to outcomes of initial assessment.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	Good. There are good progression routes for students aged 16 to 18. Students are developing good levels of interpersonal skill and confidence in their learning. There is extensive support for students through additional learning and effective tutorials. The extent to which the needs of individual students are formally identified and addressed is limited and progression routes for adult students are poorly developed.

How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management at the college are good. There is a culture of continuous improvement. The college has been successful in raising students' achievements. The strategic plan is clear and comprehensive. Faculty operational plans sometimes make insufficient reference to developing teaching and learning strategies. Curriculum self-assessment reports are comprehensive and contain a detailed analysis of achievements against national averages. Some of the targets in resulting action plans are insufficiently specific. The internal inspection programme is rigorous. Management is good in the majority of curriculum areas. Governors give appropriate attention to pass rates, but attendance at meetings is unsatisfactory.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. The number of part-time students attending the college has increased by 61% since 1997; the proportion of school-leavers attending the college has increased by 17% over the same period. A number of curriculum initiatives have supported widening participation. For example, the college foundation programme for students aged 16 to 18 attracts over 130 students annually and basic skills programmes are provided for the growing numbers of asylum seekers and refugees. The college caters well for pupils who have previously been excluded from school. Introductory computing courses operate at 50 centres across the city and last year attracted over 10,000 students. The provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, as part of an overall inclusive learning strategy, is less well developed.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

The college provides good guidance and support for students. There is good provision for students who require additional support. Performance targets are agreed with most full-time students, and this helps them to reach their full potential. The tutorial programme is insufficiently broad in its coverage. There is insufficient access to external careers education and guidance services.

Students' views of the college

Students' views about the college were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below:

What students like about the college

- friendly and helpful teachers
 - tutorial and additional learning support
 - being treated as adults by college staff
 - access to, and the quality of, information technology (IT) resources
-

-
- quality of teaching.

What they feel could be improved

- some aspects of the college's social and refectory provision
- provision of programme base rooms
- insufficient work experience
- requirement to study too many subjects.

Other information

The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the inspection. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LLSC). The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the LLSC. The LLSC is responsible for ensuring that the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) receives the college's post inspection action plan within the stipulated two months.

Part B: The college as a whole

Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16–18	63	30	7
19+ and WBL*	54	38	8
Learning 16–18	61	30	9
19+ and WBL*	59	34	7

Key: The range of grades includes: Excellent (Grade 1), Very Good (Grade 2), Good (Grade 3), Satisfactory (Grade 4), Unsatisfactory (Grade 5), Poor (Grade 6) and Very Poor (Grade 7).

* *work-based learning*

Achievement and standards

1. The college recruits a high proportion of its students from disadvantaged areas. The college's performance has been compared, in this section and in table three at the end of the report, with that of other colleges which recruit a high proportion of students from disadvantaged areas. The college's pass rates compare favourably with such colleges, but also with the national averages for all colleges in the FE sector.

2. Attendance in the lessons observed during the inspection was 71% overall, compared with a national average of 76%, for all inspections carried out to date, using the new inspection framework, in general FE and tertiary colleges. The inspection was carried out at a time when many students were engaged in external examinations, which contributed to the low attendance in many lessons. Attendance was highest in programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and in hospitality and catering, and lowest in foundation programmes and in mathematics and construction. The separate reports on areas of learning in Part C provide more detail about achievements and standards for particular courses.

3. Students of all ages are generally working at an appropriate level and making at least satisfactory progress. Their written work is often of a good standard and indicates a satisfactory or better understanding of the subject. Portfolios are well presented, the better quality work often drawing extensively on students' own experience. Students show particular interest in their practical work and in some subjects, for example engineering, and art and design, demonstrate high levels of skill. Students generally worked with a satisfactory concern for health and safety, but there were a few instances where students failed to wear the appropriate safety clothing.

16–18 year olds

4. Pass rates for courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 compare very favourably with national averages. They have been above the national average, at all three levels, in each of the last three years. At level 3 they improved from 68% in 1997/98 to 77% in 1999/2000, and have been well above the national average in each of these years. In the most recent year for which statistics are available, 1999/2000, the pass rate was 12% above national average. At level 2 the pass rates also demonstrate improving performance and in 1999/2000 were well above the national average. Pass rates have also improved at level 1, but less markedly than the national average and in 1999/2000 were only just above the average.

5. Pass rates on all but 1 of the 11 major qualification aim categories provided by the college are high. For example, pass rates on courses leading to NVQs at levels 1, 2 and 3 have been five or more percentage points above national averages in each of the last three years. Only on GCSE courses is the college pass rate below the national average.

6. The average points score for each student on GCE A-level or General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses in 2001 was 13 points and the average points score for each entry was 4.4. The performance of students taking GCE A-level and GNVQ advanced courses, when compared with that predicted on the basis of their GCSE scores, is consistently lower than expected and has fallen in the last four years.

7. Retention rates at levels 1, 2 and 3 are similar to national averages. In 1999/2000, the rate was well above the national average at level 1 and similar to it at levels 2 and 3. For the 11 major qualification aims where significant numbers of students are recruited, retention rates are generally at or above the national average.

Adult learners

8. Pass rates for adult students are good. In 1999/2000, they were well above national averages at levels 1, 2 and 3 and have improved over time at each level. At level 2 for example, they have improved by 18% in three years and in 1999/2000 were 7% above the national average.

9. Pass rates on nearly all of the nine major qualification aim categories provided by the college are consistently high. For example, pass rates on courses leading to NVQ level 1 and NVQ level 2 and to other long qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3 have all been well above national averages in each of the last three years. Only for higher-grade pass rates in GCSE courses are they consistently below average.

10. Overall retention rates for adult students are consistently well below the national average at levels 1, 2 and 3. However, on courses leading to the nine major qualification aims where significant numbers of students are recruited, they are generally close to the national average.

Quality of education and training

11. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 309 lessons. The grade profiles for teaching and for learning were similar. Teaching was judged to be good or better in 60% of the lessons, satisfactory in 33% and less than satisfactory in 7%. This represents a slightly smaller proportion of good teaching and also of unsatisfactory teaching, than has been seen nationally in similar colleges so far this year. The teaching of students aged 16 to 18 was better than that of adults; 63% of the teaching for younger students was good, compared with 56% for adults. A slightly lower proportion of the teaching was good or better on level 2 programmes than on programmes at levels 1 and 3. A lower proportion was judged to be less than satisfactory at level 3 than at levels 1 and 2.

12. Across the individual curriculum areas inspected there was considerable variation in the quality of teaching. In engineering, leisure and tourism, and art and design, there was no unsatisfactory teaching and nearly all the teaching was judged to be good or better. In leisure and tourism and art and design, a high proportion of the teaching was judged very good or excellent. In five curriculum areas, no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In six curriculum areas, less than 50% of the teaching was judged to be good or better.

13. At the time of the inspection, close to examinations, much of the teaching was devoted to revision activities. Teachers often made good use of examiners' marking schemes and past papers and lessons were focused clearly on examination requirements. Relations between students and teachers are generally conducive to learning. In the better lessons, a range of appropriate learning activities was employed and teaching engaged and sustained the interest of the students. The lessons were purposeful and teachers presented appropriate challenges to the students. Students' interests and experience were used to good effect. For example, in business, students' experience was used to relate management theory to practice and a family learning lesson was structured around family life.

14. Teaching is often well planned. Schemes of work and lesson plans generally cover the syllabus thoroughly. In the better cases, they include the learning methods and the materials to be used. In a few cases, however, they lacked detail, for example about learning methods or ways in which the needs of higher or lower attaining students would be met. In some curriculum areas, paper-based learning materials are of good quality. Where teaching is conducted across a large number of community venues, standardised learning materials help to ensure that the quality of the teaching is of at least a satisfactory standard, even when teachers have to be replaced at the last minute, for example, due to sickness.

15. The college is developing the use of computer-assisted learning. Teachers in some curriculum areas are beginning to make good use of this method of teaching. For example, in some humanities subjects, lecture notes, assignment briefs and, at an appropriate stage, model answers, are placed on the college's intranet. Students are beginning to make good use of the facility. Some are using the 'discussion board' on the intranet to engage other students and teachers in debate about their subjects. Some curriculum teams, however, make insufficient use of IT in their teaching.

16. A minority of lessons were poorly planned. Some of the teaching was dull and unimaginative. Teachers sometimes talked for too long and failed to engage the interest of all the students. The students lost interest. Opportunities were missed to make use of students' experience to increase the relevance of the subject matter.

17. Most teachers are well qualified. Some 95% have teaching qualifications. Many teachers have had little recent industrial updating and some need to improve their teaching or assessing skills.

18. There are learning centres on each of the main sites. These centres contain good IT facilities and libraries. They are well used, provide good learning environments and have extensive opening times. Each centre provides well for a wide range of learning activities, including work with IT, group work and quiet study areas. Study spaces are plentiful. Staff in the centres are well qualified and provide good support and useful information to students and teachers. The book stock is extensive. In a few vocational areas, some textbooks and literature on industrial standards are out of date, but, in most curriculum areas, the learning materials are good. There is a useful range of periodicals and trade journals. The level of funding for learning resources is good.

19. The IT facilities are modern and extensive. Workstations and software applications are of industrial standard. Many high specification computers have been purchased recently. The ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students is good at 1:4. Nearly all workstations provide access to the Internet and multimedia. All IT areas have laser printers, some have colour printers and most have access to data scanners. IT facilities in the community venues are also of good quality.

20. Most accommodation is good and some, for example in engineering, art and design, hospitality and computing is outstanding. Some of the college's restaurants and fast food areas are in need of refurbishment. College sites are clean and most are well maintained. Most classrooms are fit for their purpose, but some lack display material relating to the subjects taught in them. Some classrooms and workshops are too small for the number of students using them. Some demountable classrooms at the Bede centre are of a poor standard. There are insufficient storage facilities in the college. As a result, some laboratories and workshops are cluttered. Wheelchair access to all areas of the college is good.

21. The arrangements for the assessment of students' work and the monitoring of their progress are good in most curriculum areas. Students' performance is carefully tracked by teachers and course tutors. In basic skills this is particularly good. Students speak positively about the ways in which they are assessed. The reports of internal and external verifiers confirm that assessment is fair and rigorous in most curriculum areas. However, in construction, assessment practice is poorly managed and insufficiently rigorous. There is insufficient evidence, for example, that students have met all the performance criteria needed to demonstrate some competences. Assessment is also poorly managed on the work-based NVQ course in early years, and students on this course receive inadequate feedback on their performance.

22. Internal verification procedures are broadly satisfactory. There are some deficiencies, however, notably in construction and health and social care where there is insufficient internal verification of assessed work. There is no formal moderation on college-certificated courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students' work is usually marked promptly and thoroughly and teachers provide constructive feedback in order to help students improve. Students undertake well-structured assignments on many courses. Many of these are challenging and enable students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills well. Homework is regularly set for full-time and part-time students. Parents of full-time students aged 16 to 18 are kept well informed about students' progress. They receive annual written progress reports and are also invited to attend parents' evenings. Some of these are open to all parents. There are also specific events, to which parents of students who are causing some concern are invited.

23. The college's policy on key skills is for teaching and assessment to be undertaken separately from the students' main programme of study on academic courses and on some vocational courses. In some cases, this results in opportunities for assessment of key skills being missed.

24. The college provides a wide and diverse range of courses and programmes that matches most students' aspirations and potential. Programmes generally meet external requirements set by awarding bodies and are responsive to local circumstances. Courses and individual programmes of work are coherent and provide suitable opportunities for progression to higher level courses. Student surveys show that students are highly satisfied with the curriculum on offer to them. There are some gaps in provision, for example, there are no level 1 courses in science, and in business there are no marketing or personnel courses. The location of a main college centre in each of the four geographical areas of Sunderland means that most students can get to their chosen course easily.

25. Advanced level students undertake a wide programme of study, in line with the philosophy of the Curriculum 2000 initiative. Students are able to study both academic and vocational courses. GCE A-level students study a broad range of GCE AS subjects. For example, more than half of the first-year students are studying five or more GCE AS subjects and the average number is 4.7. A significant proportion of full-time students take a mix of academic and vocational programmes. For example, some students are studying a six-unit Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) and two GCE AS subjects in their first year. Others are taking national diploma courses alongside one or more GCE AS subjects. There is no work experience for full-time students in several curriculum areas, including business and engineering.

26. There is a strong commitment to social inclusion and ensuring equality of access and opportunity for all students, particularly through programmes provided in the 50 local community centres. Student numbers have grown significantly in the last three years. Adult student numbers have grown by 54% and the number of students aged 16 to 18 by 17%. There is significant provision for a variety of disadvantaged groups including asylum seekers and school-aged pupils not participating in learning in schools. The college helps to co-ordinate family learning programmes in 23 local schools. This programme helps over 200

parents and children to develop their literacy and numeracy skills together. The college has a partnership with local community centres that caters for the learning needs of women. There is good provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the programmes provide useful progression to many college courses. There are good links with special schools.

27. Opportunities for enrichment and additional study are good. There are a wide number of team sports and other pursuits including the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. There is a high-achievers programme, where students from the college regularly meet their peers from other local colleges and participate in special events that include lectures from eminent academics. Vocational programmes provide opportunities for additional study; for example, in health and care there are short courses for students in alternative therapies, first aid and fitness.

28. The training needs of employers in the region are well met by the college. For example, in construction the college helps a national training organisation to provide training and certification for craftspeople. The college is the leading provider nationally for this type of training in construction. There are strong training links with the regional health service and the local authority. Other training for industry is provided through the small business unit.

29. There are good guidance and support for students. Students receive effective and impartial advice on courses from a team of specialist advisors. A college counsellor is readily available to discuss personal issues and provide confidential advice and support. Extensive welfare services are also available. The college has recently restructured its student support arrangements. A team of specialist personal tutors has been established to support full-time students through a programme of weekly tutorials. In addition, a student target achievement unit has been created, in which student learning managers provide intensive support for full-time students whose attendance is poor or whose work is below the required standard. High achieving students are also provided with this intensive support to ensure they reach their full potential.

30. Students are set individual performance targets for coursework, based on assessments of their ability. Students' actual performance in coursework is closely monitored and intensive support is provided to students who under perform. Advanced level students are set minimum target grades based on their GCSE attainments. In a few curriculum areas, for example in some humanities subjects, some students are set grades that are not challenging enough. Target setting for adults on full-time courses is underdeveloped.

31. There is thorough and effective initial assessment of students to determine whether they require any additional learning support. All full-time and most part-time students are assessed to determine their level of attainment in numeracy and literacy. Assessment is undertaken with sensitivity and is confidential. There is good provision for students requiring additional learning support. In addition to providing support in specialist workshops, support teachers also work effectively with many students in their subject lessons alongside subject teachers. Students speak positively about the value of this support. Arrangements for the

induction of students on to courses are good. All full-time students undertake an induction programme lasting at least a week and covering the college, its facilities and policies and their chosen course. Part-time adult students undertake an appropriately shorter induction programme.

32. The college has strong and productive links with local schools. College staff visit Year 9 pupils in their schools and offer advice about the courses available. Taster courses are run at the college which school pupils attend to help them make a decision about their preferred course at age 16. These students are interviewed before finalising their choice of course. The college is undertaking joint curriculum development activities with a number of local schools. Tutorial arrangements for full-time students are satisfactory. Students receive a weekly tutorial with their personal tutor and speak highly about them. These consist of group tutorials and scheduled individual tutorials in which progress and performance are monitored. As part of their tutorial entitlement, students also undertake either additional key skills or GCE AS general studies, critical thinking or citizenship. Most tutorials observed by inspectors were judged to be satisfactory or better. There is however, no standard programme of topics which tutors are expected to cover, for example on equal opportunities awareness, drugs awareness, health issues or careers education and many students do not have any other opportunities to increase their awareness of these issues.

33. Individual learning plans are used on some courses to help students achieve their qualification aims. However, this practice is not universal. On courses where they are not used it is difficult for teachers to monitor students' progress effectively. Students receive careers education and guidance from specialist college staff. There is, however, insufficient access to wider careers advice and guidance. The involvement of external careers and other advisory services is largely restricted to the induction programme and tutor referrals, which are few in number.

Leadership and management

34. Leadership and management are good. There is a culture of continuous improvement throughout the college. Students' achievements have consistently improved, most markedly for adult students. Overall pass rates at levels 1 to 3 are now significantly above national averages, not just compared with similar colleges enrolling a high proportion of disadvantaged students, but with all colleges. Retention rates have also improved at all levels, most significantly at levels 1 and 2. They are still, however, below national averages for adults at level 3. The college, through its advanced level provision for students aged 16 to 18, provides students with a wide breadth of subjects to study in order to maximise their chances of entry to higher education (HE). Pass rates for this group of students are higher than national averages although, their performance, compared with predictions based on GCSE attainments, has been below expected levels for the last four years. Data on students' achievements were found by inspectors to be accurate. Apart from at the Washington centre, most managers make good use of computerised information on attendance, retention rates and the achievement of target grades.

35. The strategic plan for the period 2001 to 2004 is a comprehensive and clearly presented document. It sets out the priorities for the college in the context of its economic and social environment, government policy, investment needs, human resource development and equality of opportunity. Curriculum objectives specify the setting of targets for retention and pass rates and require that the causes of poorly performing courses are addressed. Courses where pass and retention rates are below national averages must demonstrate a 5% annual improvement; those above, where mathematically possible, are expected to achieve a 2% improvement. The strategic planning process is consultative, although for some curriculum initiatives there has been insufficient discussion with the operational management teams. The college acknowledges that operational plans for 2000/01 were not developed effectively in all faculties. Some of the current plans make insufficient references to the development of teaching and learning strategies.

36. A major component of the quality assurance framework is the annual self-assessment of curriculum areas and cross-college services. Curriculum self-assessment reports are comprehensive and contain a detailed analysis of students' achievements against national averages. The action plans address weaknesses appropriately, although some targets and success criteria are insufficiently specific. For example, tutorial teams are asked to address instances of low retention rates, but the strategies to be adopted are insufficiently detailed. Most action plans have resulted in improvements. In some cases, however, for example GCSE mathematics, GNVQ intermediate business and GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism, these plans have yet to lead to improvements in success rates. The internal inspection process is also a key element of the quality assurance system. In 2000/01, 147 curriculum observations were undertaken. The resulting judgements were similar to those of inspectors. For example, the proportion of unsatisfactory lessons was almost the same and the percentage graded good or better by the college was only slightly higher.

37. Inspectors judged the majority of curriculum areas to be of good quality. In these areas, communications between teaching staff and managers are effective. Team meetings are held regularly and ensure the proper planning, resourcing and management of the curriculum. For example, in information and communication technology (ICT) community provision, a dedicated team of teachers secures the reliable delivery of courses in a wide range of dispersed locations. To achieve this, staff absence is carefully monitored and cover is quickly arranged when any illness occurs. Some new curriculum developments have been well managed, for example, the foundation programme for students aged 16 to 18, where a wide range of relevant vocational options has been established. In mathematics, where past curriculum management has been poor, new appointments have been made and improvement strategies instigated. The management of some curriculum areas is fragmented. For example in business, provision is delivered in three different faculties, inhibiting the sharing of good practice. The management of early years NVQ provision has been unsatisfactory, as has the management of workshop processes and assessment in construction. Some course timetables are poorly planned, resulting in lessons that are too long.

38. The college is in a strong financial position. It has achieved operating surpluses in three of the last four years and the surpluses are forecast to continue. Reserves are substantial

and have been further increased by the recent sale of the Tunstall site. A significant proportion of the accumulated funds has been allocated to the accommodation strategy and a new centre at Washington is being planned.

39. Governors are broadly representative of the different constituencies the college serves. Academic achievement is effectively considered by the standards committee. Heads of faculty attend this committee in order to inform discussion about the interpretation of data and the appropriate actions necessary to address under performance. The corporation has elected to recruit some high profile individuals who have competing pressures on their time. Low attendance at meetings is a recognised problem. Full corporation meetings, over the last year, have only averaged 54% attendance, while the standards committee has achieved only 56%.

40. Equal opportunities issues are clearly referenced in the college mission, strategic plan and curriculum policy. Equal opportunities policies for staff and students are regularly reviewed and the course validation process requires equal opportunities issues to be considered. At present, there is no equal opportunities committee or annual report. Staff training to promote equal opportunities has not taken place this year. The college is socially inclusive. A number of curriculum initiatives have led to widening participation. For example, the college foundation programme for students aged 16 to 18 attracts over 130 students annually and basic skills programmes are provided for the growing number of asylum seekers and refugees in the locality. Introductory computing courses operate at 50 centres across the city and attract around 10,000 students annually. The provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, as part of an overall inclusive learning strategy, is less well developed.

41. The college has worked hard to ensure that staff are deployed efficiently. Where appropriate, teachers have been re-trained and reallocated to expanding areas, for example, ICT, provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and basic skills. All staff are offered good staff development, linked to strategic priorities. Recent initiatives include customer care programmes for support staff, training for the broader advanced level curriculum and ICT. The training in ICT has effectively supported the introduction of the 'blackboard' intranet system. All staff are appraised annually by their line manager, but the outcomes of internal lesson observation are not used to inform the appraisal of teaching staff.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas

Science

Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- good pass and retention rates on GCE A-level chemistry and physics
- effective learning support for full-time students
- good pass rates on GCSE chemistry and physics courses for adults
- good learning materials.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on GCE A-level biology and GCSE human physiology and health
- poor retention rates on GCSE courses and evening GCE AS courses
- poor laboratory accommodation on one campus.

Scope of provision

42. The college provides a satisfactory range of academic courses for students aged 16 to 18 and for adult students. GCE AS and A-level courses in biology, chemistry and physics and GCSE courses in chemistry, physics and human physiology and health are provided on two of the college's sites. GCSE human physiology and health is offered by distance learning. The thriving vocational short courses in forensic science, astronomy, and science of drugs recruit large numbers of students. A preliminary course is available for students who wish to progress on to a full GCSE. The college has offered full-time vocational courses at levels 2 and 3, but these have not recruited sufficient students to run. There is no full-time level 1 course in science. A good range of science enrichment activities is available including analytical chemistry competitions, visits to local universities related to pharmacy, medicine and engineering, open days at Oxford and Cambridge universities and science summer schools. More able students can opt to take the advanced extension award (AEA) in physics and chemistry.

Achievement and standards

43. Pass and retention rates on GCE A-level physics and chemistry courses are high; they have been above national averages for the past three years. Value added data show that these students generally achieve at or above the grades predicted by their GCSE points scores. GCE A-level biology pass rates are below national averages: only 68% passed in

2001. In 2001, pass rates in GCE AS chemistry and physics were low. The module tests sat in January 2002 indicate an improved performance in GCE AS biology compared with the year before. GCSE physics and chemistry higher grade (A* to C) pass rates for adult students are above national averages. Retention rates on these courses are low. The retention rate on the GCSE human physiology and health course is similar to the national average, but the pass rate is low: only 14% of students achieved a higher-grade pass. Retention rates so far, in 2002, on adult courses is low. There are strong links with local HE institutions and many full-time students progress to HE.

A sample of retention and pass rates in science, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE physics	2	No. of starts	73	14	13
		% retention	66	43	54
		% pass rate	29	83	57
GCSE chemistry	2	No. of starts	14	10	15
		% retention	79	100	60
		% pass rate	64	70	78
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	55	82	73
		% retention	85	78	86
		% pass rate	82	81	86
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	76	110	102
		% retention	84	74	68
		% pass rate	90	87	85
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	156	160	151
		% retention	79	62	70
		% pass rate	80	69	68

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

44. Most of the teaching was at least satisfactory and a proportion similar to the national average was good or better. The best lessons are well planned and organised and students participate enthusiastically in learning activities. In a GCE A-level lesson, students used computers to present their findings on a medical physics topic. They did this confidently and responded well to questions from the group. In another lesson, for adults who had had little previous experience of science, the students were using microscopes to study different hair types. They participated in the activity with enthusiasm. The practical lessons observed were well organised and provided opportunities for skills development. Students handle equipment confidently and with due regard to safety. Some of the written learning materials are of good quality and are shared among the teaching teams, including part-time teachers. On the GCE A-level courses, students have useful learning materials for each module. These contain additional notes, course information and student assessment questions. The students work diligently on these during directed study time in the learning centres and complete the assignments on a regular basis.

45. There was some unsatisfactory teaching. These lessons were poorly planned. The teachers made insufficient use of IT and did not address the needs of all the students. Some students use IT for word processing and graph plotting. There are plans to increase the use of IT and make more use of the newly installed computers in the laboratories.

46. Teachers are suitably qualified and experienced and make good use of their specialist knowledge. Support sessions are well attended by students, who comment positively on the formal and informal support they receive, and the way it assists their examination preparation. The science laboratories are well equipped, but in the laboratories on one campus, noise from other student groups adversely affects learning and the utilisation of space is poor. These laboratories are sometimes cluttered with equipment not in use, which limits movement, and represents a potential safety hazard.

Leadership and management

47. Courses are satisfactorily managed. Schemes of work, student progress reports, moderation reports and other records are satisfactory. Progress reports and other data are used well to monitor the performance of students compared with target grades based on their GCSE scores. The performance of course teams is also carefully reviewed using retention and pass rate data. However, course teams have been slow to take action to address, for example, persistently low retention rates on full-time GCSE courses. College quality assurance procedures identified most of the weaknesses of the provision, but failed to identify some low pass rates.

Mathematics

Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- good use of the resource centres
- good support.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GCE A-level and GCSE courses
- low attendance and retention rates on GCSE mathematics courses
- low added value scores in GCE AS and A-level mathematics
- some dull and uninspiring teaching
- inappropriate teaching methods.

Scope of provision

48. The college offers a range of GCE AS and A-level modules in mathematics, including options in statistics and further mathematics.

49. GCSE mathematics is offered in both full-time and part-time modes of attendance and is taken by about 800 students each year. Many of these students take the short course option and sit the examination in November. All full-time students take a numeracy test on entry. The results of this test help to identify students who require additional learning support.

Achievement and standards

50. Pass rates for both GCE AS and A-level mathematics are significantly lower than the national average. The GCE A-level pass rates have been declining for the last three years. GCE AS module results for the present year indicate a significant improvement on the previous year's results. Value added data indicate that students do not do as well as their GCSE points scores predict. Retention rates are below the national average. However, data for the present year indicate that retention rates are improving significantly.

51. GCSE higher-grade (A to C) pass rates in mathematics are very low and, on the one year course, have been declining over recent years. Last year, only 15% of those who completed the course achieved a higher-grade pass. In an attempt to improve performance, some new arrangements have been introduced this year. For example, all GCSE mathematics students are required to take a numeracy examination at the end of the first term. A high

proportion of the students passed this examination, providing them with some success in mathematics and thereby helping to improve their motivation.

A sample of retention and pass rates in mathematics, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE mathematics (1 year)	2	No. of starts	789	514	656
		% retention	65	66	73
		% pass rate	25	22	15
GCSE mathematics (short)	2	No. of starts	71	167	237
		% retention	72	83	76
		% pass rate	18	19	28
GCE A-level further mathematics	3	No. of starts	14	11	11
		% retention	93	55	64
		% pass rate	62	83	71
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	62	119	116
		% retention	92	61	74
		% pass rate	76	74	50

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

52. Students are generally well motivated and work hard in lessons. The lessons are clearly structured and follow an overall scheme of work. In planning individual lessons, too little account is taken of students' different learning styles and there is insufficient use of mathematics equipment and other learning resources. Even though teachers recognise that the groups are of mixed ability, little attempt is made to tailor the teaching to meet the differing needs of students with lower or higher ability. Explanations provided by teachers are clear and students have plenty of opportunities to reinforce their learning by completing worksheets. Some teachers rely too much on this method of learning.

53. The quality of the teaching in nearly all lessons is at least satisfactory, but many are uninspiring and fail to enthuse the students. A lower proportion than is seen nationally was judged to be good. Most students can complete straightforward tasks such as graph plotting

on the GCSE course or simple differentiation on the GCE AS course. In a few lessons, students present coherent mathematical arguments in discussions but generally, there is an overemphasis on a mechanical approach to mathematics. For instance, GCE AS students were using the second differential to determine turning points, but none could explain the principles behind the method. Similarly, in a GCSE lesson, students were encouraged to learn the standard equation for a straight line and insufficient attention was given to understanding the principals behind the formula. The approach to regression and correlation during a GCE AS lesson in statistics was too mechanical; there was insufficient discussion about why the process works, or about interpretation. There has been too little staff development on teaching methods.

54. Appropriate assignments and homework are set and, although there is no agreed scheme for the marking of students' work, it is accurately assessed and helpfully annotated with information on how it could be improved. Students' work is sometimes discussed and assessed during lessons, and immediate explanations and help are provided.

55. The learning centres are well equipped and stocked with a comprehensive range of books and other learning materials. These cater for the full range of ability and age. For example, there are books that would challenge and inspire the most able GCE A-level student and other books which have been designed to meet the needs of students having trouble with basic number operations. Students use these materials regularly. The mathematics timetable has been modified recently to improve the use of these resources. For example, GCE A-level timetables include an hour in the learning centre sandwiched between two hours of formal class teaching. Students receive good support from specialist teachers when they are in the learning centre and also at other times. Tutorial support arrangements work well.

Leadership and management

56. A range of strategies has been implemented to improve retention and pass rates. For example, the college has recently appointed two new teachers as subject leaders, improved team working and established clear areas of responsibility. Teaching hours have been increased; there have been changes in the syllabi used, timetables and support arrangements; a mathematics club has been established and enhancement lessons provided. These changes have already started to have a positive effect on the GCE AS module results, which have improved significantly on last year's performance.

Construction

Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- high pass rates
- good use of the resource centre
- wide range of provision
- productive partnerships with external organisations.

Weaknesses

- low retention rate in the current year
- lack of individual learning targets
- workshops too small for the number of students
- poor assessment and internal verification
- weak monitoring of students' progress
- poor management of workshops.

Scope of provision

57. The college provides a wide range of full-time and part-time courses at levels 1, 2 and 3. Construction craft courses include brickwork, carpentry and joinery, electrical installation, painting and decorating and plumbing. There are courses leading to AVCE, GNVQ and to national certificate qualifications in the built environment. A number of taster courses, designed to encourage women into construction and to promote construction in general are also available. The department is a key partner in the Construction Skills Certificate scheme and has tested over 400 construction workers. A partnership with a private organisation has led to successful NVQ provision at level 1. A range of short courses meets the needs of individuals and of local industry.

Achievement and standards

58. Pass rates are high on most courses. The NVQ level 3 brickwork course, for example, has had a 100% pass rate in each of the last three years. Retention rates are more variable. For example, the NVQ level 3 painting and decorating course has retained all its students in each of the last two years, but the NVQ level 3 mechanical engineering services

course in plumbing has retained less than two thirds of its students in each of these years. For the current year, the overall retention rate is low.

59. Students of the built environment produce some good quality work. Their drawings, specifications and reports, for example, are produced to a professional standard and are well presented. The standard of students' work in construction crafts is satisfactory. During their practical workshop activities students display some poor tool-handling techniques and some unsafe working practices, including, for example, the failure to always wear appropriate safety goggles whilst cutting bricks.

A sample of retention and pass rates in construction, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ trowel occupations	1	No. of starts	27	22	31
		% retention	72	76	90
		% pass rate	50	88	96
NVQ wood occupations	1	No. of starts	36	25	28
		% retention	56	71	75
		% pass rate	75	94	81
NVQ carpentry and joinery	2	No. of starts	17	12	14
		% retention	82	91	46
		% pass rate	36	70	83
National certificate in building	3	No. of starts	9	12	15
		% retention	78	92	80
		% pass rate	86	100	80
NVQ carpentry and joinery	3	No. of starts	23	35	32
		% retention	83	89	97
		% pass rate	89	65	84

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ brickwork	3	No. of starts	12	8	13
		% retention	100	75	69
		% pass rate	100	100	100
NVQ plumbing (2 year)	3	No. of starts	24	14	10
		% retention	88	62	60
		% pass rate	52	100	100
NVQ painting and decorating	3	No. of starts	12	13	14
		% retention	83	100	100
		% pass rate	60	77	93

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

60. Schemes of work are limited in their scope and often unimaginative. Lesson plans are generally superficial. Most of the teaching is satisfactory, but the proportion that is good is less than the national average. In the better lessons, teachers use language which students understand and place the subject matter in an industrial context. In one lesson, for example, the teacher introduced a physics principle, but referred frequently to applications in construction. Some teachers expertly demonstrate practical skills. In some lessons, students demonstrate poor working practices and do not learn from their repeated mistakes. A few teachers fail to check that students have understood the topic or to reinforce sufficiently what has been covered.

61. The learning centre is well equipped and appropriately furnished. There is a wide range of textbooks and some good student workbooks. Noise from other students is sometimes distracting. There are not enough copies of some of the more commonly used texts. The construction provision is located in a new construction centre. This has good communal areas, bright classrooms, and eye-catching wall displays. Students' success is celebrated publicly through well-presented photographs of high-achieving students. Staff rooms are crowded and there is inadequate storage space for the teachers' course materials.

62. The carpentry and joinery workshop is clean and well laid out. Illumination is good and dust is kept under control. The painting and decorating workshop is light, airy, well illuminated and clean. Relevant wall displays, for example, of trade models and literature, enhance the learning environment in these workshops. The painting and decorating

workshop does not have stair and high-level work areas. As a result, students cannot gain the full range of competences required by some NVQs. The management of some workshops is poor. Some are too small for the number of students using them. In the brick workshop, students' work is susceptible to damage due to the cramped conditions. This workshop is untidy and dried mortar is not cleared often enough from the floor. Students' shoes, coats and bags are left in corridors, cluttering a fire exit. Storage arrangements are unsatisfactory. For example, a cramped storage area for bricks provides insufficient headroom for manual handling. Some hand tools in carpentry and joinery and in brickwork are poorly maintained.

63. Student support is good. Students are initially assessed for their competence in basic skills and the vocational teachers are informed of the results. Additional support is provided through double staffing of some teaching sessions. The arrangements are well documented and effective. Support is effectively and discretely targeted and sensitively provided. Students are not set individual learning targets and some are not working as quickly as they should or at an appropriate level of skill. Their progress is not monitored closely enough.

64. Assessment practices are insufficiently rigorous. Internal verification does not occur sufficiently frequently and has not identified weaknesses in assessment. The procedures do not eliminate the possibility that students are credited with a competence that they have not demonstrated. In some cases, important documentation is not completed thoroughly. On some NVQ courses, assessments are not spread evenly through the year, leading to a rush to complete assessments at the end of the year. On some courses, students have to wait too long before work is marked and returned to them. Some receive inadequate feedback on the quality of their work. Not all assessment practice is weak; teachers of the built environment are developing a useful assessment and verification system that will allow students to continually collect evidence of competence and improve their performance.

Leadership and management

65. Appraisal and staff development procedures are implemented in line with college policies. Communications are satisfactory. Quality assurance systems are not operated sufficiently rigorously. They have not, for example, identified weaknesses in the assessment processes. The construction assessment board does not review assessment practice or the results of assessment sufficiently rigorously.

Engineering

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates
- much good teaching
- excellent specialist resources
- good learning support.

Weaknesses

- lack of work-based assessment on some NVQ units
- insufficient work experience for full-time students
- infrequent individual tutorials for some students.

Scope of provision

66. A wide range of full-time and part-time engineering courses is provided. These include craft, technician and higher technician courses that provide opportunities for progression into degree level or to employment. Full-time motor vehicle provision at level 1 is an appropriate mix of NVQs in welding, valuing and body repair that is a useful preparation for employment or further study. Engineering provision has recently been moved to new accommodation at the Shiney Row and Hylton sites. Some practical mechanical craft courses are provided under partnership arrangements with a local training organisation. Modern apprentices from several training organisations are taught the necessary background knowledge for NVQs at the college. The college has recently become a centre of vocational excellence for computer networking.

Achievement and standards

67. Pass rates are high. For example, pass rates on the NVQ level 2 engineering foundation course have been consistently above 95% and on the City and Guilds vehicle body report course at level 1 they have improved markedly over three years to a level well above national average. Retention rates on most courses are similar to national averages. On the first certificate course they were excellent in 1999 and 2000, but the course failed to recruit in 2001. On the vehicle body repair course at level 1, retention rates are consistently low. Retention rates in 2001 are below those of 2000 on several courses.

68. Students show high levels of aptitude and interest in the subjects they are studying and respond well to the teachers. The standard of students' written work is generally good.

Portfolios are well structured and presented. Assessed work is often of a good quality. Practical work is of a consistently high standard. There is a good rapport between the teachers and students. Attendance rates are high and punctuality is good.

A sample of retention and pass rates in engineering, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
City and Guilds vehicle body repair	1	No. of starts	40	27	29
		% retention	58	67	59
		% pass rate	13	72	94
City and Guilds basic engineering	1	No. of starts	*	30	31
		% retention	*	87	68
		% pass rate	*	85	86
GNVQ intermediate engineering	2	No. of starts	13	31	24
		% retention	69	84	75
		% pass rate	100	88	83
NVQ vehicle unit replacement	2	No. of starts	18	17	19
		% retention	56	82	68
		% pass rate	90	86	54
NVQ engineering (foundation)	2	No. of starts	66	20	30
		% retention	97	95	67
		% pass rate	95	100	100
National diploma in engineering	3	No. of starts	16	*	15
		% retention	56	*	87
		% pass rate	89	*	92

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
National certificate in engineering	3	No. of starts	46	70	40
		% retention	54	81	63
		% pass rate	100	64	100

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

69. The quality of teaching is good in all the engineering disciplines. On motor vehicle courses, lesson planning is effective and draws out the links between theory and practical work. Practical lessons are well organised, and are structured to meet clearly defined objectives. For example one afternoon lesson was based on the application of paint primers in a working environment. It followed on from the morning theory lesson on the characteristics of etch-based primers. Students showed high levels of skill in spray techniques and were able to identify defects in their own work. One group was rectifying the defects while other students masked up the vehicles. Teachers provided appropriate support when required.

70. In electrical and mechanical engineering, the quality of lesson planning is more variable. Some plans lack sufficient detail of methods and resources to be used. Welding courses are well organised and structured. Teachers use appropriate teaching methods in theory and practical lessons and are responsive to the needs of individual students. As in motor vehicle work, theory is linked, where possible, to practical workshop activities. Effective use is made of structured question and answer sessions and appropriate learning materials. In one effective lesson, students successfully developed their understanding of the properties of materials by using the results of their own experiments to calculate the elasticity of various materials. The teacher kept all students involved by judicious use of questioning and by using handouts that required the students to fill in some of the information.

71. Engineering facilities are excellent. The motor vehicle and computer networking facilities have recently benefited from new equipment and purpose built rooms. The motor vehicle body repair resources include a spray oven and new body jig system. The computer-aided design and manufacture equipment is modern and wide-ranging and the computing facility works to industry standard software. The machine tools used by students are modern. Electronics and mechanical science rooms are spacious and well furnished, but students use one of these rooms to gain access to another, causing disruption to the teaching. Mechanical science and materials testing equipment is old. There are insufficient motor vehicle hand-tools. Staff are well qualified and have undertaken recent staff development in the use of the new equipment and resources.

72. Due to the non-completion of some accommodation, motor vehicle students are required to take some of their end of year examinations in the resource centre. These arrangements are unsatisfactory. Students are distracted by the noise and other activities taking place.

73. Learning support arrangements for motor vehicle level 1 courses are good. All students are initially assessed prior to starting their courses and, where additional support is required, it is provided sensitively by specialist support staff, in the vocational lessons. Students respond well to the additional support provided and comment on the effectiveness of the help they receive. On some courses, there are insufficient opportunities for students to discuss their progress individually with their tutor.

74. There are some weaknesses in the arrangements to provide work experience for students. Students on some NVQ courses are assessed in the workplace, but on other NVQ courses such arrangements have not yet been established. AVCE students went to Italy this year. The visit included a tour of a large car manufacturer and course-work in an Italian college.

Leadership and management

75. Management structures in engineering are new. Arrangements for communication between the different engineering disciplines are unclear. Some teams do not have a full-time manager on site. Team meetings are informal and poorly minuted. There is some confusion over responsibilities and procedures, for example, for motor vehicle work placement and assessment of some units in the manufacturing NVQ. Managers set targets for retention and pass rates and progress towards these is monitored. However, some teachers are insufficiently involved in the process of setting targets and are unaware of performance against targets.

Business

Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- good retention rates on GNVQ intermediate and NVQ level 2 administration courses
- good pass rates on GCE A-level business studies, NVQ level 2 administration and NVQ accounting courses
- effective teaching on courses for adults
- well-structured revision activities
- good specialist resources for call centre training.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on GCSE business studies, GNVQ advanced, NVQ level 3 administration and some management courses
- poor pass rates on GCSE business studies, GNVQ intermediate and management certificate courses
- insufficient checking of students' understanding in some lessons
- failure to adapt teaching methods in response to small group sizes
- insufficient attention to practical work in full-time administration programmes.

Scope of provision

76. A broad range of courses is provided, ranging from GNVQ foundation to higher level management programmes. There are gaps in the provision. For example, no personnel or marketing courses are available. Due to low recruitment, some courses have been discontinued. Some areas of provision, for example call centre operations, have expanded rapidly. Work experience is not provided for students on full-time vocational programmes. The current full-time administration programmes focus too narrowly on principles and pay insufficient attention to practice. There are some productive links with employers resulting in bespoke training on recruitment and selection, anger management and team leadership. Enrichment activities include a Young Enterprise programme for AVCE students using local industrial advisers.

Achievement and standards

77. Pass and retention rates on full-time programmes for students aged 16 to 18 vary. Pass rates on the GNVQ advanced course, for example, are consistently high, but the retention rate has been low in two of the last three years. Pass rates on the GCE A-level business studies course are above national averages, but on the GCSE course, pass and retention rates are low. Retention rates on the GNVQ intermediate courses are improving, but pass rates are low. Retention and pass rates for adults are mostly satisfactory or good. For example, retention and pass rates on Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) NVQ levels 3 and 4 are good and are significantly above national averages. There are satisfactory retention rates and high pass rates on the AAT NVQ level 2 course. Pass rates on the national certificate course in business and finance course have improved and are now high. There are low retention and pass rates on some management courses, for example, the National Examination Board for Supervisory Management (NEBSM) management certificate course.

78. Revision lessons reinforce students' understanding of relevant business concepts and improve their examination technique. Most students are working at the required standard for the course they are following. The standard of work in the portfolios of employed students was particularly good. Some of the work on the full-time administration courses was at too low a level. The standard of students' work was often high on GCE AS and A-level business studies courses. Assignments on GNVQ programmes demonstrate an over-reliance on secondary evidence. Standards of attainment in lessons and in coursework for adults are generally satisfactory and sometimes high. Portfolio work on accounting and management courses is well presented and draws heavily on students' work experience.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ intermediate	2	No. of starts	38	30	18
		% retention	71	73	83
		% pass rate	71	55	60
NVQ accounting	2	No. of starts	34	53	83
		% retention	71	72	70
		% pass rate	88	74	76

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ administration	2	No. of starts	59	72	62
		% retention	79	81	81
		% pass rate	85	88	80
GCE A-level business studies	3	No. of starts	125	131	147
		% retention	74	69	76
		% pass rate	82	78	80
GNVQ advanced	3	No. of starts	49	30	44
		% retention	57	71	56
		% pass rate	85	87	95
NVQ accounting	3	No. of starts	24	59	54
		% retention	83	82	80
		% pass rate	80	59	77
NEBSM management certificate	3	No. of starts	57	39	75
		% retention	86	62	63
		% pass rate	51	71	73
NVQ accounting	4	No. of starts	9	53	32
		% retention	89	87	91
		% pass rate	100	35	68

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

79. Revision lessons for full-time advanced and GCSE students were well managed and clearly structured. Teachers often made use of past or specimen examination papers to develop students' examination techniques. A lesson on financial ratios, for example, involved the teacher briskly reviewing answers to a homework revision question. This was followed by further exercises involving more complex calculations to ensure that students

were able to apply appropriate formulae to a range of different business accounts. Some teaching groups were very small, and teachers failed to adjust their teaching methods to take this into account.

80. The teaching on courses for adults is satisfactory or good, students learn effectively and make good progress with allotted tasks. Most teachers are enthusiastic and use a range of appropriate learning activities to stimulate students' interest and promote learning. Most lessons are well planned. Good use is made of adult students' work experience to illustrate concepts. For example, students on management courses are encouraged to discuss their experiences at work and to consider how management principles are applied in practice. In some lessons, there was insufficient checking of students' understanding and, in such lessons, a few students lost interest and stopped participating in the learning activities organised by the teacher.

81. There is effective assessment on most courses. Students are regularly set work that is marked and returned promptly. Teachers provide good written feedback that helps students to improve their performance. In a few cases, comments were over generalised, with insufficient pointers for improvement. Arrangements for internal verification are effective. Students' assessments are closely monitored on all courses. Where students are not performing at the predicted level, additional support is provided to help them fulfil their potential.

82. The arrangements for supporting students are good. As part of their induction programme, all students undertake an initial assessment of their basic skills and key skills. These assessments are effective in identifying additional support needs. There are good arrangements for providing additional learning support. Support teachers work alongside subject teachers in the classroom. They use separate lesson plans to ensure that their students' needs are adequately met. Subject teachers also provide good learning support to students. Students do not have individual learning plans against which their progress can be measured. There are tutorials for full-time and some part-time students. Effective advice and information is provided to most students. Students who enrol late are not always given appropriate advice. There is generally good progression on to other courses in the colleges or into HE or employment.

83. Learning resources are generally good. Handouts are word processed and often contain extension tasks as well as basic information. College staff have produced particularly lucid workbooks which are used by administration students in IT lessons. Access to IT and the Internet in the learning centres is good; increasing use is being made by students of learning resources on the college intranet. The modern accommodation at the Doxford call centre is of good quality: computers are equipped with specialist software; all workstations have telephone access; and the assessment suite provides both video and voice recording to allow precise feedback on communication skills. Administration students no longer have access to a realistic working environment following the discontinuation of NVQ programmes for full-time students. This, combined with the absence of work experience, restricts the development of their practical skills. Teachers are appropriately qualified in their subject areas and over 80% have qualified teacher status and qualified assessor status.

Leadership and management

84. Three separate faculties are responsible for business courses. Operating plans reflect strategic objectives and are regularly monitored. Targets are set by course teams for recruitment and retention and pass rates based on prior performance and national averages. On some courses targets have been met and pass rates have improved, for example on the national certificate course in business and finance and NVQ accounting courses at all three levels. On other courses, however, there has been little improvement. Management information is used effectively. There are regular course team and faculty meetings, but minutes of meetings do not contain action points. There are thorough procedures for course evaluation. Course committees, which include student representatives, meet regularly to review performance. The self-assessment report draws on the findings from internal inspection and course evaluation. There is a thorough evaluation of students' achievements, but some action plans are insufficiently detailed.

Computing

Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on vocational courses
- good progression rates
- good skills development in practical lessons
- well-managed vocational courses.

Weaknesses

- failure to draw all students into learning activities
- low value-added scores on GCE A-level programmes
- insufficient opportunities for students to become familiar with current industrial practice.

Scope of provision

85. The college offers full-time courses in computing and ICT from level 1 to level 4. They are available at all the main college centres. AVCE courses in ICT are available in 3, 6 and 12 unit combinations. There are GNVQ ICT courses at foundation and intermediate levels and NVQ level 1 courses in using ICT. GCE AS and A-level courses in computing and ICT are also available. The college is a regional academy for computer networking courses. There are clear progression routes to higher level courses.

Achievement and standards

86. Students on vocational courses achieve well. Pass rates are high. The pass rate on the GNVQ advanced course in IT is consistently well above the national average. Students become competent in practical IT skills and achieve appropriate knowledge and understanding of theoretical comments. Pass rates on GCE A-level computing were significantly below the national average in 2001 and the students on this course achieve grades that are lower than those predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. The quality of work produced by students following the NVQ level 1 course in 'using IT' is very good. Students are able to demonstrate with confidence high levels of practical skill and well-presented assignment work. For example, one student had prepared an online presentation that included hyperlinks to relevant websites. Retention rates fluctuate, but are mostly around national averages. Many students progress to higher level courses in the college or elsewhere.

A sample of retention and pass rates in computing, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ foundation IT (1 year)	1	No. of starts	50	46	16
		% retention	62	80	69
		% pass rate	71	75	73
NVQ level using IT (1 year)	1	No. of starts	*	*	15
		% retention	*	*	67
		% pass rate	*	*	90
GNVQ intermediate IT (1 year)	2	No. of starts	85	105	122
		% retention	64	78	82
		% pass rate	75	68	86
GCE A-level computing (2 year)	3	No. of starts	155	123	142
		% retention	73	57	77
		% pass rate	65	83	54
GNVQ advanced IT (2 year)	3	No. of starts	56	64	95
		% retention	71	55	68
		% pass rate	83	97	84

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

87. Most teaching is at least satisfactory, but a lower proportion is good, very good or excellent than is usually seen in colleges. Teachers often fail to draw all students into question and answer sessions. Some students became bored during long presentations by the teacher. Lessons were most effective when teachers organised activities that tested students' understanding or required them to work together. For example, in one GNVQ intermediate revision lesson, the teacher set pairs of students to answer past examination questions and

required them to produce an overhead transparency of the key points. They all achieved this, working conscientiously to a deadline. The teacher then displayed the overhead transparencies, questioned all the students and reached a consensus on the best solution.

88. Most schemes of work and lesson plans are thorough. Through practical activities, students learn to manage their own learning, and develop appropriate skills. For example, some students were working on a design and build project to automate a computer application for a personal computer supplier. They were working at an appropriate pace to produce a prototype within the assignment deadline. The work tested their technical knowledge in producing the design, developed the wider skill of managing their own learning, and helped them to understand how applications development might operate in the workplace.

89. Staff are well qualified and experienced. Students value their support in and out of lessons. Several teachers have taken on new roles as additional learning support staff to assist students identified as needing additional support. This support is mostly provided alongside the subject teaching and is valued by students. However, many of the staff have had insufficient training for this new role.

90. Students' work is regularly monitored and reviewed. Students know the target grade they are aiming for and how well they are doing in comparison with this target. Some of the action plans arising from progress reviews are not sufficiently precise, for example, they do not specify the time within which actions should be completed.

91. Resources are sufficient in classrooms and the availability of computers out of class is good. The college has some very good, newly refurbished accommodation equipped with good computer projectors. The learning centres have adequate stocks of books, and sufficient copies of key texts.

92. Assessment materials are appropriate and include the assessment criteria, which students find helpful. Some teachers give thorough and detailed feedback to students on their work and how it can be improved. Internal verification of assessment on the NVQ course is not done sufficiently frequently.

93. Programmes are arranged so that students can select a main programme of study and then add extra courses such as GCE A-level psychology, GCE AS ICT and GCSE re-sits. The CISCO network course leads to a valuable workplace qualification and is taken by second-year GCE A-level and AVCE students. However, the GCE A-level and AVCE courses provide insufficient opportunities for students to become familiar with current industrial practice by listening to guest speakers or making visits to companies.

Leadership and management

94. Management of the vocational courses is good. Course teams generally work well together, share good practice and adopt common approaches, for example to timetabling and lesson planning. However, teachers do not fully understand the reasoning behind the recent curriculum reorganisation, for example the rationale for allocating courses to different

faculties. On some advanced level courses there has been a shortage of suitable teachers. Managers have acknowledged the weakness and taken action by recruiting new teachers, but the problem is not yet fully resolved. The self assessment report does not identify the relatively low proportion of teaching which is very good or excellent.

Information technology in the community

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses
- very good computing resources in the majority of centres
- good guidance and support for students
- wide range of courses providing good progression routes
- use of a large number of community locations
- good course management.

Weaknesses

- gaps in the specialist knowledge of a few teachers
- some errors in college devised learning materials.

Scope of provision

95. A wide range of courses is provided to meet the needs of adults in the community. The courses are provided on three main college sites and at over 20 outreach centres, some on a franchise basis. A wide variety of outreach venues is used, including schools, libraries, village halls, day centres, women's centres, nurseries, and buildings used by neighbourhood youth projects, community associations, the Salvation Army and Age Concern. A distance learning programme is also available enabling students to study at home. The range of courses includes computing for absolute beginners, computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), Integrated Business Technology (IBT) level 2 and 3, the European computer driving licence (ECDL), using the Internet, and desktop publishing. The main centres and some of the outreach centres provide 'Learndirect' courses for the community and business. There are presently over 10,000 students. Of these 59% attend drop-in centres, 33% attend timetabled classes and 8% are on franchised courses.

96. As part of its growth strategy, the college offers some innovative provision. During the summer of 2001, the faculty offered an eight-week 'summer experience', during which adults could try taster sessions in using computers. Free transport and lunches were provided together with a range of other entertainment. The event attracted large numbers of students, many of whom subsequently joined courses. Short taster courses are offered in public houses, residential homes for old people, supermarkets and shopping centres.

Achievement and standards

97. Pass rates are high on most courses. The pass rate on the one-year CLAIT course has been consistently above the national average over the three-year period to 2001. The short courses in CLAIT and IBT 2 and the one-year IBT 2 course have all improved their pass rates over the same period to above national averages in 2001. For example, the pass rate on the one-year IBT 2 increased from 44% to 75% over the period. Retention rates are satisfactory. Overall attendance rates in lessons and drop-in centres during the inspection were similar to those seen nationally on inspections this year. The pass rates on the computers for absolute beginners course fell to the national average in 2001. The college has implemented a recovery plan to address this downward trend.

98. Students are hard working, confident and show good levels of ability in using computer software packages. The standard of students' work is high. They speak enthusiastically about their courses. Many of the older students felt that their course had given them added confidence in helping children or grandchildren with schoolwork.

A sample of retention and pass rates in information technology in the community, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Computers for absolute beginners	1	No. of starts	4,155	4,154	3,683
		% retention	93	90	97
		% pass rate	72	74	66
CLAIT (short)	1	No. of starts	2,735	1,632	2,307
		% retention	80	78	85
		% pass rate	64	58	75
CLAIT (1 year)	1	No. of starts	1,539	2,198	800
		% retention	78	74	81
		% pass rate	71	77	74
Desktop publishing (short)	1	No. of starts	357	279	529
		% retention	96	86	92
		% pass rate	68	88	87

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
IBT 2 (short)	1	No. of starts	672	1,102	1,059
		% retention	81	82	87
		% pass rate	43	55	63
IBT 2 (1 year)	1	No. of starts	603	865	405
		% retention	79	59	78
		% pass rate	44	67	75
ECDL	1	No. of starts	*	*	268
		% retention	*	*	78
		% pass rate	*	*	90

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

99. Students are well supported in timetabled workshops or drop-in centres by enthusiastic teachers and additional support workers. Most of the teachers are effective in correcting students' errors and answering their questions. There are gaps in the specialist knowledge of a few teachers, for example, on the role of primary keys in databases. The faculty produces standardised learning materials for each of the courses it provides. These materials are used whether the courses are provided directly or through franchise arrangements. Their use enables courses to continue as normal if a replacement teacher is used to cover for illness, for example. The materials are clear and easy to follow, but they have some weaknesses. For example, they are not customised for the different networks in outreach centres, and some contain errors. The faculty is presently rewriting some of these materials.

100. Computing resources in the majority of centres are very good. All centres have modern computers, robust networks, and laser printers. Some have colour printers and most have scanners. A few centres have occasional problems with the printers that impact adversely on students, particularly when they are being assessed. At one centre, the college had updated and taken over the management of the computer facilities to solve ongoing technical problems. The distance learning section has a stock of 300 reconditioned computers that it loans to students who do not have computing facilities at home. At present

there are 266 computers on loan. A college technician is on secondment to the section to maintain these computers.

101. Students' progress is tracked using standard documentation. Assessment is usually undertaken when students feel they are ready. It meets awarding body requirements. Internal verification is carried out regularly and is sometimes followed up by unannounced visits to monitor responses to issues raised.

102. Support for students is very good. In each centre, there is very good initial advice, guidance and support for students. Some course workbooks have been produced in Farsi and Surani for asylum seekers whose first language is not English. Students in danger of dropping out or failing their course are given extra support and, where appropriate, they are given the opportunity to study by distance learning.

Leadership and management

103. Course management is good. The faculty has a clear organisational structure. There is a schedule of monthly course leader and section leader meetings. To facilitate the effective management of the provision over a wide geographical area, the faculty has an operational team that manages the day-to-day administration. For example, the operations team is responsible for arranging teaching cover for illness at all the main and outreach centres. There is a programme of staff development to support all teachers including those in franchised provision.

Hospitality and catering

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates on the NVQ level 2 food preparation course
- good learning support
- good resources
- modes of attendance which meet the needs of adult employed students.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on some current courses
- some inappropriate progression
- insufficient industrial updating for teachers.

Scope of provision

104. The provision, which is managed by two faculties, includes courses in catering and hospitality, food preparation and cooking, food and drink service, accommodation management and licensed trade management. Full-time courses in catering and hospitality lead to NVQs at levels 1 to 3. A small group of students are undertaking an ACVE in hospitality and catering. Part-time specialist professional courses take place with modes of attendance that suit the needs of adult employed students who work shifts. This provision includes courses leading to NVQs at levels 1 and 2 in food service and food preparation and NVQ level 4 in accommodation management. A range of short courses, provided in community venues, includes several culinary options, food hygiene certification and wine tasting and appreciation. Some courses can be taken by distance learning.

Achievement and standards

105. Pass and retention rates on the NVQ level 2 food preparation and cooking course are high. They have been well above national averages for each of the last three years. During this period, nearly 90% of the students who started the course achieved the qualification. Pass rates are also high on the professional cake decoration course at level 1. On other courses, pass rates are generally in line with national averages. Retention rates on most courses are above national averages. However, retention rates for students recruited in the 2001/02 academic year are low on some courses.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hospitality and catering, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ catering and hospitality (serving food and drink)	1	No. of starts	12	31	28
		% retention	50	81	71
		% pass rate	83	96	89
Professional cake decoration (introductory)	1	No. of starts	49	16	21
		% retention	69	50	67
		% pass rate	94	100	100
NVQ catering and hospitality (food preparation and cooking)	2	No. of starts	34	33	38
		% retention	94	90	87
		% pass rate	97	100	97
National licensees certificate examination	2	No. of starts	92	142	74
		% retention	96	100	99
		% pass rate	83	69	74

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

106. All the teaching seen was satisfactory or better. The planning of teaching is good. There are detailed schemes of work and lesson plans. An appropriate variety of teaching styles is used. Students have access to a wide range of learning materials that are of good quality. The planning of the learning does not always adequately reflect the differing needs of individual students. The students are encouraged to develop a professional approach and maintain high personal standards of dress, conduct and behaviour while working in practical workshops and in the simulated work environment. Good working relations between teachers and students promote effective learning. A few lessons were uninspiring and insufficiently related to industry. Little use is made of the industrial knowledge of adult students to inform the learning. In some of the community venues, insufficient attention is paid to ensuring that students are appropriately dressed when working, for example, in the kitchens.

107. Where appropriate, extra staff work alongside teachers, or with individual students, to provide additional learning support. Extra workshops are arranged, where necessary, to help students improve their practical skills. These arrangements work well.

108. A few full-time students on the NVQ level 3 course do not have the prior experience or level of skill required for the course and are struggling to cope with the course demands. The college's simulated work environment does not provide enough scope to assess all the competences required at this level.

109. Teachers are well qualified, but they have not had enough industrial updating. This is particularly the case for some of the teachers who have been in the college for some years. There are well-equipped learning facilities. A newly developed simulated work environment includes a fast food outlet, a bistro-style restaurant and a production kitchen with ancillary areas. Full-time students are scheduled to work in each of these areas, providing them with realistic working environments and appropriate assessment opportunities. The college learning centres have a good stock of textbooks, magazines, and trade journals.

110. Assessments are well planned, fair and accurate. Students are made aware of assessment criteria. In a few cases, students are given too much help when completing assessed tasks. A wide range of evidence, including witness testimonies, direct observation, and photographs, is used when making assessment judgements. Students' portfolios are carefully compiled. Students' performance is carefully monitored and they receive regular feedback on their progress.

Leadership and management

111. The number of students on catering and hospitality courses has declined over recent years and actions have been taken to reverse the trend. A recent restructuring resulted in some new management and teaching appointments, redeployment of some teachers, and the creation of new roles. The range of programmes offered, and operating procedures are being reviewed and reasons for low retention rates on courses running this year are being identified. Communications between the two faculties that provide the courses are good. Course teams meet regularly. Links with local schools are good.

Sport, leisure and tourism

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses
- much good teaching
- good support for students
- good progression routes.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on the GNVQ advanced courses
- low retention rates on some advanced vocational courses.

Scope of provision

112. The college offers a broad range of courses in the sport, leisure and tourism curriculum area. As a result, students are able to progress to advanced and higher levels. The provision is aimed mainly at full-time students aged 16 to 18. The courses include leisure and recreation, travel and tourism, sport science, GCE AS and A-level physical education, and public services courses at different levels. A range of short courses is also available. A partnership with Sunderland football club has resulted in the club's academy players taking courses at the college.

Achievement and standards

113. Pass rates are high on most courses. For example, they were 100% on both the national diploma in sports studies and the preparation for uniformed services courses in 2001. Pass rates on the GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism course have been consistently low. The first-year pass rates on its replacement, the new AVCE in travel and tourism, show an improvement and unit pass rates in the second year are maintaining this trend. Coursework produced by students is generally of a good standard. In theory lessons, students use technical terminology correctly and in practical work they demonstrate that they have acquired appropriate skills.

A sample of retention and pass rates in sport, leisure and tourism, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	42	53	37
		% retention	52	75	75
		% pass rate	55	79	78
Preparation for entry/uniformed services	2	No. of starts	20	23	12
		% retention	70	70	58
		% pass rate	64	88	100
National diploma in sport studies	3	No. of starts	25	21	42
		% retention	48	76	61
		% pass rate	100	81	100
GCE A-level sports games and recreation	3	No. of starts	34	50	65
		% retention	76	66	75
		% pass rate	96	76	77
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism	3	No. of starts	45	35	50
		% retention	43	54	52
		% pass rate	74	68	67
Advanced uniformed services	3	No. of starts	12	12	*
		% retention	81	75	*
		% pass rate	100	100	*

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

114. Much of the teaching is good and some is excellent. Lessons are well structured and teachers encourage lively debate among the students, who are well motivated. Teachers often make good use of ICT. For example, one teacher explained the complexities of the respiratory system in an interesting and easily understandable way, making good use of visual images stored on a computer. Practical sports science work is well managed; the students listen attentively, undertake the various activities efficiently and record physiological data accurately for use in future lessons. The lesson plans and schemes of work are of a very high standard. Sports studies students, undertaking a sports leaders' award, work with students with mobility, behavioural and emotional problems, and lead practical sport activities for these students well. The lessons are well organised and enjoyable for all concerned.

115. Resources are generally of good quality. The classrooms are well maintained and of suitable size. Some sports facilities are in the college, for example a swimming pool and fitness suite. Other facilities are off-site. All the facilities are of very good quality. The use of off-site facilities is assisted by a partnership between the college, the local authority and the university. Fitness-testing equipment in the college is of good quality. The travel training room has a good range of learning materials. The library contains a wide range of relevant, up-to-date books, periodicals and magazines, and some very good curriculum materials, particularly in sport science. Teachers are well qualified and have relevant industrial experience. Their high level of expertise helps to promote learning and motivate students.

116. Travel and tourism students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities. For example, they undertake work experience, go on work-related visits, take part in outdoor activities, and hear visiting speakers.

117. Assessment of work is accurate and students receive detailed feedback on their performance and how to improve it. Students are well supported in their studies and speak highly of this support. They take part in group tutorials, in which general topics are dealt with, and individual tutorials, which students said they found particularly useful. The additional support needs of students are identified effectively and appropriate support is provided.

Leadership and management

118. The area is well managed. Communications are effective. Team meetings occur regularly and the outcomes are clearly minuted. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process. They have a realistic view of the quality of the provision and are aware of the areas needing improvement.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- effective learning support
- much good teaching
- effective tutorials
- high pass rates
- wide range of opportunities for curriculum enrichment
- good specialist accommodation.

Weaknesses

- some ineffective practical work
- no assessment of key skills
- inappropriate accommodation for theory teaching and tutorials.

Scope of provision

119. Full-time and part-time courses are available in hairdressing and beauty therapy which lead to NVQs at levels 1 to 3. There are no pre-entry level courses. A range of courses in complementary and holistic therapies is provided and short courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy are offered in community venues. Students may commence their studies on most courses at any time during the year. The majority of full-time hairdressing and beauty therapy students are aged 16 to 18. There are good opportunities for curriculum enrichment, including work placements. The courses support the college's policy on inclusion and meet the needs of a wide range of students, including young people who have previously been excluded from school and young mothers. There is also provision for asylum seekers.

Achievement and standards

120. Pass rates on most courses are high. On courses leading to the diploma in reflexology and the body massage certificate, pass rates are consistently above 95%. There are also high pass rates on beauty therapy complementary programmes and short courses. Retention rates are satisfactory on most courses and high on the NVQ level 2 hairdressing and diploma in reflexology courses. However, evidence from registers suggests that retention rates in hairdressing at level 1 have declined in 2002. Average attendance at lessons, at 83%,

is higher than average. In most lessons, students make good progress and demonstrate appropriate levels of skill and knowledge.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NVQ hairdressing	1	No. of starts	25	38	78
		% retention	72	53	76
		% pass rate	100	100	97
NVQ hairdressing	2	No. of starts	57	47	37
		% retention	43	62	84
		% pass rate	88	89	90
NVQ beauty therapy	2	No. of starts	16	18	24
		% retention	88	78	75
		% pass rate	100	93	94
NVQ beauty therapy	3	No. of starts	10	12	14
		% retention	100	100	86
		% pass rate	100	100	92
Body massage certificate	3	No. of starts	29	32	34
		% retention	79	88	74
		% pass rate	100	96	100
Diploma in reflexology	3	No. of starts	23	18	17
		% retention	70	78	94
		% pass rate	94	100	100

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

121. Most of the teaching is good, especially in theory lessons where teachers establish good working relationships with their students. Teachers plan their lessons well and use a variety of appropriate and creative teaching methods that engage students successfully in learning. In one revision lesson, the teacher used a game of snakes and ladders to reinforce learning. Students responded to the teacher's enthusiastic approach and enjoyed the lesson. Teachers offer sensitive and supportive guidance in practical lessons. They work well as part of a team and communicate their enthusiasm and experience to students. A few lessons are ineffective. During one practical demonstration, students were given too little to do, became distracted, and lost interest. In some practical sessions there are insufficient clients, resulting in some students spending too much time working with model heads or wasting time. Some theory lessons are taught in a salon, where students undertake practical work at the same time and disrupt the learning.

122. Teachers are well qualified and have up-to-date commercial skills. Courses are provided on two of the college sites: hairdressing and beauty therapy at the Shiney Row centre and hairdressing only at the Hylton centre. Teaching accommodation on both sites is purpose built, of good quality and well equipped. However, there are no computerised tills in the reception areas.

123. The assessment of students' work and the progress they make are recorded carefully. Internal verification is undertaken rigorously to ensure the validity of assessments. Assessments are scheduled to ensure an even workload for students through the year. Opportunities are missed in some lessons to develop and assess key skills.

124. There is good support for students who need additional help. Students undertake a diagnostic assessment at induction and learning support is available to meet their needs. For example, students whose first language is not English receive appropriate individual support and the student target achievement unit supports students who have poor attendance records or are experiencing problems with their studies. Curriculum support officers help in practical lessons where there are large numbers of students.

Leadership and management

125. The section and its courses are well managed. There are clear lines of responsibility. Management responsibility is devolved effectively from the section manager to the course team. There are regular assessment board and course team meetings to discuss relevant matters. These meetings are carefully minuted. Course teams carefully consider course-related issues such as retention and pass rates and develop appropriate action plans. Their implementation is closely monitored.

Health, social and childcare

Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- effective support for students
- much good teaching
- high pass rates on many courses
- wide range of courses
- good progression to other FE courses, HE, and employment
- well-managed, work-based learning programmes in care.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on some courses
- poor assessment practice on the early years NVQ course
- weak course management of the early years NVQ course
- insufficient accreditation of prior learning
- poor assessment planning on full-time courses.

Scope of provision

126. The faculty of social and professional development provides a wide range of full-time and part-time courses in health and social care, early years education and childcare, and counselling. There are access courses enabling adults to prepare for HE study in health studies, nursing, social work, and teaching. Courses are provided from foundation level to level 3. A wide range of short courses is provided in alternative therapies, first aid, fitness and health. Most courses are full-time, but the college has responded to community needs by introducing a range of part-time courses. These include courses for childminders, crèche workers and classroom assistants. Counselling courses include an introduction to counselling, and certificate and diploma level courses. There is substantial work-based learning provision leading to NVQs in early years and in care.

Achievement and standards

127. Pass rates are high on many courses. Those on courses leading to the national diploma in childhood studies, the diploma in nursery nursing and the certificate in counselling are excellent. Students on GNVQ courses do well. Pass rates on the foundation course have been consistently above national averages. Both the intermediate and advanced level courses have had good results for two out of the last three years. Some pass rates, for example, on the certificate in childcare and education course, are declining.

128. Retention rates are low on many courses. For example, those on the diploma in nursery nursing have been consistently below national averages and remain so in the current year. The rates on some courses, for example the GNVQ intermediate course and the certificate in childcare and education courses have shown a steady improvement. Retention rates have declined on some courses in 2002. Progression rates are high from many of the courses. In 2001, for example, all the students completing the national diploma in childhood studies course progressed to HE.

129. Some of the students' work on the NVQ early years course is not of the required standard.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health, social and childcare, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GNVQ foundation health and social care	1	No. of starts	30	15	15
		% retention	50	73	73
		% pass rate	100	69	91
Certificate for crèche workers	1	No. of starts	42	36	10
		% retention	83	81	80
		% pass rate	100	76	63
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	31	61	46
		% retention	68	74	85
		% pass rate	100	83	69

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	28	49	47
		% retention	68	78	85
		% pass rate	100	84	72
NVQ direct care	2	No. of starts	11	10	7
		% retention	18	40	57
		% pass rate	100	25	100
Certificate in counselling	2	No. of starts	15	14	46
		% retention	67	86	83
		% pass rate	90	100	100
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	No. of starts	49	51	65
		% retention	53	65	43
		% pass rate	100	75	85
Diploma in nursery nursing	3	No. of starts	70	35	87
		% retention	67	54	68
		% pass rate	100	88	95

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

130. Most teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers plan and implement a range of challenging, exciting activities to promote both the professional role and reflective practice. In one crèche work lesson, students identified positive and negative images portrayed to children through songs and rhymes, and worked in groups to prepare activities to use on their placements. Good formative assessment of care activities in the work place and good feedback consolidate students' learning and motivate them. Students are enthusiastic and enjoy being given opportunities to solve problems. For example, in one lesson, students examined teenage pregnancy within both national and local contexts, and discussed and devised contentious strategies to reduce the rate of unwanted pregnancies.

131. There are no arrangements for the accreditation of prior learning or experience. Assessment practice on the NVQ early years course is poor. Many of the assessors are unqualified and are not working towards appropriate qualifications. Their assessments are not properly internally verified. Direct observation of students' work is poorly documented.

132. Teachers act as excellent role models in lessons and provide effective support in tutorials. Feedback to students on the early years NVQ course is not sufficiently comprehensive and, in some cases, inappropriate. For example, weaknesses are not clearly identified and breaches in confidentiality are not always highlighted. Some students on this course are not visited regularly while on work placement.

133. Some resources are poor. Students find that access to computers in the learning centre at Hylton is difficult outside their timetable slots. Students who work cannot use the centre during less busy periods. There are few up-to-date textbooks for the early years courses and there are many old and outdated books for both the early years and social care courses. There is some inappropriate use of rooms, for example, a science laboratory is used for long, theory lessons. The room is uncomfortable and there are not enough seats. The lecture theatre is also inappropriate for some of the lessons taught there.

Leadership and management

134. The new management team work well together and the area is satisfactorily managed. Teachers have vocationally relevant qualifications and experience. Staff development opportunities are good. Staff are given the opportunity to update their occupational experience, but only one teacher had done so at the time of the inspection. New staff receive good support and are allocated a mentor. There is good communication within the faculty. Regular meetings at all levels ensure a constant flow of information. There is thorough monitoring of teaching, assessment and internal verification activities on all courses except the NVQ early years course which is poorly managed. There are appropriate links with placement providers. Staff are aware of the poor retention rates on courses and have implemented a range of strategies to try to improve them. Quality assurance of the early years NVQ course is inadequate. Management of the NVQ care course is good. The course is well organised and meets all awarding body regulations.

Visual arts

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- good pass rates on most courses
- much good teaching
- good use of the workshops by students
- excellent accommodation and resources
- wide ranging and effective support for students.

Weaknesses

- insufficiently rigorous self-evaluation of work by students
- practical lessons which are too short
- no recent industrial updating by full-time teachers.

Scope of provision

135. The college provides a wide range of art and design courses. These include part-time courses at levels 1 and 2, full-time courses leading to GNVQ, AVCE, GCE A-level and GCE AS qualifications. There are GCE A-level courses in fine art, graphics, photography and textiles, and vocational courses in art and design and multimedia. Large numbers of part-time adult students are attracted by short courses in specialist subjects such as calligraphy, watercolours, scanning and digital imagery and photography. Full-time students are able to design a personal programme from the courses on offer. Life drawing, GCE A levels, vocational certificates and other part-time courses including dressmaking are available for full-time students to add breadth to their programmes. Progression from the foundation diploma to HE is good, but progression from GNVQ intermediate to AVCE has declined since 1999. Many part-time students who start on beginners' courses progress to courses at levels 1 and 2.

Achievement and standards

136. Pass rates are high on most full-time courses. They are well above national averages on GCE A-level fine art and GNVQ advanced art and design and above the national averages on part-time courses. GNVQ intermediate retention and pass rates are lower this year than in previous years and are now below national averages. There are low retention rates on the GCE A-level photography course. Levels of attainment are good on most courses. The standard of students' work is high. For example, there is some very good photographic work

and imaginative use of digital image manipulation software. One student has won a regional adult learners award for scanning and imaging. Part-time students on courses for beginners demonstrate high levels of skill in calligraphy and patchwork and show sensitive colour awareness. There are examples of thoughtful and inventive painting. Three-dimensional work is skilful and shows imaginative use of a wide range of materials. An enthusiastic group of GNVQ students were working in plaster, making three-piece moulds for an external sculpture. The project is contributing to their achievement of wider key skills. Some students' work is over-dependent on magazine images for ideas and shows little evidence of drawing from primary sources. Students rarely use their own artwork as a starting point for digital imagery.

A sample of retention and pass rates in visual arts, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
NCFE practical craft skill stage 1	1	No. of starts	*	35	220
		% retention	*	80	85
		% pass rate	*	79	93
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	39	24	31
		% retention	69	92	63
		% pass rate	89	91	58
GCE A-level photography	3	No. of starts	40	50	33
		% retention	68	62	42
		% pass rate	91	97	86
GNVQ advanced art and design	3	No. of starts	36	37	48
		% retention	49	70	73
		% pass rate	76	96	97
Foundation diploma in art and design	3	No. of starts	20	26	23
		% retention	90	81	86
		% pass rate	100	95	84

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level art/fine art	3	No. of starts	113	85	81
		% retention	64	73	81
		% pass rate	83	93	94

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

137. Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers have appropriate specialist skills. In photography and digital media, both teachers and students demonstrate high levels of vocational expertise and technical competence. One student had scanned in sugar and brush bristles to create an unusual image which he then developed using image manipulation software. His skill level was above that required for the course. Students use computers confidently and digital images are integral to their work. A calligraphy teacher inspired students with her enthusiasm, an excellent skills demonstration and original examples. Students on the women's photography course produce good work. For example, one had produced a strong black and white image of a child through a rainy window. Lessons are well planned and practical activities are well managed. However, some practical lessons are too short to give students enough time for reflection and design development. Insufficient attention is given to ensuring that students fully evaluate and analyse their own work and the work of others. Some teaching does not take sufficient account of the differing needs of all the students present. Some students' knowledge of careers in art and design is limited.

138. The accommodation is excellent and studios are well equipped. The classrooms and studios are bright and purpose-built. A specialist computer room in the new design centre has unlimited access between 9.00 and 19.00. Additional Internet access is available in the college learning centres. Art workshops are easily accessible to both part-time and full-time students. Part-time students, for example, use them in advance of their evening lessons. A small number of classrooms in the Bede centre have poor natural light. Teachers and support staff are well qualified and are readily available to assist students and further their learning. Full-time teachers have undertaken little recent industrial updating.

139. Teachers monitor students' progress carefully. Reporting is comprehensive and gives details of progress made in each subject and unit. The parents of students whose progress gives cause for concern are approached to encourage them to attend open evenings to discuss relevant issues.

140. Support for students is effective and highly regarded by students. Teachers undertake personal tutorials with students. Course teams are kept informed of any personal issues that may affect attendance or performance. The student support manager provides help where necessary. Students value the expertise and availability of the curriculum support

officers. Students in a women's photography lesson were provided with a learning environment within which they felt comfortable and could work without feeling pressurised.

141. Additional learning support is good. An access to HE student who had missed basic education at school received additional support from a vocational specialist from which he gained valuable insight into his dissertation topic. He would have been unlikely to progress without this support. Students with hearing and speech impairments receive effective support.

Leadership and management

142. Managers set a clear direction and are responsive to the needs of staff and students. For example, additional resources have been made available to accommodate the increased numbers of students taking short courses. Staff are supportive of college strategies to widen participation. Appraisal has led to appropriate staff development. Course teams receive relevant data on retention and pass rates and take appropriate action where necessary, for example, by introducing initial taster courses for adults before they enrol on specialist courses.

Geography, history, politics and religious education

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE A-level history and geography courses
- thorough and well-organised revision lessons
- effective quality assurance
- good learning support for individual students
- good learning resources.

Weaknesses

- insufficient student participation in class discussions
- low pass rates on GCE AS geography and religious studies courses.

Scope of provision

143. The inspection covered the GCE AS and A-level courses in history, geography, government and politics, and religious studies. Inspectors also observed some GCSE lessons and some non-examination part-time courses. Courses take place mainly at the Bede centre, but some are taught at Shiney Row.

Achievement and standards

144. GCE A-level pass rates in history and geography were high in 2001. In geography, they have been high in two of the last three years and, in history, at or above the average for the last three years. During this three-year period most students have achieved grades which are similar to, or above, those predicted on the basis of their GCSE grades. On GCE AS programmes in 2001, pass rates were high in history and in government and politics, but low in geography and religious studies. Retention rates have been similar to national averages in the three-year period, except in GCE AS government and politics and geography in 2001, when they were low.

145. The standard of much of the students' work is good. Assignments are well planned and contain good ideas supported by relevant information. In some lessons, students were reluctant to contribute to discussions even when encouraged to do so, and a few lacked some essential vocabulary and knowledge.

A sample of retention and pass rates in geography, history, politics and religious education, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	135	129	85
		% retention	68	73	77
		% pass rate	82	81	95
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	50	40	43
		% retention	76	73	78
		% pass rate	97	75	93

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

146. Most of the teaching is thorough and well planned. Schemes of work are detailed and cover the specifications of the course well. At the time of the inspection, teachers were concentrating, appropriately, on completing preparations for the forthcoming assessments. In revision lessons, they explained how key ideas and relevant supporting information can be drawn together to produce effective answers to examination questions. In many lessons, the students are given, or are referred to, additional material to consolidate their learning. Sometimes, when opportunities are created for students to contribute other ideas, some appeared reluctant to say much, and the teachers themselves provided the bulk of the ideas. An exception was a government and politics lesson in which, with skilful prompting from the teacher, the students discussed whether or not they supported regional councils. The teacher and students introduced a wide range of local issues into the lesson.

147. In many lessons, learning materials are used effectively. Teachers use the whiteboard or overhead projectors effectively to demonstrate key ideas and how they can be shaped into coherent responses to examination questions. In one GCE AS history lesson, the teacher used to illustrate key points about the effective use of documents. History and geography teachers have used the intranet extensively to provide additional learning material for use in lessons and by students working on their own. Students can download lecture notes, and other information; assignments are set through this teaching medium and, at a later date, model answers to these assignments are provided. Many students make good use of this resource.

148. Teachers set assignments regularly. These are marked promptly and carefully. In history and geography, the course assessment criteria are used methodically to indicate the standards which students should achieve. Teachers usually annotate scripts helpfully, but on

some work there is insufficient written advice on how students can improve. Teachers support individual students well. They offer extra help during additional lunchtime sessions and at other times. They are aware of any difficulties experienced by individual students and provide effective help and encouragement. Students' performance in assignments is compared with a target grade based on their GCSE results. Students value this comparison and the associated discussion as a means of charting their progress.

149. Most lessons are taught in satisfactory classrooms. Geography lessons are regularly taught in a specialist room. The one specialist room for history at Shiney Row is too small. Many classrooms used in history, religious studies and government and politics lack any subject identity or display of students' work. The book stock in the learning centres is extensive, but much of it relates to previous rather than current courses. There are plentiful copies of essential textbooks, but many are borrowed infrequently. Students have good access to computers in the learning centres and get useful help from many of the staff there.

Leadership and management

150. Courses in the curriculum area operate efficiently. Course meetings are productive and have useful outcomes on how teaching can be improved. Schemes of work have been standardised. The curriculum manager meets teachers regularly to discuss issues and resolve problems. The management style is supportive. The course leader keeps part-time staff informed about major issues, but those who only teach for a few hours each week have not been fully integrated into the team. They have insufficient knowledge, for example, of the system used to set target grades, or of the intranet learning materials. Effective use is made of the college's quality assurance procedures. For example, the teaching of some subjects has been improved and the issue of coursework to students rescheduled as a result of the analysis of students' achievements and students' views.

Psychology, sociology and law

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE A-level psychology and sociology courses
- good teaching on level 3 programmes
- rigorous assessment and review of students' performance
- well-planned revision and examination preparation.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GCSE psychology and law courses
- poor planning and teaching on some part-time programmes.

Scope of provision

151. The college provides a wide range of full-time and part-time courses and some evening classes. A wide variety of GCE A-level options is available. An interesting range of introductory programmes, leading to GCSEs, is offered in a number of locations. These are designed for adult students returning to learning.

Achievement and standards

152. Pass rates in GCE A-level psychology and sociology are significantly above the national average. In law, the pass rates are improving steadily. Pass rates in GCE AS psychology, sociology and law are all above national averages. GCSE psychology and law pass rates are below national averages. Retention rates on most programmes are close to national averages, but retention rates in GCE AS and A-level sociology are well above national averages.

153. High standards of attainment are evident in many lessons. Students on GCE AS and A-level programmes demonstrate good analytical skills when answering questions and during group discussions. Students' work shows a sound understanding of the relevant subject and a developing ability to write clearly about it. Students on access to HE courses are confident in their ability to cope with university study.

A sample of retention and pass rates in psychology, sociology and law, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	183	127	82
		% retention	40	51	73
		% pass rate	70	42	38
GCSE law	2	No. of starts	125	18	27
		% retention	59	53	54
		% pass rate	14	67	36
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	73	64	79
		% retention	81	61	80
		% pass rate	84	89	98
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	91	86	142
		% retention	79	71	71
		% pass rate	53	68	76
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	200	173	205
		% retention	73	68	68
		% pass rate	85	91	91

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

154. Lessons are generally well planned and managed. Much of the teaching is good and some is inspiring. In a GCSE lesson, adult students identified stereotypes in the media by comparing the representation of gender and ethnicity within Coronation Street and Eastenders. In GCE A-level psychology, students analysed examination questions and confidently discussed the balance and structure of answers to maximise marks. The full-time teachers manage the curriculum effectively and have appropriate subject knowledge. The innovative structure and planning of the psychology programme and the use of the college intranet ensure a consistent quality of teaching across sites, and for different groups of

students. An increasing number of students use the intranet discussion board to post questions and engage in debates with teachers. The sociology and law programmes do not yet demonstrate the same degree of consistency across the college sites. In a few lessons, teachers talk for too long and fail to hold the students' interest. Lesson plans and schemes of work do not specify how the differing needs of individual students will be met. There are good working relationships between teachers and students. Students speak positively about the college and about the support they receive from teachers.

155. All the full-time teachers are well qualified and experienced. This is less so for part-time teachers. The fact that full-time teachers work mainly on level 3 programmes, and part-time teachers work mainly on lower level programmes means that there is insufficient mutual support or sharing of good practice. Some teachers have not had sufficient staff development. This is partly due to difficulties in arranging teaching cover. Accommodation at both Bede and Shiney Row is good. Lecture theatres are well equipped and well maintained. There is good access to IT and library facilities. Students are required to obtain their notes and other learning materials from the college intranet. Most learning materials are of good quality and are well produced. In one or two instances, materials were not up to date or were poorly presented.

156. Assignments are demanding and are set regularly. Some give the assessment criteria on the cover sheet. Marking and feedback are good on most programmes. Students' work is returned promptly. Students are set target grades in each subject based on GCSE performance. The targets set are appropriately demanding. Achievement and progress boards review full-time students' progress at four points during the year. Newly appointed learning managers support underachieving or high achieving students. A few students had not had regular assessments and felt unprepared for examinations.

Leadership and management

157. There is generally effective leadership and management of the level 3 full-time provision and the access to HE programme. The deployment of part-time teachers on other programmes leads to variations in the quality of teaching and classroom management. There are one or two instances where the turnover of teachers has affected the success of students. Schemes of work in law and sociology are not as good as those in psychology. The use of performance indicators and other data to evaluate the quality of provision is well established and effective.

English and modern foreign languages

Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates on GCE A-level English language course
- broad range of part-time courses in modern foreign languages
- good communications with part-time teachers.

Weaknesses

- low added value scores on some GCE A-level courses
- low pass rate at the higher grades on the GCSE English language course
- teaching which fails to maintain students' interest
- insufficient curriculum enhancement for full-time modern foreign languages students.

Scope of provision

158. The college provides a wide range of foreign languages courses for part-time study. A coherent qualification framework has recently been introduced, which enables students to progress steadily, through up to six years of study, to level 3. The study of modern languages at level 1 is available by distance learning, but is not currently supported by the college's intranet. The modern languages available to full-time students has narrowed since last year and only French and German are available at GCE A level.

159. The range of the provision in English is narrow for a large college. It is limited to GCE A-level English language and English literature and GCSE English language. For adults studying in the evening, the only course provided is GCSE English language.

Achievement and standards

160. The retention rate on the GCE A-level English language course is high and students achieve higher grades than those predicted on the basis of their GCSE results, representing good added value. However, on GCE A-level English literature and modern languages courses, students achieve lower grades than those predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. The higher-grade pass rate on the GCSE English language course fell last year to well below the national average. The standard of students' work in GCSE English is often lower than is required at this level of study. The work of most GCE AS and A-level students in English is appropriate for advanced level.

161. On short courses in modern foreign languages, retention rates are good. Pass rates in German and Russian are particularly good. In the majority of foreign language lessons, the standard of work is appropriate. However, too few students are able to use the language spontaneously in oral and written work. In some lessons, students had too little confidence to be creative in their use of the language.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English and modern foreign languages, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Foreign languages at work – French	entry	No. of starts	454	190	410
		% retention	50	88	89
		% pass rate	84	76	72
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	425	205	395
		% retention	60	57	71
		% pass rate	52	55	25
GCE A-level German	3	No. of starts	30	11	18
		% retention	73	64	67
		% pass rate	75	100	58
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	146	160	182
		% retention	83	76	74
		% pass rate	90	90	90
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	200	177	226
		% retention	79	74	80
		% pass rate	84	97	94

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education and training

162. Some lessons were conducted in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. The teachers set challenging goals and had high expectations of their students. In one revision lesson, the teacher used the examiners' marking scheme and guided the students in identifying the features examiners were looking for. In another, a poem was revised by asking students to re-assemble it after it has been cut up into sections. The students were then asked to justify their order, leading to a discussion about the relationship between form, language and interpretation. In one level 1 foreign language lesson, a grammatical point was explained using the language the students were studying. Students played a game to reinforce the learning, participating confidently and with enjoyment. Such lively, productive lessons are, however, in the minority. In many lessons, students rarely speak and there is insufficient exchange of ideas. Some mistakes made by students are not corrected by the teachers. In many foreign language lessons, too much English is spoken. When students use the foreign language, it is frequently simply to read out loud. Modern foreign language teaching is enhanced by the use of a language laboratory and tape recorders. Students are provided with copies of tape material for home study. Few adult students make use of the learning centres for additional practice. Full-time students are not offered the opportunity to visit the country whose language they are studying.

163. Schemes of work for all English courses are available on the college's intranet. Some course materials are also available on the intranet. Reading lists are linked to the library catalogue so that students can see if books are available. Students are required to study in the learning centres as part of the course. Few foreign language resources are available on the college's intranet and the Internet is not used extensively as an aid to study or to communicate with people abroad.

164. Some accommodation at the Bede Centre is poor. Rooms are dingy and it is difficult to use audio and video equipment. Teachers of English are appropriately qualified. Many foreign languages teachers are native speakers of the language and have teaching certificates. They are nearly all part time. There is insufficient sharing of good practice between full-time and part-time staff.

165. Homework and coursework are thoroughly and correctly marked. Teachers often give suggestions as to how students' work could be improved. They do not, however, routinely specify the assessment criteria or indicate which criteria students are achieving well or badly. In part-time modern foreign language courses for adults, work is set regularly but written feedback is sometimes limited to a very brief comment with no recommendations for further study.

166. Students in English and modern foreign languages have their additional support needs assessed and, if appropriate, an additional learning support tutor is allocated to their lessons to support them. Where this works well, the two teachers plan lessons together to support all students. In practice, these arrangements are not always effective because

teachers do not always plan their lessons to allow the assistant to work with individual students. Additional learning support is also provided through the learning centres.

167. Full-time students are aware of their target grades and if their performance falls below what is expected they are allocated a learning manager and sometimes attend additional support lessons. Students speak well of this support.

Leadership and management

168. Full-time teachers of students aged 16 to 18 are managed by course leaders who report to the head of faculty. Teams meet regularly to plan and review the courses and monitor the progress of individual students. The minutes are clear and actions are followed up. Part-time teachers are managed by a course leader reporting to the assistant head of faculty. There are over 60 part-time teachers of English and modern foreign languages. These teachers are paid to attend three meetings annually. Additional meetings, concerned with specific issues, are also held, for example to discuss additional learning support and distance learning. The course leader manages the programmes well and provides good support for part-time teachers, maintaining contact through telephone calls, letter and e-mail. However, more attention is needed to improve the quality of teaching by part-time teachers.

Basic skills

Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- effective and innovative teaching on family learning programmes
- responsive community provision in basic skills
- good accommodation and well-resourced, community-based learning centres.

Weaknesses

- some unsatisfactory teaching on foundation and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) programmes
- inconsistent use of initial assessment results to develop individual learning plans
- poor attendance in some lessons.

Scope and range of provision

169. Basic skills provision is organised by the faculty of social and professional development. Courses are provided on the main sites and in more than 50 venues in the community. A broad range of courses is provided leading to externally accredited and college-certificated awards. The provision includes return to learn programmes, ESOL, family learning, franchised basic skills programmes for young people and adults, and a cross-college foundation programme for students aged 16 to 18.

170. The community-based provision in basic skills is responsive to students' needs; for example, attendance patterns can be adapted to students' requirements. The provision has been broadened and participation widened by the development of productive partnerships with other organisations. For example, a partnership with the library service has resulted in the opening of three new learning centres in areas with low literacy and numeracy levels. Family learning has been developed with the local authority, 'pathfinder' programmes with the LSC and intensive basic skills programmes with the employment services. The range of provision provides opportunities for progression to higher level courses.

171. There is a growing family learning programme, which is offered in 22 nursery and primary schools. The innovative curriculum on this programme links adult sessions in literacy, numeracy, IT and arts and crafts to the learning activities of their children in schools. There has been a rapid response to the needs of asylum seekers relocated to Sunderland. At present there are over 300 asylum seekers attending courses, 93 of which are full time.

Achievement and standards

172. On some courses for adult students, such as Open College Network (OCN) short courses and City and Guilds one-year Wordpower courses, pass rates are above national averages. Pass rates on foundation programmes are mixed. Retention rates on some of the courses that make up the foundation programme are below national averages. During the inspection, attendance rates were low in many lessons.

173. There are excellent examples of student development and progression. In one family learning group, two thirds of the students were progressing on to further training courses. Some students have progressed from pre-foundation courses up to advanced vocational programmes.

A sample of retention and pass rates in basic skills, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
ESOL (short)	entry	No. of starts	97	137	66
		% retention	99	97	92
		% pass rate	88	77	70
City and Guilds 3793 communication skills (Wordpower)	entry	No. of starts	40	15	11
		% retention	72	73	100
		% pass rate	79	44	100
OCN (short)	1	No. of starts	273	85	175
		% retention	63	100	86
		% pass rate	53	66	86

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

Quality of education & training

174. Teaching on basic skills and family learning programmes was satisfactory or better. Some lessons on ESOL and foundation programmes were unsatisfactory.

175. Lessons were generally productive when teachers used the goals and interests of the students to focus the learning. In one family-learning computing lesson, parents were designing and producing invitations for a forthcoming birthday party. In a drop-in learning centre lesson, one member of the group collected contributions for a student newsletter. Copies of the newsletter illustrated clearly the increasing professionalism of its production.

Teaching was usually less effective when teachers taught the group as a whole, without taking account of how long students had been in the group, and what their individual needs were. Some teachers used a narrow range of teaching methods, and relied too heavily on writing on the board and asking questions. Some resources, work books and audio and video tapes have recently been purchased. The new language laboratory is not used sufficiently. Some paper-based resources have little or no relevance for the students and do not promote positive cultural or ethnic role models.

176. ESOL provision is in a state of transition. The college has responded to the influx of asylum seekers by opening a town centre venue and extending its programmes across the city. This expansion has not been adequately resourced.

177. Students in adult basic education are well motivated and enthusiastic. Most make good progress towards achieving their learning goals. They are well supported by their teachers and additional learning support tutors. All full-time students receive an initial assessment. The results are analysed by the additional support team and returned to vocational teachers promptly. For part-time students on basic skills and ESOL courses, initial assessment is made through a range of methods including self-assessment, interview, and computerised assessment.

178. There is inconsistent use of the results of initial assessment to develop individual learning plans for students. The best plans identify realistic targets, which are cross-referenced to core curriculum elements. However, in some learning plans there is too much emphasis on the qualification aim, rather than the particular learning needs of the student. The recording of progress on ESOL and basic skills programmes centres on activities covered rather than skills developed or knowledge acquired. The quality of written feedback to students is variable and some opportunities are missed to comment on the quality of students' work and how it can be improved.

179. Students feel well supported in their studies and speak highly of the encouragement and practical help provided by their teachers and support tutors. Teachers and support staff work well together. In the most effective lessons, they jointly plan support strategies for individual students.

180. The learning centres, based in local communities, provide very good IT facilities and accommodation. The resources used in basic skills range from very good to poor. Students have insufficient access to IT on the main college sites. IT and audio-visual resources are not used enough in the teaching of ESOL.

Leadership and management

181. There is a large team of staff teaching basic skills including full-time, part-time and agency staff. A significant number of staff have been seconded to the area and have been offered some initial basic skills training in literacy, numeracy and ESOL. Staff feel well supported by their line managers and a strong team ethos has developed. The broad spread of

provision and the number of staff involved means that communication is sometimes difficult. Electronic means of communication, such as e-mail, are not widely used.

Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates
- confident students
- much good teaching
- high standards of work on externally accredited courses
- well-devised progression strategy for students aged 16 to 18
- extensive additional support.

Weaknesses

- too few opportunities for progression for adult students
- insufficient account taken of students' individual learning needs
- no formal moderation procedures for college-certificated courses.

Scope of the provision

182. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities includes two full-time courses for students aged 16 to 18 and three courses for adults which may be studied either full time or part time. Young students join the 'Network' course and progress to the college's vocational skills programme. There are currently 22 students in total on these two courses and for many of their core subjects they are taught in one group. Adult students, aged 19 to 25, progress from special schools to the college's four-year course. Those aged 25 and over may attend the two-year vocational preparation course or the 'skills for living' course which is of two or three years duration. There is good liaison with schools including opportunities for customised tasters for school pupils. More than 30 young people attend the college's successful summer school. Student numbers have increased steadily over the past three years.

Achievement and standards

183. Pass and retention rates are high for adult students. On both the English speaking board (ESB) entry level basic oral skills course and the entry level national skills profile course they are consistently 100%. The pass rate for young students who complete the two-year, full-time courses and gain entry level certificates in life skills and skills for working life is well above the national average. Although retention rates on the courses for students aged 16 to 18 are below national averages they improved significantly in 2001 and maintained this improvement in 2002. As the majority of students on these programmes have had

considerable difficulties at school and have left compulsory education with no qualifications these retention and pass rates represent good personal achievements.

184. The majority of adult students have their progress certificated by the college and do not take any external texts. The pass rate is 100% on these courses. However, the individual learning aims set for many of these students are insufficiently challenging and evidence that students meet these aims is not recorded. Many of the students continue on the same course for four years and are given too few opportunities to achieve external qualifications or to join mainstream vocational courses even though they have followed preparatory vocational courses.

185. Young students may progress to the college’s foundation programme, other education or employment and there are a several examples of students progressing to GNVQs in vocational areas. Students speak positively of their plans to join a range of vocational courses and are appreciative of the opportunities that the college provides.

186. Students make good progress in developing learning skills and gaining confidence. In numeracy, IT and drama lessons, students were enthusiastic and participated confidently in group and individual activities. The standard of work observed in lessons and in the students’ files was satisfactory or better. In the majority of lessons, all students were punctual. Where lateness occurs, tutors deal with it immediately and remind students of the need to be punctual.

A sample of retention and pass rates in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, 1999 to 2001

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
Certificate in skills for working life	entry	No. of starts	9	21	31
		%retention	89	48	74
		% pass rate	100	80	96
Certificate of achievement in basic oral skills	entry	No. of starts	*	25	20
		%retention	*	100	100
		% pass rate	*	100	100
Oxford, Cambridge and RSA national skills profile	entry	No. of starts	*	*	12
		%retention	*	*	100
		% pass rate	*	*	100

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

187. The majority of the teaching is good or better. Most teachers give clear explanations of the learning outcomes and use appropriate teaching methods, including role play and group work to develop students' interpersonal skills and to reinforce learning.

188. In a minority of lessons, students lose concentration because the activities are too long. Opportunities are missed to reinforce learning by recording progress towards individual learning goals.

189. Most lesson plans are too brief and do not identify how the different individual needs of students will be met. The deployment of teachers from other areas of the college has given students the opportunity to be taught by subject specialist. However, in these lessons, teachers do not take sufficient account of the students' different levels of ability.

190. The teaching of basic numeracy is good. Students learn to estimate sequence and date order, for example, through individual, paired and whole-class activities. There is a real sense of enjoyment and participation in these lessons.

191. In a few lessons, poor use of learning resources impacted adversely on students' learning. There were no suitable screens for use with overhead projectors, handouts were poorly photocopied and staff wrote on whiteboards illegibly. Some rooms were unsuitable for the activities taking place in them.

192. The college has established good assessment procedures for externally accredited courses. Students understand the requirements of the course and are knowledgeable about what is required of them to succeed. For those students who have not been successful previously, this is an important part of their learning.

193. Adult students working towards a national skills profile keep detailed files of evidence to illustrate their progress. On college-certificated courses for adults there are no formal moderation arrangements to confirm that students' work meets the course requirements. For students of all ages, written feedback on their performance is often insufficient.

194. Students are given individual learning programmes. However, the learning targets set for each student are not sufficiently specific or challenging. Tutorial arrangements are good on all courses. There are weekly group tutorials and individual tutorials on a regular basis. All students said that the tutorials were well organised and that the discussions about progress were useful.

195. The provision of additional support is good. The college has re-deployed nine full-time teachers from other curriculum areas to give additional support and has provided

appropriate basic training for this role. Extensive records are kept of the additional support provided for each student.

Leadership and management

196. There is a well-devised strategy to provide for disaffected young people who do not have qualifications. The staff team are enthusiastic and work together to provide a variety of core and vocational options linked to progression opportunities. There is no such programme for adults, who spend four to six years in the college. There is currently no management strategy to develop this area of work within an overall inclusive learning strategy. Curriculum managers understand the requirements of the new pre-entry curriculum and are working towards its implementation. The self-assessment report is evaluative and has identified appropriate areas for improvement.

Part D: College data
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

Level	16–18 %	19+ %
1	21	48
2	29	17
3	32	5
4/5	0	1
Other	18	29
Total	100	100

Source: Provided by the college in spring 2001.

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16–18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments %
Science	7,306	18,677	33
Agriculture	8	249	0
Construction	1,050	2,167	4
Engineering	586	2,028	3
Business	2,088	5,880	10
Hotel and catering	532	1,589	3
Health and community care	1,188	4,638	8
Art and design	1,587	3,267	6
Humanities	11,361	7,091	24
Basic education	2,021	4,699	9
Total	27,727	50,285	100

Source: Provided by the college in spring 2001.

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16–18			19+		
		1997/ 98	1998/ 99	1999/ 2000	1997/ 98	1998/ 99	1999/ 2000
1	Starters excluding transfers	2,049	1,442	6,133	3,462	4,807	7,774
	Retention rate (%)	74	70	84	76	67	70
	National average (%)	77	74	76	76	73	76
	Pass rate (%)	63	64	66	67	63	71
	National average (%)	49	59	64	55	58	66
2	Starters excluding transfers	3,554	3,135	2,575	2,951	3,236	3,483
	Retention rate (%)	76	74	73	71	65	69
	National average (%)	75	72	73	76	75	75
	Pass rate (%)	62	68	74	55	69	73
	National average (%)	57	65	69	57	63	66
3	Starters excluding transfers	4,059	3,563	3,640	1,628	1,502	1,854
	Retention rate (%)	74	78	73	72	67	71
	National average (%)	77	73	75	76	75	75
	Pass rate (%)	68	76	77	51	71	72
	National average (%)	59	64	65	58	63	66
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	27	37	41	414	430	271
	Retention rate (%)	85	68	61	75	71	66
	National average (%)	*	*	*	81	78	76
	Pass rate (%)	82	93	52	68	78	70
	National average (%)	*	*	*	50	56	55

Note: Summary of retention and achievement for the last three years by age and level of course, compared against national averages for colleges of the same type (that is general FE/tertiary colleges or sixth form colleges).

Sources of information:

- National averages: Benchmarking Data (1997/98) to (1999/2000): Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, The Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.*
- College rates for 1997/98–1998/99: Benchmarking Data (1997/98) to (1998/99): Retention and Achievement Rates, produced by the Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.*
- College rates for (1999/2000): provided by the college in spring 2001.*

** data unavailable*

Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	63	34	3	125
Level 2 (intermediate)	58	32	10	71
Level 1 (foundation)	62	27	11	60
Other sessions	53	38	9	53
Totals	60	33	7	309

MONITORING INSPECTION OF CITY OF SUNDERLAND TERTIARY COLLEGE

Published May 2003

Outcome of monitoring inspection

The curriculum area provision of construction is now **satisfactory**.

Background

City of Sunderland Tertiary College was inspected in May 2002. Inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) carried out the inspection under Section 62 of the Learning and Skills Act. The quality of provision was found to be satisfactory in all curriculum areas inspected, except mathematics, construction and work-based learning in early years care and education.

Ofsted and ALI have particular duties in relation to colleges where their inspection report indicates that individual curriculum areas are unsatisfactory or very weak or that leadership and management are unsatisfactory or weak. Where a college has been judged to have less than satisfactory provision in any curriculum area, or less than satisfactory leadership and management, Ofsted or the ALI will visit the college to carry out monitoring inspections of any unsatisfactory curriculum areas and of leadership and management, where applicable. As a result of monitoring inspections, inspectors may judge that the curriculum area or areas, or leadership and management, are satisfactory and that no further visits are required. Such a judgement is likely to be made between 12 and 24 months after the initial inspection. A short report outlining the improvements made will be published on the Ofsted website alongside the original report. If, after approximately 24 months, the college has not made sufficient progress to justify a judgement that the curriculum area(s) or leadership and management are satisfactory, the original grades for the areas that continue to be unsatisfactory will remain on the college's record until the next full inspection. Ofsted will inform the local LSC that provision remains unsatisfactory and why.

Monitoring inspections

In accordance with the above procedures, monitoring inspections of construction took place on 5 and 6 December 2002, and 7 and 8 April 2003.

Construction

In the May 2002 inspection, the quality of overall provision in this area was judged to be **unsatisfactory**. The following strengths and weaknesses were identified in the inspection report:

Strengths

- high pass rates
- good use of the resource centre
- wide range of provision
- productive partnerships with external organisations.

Weaknesses

- low retention in the current year
- lack of individual learning targets
- workshops too small for the number of students
- poor assessment and internal verification
- weak monitoring of students' progress
- poor management of workshops.

Following the monitoring inspections, inspectors judged that progress has been made in addressing the above weaknesses and that the overall provision in this area is now **satisfactory**.

Low retention rates have improved and the faculty has identified 'at risk' students and monitored attendance. Students' progress is routinely monitored and results displayed in workshops; this has proved successful in motivating students. The faculty management team have addressed the needs of the department; classrooms have been modernised and one has been equipped with an interactive white-board and a LCD projector. Staff workrooms have been upgraded and appropriate archive storage has been provided. Work has been completed to provide a first class painting and decorating area along with a high quality wall tiling provision. Assessment procedures are now robust and all students have agreed individual learning targets that are regularly reviewed and monitored.