

Action for Business Colleges
EMPLOYER SATISFACTION INDEX 2004

Sussex Report

A Report for the Sussex Learning and Skills Council

October 2004

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report presents the results of the 2004 employer satisfaction survey. Largely replicating the methodology used in 2003, the survey seeks to gauge employers' level of satisfaction with services provided by colleges in Sussex and to compare this with a Sussex benchmark.
- From contact details provided by colleges, SEER Consulting aimed to interview 100 employers who had engaged with each college in the last year.
- From a sample of 1189 employers, 427 interviews were conducted across Sussex. If the survey is to be repeated, more robust analysis would be achievable if colleges could provide details of a greater number of clients.
- Satisfaction ratings suggest the majority of employers are satisfied with the overall service provided by colleges across Sussex.
- Nearly three quarters of employers (73%) interviewed across Sussex gave a high (7+) satisfaction rating to the 'Overall Good Service' provided by their college. Similarly high satisfaction ratings were given for the 'Knowledge and Experience of Staff' and the 'Adequate Facilities'.
- Giving feedback on employee performance received the lowest satisfaction rating and was also regularly mentioned as an area for improvement. Sussex colleges need to improve the flow of information between themselves and employers as part of an effort to increase satisfaction levels. Other major areas of dissatisfaction are concerned with other information provision and the efficiency of administration.
- At an individual college level, most satisfaction levels have not changed significantly, but the overall Sussex results suggest there have been slight decreases in levels of satisfaction since the 2003 survey.
- The mean weighted satisfaction index for Sussex indicates a fall in satisfaction since 2003.
- The cost, location and flexibility of courses were the most important aspects when selecting a college or training provider.
- Two thirds (65%) of employers felt that their relationship with their college was either 'quite good' or 'very good', however this varies across colleges, with 18% reporting a 'very poor' relationship with City

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College Brighton and Hove. There is also evidence of variation within colleges, especially at Hastings College where opinion of how well relationships have developed over the year are quite polarised. This highlights the need to ensure that quality standards are applied and monitored across all departments within each college.

- 34 of the 427 employers interviewed felt that their relationship with their college had worsened over the previous 12 months. The most commonly reported reason was the efficiency of administration and the level of communication or feedback between the college and employers.
- Aspects that employers engaged by college across Sussex particularly liked about the service included the appropriate courses that met business needs and the cost and location of provision.
- Suggested areas for improvement varied between colleges, but better administration and organisation, as well as improved and more flexible courses, were areas that were commonly mentioned.

2. INTRODUCTION

Action for Business Colleges provide business focussed networking, training and learning opportunities. There are 7 such colleges in the area covered by the Sussex Learning and Skills Council.

In order to improve employer satisfaction and engagement in learning, these Action for Business Colleges need to be aware of the current level of satisfaction with their service provision and be able to monitor changes over time. In order for colleges to be more responsive to the needs of their clients, they also need to understand in which areas they are currently providing best practice and where they need to improve their service. This understanding can be used to develop and improve services, systems, procedures and staff.

In 2003 SEER Consulting was asked by the Sussex Learning and Skills Council to devise a framework for the calculation of an Employer Satisfaction Index for the seven Action for Business Colleges in Sussex. This framework has been used to repeat the calculation of an Employer Satisfaction Index in 2004 to gauge the level of satisfaction with the colleges. Employers who had engaged with colleges in the last 12 months were surveyed about their level of satisfaction with the service they received. The survey also sought to discover examples of best practice and areas for improvement in service provision.

This report presents a summary of the findings from all seven colleges in Sussex benchmarked, where appropriate, against the Sussex average for comparison.

Each college was asked to provide contact details for all the employers that they had engaged with in the last year. It was anticipated that around 600 contact details would be required for each college to achieve the aim of 100 interviews.

The sample size that was provided by each college and the resultant number of interviews achieved are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Interview Sample

College	Sample ¹	Interviews
Chichester College	73	47
City College Brighton & Hove	193	55
Crawley College	242	65
Hastings College	90	41
Northbrook College	89	44
Plumpton College	129	75
Sussex Downs College	373	100
Sussex Total	1189	427

Sussex colleges provided SEER Consulting with a sample of 1626 employers, where details of 1189 were accurate/complete. The accuracy of the index and other results from the interviews presented in this report are dependent on the quantity and quality of the data provided by the colleges.

Given the small sample, the 427 interviews achieved represent a high response rate, but only 61% of the intended number.

The reader should bear in mind the small sample size for individual colleges and hence treat the findings with caution. If the index is to be repeated, more robust data would be achievable if the colleges were able provide details of a greater number of clients. Further investigation is needed into the quantity of data provided by colleges. If there were employers who were engaged by the college in the last year who weren't included in the sample, then the reasons for this, such as database management, should be addressed and rectified before any future survey.

Following the survey in 2003, one college requested that data be collected on the different types of service they provided. Of the 427 employers interviewed, 417 had only received employer training, 5 had received this as well as another service and 6 employers had received a service other than employee training from their college. Because nearly all had received only employee training, analysis could not be conducted on the basis of the service used.

¹ These sample figures do not include incomplete/incorrect data (wrong numbers, unobtainable numbers, no number, fax number, duplicates and those who had not used college or not used in past 12 months). Incorrect/incomplete sample data provided: Chichester (28), City (186), Crawley (71), Hastings (27), Northbrook (58), Plumpton (31), Sussex Downs (36), Sussex (406)

3. EMPLOYER SATISFACTION

The first part of the Employer Satisfaction Survey framework measures satisfaction and is based on the responses to ten statements. For each statement the interviewed employers was asked to rank their college on a scale of one to ten (1 being not at all satisfied and 10 being very satisfied).

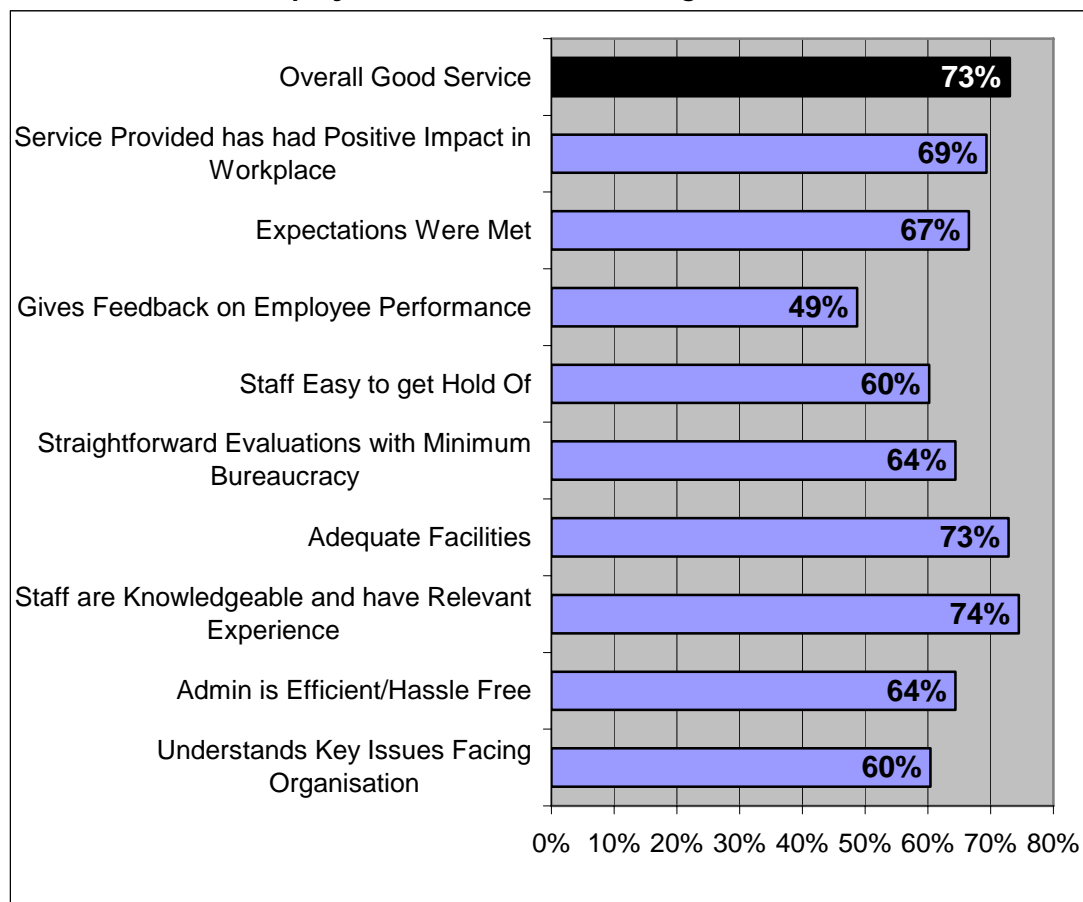
Chart 1, overleaf shows the percentage of interviewees across all seven colleges who gave a rating of 7 or above to each criteria. This gives an indication of which aspects of college provision in Sussex a larger proportion of employers are satisfied with, and which aspects a smaller proportion are satisfied with.

It shows that nearly three quarters (73%) of respondents gave a rating of 7 or above to their level of satisfaction with the 'overall good service' provided. Although satisfaction levels vary across the criteria, the overall rating is a good indication that the majority of employers are satisfied with the overall service provided by colleges.

As well as for 'Overall Good Service', the highest satisfaction ratings were given for the colleges having 'Adequate Facilities' and the 'Knowledge and Relevant Experience' of their staff. For all but one of the ten criteria, sixty percent or more of employers gave a satisfaction rating at seven or above.

The lowest satisfaction rating was for 'Giving Feedback on Employee Performance'; just under half of employers across Sussex gave this criteria a satisfaction rating of 7 or above. Feedback on the performance and progress of students was also regularly mentioned by employers across all seven colleges when they were asked for areas in which service provision could be improved.

Chart 1 : Levels of Employer Satisfaction (7+ Rating)



This year's satisfaction ratings suggest that colleges need to improve the flow of information between themselves and employers, at the planning stage prior to training, as well as updates and feedback on the learner's progress, during and on completion of training. Comments on suggested improvements are covered in Section 4.3 and detailed in Appendix D of this report.

The overall results for Sussex also suggest satisfaction levels have fallen since 2003 for all ten criteria. Although some of these changes are small, the results for seven of the criteria are significantly lower than in 2003.

At a Sussex level, the largest falls between 2003 and 2004 were in 'Service Provided having a Positive Impact in the Workplace' (in 2003 83% of employers gave a rank of 7 or above, in 2004 this fell to 69%) and 'Straightforward Evaluations with Minimum Bureaucracy' (78% to 64%). Again this could indicate a need for improvements to be made around the flow of information between the college and the employer.

For employers to feel college services have a greater impact on their business, the colleges need to better understand and meet the expectations of their clients. The results also suggest that there are possible areas for improvement in the administration of courses. Colleges need in particular to reduce bureaucracy and should perhaps investigate greater use of the

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Internet and/or reviewing their management information systems to ensure that information is not collected unnecessarily or repeatedly.²

Although it is useful to consider the Sussex level results to give us an overview and because the larger sample increases the robustness of findings, the survey results suggest that satisfaction does not necessarily follow the Sussex trend within individual colleges. The proportion of respondents from each of the Colleges separately who gave a rating of 7 or above are shown in the table below.

Table 2: High Levels of Employer Satisfaction by College

	Plumpton College	Northbrook College	Hastings College	Chichester College	Sussex Downs College	City College Brighton and Hove	Crawley College
Overall Good Service	79%	70%	63%	79%	84%	56%	68%
Understands Key Issues Facing Organisation	77%	34%	49%	66%	75%	44%	54%
Admin is Efficient/Hassle Free	67%	52%	54%	70%	75%	49%	69%
Staff are Knowledgeable and have Relevant Experience	80%	68%	66%	74%	84%	62%	74%
Adequate Facilities	79%	68%	66%	72%	82%	71%	62%
Straightforward Evaluations with Minimum Bureaucracy	68%	52%	61%	66%	81%	40%	65%
Staff Easy to get Hold Of	71%	57%	46%	57%	73%	47%	52%
Gives Feedback on Employee Performance	64%	39%	49%	60%	51%	29%	43%
Expectations Were Met	73%	59%	56%	68%	78%	51%	65%
Service Provided has had Positive Impact in Workplace	75%	68%	51%	66%	85%	51%	69%

Importantly, as was seen at the Sussex level, this table shows that satisfaction with 'Overall Good Service' is high across all seven Action for Business Colleges. Also in similarity to the aggregated results, 'Gives Feedback on Employee Performance' is one of the lowest satisfaction areas across all the colleges.

For the individual colleges, a comparison of the results of the 2003 and 2004 surveys do show falls in the satisfaction levels for each of the criteria, except Plumpton and Sussex Downs (which have seen increases in just two criteria). However, for individual colleges, the sample size is smaller and therefore the

² Indeed this is one of the key recommendations of the recent review of bureaucracy in the LSC – see 'Extending Trust – A report of the Bureaucracy Task Force', May 2004.

expected variation larger. This means that in many of the cases, one cannot be confident that the decline in satisfaction for individual colleges is significant. Despite this, the picture at the Sussex level suggests satisfaction levels have fallen.

3.1 MEAN SATISFACTION INDEX

From the employers' satisfaction ratings used to construct chart 1, it has been possible to calculate a mean satisfaction index. The table below shows the index for each of the Sussex colleges and the Sussex Benchmark (with the 2003 figure for comparison):

Table 3: Mean Satisfaction Index

College	Mean Satisfaction Index	
	2004	2003
Chichester College	72.17	74.49
City College Brighton and Hove	58.89	68.40
Crawley College	67.43	74.59
Hastings College	63.51	73.43
Northbrook College	64.59	71.71
Plumpton College	73.04	78.07
Sussex Downs College	76.33	76.90
Sussex Benchmark	69.25	74.19

This was derived from working out for each college the mean value for each of the ten satisfaction criteria; the mean scores across all the satisfaction criteria were then added up to form the index number. With satisfaction ranks 1-10 and 10 criteria, the maximum value achievable for each college is 100.

An index of 50 is equivalent to the average response being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied for all ten criteria. The overall Sussex mean satisfaction index in 2004 is 69.25; being greater than 50 this falls within the 'satisfied' end of the scale. The same is true for the satisfaction indices of all 7 individual colleges.

The mean satisfaction index for City, Crawley, Hastings and Northbrook Colleges are slightly below the Sussex benchmark, while those for Chichester, Plumpton and Sussex Downs Colleges are slightly higher.

The results also suggest that the satisfaction index for all 7 colleges, and therefore also the Sussex average, have fallen since 2003. However, the small sample size for employers using each college means that these findings should be treated with caution.

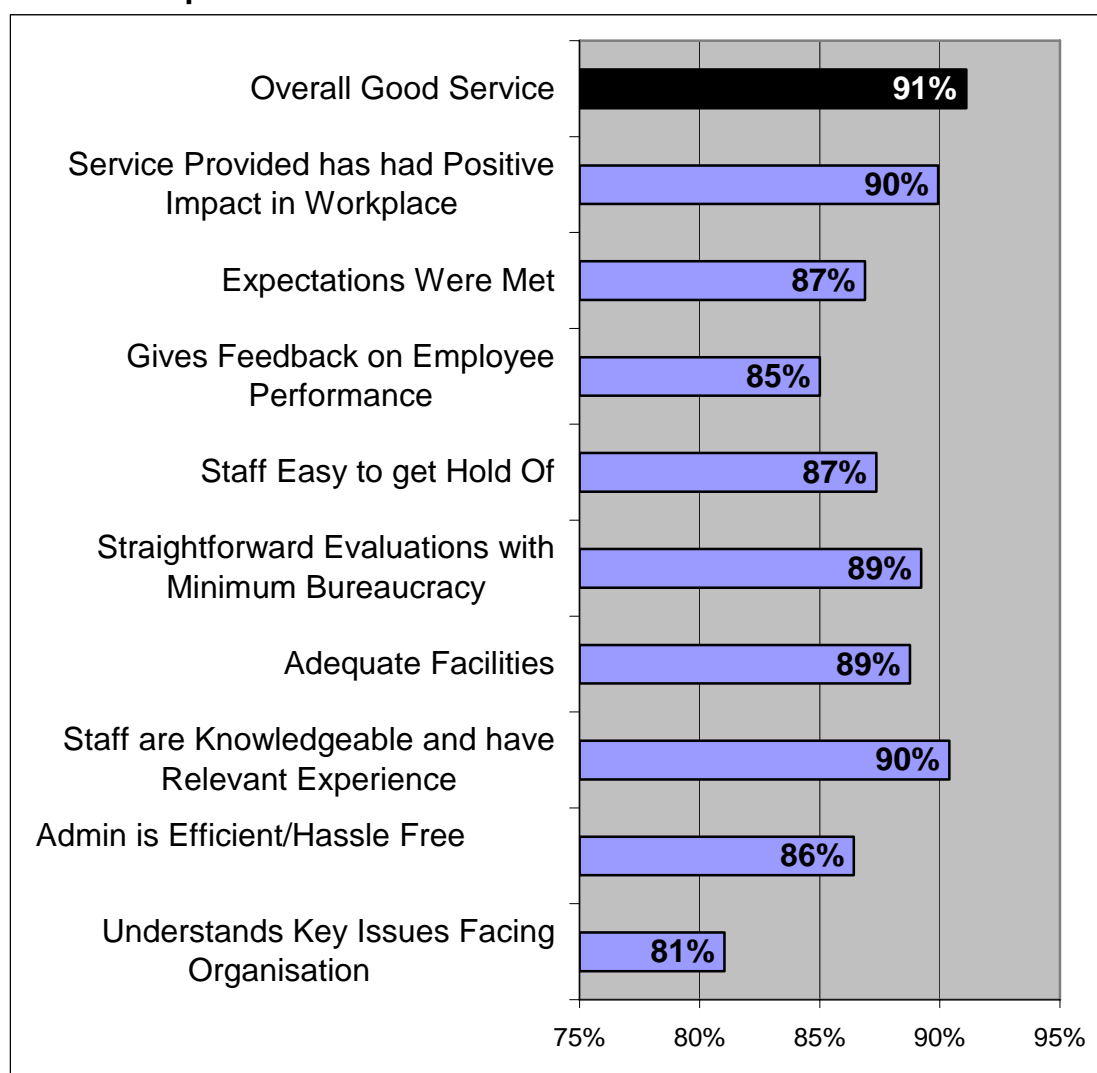
4. IMPORTANCE OF SATISFACTION CRITERIA

For each of the satisfaction criteria, employers were also asked to rate, on a scale of one to ten, how important each was to them (1 being not at all important and 10 very important). Chart 2 shows the proportion of employers engaged by colleges in Sussex who have given the criteria an importance rating of 7 or above.

By a simple visual comparison of charts 1 and 2 the results suggest that the highest satisfaction levels are achieved with criteria that are also considered the most important by employers. However, despite these differences in the ratings, all the criteria were considered by employers to be important, with at least 8 out of 10 employers giving a 7 or greater rating to each criteria.

'Overall Good Service' was most frequently given a high rating, 9 in 10 employers rated it at 7 or above in terms of importance.

Chart 2: Importance of Satisfaction Criteria



Employers considered the college 'Understanding Key Issues Facing the Organisation' (81%) and 'Giving Feedback on Employee Performance' (85%) as the least important criteria. However, improvements in these areas may contribute to increases in satisfaction with the 'Overall Good Service' provided.

4.1 MEAN WEIGHTED SATISFACTION INDEX

Using the information gained on the importance attached to each criterion (shown above), the satisfaction ratings used in section 3.1 given by each employer can be weighted according to their perceived importance. This is done to give a better reflection of the satisfaction levels across colleges. By weighting the data, this provides a more accurate picture of employers' levels of satisfaction with the colleges than the un-weighted index because it gives greater emphasis to the satisfaction ratings of the more important criteria.

Table 4 shows the weighted index for each college in 2004.

Table 4: Mean Weighted Satisfaction Index

	Mean Weighted Satisfaction Index
College	2004
Chichester College	72.20
City College Brighton and Hove	58.97
Crawley College	67.50
Hastings College	63.55
NorthBrook College	64.69
Plumpton College	73.09
Sussex Downs College	76.41
Sussex Benchmark	69.32

The weighted index gives a slightly higher score to the Sussex colleges than the mean satisfaction index in Table 2. This suggests that employers have higher levels of satisfaction with the aspects of college service provision that they regard as more important. This may in part reflect the responsiveness of the colleges to the needs of businesses and students.

However, although the method of weighting has changed slightly from the 2003 survey, the data suggests that the mean weighted satisfaction index score for Sussex is below that achieved in 2003, having fallen from 75 to 70³.

Tables 5 and 6 show the weighted satisfaction index by industry and employee size-band respectively.

³ In 2003 each employers ratings were weighted using the importance that they themselves attached. This year, to increase the reliability of the weighting system at the individual college level, the average importance ratings across Sussex are used to weight the satisfaction ratings.

Table 5: Mean Weighted Satisfaction Index by Industry

Industry	Sample Size	Mean Weighted Satisfaction Index
Primary, Extraction and Energy	17	78.33
Manufacturing	32	68.49
Construction	57	70.80
Transport or communications	15	72.79
Wholesale/retail	33	71.49
Hotels or restaurants	17	67.57
Financial or business services	37	63.62
Other	219	68.89

Table 6: Mean Weighted Satisfaction Index by Size-Band

Size-band	Sample Size	Mean Weighted Satisfaction Index
0 – 4	80	69.90
5 to 9	93	69.44
10 to 49	143	68.08
50 – 99	50	73.39
100+	61	67.94

In Sussex, the highest mean weighted satisfaction index was found amongst those employing between 50 and 100 employees (index of 73) and for employers in the Primary sector (index of 78). Lowest satisfaction scores were reported in the Financial and Business Services industry (64) and amongst those employers with over 100 staff (68). See tables 4 and 5 below. Different industries may have specific needs. However the type and size of employer also varies greatly between the colleges.

Comparing industry and size-band satisfaction within individual colleges would be more informative, as would an investigation of whether different types of employers attach different weight to individual satisfaction criteria. However, the sample size of this year's survey does not allow for this level of analysis. Nevertheless this is a key question to be answered if colleges are to significantly improve employer satisfaction and engagement.

Had the survey been able to achieve its full quota of interviews these effects could have been investigated in a little more detail, although there may still have been limitations on the accuracy of the data. An alternative strategy for future years could be to align the Sussex survey with employer satisfaction surveys for colleges in other areas and/or to follow up the survey with qualitative research with employers to identify the extent to which they have different values and expectations from college services.

4.2 Factors Influencing Employers' College Choice

On top of the ten criteria employers were asked to rank, they were asked whether there were any other aspects that they considered important when selecting a college or training provider. Just under half of the employers interviewed across Sussex identified additional factors.

The employers were not questioned specifically about the college they had used, but rather were asked to consider the choice they face between all training providers including Action for Business Colleges. As such, responses are not specific to a particular college and this section considers the comments of all employers interviewed across Sussex. Table 6 summarises the responses.

When selecting a college or a training provider, employers were most likely to identify the location of the provision, the flexibility of the course and the cost as key factors in their choice.

Employers said they looked for training that was reasonably priced and competitive and where they got value for money. Many employers felt it was most important that training was provided close to their workplace or to employees' homes and that the location was easy to get to, including by public transport. Employers therefore want to minimise the travel costs and time out of work for their employees.

Table 6: Summary of Factors Influencing Employers' Choice of Provider

Factor	Sussex
Location and Accessibility	61
Course Availability, Flexibility and Suitability	49
Cost and Value	29
Administration, Organisation and Information	28
Reputations, Results and Staff Competency	16
An Understanding of Business	11
Feedback and Face-to-Face Visits	9
Facilities	5
Other	14
Did Not Answer	245

Please note some respondents gave multiple answers, so columns does not sum to 427.

The flexibility of courses is also an important aspect with a large number of employers wanting flexible training arrangements such as a range of times and days as well as evening classes and support available outside hours.

A recurring criticism of past provision is the level of communication and efficiency of administration. This is also reflected in what employers see as important aspects when deciding on training provision.

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Employers mentioned that they want a tight administration process that is timely and efficient. They look for good availability of up-to-date and understandable information on courses and colleges, easy and efficient avenues of communication and quick response times. They also feel that feedback on training is important and that there should be a good system of communication between the provider and the employer before, during and after training is provided.

When selecting a training supplier some employers mentioned the reputation of colleges, the importance of evidence of past results and the quality of provision. Some felt there needed to be a greater range of available courses, or courses more specific to their needs and that the staff should be competent, experienced and have adequate, relevant knowledge.

They also felt that there should be a good awareness of student needs, an awareness of current business issues and a good understanding of the commercial environment.

Appendix A shows the full list of comments made by the employers interviewed on other aspects they consider important when selecting a training supplier.

5. EMPLOYERS RELATIONSHIP WITH COLLEGES

Employers were also asked to rate their relationship with their college in general. The distribution of responses for each college are shown in the table below:

Table 7: Employers Relationships with Colleges

	Very Poor	Quite Poor	Neither Good Nor Poor	Quite Good	Very Good
City College Brighton and Hove	10	2	19	18	6
Chichester College	3	1	8	20	15
Crawley College	3	5	18	28	11
Hastings College	2	3	13	16	7
Northbrook College	3	1	8	18	14
Plumpton College	3	1	16	35	20
Sussex Downs College	2	8	22	36	32
Sussex Benchmark	26	21	104	171	105

Overall, employers were largely positive about their relationship with colleges in Sussex. Two thirds (65%) felt that their relationship was either quite good or very good and only 11% reported that it was quite poor or very poor.

City College Brighton and Hove, Crawley College and Hastings College both had below average proportions of employers who said their relationship with the college was good or very good. Nearly one in five (18%) of employers reported that their relationship with City College was very poor. This was significantly higher than the average for Sussex.

Employers were then asked whether their relationship with the college had changed over the past 12 months, the table below shows how they responded:

Table 9: Change in the Relationship with Employers

College	Got Worse	Remained the Same	Improved
Chichester College	2	35	10
City College Brighton and Hove	13	38	4
Crawley College	3	53	9
Hastings College	8	24	9
Northbrook College	3	32	9
Plumpton College	2	68	5
Sussex Downs College	3	88	9
Sussex Benchmark	34	338	55

Overall in Sussex, for nearly eight out of ten (79%) respondents there had been no change in the quality of the relationship, but a higher proportion of

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employers (13%) reported that their relationship had improved than had reported that it had got worse (8%) over the past year. This picture is largely reflected across the 7 Sussex colleges.

In the case of three of the colleges – Chichester College, Hastings College and Northbrook College, at least one in five employers reported that their relationship had improved since the last year.

This appears to be at odds with the findings from the satisfaction index, which suggests that the overall satisfaction levels with colleges had, if anything, got marginally worse.

However, the survey did not capture whether the employers had had contact with the college in the previous year, so it is possible that a proportion of those that reported improvements were dealing with the college for the first time. This may partly explain the slightly lower overall satisfaction rates, but the higher proportion of employers that reported an improvement in their relationship with the colleges.

Although a high proportion of employers reported that their relationship with Hastings College had improved (22%), a high proportion also reported that it had got worse (24%).

The case of Hastings College highlights the possibility that there is large variation in perceptions of different departments within colleges. Different departments, different courses or different staff may produce different levels of satisfaction responses. This is backed up by the comments made by employers.

For each college, aspects that some employers see as positive points about a college appear as areas for improvement from other employers. It is likely that improvements need to be more specifically directed to improve the relationships that individual departments within a college have with employers, so that the highest levels of service are mirrored across the whole college.

In Crawley, Plumpton and Sussex Downs a large proportion of employers thought there had been little change in the relationship. In the case of City College Brighton and Hove, a high proportion of employers (24%) reported that their relationship with the college had worsened. This supports the findings of the previous table where 18% said that their relationship with this college was very poor.

Employers who felt their relationship had 'Got Worse' over the past 12 months were asked to give a reason why this had happened.

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A summary of the comments made by employers who felt their relationship with a college had worsened over the last 12 months is given below. Results are shown by college to flag up any specific issues and show where these are common across Sussex. The majority of comments across Sussex as a whole were concerned with the **efficiency of administration** at colleges or the **level of communication or feedback** between the college and the employer.

Please see the attached appendix B for the full list of comments made by those interviewed.

Chichester

Two employers who had received a service from Chichester College felt their relationship with the College had declined over the past year. Whilst it will be important to take on board the comments that have been made, it is likely to be inappropriate to generalise the significance of these responses. The reasons given for the worsening relationship were:

“They don’t meet our expectations and they won’t acknowledge this. The assessors are rude when you do get through to them.”

“Contact fizzled out.”

It is likely that any large service provider will have some service users that have a poor experience. The number of cases in this instance is not significant.

City College Brighton and Hove

Thirteen employers who had received a service from City College Brighton and Hove felt their relationship with the College had declined over the past year. Reasons for the worsening relationship mostly revolved around communication and competent administration, these include:

“We cannot get any information at all and no one to speak to at all. No one ever rings back when we have been promised they will.”

“They don’t inform you when pupils are not at school - they do not do the sight inspections they are supposed to do - the administration is bad, we are still receiving forms for a student that left 18 months ago.”

There do appear to be some issues of concern. Although only 13 employers reported that their relationship with the college had got significantly worse, this represents a high proportion of those that were surveyed. There may be issues for the college to investigate in relation to improving their systems of communication with employers and in ensuring that their internal administrative processes are tightened.

Crawley College

Three employers who had received a service from Crawley College felt their relationship with the College had declined over the past year, these employers gave reasons:

"There is no contact, no feedback, no responses."

"Because of the administration on the course - they said things would get done and they never happened - and things would arrive and they never turned up."

"Due to lack of communication - with regard to the coordinators and with regard to NVQ."

Because only three respondents reported that their relationship had got worse, it is important to ensure that these responses are placed in context. It is possible that some departments may need to improve their communications with employers.

Hastings College

Eight employers who had received a service from Hastings College felt their relationship with the College had declined over the past year. Reasons given for the worsening relationship were largely concerned with communication problems and issues around staff changes and shortages:

"The admin staff has been changed. Never know who to contact and have not been introduced to or know of the liaison officer as yet"

"It appears from the lack of feedback I have had from the students that there is a lack of communication and information between the employer, staff and students. A lot of staff problems and shortages. Also the progress of the students has not been monitored."

Although a high proportion of employers reported that their relationship with the college had got worse over the year, there appeared to be some acknowledgement that there may be particular issues that Hastings College is currently facing. Staff changes and shortages may have contributed to communications difficulties.

Northbrook College

Three employers who had received a service from Northbrook College felt their relationship with the College had declined over the past year. These employers gave a reason for the worsening relationship with the college:

"Inadequate admin and lecturing staff."

"I started an NOVA level 4 and the tutor just talked at us every week. At Christmas they changed the tutor and the new tutor expected us to have covered much more work than we had and that we were very behind."

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"I completed a NOVA level three in June last year and did not get the certificate until November last year."

Of the three respondents reporting a worsening relationship with the college, two appear to comment on a specific course, where it is possible that there were some issues during the year. It is possible that it is not appropriate to make college-wide generalisations about all courses and departments within the college.

Plumpton College

Two employers who had received a service from Plumpton College felt their relationship with the College had declined over the past year. These employers gave a reason for the worsening relationship with the college:

"College staff failed to turn up for progress meeting without explanation."

"Communications problems regarding courses and students. Lack of administrative competence on the part of the college."

In both these cases, the worsening relationship was perceived to be due to poor communication.

Sussex Downs College

Three employers who had received a service from Sussex Downs College felt their relationship with the College had declined over the past year. These employers gave a reason for the worsening relationship with the college:

"The course didn't match our requirements once we got back to work."

"Rude, offensive, disinterested, reports are all the same, no change."

"No feedback."

Of the three comments made, one may have been due to a lack of clear communication about the relevance of a to a particular employer's needs and the other two instances related to customers services and communication issues.

6. BEST PRACTICE AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

In order to improve employer satisfaction and engagement in learning, colleges need to understand where they are currently providing best practice and where they need to improve their service. The 2004 survey included a number of questions further investigating employer perceptions of college services.

Tables 10 and 11 below group the responses to these two questions into similar areas and summarises the proportion of responses from each college that fall into these categories. Table 10 summarises employers comments about positive aspects of service provision, while table 11 summarises employers comments about areas for improvement in college provision.

Table 10: Positive Aspects of Service Provision

Positive Aspects	Chichester	City College Brighton and Hove	Crawley	Hastings	Northbrook	Plumpton	Sussex Downs	Sussex
Good/Appropriate Courses. Meets Business/Training Needs.	11	9	12	5	12	9	13	71
Quality of Staff	3	3	14	4	6	8	14	52
Flexible/Friendly/Approachable	7	9	9	3	2	10	11	51
Facilities/ Location/Cost	3	10	13	3	11	8	21	69
Everything. Generally Good	7	3	1	3	6	5	15	40
Other	2	3	4	2	6	7	7	31
Nothing	2	4	0	0	1	1	2	10
Did Not Answer	14	17	17	24	4	33	23	132

Please note some respondents gave multiple answers, so columns do not necessarily sum to 100%.

Table 11: Areas for Service Improvement

Areas for Improvement	Chichester	City College Brighton and Hove	Crawley	Hastings	Northbrook	Plumpton	Sussex Downs	Sussex
More Regular Contact/Feedback between Trainer and Employer	6	8	10	7	11	13	10	65
Better Administration and organisation	3	13	11	14	11	10	18	80
More/Better Teaching Staff	4	6	3	12	4	8	6	43
More/Better Marketing and promotion	2	5	2	3	6	5	8	31
Better Course Availability, relevance and Flexibility	3	8	13	13	10	12	19	78
Better Attitude/Friendliness	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	3
Better Facilities	0	0	5	1	2	2	3	13
Lower Cost	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	5
Other	1	3	4	0	1	4	1	14
Nothing	5	2	1	0	1	3	7	19
Did not answer	23	18	20	5	5	23	34	128

Employer Satisfaction Survey 2004

Please note some respondents gave multiple answers, so columns do not necessarily sum to the total number of interviews.

A summary is given below for each college of aspects of service provision that employers particularly liked, as well as suggestions for the future improvement of provision.

Please see the attached Appendices C and D for a full list of comments made by the employers interviewed.

Chichester College

A range of positive comments were made about the service provided by Chichester College. Aspects employers liked included the friendliness of the College and the good level of contact with employers, the level of hands on experience and understanding about business issues and needs and the flexibility of provision, which was felt to be tailored to meet the needs of employers and students.

Key Strengths:

- Friendliness of staff**
- Experience**
- Understanding of Business Issues**
- Flexibility of provision**

The main improvements suggested by employers for service provision at Chichester College were for better communication and improved tailoring of courses. Employers indicated that they would like more information and more regular contact from the college, including feedback and reports on students. Other employers suggested there was a need for more tailored courses after closer liaison with businesses and better identification of what candidates needed, including their needs in terms of self-confidence and learning ability. Other areas for improvement mentioned were the need for more and higher quality trainers and less time consuming bureaucracy.

Key Areas of Improvement:

- Better communication**
- Improved bespoke courses**
- More feedback on student's progress**
- Improved administrative systems**

City College Brighton and Hove

Employers who have used City College Brighton and Hove most frequently mentioned the location of service provision as an important positive about the college. Others mentioned that it provided a good range of appropriate courses and that it is approachable and flexible. Some mentioned the good knowledge of staff and the college's ability to cope with disability.

Employer Satisfaction Survey 2004

Please see the attached appendices C and D for a full list of comments made by the employers interviewed.

In some cases, issues that some employers viewed as strengths were viewed by other employers as weaknesses. Some employers felt that colleges maintained a good level of communication with employers, whilst others felt that this was a weakness. This may be due to individual employer's expectations or differences in their actual experiences. It is inevitable that employers will have differing perceptions of their relationship with the college, however, this does highlight the need to ensure that quality standards are applied and monitored across all departments within the colleges.

Appendix A – Other aspects considered important by businesses when selecting a college or training supplier

City College Brighton and Hove:

- Accessible. Cost quite expensive for what we missed.
- Availability of courses. Cost implications which we have to overcome and must give value for money.
- Changes should be notified immediately.
- Cost has to be realistic. Administration has to be quite important which has to be tightened up.
- Don't go so round about to get to the point – it took a long time to get there in some of the issues.
- Had bad experience the person who was training left my colleague half way through.
- Location.
- Location and evening class.
- Location and cost.
- Location plays a part. The ability to understand the information given on the website and the descriptions of courses (i.e. day of week).
- Location to the base where they work.
- More variety of courses. Need to provide CIMA and ACCA accounting qualifications as the other nearest is London.
- Reputation is very important and its results.
- Sufficient competent lecturers.
- The location of the college in relation to where they live.
- The only college to offer the CIPD course.
- Travelling distance.
- Understanding you students.
- Within the computer industry we need specific topics covered location of these specialised courses need to be considered for staff travelling too and from.
- Would like to be able to communicate with anybody in the admin team and in particular when anyone knew when the course would be run and where based.

Chichester College

- Accessibility.
- Better induction – information arrived piecemeal.
- Conversant in current day plumbing standards.
- Good communication.
- Good support.
- Homogeneity of courses between colleges would help timing and course content etc.
- Location.
- Location access.
- More input from inspectors.
- Previous history of exams and quality of work I was told they had a good record of previous pass rate which was totally false.
- Proximity to workplace, cost of courses, flexibility.
- Relate course to the real world: we don't work 9 to 5, don't have bank holidays, long holidays.
- Smooth running, named contacts.
- Standards should be high (which they are at Chichester).
- The experience is the most important.
- The location would be better if they were closer to home.
- The range of services plus price.
- The staff should know what they are talking about.

Crawley College

- Accessibility and cost.
- An understanding of business.
- Availability and human contact.
- Business developed section should be closer to business.
- Cost.
- Cost and facilities.

Employer Satisfaction Survey 2004

- Distance, availability of the course, the right times for childcare.
- Ease of access – proximity – flexibility in timing.
- Easy to get for the staff – local.
- Enrolment to be more efficient.
- Fees. Level of training. Availability of courses. Whether they are evening etc. Outside college tutorial support (e.g. you can phone in if you need help, good library book shop, good internet access).
- Flexibility.
- Flexibility – timescales in training – building a partnering relationship.
- Flexibility of courses – times that courses can be run.
- Local
- Locality
- Location
- Location and availability e.g. what time is it, what day is it.
- Location and cost.
- Location and courses.
- Relationship to the company.
- Right lectures.
- Tend to go for a college near to our premises.
- The courses that they provide are suitable for our company.
- The range of courses.
- Their understanding of work based learning, funding systems and deadlines meeting both provider, learner and employer needs.
- They need to be near and have good facilities.
- Times of the courses.
- Training course development is difficult, no one takes ownership.
- Up to date information in their literature.
- Value for money.
- Value for money. How they are perceived by our delegates. Easy to get to location.

Hastings College

- Accessibility.
- Accessible transport etc.
- Adequate staff for the number of courses and students.
- Appropriate for trainees needs.
- Back up from college.
- Choices regarding courses. I.e. location nearest plumbing course was Hastings where as the west Kent college no plumbing courses available at the time 300 applications for 182 places.
- Course content and the aptitude of our member of staff to do the job i.e. tests before the course don't seem to be very realistic or correct.
- Flexibility on courses. I.e. on different days as this places a tremendous strain on small businesses.
- Good hands on training provision and experienced tutors with hands on experience.
- Good tutors with a good rapport with young people. The need to be close to home transport wise etc.
- Happiness of the person attending, location, friends etc.
- Local and results.
- Locality.
- Locality, course choices.
- Locality and word of mouth and past experiences.
- Location.
- Location, ease of transport and cost.
- Location/Access for the staff.
- More choice, area, locality and transport commitments to campuses.
- More face to face visits for assessments.
- Particular training needs at what costs.
- Structure of the courses provided.
- The only reason is to get the certificate required.
- The suitability or academic/interest level of the person attending the course should be better assessed to suit the course.

Northbrook College

Employer Satisfaction Survey 2004

- As a small employer, I appreciate their excellent quality and reasonable price, it is local to us also. That I was offered the possibility to take the initial training further if we wanted it.
- Being able to talk to one of the lecturers on the course, which are specific to the actual course.
- Cost and accessibility.
- Cost effectiveness.
- Decent administration.
- Feedback would be very useful.
- I want somebody to come and talk to me and say what do you need and how can we provide you with it. I would like focused courses on specific areas such as handling discipline group training and interviewing techniques.
- Important to have in depth induction at the beginning of the course.
- It has got to be much easier to get in contact with them. Waiting for three weeks for them to reply to an email is not really helpful.
- Locality and cost.
- Location and availability of courses. We found that Northbrook college do not provide regular plumbing and electrical three day development courses. We were on BS2391 and 2381. The college need to gear their training for part p. electrician.
- Looking for a supplier that meets our needs for the courses.
- Proximity, easy to get to.
- That they employ the right people to do the job.
- The ability to deliver against the requirements of our needs. If the price could be more flexible this would be better. Also finding the right level of courses available to be more consistently available across the board.
- The cost effectiveness of the training with no loss of standard and more tutors.
- The location, whether they offer the specific course that you want and the cost implications.
- The organisation is quite important which they coped with well.
- Things like sudden and unexpected trebling of costs which we had not budgeted for which caused us serious problems. They need to improve facilities for special needs, given options which do not work out because they have not been thought out correctly.
- Venue is important and I would like to see more efforts made to improve the venue.
- Wide variety of courses. Actually running the courses if they say so and an early warning to say if the student is likely to complete the course.

Plumpton College

- A good liaison with the college.
- Better feedback.
- College relates to the commercial environment.
- Communication relationship between tutors and students.
- Course suitability.
- Difficult to get to. Vetinary course few and far.
- Equal opportunities.
- Locality means of public transport to it Plumpton is not good on that
- Location.
- Location and accessibility.
- Location, good environment.
- More correspondence.
- Nothing.
- Paperwork is too much.
- Pass rates.
- Preparation for exams very important.
- Proximity, course flexibility and timing.
- Pupils enjoy their time there.
- Relevant courses.
- Reputation.
- Results of exam passes.
- Syllabus.
- Work ethic - they need to learn the technical skills but they also need to know that they have to earn their wages, otherwise there's no incentive for an employer to employ them.
- Work needs to tie in with college.

Sussex Downs College

- Accessibility.

Employer Satisfaction Survey 2004

- Availability of courses at convenient times. Refresher at times that tie-up with the mandatory refreshment courses.
- Availability of the staff is key. Plus delivering of teaching.
- Castings they were not expensive which was good they range widely.
- Catering.
- Communication.
- Communication, keep the employer up to date.
- Cost and accessibility.
- Cost of the course. Needs to be competitive.
- Course content.
- Courses seem not to be relevant.
- Ease of contact, level of understanding of business world.
- Efficiency and good contact with the client. Understanding of our business. Good range of courses.
- Feedback.
- Give a bit more information.
- Good communication, better planning, better structure.
- I need to now that they are being trained adequately. I need to have adequate feedback. Greater correspondence with the assessor.
- It's the nearest one there.
- Local availability and competitive pricing.
- Locality.
- Locality. Local to where we are is most important.
- Location.
- Location needs to be within a reasonable travelling distance and the price of courses.
- Location. The relevant class sizes. The courses are up to date and match our requirements.
- More help and general information. Better help for new businesses.
- Price of the course.
- Returning of phone calls. Returning of letters. Sending the right people to meetings. I'm looking for a high level of efficiency.
- Ring me when the employee doesn't turn up.
- Service, cut down prices.
- That there is a recommendation for our students from the trainer.
- The ability to plan the information earlier or give us the whole information and keep it rolling. They work through the school year not the business year.
- Their understandings of business needs.
- They are relevant.
- Value for money.

Appendix B – Why has relationship with college got worse over the past twelve months.

Chichester College

- They don't meet our expectations and they won't acknowledge this. The assessors are rude when you do get through to them.
- Contact fizzled out.

City College Brighton and Hove

- The course was not appropriate for what I had needed but they insisted I pay for it anyway which was against my views and my employers.
- We cannot get any information at all and no one to speak to at all. No one ever rings back when we have been promised they will.
- Lack of tutors or badly qualified tutors. Staff, classroom and chairs etc shortages in all areas.
- I am reluctant to send another employee on the course we are reverting to in-house training as we get what we need.
- You can never get hold of them, they have moved their offices and we don't get updates of phone numbers and confusion when you do ring up. Bad Admin.
- They don't inform you when pupils are not at school - they do not do the sight inspections they are supposed to do - the administration is bad, we are still receiving forms for a student that left 18 months ago.
- They are not as competent as they were. The administration has collapsed, communication has broken down between students staff of college and employers. In fact we are changing our courses to another college from now on.
- Their attitude was totally unreasonable.
- They're impossible to communicate with, they don't return calls or e-mails. No one at all at any level seems to know what's going on.
- Last Friday we were phoned to ask if we could go last Friday to enrol but we have a business to run - I am training manager with heavy schedule and there was no flexibility, why could we not be enrolled whilst being interviewed.
- Difficulty of communication - trying to get hold of the right information and the right people.
- Failure for course completed, exam failure.
- We had no feedback - they had no spaces left.

Crawley College

- There is no contact, no feedback, no responses.
- Because of the administration on the course - they said things would get done and they never happened - and things would arrive and they never turned up.
- Due to lack of communication - with regard to the coordinators and with regard to NVQ.

Hastings College

- We were not notified about the induction day. He turned up on Friday and there was nothing to do so he was sent home. Start date was moved forward a week but we had no notification.
- The usual day release lady was made redundant and we now have inexperienced staff in charge. I.e. your student been issued with a kit list and does not have the kit to start properly and efficiently this week. It is unprofessional.
- The mediation between us, the trainee and them was awful. The trainee felt he was only there because the college put him there - not as a future job! I felt the college was on a numbers game putting students into workplace positions.
- The admin staff have been changed. Never know who to contact and have not been introduced to or know of the liaison officer as yet
- It appears from the lack of feedback I have had from the students that there is a lack of communication and information between the employer, staff and students. A lot of staff problems and shortages. Also the progress of the students has not been monitored.
- Everybody has been sacked and all I received was a pp signed letter telling me they have changed the whole format and they will be in touch at a later date. Dated 14th July, still haven't heard and they had no bridging plan.

Employer Satisfaction Survey 2004

- Specific tutors in the plumbing department. In fact the head - a Mr Rockwell. He is an unsuitable man for the job, inadequate in every way, my boys could not complete their course and have to sit it this year. New head seems to be more helpful so far.
- My staff do not get the back up from the college i.e. two girls were not entered for exams and one missed a deadline due to her age.

Northbrook College

- Inadequate admin and lecturing staff.
- I started an NOVA level 4 and the tutor just talked at us every week. At Christmas they changed the tutor and the new tutor expected us to have covered much more work than we had and that we were very behind.
- I completed a NOVA level three in June last year and did not get the certificate until November last year.

Plumpton College

- College staff failed to turn up for progress meeting without explanation.
- Communications problems regarding courses and students. Lack of administrative competence on the part of the college.

Sussex Downs College

- The course didn't match our requirements once we got back to work.
- Rude, offensive, disinterested, reports are all the same, no change.
- No feedback.

Appendix C – What could the college do to improve their service to businesses.

Chichester

- Seeing a bit more regular contact would not go amiss. Cost is good. Accessibility.
- Employ more trainers.
- Less time for bureaucracy.
- Be more proactive talking to businesses, tailoring courses.
- Nothing that I am aware of.
- Identify what is best for candidate, not what's best for college.
- First aid course provision.
- More frequent liaison between them and employer.
- To build self-confidence in staff especially those who have been out of education for some years.
- Provide a bit more information on what is going on - maybe communicate a bit more at the beginning.
- Ensure learning difficulties are properly assessed and acted upon.
- Nothing, happy the way they are.
- Seems to be quite adequate, good feedback.
- They need to look at their staff to make sure they have relevant qualifications not just drafted in teachers.
- Already doing it - they are sending people to the work place and good at the job.
- They need to communicate more about the students.
- Be more reliable.
- Evaluations can be disruptive, plan them better.
- Advertise better - its hard to find information about the college this forces people to other better recognised colleges.
- More feedback.
- Assessor training. Their service is so generic it is of no relevance to us. They need to maintain better contact with the customer, maintain the dialogue with us. They don't need to flatly contradict what I tell them. They are very aggressive.
- Report back on employee progress.
- Happy the way things are.

City College Brighton and Hove

- Maybe do newsletters with up and coming training so we know what courses they do apart from what we are using.
- Nothing that I can think of.
- Improve their attitude to customers.
- More business friendly.
- Clarify the info on pricing better, procedures regarding date changes.
- They could reply to calls and e-mails, make it easier for people to enrol, don't insist they have to travel to the college, appreciate the people we are sending work full time so don't have a lot of free time.
- The enrolment process is very poor, the attitude & help offered to resolve problems is poor. Feedback on student performance has been poor general things e.g. parking issues, travel issues etc. They've been very unhelpful, its the front office team that's unhelpful.
- Liaise more between staff at college and the employers staff. Also better awareness of trainees needs and the fact that they are working a full day in employment as well as their course i.e. a lot of written work expected to be done in short space of time.
- More flexible with times. The clients should be kept informed as to what's going on via e-mail.
- More feedback from the college would be good.
- Offer a combined package, not just a technical certificate, for example things like key skills NVQ. One stop shop.
- Restructure course to exam success.
- Nothing, everything is hunky dory.
- Colleges have got to be more responsive to industrial needs and give early support.
- Send out programme and events to the employer.
- We have had three experienced people trying to get one nurse on to a course in Eastbourne and as stated no one seems to know the date or location.

Employer Satisfaction Survey 2004

- Give me sensible feedback.
- Making sure that their teaching has a basis in real life. Exams in subjects does not always have a direct bearing on everyday working life.
- Sack all their staff and get someone in who actually cares.
- Probably be more organised, need to publish more of their courses.
- Improve their administration.
- More staff per session to cope with large numbers in classes.
- Someone to be there when you call.
- Longer opening hours would be better.
- More knowledgeable tutors.
- Give better explanation about the course at the outset - exam based versus course based assessments.
- They need a period of calm following their re structure.
- Possibly greater contact with the employers, in-house organisation, administration of courses, we had a number of problems with being passed from one person to the next and no-one knew exactly what was going on.
- Publicise it more, they should get out to speak businesses more and push what courses they have.
- New courses seem to have more problems as the tutors do not seem to have had the time to prepare properly and be fully instructive or knowledgeable.
- Expand on courses as mentioned.
- Complete overhaul, now has a bad reputation. Hasn't listened or improved service. Lack of funds.
- They misrepresented the scope of the course offered. Need to improve the description of the courses offered.
- More information on the courses available, more support for the students whilst on the course. They do attend but they do not come out enough to the individual businesses premises.
- Better employee feedback.
- Be more efficient, not lose test results.
- Improve their administration and have sufficient competent lecturers. Sometimes dental nurses stood in for lecturers.

Crawley College

- To improve their administration.
- Basically to advise of the current situation, if there are staffing difficulties - to improve future planning of how they can overcome it.
- More 1 day courses.
- Larger range of courses.
- Enrolment procedures and communication could be better - they don't tell us anything.
- Improve car parking, get to know us a bit more.
- Improve parking.
- Better feed back on courses.
- They can offer more training courses - and talk to industry about what they want.
- An appointed liaison, key person to each business so I would have a named person to deal with on all Crawley college aspects.
- Maybe pack up and start again. They have no idea about the management of programmes and the standard length of stay and funding end dates. Certification - they need to make sure certificates are sent out restructure from management downwards.
- Better lines of communication.
- Making their courses more business specific.
- We have a new assessor and she takes her time to explain things - she is good with the staff.
- On the whole the service is fantastic but sometimes you want something between this and that, courses between basic and intermediate could be handy.
- Nothing we are looking to use learn direct as it would be easier than using the college but if there's no benefit to us we would go back to using Crawley college.
- More feedback, general communication.
- They don't seem to be very professional e.g. teachers don't turn up, no replacement, projector not working, couldn't continue. Teachers need to do more planning for lessons they always seem to be a bit woolly, people were rolling their eyes as nothing was prepared.
- Send out prospectus more regularly to remind me they are there.
- Become more focussed, outward looking, better premises and facilities and don't be a backwater college as how I see it. I'm hopeful that when the University comes (as soon as possible) it will improve more scientific courses for software writing availability.

Employer Satisfaction Survey 2004

- Funding should be based on revenue.
- Flexibility in the courses and times in the late afternoon or evening, have the workshop opened before 10.30.
- Stop poaching my staff.
- Main thing is accessibility.
- They need more co-ordinators they are quite stretched with the amount of co-ordinators, therefore companies like us don't get to see co-ordinators as much as we'd like to.
- Improve communication and less bureaucracy.
- Take more notice of supply and demand towards today's climate.
- They could improve access.
- Quite early days for me, but generally they appear quite good. Generally are quite good.
- Market themselves a bit more heavier.
- Feedback for the courses we send people on.
- Better feedback, no help.
- Better communication - who am I supposed to talk to?
- Update the building, appearance very run down.
- Give more information about the course to enable employer to know what staff are doing.
- Irrelevant courses.
- Improve their parking.
- Administration - we had some problems with bills, getting a response from them was quite awkward.
- Keep us more informed about what is going on.
- Admin needs to improve. Tell us the named source of correspondence etc from them.
- Assess the abilities of course attendees to pitch at correct level.
- Tailor some of their courses towards particular industries, have a variety of different times for the courses, do distance learning.
- Understand business.
- More easy availability of college staff. Return calls please.
- Get it right - make sure the courses are appropriate for the students.

Hastings College

- More organised in relation to the training and to have skilled tutors with hands on experience.
- We need more hands on tutors in the basic day to day plumbing skills as a lot of the work is so crammed in that the less academic students cannot take in all the technical stuff at such an early on stage. This would help us in the working environment.
- Improve the admin.
- Vet the kids they send out better, many of the kids haven't got the aptitude and the drive required to do this type of job.
- From past experience the skills of the tutors are not as good as they should be. I.e. teaching skills.
- Sort out the admin side as they are useless. Enrolment was messed up, health and safety only gave two days notice to come out and when they did they were very rude - one man in particular we have complained about him.
- They can send more information that is just relevant to certain types of business as it is rather time consuming to sort through all the leaflets and paperwork that is irrelevant to us as plumbers.
- It needs to get closer to the commercial world i.e. day release projects on days that don't disrupt other aspects of workplace. This understanding needs to be acknowledged by the college.
- Don't sack half their staff - 7 team was cut down to 3 so they cannot get round to all the employers and hold ups to start at beginning of term.
- Give relevant information when required. Trying to get a prospectus is a nightmare. No price on certain courses when prospectus eventually arrived and therefore we couldn't book the courses and the girls have missed out and so has the college.
- If an assessor books an appointment they should come, they often cancel this is very disruptive for a salon.
- Better communication about course timetable etc and student activity and progress.
- They need more staff with more individual experience in the trades involved, which they originally had but they have been shortcutting.
- Make parking easier around the campus.
- Faster assessments.

Employer Satisfaction Survey 2004

- More qualified staff, more practical, less administration and written work. More practical work, hands on, what the employers need them to know. Better liaison between myself and officer i.e. liaison officers often know nothing about specific trades.
- Better communications and be more organised for the students so they can turn up for college and not miss the first day! Provide appropriate bookwork so the student knows what is expected of them. Better communication on what the course is going to cover.
- Sack all staff and start again. Spend more interest in where they are sending their students, more input between staff and place of work for the student. After placement the employer gets abandoned only, the student gets back up we need it to!
- Cut out some of the bureaucracy and give support to the actual ground force of the liaison officers. They should back up the promises made.
- Greater publication and awareness of what courses they do.
- Communication was very bad between college employee and myself. The content of course was not terribly applicable to the relevance of my business especially as it was labelled as a bench joinery course and it did not seem to teach them any bench joinery.
- Make courses more realistic, more real life - combining college learning skills more with the workplace. Key word: Relevance to job place.
- Better, more efficient and helpful staff that understand the needs of the lads.
- Change their courses and provide better hands on training and working experience.
- Expand training to be a bit less basic.
- Apart from the flexibility of courses and more relevance on practical work.
- Structure of courses.
- Cover other aspects more relevant to our trade, expand the choice of courses.
- Some of the timesheet filling in etc is a bit formal and hard to remember as its often referring to weeks gone by that has to be recalled.
- Liaison - find out what the customers wants and needs are. Pre-planning in the lectures and the classroom. We the employer would like to back up our staff, we need to know the curriculum so we can help the students in the workplace.
- Improve on administration and monitoring of the students and a feedback every few months. Immediate advice on ill attendance and progress etc.
- They could give more support in assessing i.e. they need more assessors.
- Admin is a major issue and has been a problem for years. Never can get hold of any specific tutors, buck is passed a lot. Organisation of and positioning in campus - every term it changes therefore pupils and tutors never know where they are.
- They need to listen to what the businesses really want. Need to work together to realise the targets, better communication on all levels, often do not get called back, need liaison between admin staff employers and students.
- Make the courses more intensive, skills cant be learnt in the short time available at college, longer courses needed and aspects covered.
- Improve the assessment of the staff or our employees. Add more relevant course material and options at stages of the course to be able to pick more relevant things to their careers i.e. using lead pipe work that is banned in plumbing.

Northbrook College

- Introduce training for part P and lay on evening courses all year round.
- They should advertise their services a bit more, it is not local to the place of work so if they want to get more people going on courses they need to advertise wider.
- Provide more courses. Bring their administration into the 21st century, in particular their web site. It is very confusing to use, I tried to put key words in to bring up different courses and it would not do this. You had to know the name of the course.
- Have the relevant staff more readily available.
- Availability throughout the year and the people who deliver it. The tutors need to be competent and up to date with current requirement. Need to be customer focused.
- To offer more informative results about the students.
- Nothing.
- Disappointed on several occasions recently. Courses poorly subscribed so the courses were cancelled with very little notice. Need to advertise the courses more. They need to visit local employers.
- Wider range of courses.
- Improve admissions procedure.
- Need to have more checks that trainers have more knowledge than they have.
- Offer more courses for medical side of work.

Employer Satisfaction Survey 2004

- Probably offer presentations for employers. More feedback on how the students are doing on the course.
- Sort out their invoices. We have had problems with invoices they send them out to us even when students have not taken part in the course and also not sending invoices when they should, which causes problems because I have to tally finances.
- Talk to us, especially local government. Offer us the open days.
- Improve facilities and give a higher priority to our needs i.e. special needs children.
- Just inform their reception staff who was present in the establishment on the day.
- Offer more feedback. Provide more information without being asked.
- New courses, but happy with the cost which was reasonable.
- Who to speak too. Sometimes the appropriate department is hard to ascertain, who does what etc. Initial contact on an administration level could be made easier. Better relationship between tutors and administrators.
- They can give more feed back to the business about the students.
- I would like more feed back from them. We have had a situation where one of our employees has not passed the year. Because we have not been informed I could not give him guidance in the right direction. I feel they should keep us updated through out the year.
- Improve there administration.
- To find a consistent overseeing member of staff, they kept changing the overseeing tutor and it was difficult for our employee to build a clear relationship with their tutor. Our employee was very unhappy with this. I feel that it might just be teething problems.
- When my tutor was off sick it took ages for them to find a replacement. Eventually I got another tutor who out of kindness has taken it on board as it is not really his responsibility. I nearly lost my funding because of the time limit on this.
- I think if they let us know how the client is doing on the course.
- I have done my nova level 4 somewhere else and finished it promptly in four months. They offer a much better service and I will not go to or send anyone to Northbrook. Their admin is also disorganised.
- I would personally like some feedback and whether they could gain a better understanding of the type of the care we need. To provide a delicate service to the client need.
- Be a bit more proactive in approaching businesses.
- Perhaps they could email or contact organisations about what courses are available and especially targeting small businesses who appreciate good courses at reasonable prices.
- Form a day release, technical release standpoint. We would prefer a lot more direct contact with tutors and term reports on student's progress.
- Facility needs to be upgraded from low standard accommodation.
- They could have been more aware of the care standards act, which is coming into effect 2005. They should have been preparing for this a couple years back.
- They could come in to see us. I want to establish a relationship where the courses are good value and meet my needs. It would be good to have one contact person who suggest ideas and possibilities.
- If they could lower the cost.
- Not sure.
- Better accessibility to tutors. Often tutors are part time but still things could be improved. We had a problem when a tutor became ill it took ages to replace them, our employee missed two weeks of tuition at a time near exams.
- Before the course started they did not inform the students that they would have to do a number of day release classes even though it was an evening course and students had to take annual leave to cover this.
- They have open days but more direct marketing to all size businesses.

Plumpton College

- Work needs to be more in depth.
- More progressive syllabus to complement the traditional aspects.
- Ensure more liaison with employers.
- Don't mix school students with working students - school people disrupt classes.
- Support was inadequate, humiliation of students in classroom, poor handling of difficult situations.
- Improvement in areas of practical training.
- Follow up and deliver their promises to the students.
- Have tutors who are prepared to give positive criticism – don't let people drift. Are tutors experienced in subject and general teaching ability.
- More feedback on course content and relevance to us.

Employer Satisfaction Survey 2004

- I don't think they can they offer a range of types of education qualifications and we pick which one we want if they didn't have what we wanted we would go somewhere else.
- Feedback on employees could be improved - written reports would be helpful from tutors at college - say every 2 months.
- More flexible availability of courses e.g. distance learning.
- Facilities improvement and less bureaucracy.
- Better communication/administration with vet nurses dept.
- Replace NVQs with more suitable courses. Improve liaison between college and employer.
- Improve management and admin listening skills.
- Everything is good, easy to deal with, straight forward.
- Keeping posted on available courses which are relevant.
- We haven't really had enough dealings with them to know at this time.
- Get rid of all the red tape.
- More experienced teachers.
- A little bit more feedback.
- More thorough with training i.e. attention to RCVS nursing syllabus.
- Less bureaucracy.
- Make the course 2 years instead of 1.
- Regular newsletters.
- More regular reporting, say twice a term with more detail about performance.
- Establish a better rapport and design with us a good course and reply to our contacts and emails.
- Come out to practice more.
- Raise the age limit up from 25.
- Better communications.
- More feedback on progress of student.
- Inform students better about course work requirements in work place.
- It was difficult for our businesses just to get them to verify the work based load - although I have to retake some parts.
- They provide a very good service to us. Perhaps provide more advanced services.
- It would be helpful to have more details of the prospectuses to know what the students are doing from week to week so you can help them as they go along. For them to make it clear to the students and employer how the different levels progress.
- Keep moving forward.
- Improve communication system - staff are too hard to get hold of. Better service for feedback and marking.
- Let you know when problems with students at earliest stage.
- Provide attendance sheets.
- Teaching more mechanics.
- More contact with business.
- Need training in up to date skills especially the commercial aspects - floristry uses fewer labour-intensive techniques.
- Increase the proportion of training re machinery in syllabus.
- More visits to shops.
- Communication.
- More regular consultations.
- Produce more commercially aware students.
- Ongoing reports, awareness of what's available.
- Better instructors.
- Better communication.
- Supply of tools could improve.

Sussex Downs College

- Just give more information on the course.
- Improve their web response.
- Be more available over holidays.
- Carry on what they are doing.
- LSC Subsidy to allow the voluntary sector to be subsidised via lower prices. To invite voluntary sector business via cheaper courses.
- Put more thought into the timings of their courses for adults.
- Nothing much. Very good initially.
- Nothing, we are quite happy.
- Contact more.

Employer Satisfaction Survey 2004

- They could ensure NVQ people should understand it better.
- Continue improving liaison.
- A certification for the assertiveness training course.
- Be more business like. Have greater contact with the clients. A brochure of the services available.
- More middle management courses.
- Better feedback.
- Need better facilities and more practical stuff.
- Regular course feedback.
- Marketing is poor cant find them easily.
- More information given out. Evaluations could be improved.
- Extending their training and assessment. I.e. greater feedback as well as a certificate. Greater relevance to your jobs function.
- Catering.
- Become more efficient and respond to correspondence etc.
- Advertise better. More awareness for business.
- Office visits can be disruptive.
- Keep employees knowing of changes.
- They could have one consistent trainer for the entire duration of the course.
- Study the business more so that they can come from a business point of view.
- More geared to our specialism - fuel injection etc.
- Nothing, I was satisfied.
- Vary courses in plumbing and heating.
- A lot more feedback to us, they are stuck in old times, they don't teach things that are relevant nowadays.
- Isn't much more they can do offer more out of hours training.
- Food facilities are very poor.
- Distinguish between NVQ 2s and 3s and improve their teaching. Staff stability and retention.
- Better feedback end of term reports.
- Structure and correspondence.
- Keep us more up to date generally.
- Permit long term sick people to continue course attendance if at all feasible.
- Course run lengths could be better organised.
- From a personal point of view, send a list of the different courses as I don't get to see them.
- No gripes at all.
- Fewer forms to fill in.
- Course help, further education help, more information in general about courses.
- Not much, I'm very happy. Maybe inform of further courses.
- College needs to have better control over their staff.
- To be stricter and to provide back to basics training. Stricter training and an exam.
- More hassle free correspondence.
- Answer customer complaints.
- Go back to apprenticeships.
- More feedback for the individual student.
- Couldn't say as have only had few dealings with them.
- Knowledgeable staff needed when dealing with finance.
- Communicate more. They need to make more contact with clients if there are problems.
- Need to publicise courses more, really have to seek info if you have not had prospectus readily available.
- Already send info on courses, can't be improved, it's quite good.
- Make the course cheaper.
- Provide more public courses.
- Better administration so that they can act like a training college rather than an academic college.
- More information, more communication.
- Administration needs to improve, it was very poor. They need to brief those who wish to improve our services better.
- We would like to get a mailing list of different courses, would like regularly.
- I think that the subsidies on the first aid courses have been cut and we want them back.
- Make the class numbers suitable to the facilities. Too many students.
- Link up refresher course schedules.
- Nothing to improve.
- Provide me with a written report on the candidate's progress. An identify any problems.

Appendix D – What do you particularly like about the training/service provided by the college.

Chichester College

- Always have people who are in retail and have practical understanding.
- Better than other local colleges more in tune.
- Flexibility.
- Friendly atmosphere, buildings are shabby.
- Friendly support.
- Gives opportunities for us to take on apprentices.
- Good contact, proactive.
- Good on problem solving.
- Good range of facilities.
- Good structure.
- Good theory.
- Hands on experience timing is sometimes poor though.
- I'm not close enough to comment on this.
- In House.
- It does its job.
- It's adequate for my girls, the location is good.
- It's all good.
- Just very good in general.
- Keeps staff up to date good with standards.
- Like the high standards.
- Local.
- Nothing.
- One on one with verifier as a contact is better than previous larger number of people, and having a verifier who is knowledgeable in my area is important.
- Quite comprehensive.
- Second to none.
- Seems to be better than the one at Worthing, it appears to be bigger and better at Chichester.
- Start off on the right foot.
- Tailored to individual employee.
- They are there for students.
- The interviewing of school applicants meant a good referral to the company.
- The training we need is successful.
- Think they allow people to train on the job.
- Very receptive to requests.

City College Brighton and Hove

- Absolutely nothing.
- Accessible, a good range of services and courses.
- All there.
- Always very willing to help.
- Ease of access, location.
- Easy to contact.
- Flexible.
- Flexible, approachable.
- Access.
- Good at listening and matching courses to business needs.
- Good image.
- Good personal support.
- Good service.
- Good tutors.
- I don't like anything about them, but I have no option but to use them, there's no other provider in the area.
- Impressed with their ability to cope with disabled staff.
- It used to be good but in last years it has deteriorated badly.
- It has appropriate level courses in a reasonable location.
- It's the only one in the area that offered to courses we wanted.

Employer Satisfaction Survey 2004

- It's the only one in the area that provided that service.
- Liked the feel of the group I was in, it became a good social aspect to the college which helped me.
- Liked the staff, they were knowledgeable and friendly. The paperwork was excessive, should concentrate more on the practical side of the course.
- Local to us.
- Locality.
- Locality and Convenience.
- Location, ease of access.
- Location is important. The girls have enjoyed going.
- Locations, it's near.
- No.
- No problems.
- Some courses are very good but in this instance the last evening courses in level 2 Java Script and X HTML also ONC Level 3 in MXL especially the latter in fact we still have not received certificates for either course.
- The course was beneath what I wanted and the college was not the ideal.
- The GBCT was excellent but the college let them down.
- The library was probably the best part of the course and the internet.
- The training course excellent. Administration around it not so hot.
- They are really easy to get hold of and knowledgeable about the subjects.
- Very flexible and accommodating.
- Wide range of courses did not like the way they cancelled courses without sufficient notice, focusing on too many age related people.

Crawley College

- Accessible and close.
- Advice and skills from college staff - very supportive.
- Close good facilities.
- Comprehensive range.
- Cost is big consideration.
- Courses at reasonable rates and a varied curriculum.
- Effort and commitment is excellent and enthuses students.
- Facilities are good.
- Friendly, close.
- Friendly, its professional, the willingness to discuss issues, they will talk things through. Flexibility, I have a close working relationship with people at the college, support from co-ordinator who is linked to me, the link to other networks introduced me to.
- General layout could have been improved.
- Good pupil teacher ratio.
- Good to network.
- Had what we were looking for at that time.
- Happy to tailor training.
- Informative.
- It can be work based, the business school bit we are dealing with, their knowledge of the NVQ that they are actually delivering.
- It fits the needs of our organisation.
- It was commercially aware.
- It was the personalities involved in the training - unfortunately they have left.
- It's cost effective.
- It's easy for our staff to get to and its close, prices are quite reasonable.
- Its local.
- It's made for you, its tailored, its delivered.
- It's minimum hassle for us, we have good rapport with the admin staff there.
- It's not been brilliant but there is one tutor who is very good, we have had a lot of contact with her and she is brilliant, we can talk to her and she always contacts us.
- It's provided in a format that everyone can understand.
- It's the tutors .
- Linked quite well with the store.
- Local.
- Local, good engineering, the employees like it.
- Locality.
- Modern, progressive.

Employer Satisfaction Survey 2004

- Not very acceptable.
- Staff are very approachable.
- Teachers good - high success rate.
- The assessors that come into the workplace are always down to earth.
- The internal verifier is extremely good.
- The location, which is local to us.
- The relevance of the subject.
- The staff - they are easy to get hold of, their feedback is excellent, they always make me aware of any problems that might be looming.
- The support they give is good when it's in place.
- The variety of courses.
- They do a side variety of training and their learning resources centre is quite good.
- They regularly update me with information, the cost is on par or cheaper and the location is very central.
- Training service is a JTL scheme anyway.
- Very helpful and good communication.

Hastings College

- Efficient. Happy trainee.
- Falls into modern apprentice scheme and is a good relevant professional course.
- Good rapport with lecturers, good relationship, therefore good for students and results.
- Hassle free.
- Hastings have better and more up to date equipment. Refurbished buildings and they seem to have better funding than our previous college of Eastbourne.
- It encourages young people to seek a trade.
- It was quite specialist to our needs which was great.
- Lecturers give a good overview of what is provided and what is required by the employer.
- Local.
- Local, easy to liaise with tutors.
- Not particularly the practical side, more the theory that we cant do in the work environment/salon.
- On an individual basis only, certain assessors were very good and helpful but they can be hindered by their own lack of info from admin. The structure of apprentice schemes are under change. We will have to wait to see if it works but the change is a positive.
- Professional training.
- The feedback from the tutor.
- The feedback is good, results.
- Their interest in the trainee and follow up.
- They are accessible, they help the girls with the worksheets and any problems, they bring out laptops to help the girls with, regular with their visits.

Northbrook College

- Accessibility and a wide variety of courses.
- Catered well for mature students.
- Cost is very useful have recognised qualifications and location is good.
- Courses mainly, location and cost.
- Don't know, but generally it is quite good.
- Encouraging work experience.
- Evening courses are great for people that work full time.
- Give a high standard.
- Good facilities and computer access and very good library.
- Good location, on hand tutors, support and guidance are good.
- Happen to be more accessible.
- I appreciated that organising it was very easy. The lady I dealt with was extremely helpful and this prompts me to have a further look at the courses available - helpful lady was Julie hunt.
- I like the fact that the training is away from the residential home and also at the home.
- In the electrical courses they are irregular and oversubscribed, they need more courses.
- It is just the courses are quite clear.
- It is only just satisfactory.
- Location.
- Location and cost.
- No hidden corners everything straightforward.

Employer Satisfaction Survey 2004

- Nothing.
- Nothing in particular.
- Nothing specific.
- Nothing stands out, it is just satisfactory.
- Nova level 4 was a very high standard and motivated staff and raised their professional expectations.
- Reliable and good people skills from tutor.
- Resources are excellent and available up until eight or nine o'clock in the evening which is very useful for business students.
- Terms of the tutors are good - accessibility - cost is OK.
- The courses are relevant to employees but the service is terrible.
- The email address and web sites for courses is very good and helps to be able to contact tutors by email out of hours.
- The location is good.
- The teaching of English as a foreign language was excellent well organised throughout - provided them with exactly what they needed to know and they got the qualification.
- The web site I quite like, enrolment was easy.
- Their cost is kept low in comparison to independent trainers.
- Their engineering centre is very good. It is very relevant to our technical business. Needs the quality of the training and staff, which is very high in that centre and I have chosen this against other colleges because of this.
- There are quite small classes.
- They have largely met our needs until recently and need to keep up this consistent quality.
- Tutors were good.
- Very friendly and understanding, helpful.
- We have always got what we want from them.

Plumpton College

- Always someone there to teach - no absences on the part of the college.
- Casebooks done.
- Continuity, contact with the same person.
- Development skills.
- Easy access.
- Easy access to staff and students when needed, good teaching.
- Excellent tutor and college listens to our needs and is flexible.
- Flexible.
- Floristry dept good, qualified staff and understands the commercial side.
- Friendly place, good on welfare for students and positive attitude.
- Good variety of courses and skill levels.
- Head of course kept you well informed.
- Helpful staff.
- How easy to reach staff.
- I don't have a lot of faith in any colleges.
- I felt a bit more comfortable at this college.
- I went to the college myself so I know the experience.
- It covers what we need it to cover.
- It gives them a degree of technical knowledge.
- It is good that they had a competition between colleges, this is healthy.
- It is local.
- Its very hands on, its got good facilities, its good they can go 1 day out and still do their job, they provide training for us to assess the students.
- Local.
- Local - convenient - know the staff well now - have good knowledge of individual students - awareness of problems.
- Local, good for day release, variety of animals kept there.
- Personal attention.
- Quite diverse in the courses they offer.
- Relaxed environment.
- Some lecturers are outstandingly good.
- Staff are friendly and helpful.
- Tailored, very nice people.
- Teaching staff are good, facilities are good.
- The college protects students from employers who are just after cheap labour.

Employer Satisfaction Survey 2004

- The health and safety was o.k.
- The person I have had working for me hasn't had to attend college they have come to her and work round her working hours.
- Tutor is very good and helpful.
- Very good.
- Very good course, covers lots of areas.
- Very practical.
- We got positive results.
- We have only sent one person so far but are due to use Plumpton again this year.
- We know the college, we've been dealing with them since it opened and its local.

Sussex Downs College

- 1 day a week is good.
- Accommodation was good and the trainer was good.
- Adequate for what we need.
- Generally good service.
- Assessor is great, very committed.
- Availability of the course.
- Brochure was good.
- Capture the employee's attention and imagination - there is no skiving!
- Certainly improved in the last 18months.
- Closely tutored, good facilities.
- Convenient and local.
- Currently the good correspondence.
- Did like that they did have good student/teacher interaction. Good correspondence. Good practical experience.
- Don't know - not my area.
- Easy, local, get what you get for good value. Suits individuals.
- Everything's ok.
- Facilities are very good.
- Fast and efficient.
- Flexible.
- Friendly Atmosphere.
- Good 1 to 1 relationships.
- Good food.
- Good on the phone. Good people.
- Good premises. Modern and clean. Good parking and canteen facilities.
- Good quality lecturers.
- Good relationship with the tutors, better placed for us.
- Good staff, very helpful.
- Good training.
- Hassle free for us. They go and learn and it's fine.
- I just think that they were efficient on what I needed.
- It was a first aid course and the lady was very knowledgeable and friendly, I felt comfortable.
- It was convenient for the junior as it wasn't too far to go.
- It's local and it's easily available.
- Just very good.
- Local.
- Local, closest one, the boys like it.
- Local.
- Locality and some good courses. Did what I wanted it to do.
- Locality is very good and the variety of courses they do are very good for our kind of work, which is a supporting housing project for young girls and children.
- Location and the small class sizes.
- Makes my job easier.
- More efficient than RMI.
- Much the same.
- Nothing.
- Nothing at all, it seems very lightweight.
- Only one college so I don't have a choice.
- Personal experience was good. A good understanding of ideas and the good networking skills (people) provided.
- Quite a good business centre.

Employer Satisfaction Survey 2004

- Relaxed, no pressure. Work at own pace.
- Staff relate well to students.
- Standard of training is good.
- The actual attendance at college rather than distance learning.
- The course was interesting and met my expectations. The trainer actually related the course teaching to my particular course.
- The course we did was excellent.
- The fact that everybody said that the trainer was excellent.
- The fact that it's local.
- The locality, that its close by.
- The locality. The trainer was excellent and made the course lots of fun.
- The location, accessible.
- The main thing is the regular course that I send my students on.
- The skills taught could be applied in the workplace.
- The trainer was superb. She had the relevant experience and was capable of answering questions. Practical teaching.
- They are basic but are regular so I can fit people in who are busy.
- They are extremely good and done at the student's own pace.
- They enjoyed the course immensely. The people and the atmosphere.
- They gave me what they want me to do.
- They have a good reputation.
- They have a professional setup. They are well established and organised. They offer a more comprehensive range of training for staff in the care sector. Reasonable value for money.
- They listen and point you in the right direction.
- They provided the course desired at the right time, price and location.
- Think it was in both cases made it very personal to all people and was made very relaxing and so enjoyable.
- Very enthusiastic.
- Very personal and professional.
- Very Up to date.
- We got what we expected.