

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Blackpool and The Fylde College

May 1995

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education every four years. The inspectorate also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum and gives advice to FEFC's quality assessment committee.

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge and experience in the work they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member who does not work in education and a member of staff from the college being inspected.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are set out in the Council Circular 93/28. During their inspection, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also use a five-point grading scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses. The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – provision which has many strengths and very few weaknesses*
- grade 2 – provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- grade 3 – provision with a balance of strengths and weaknesses*
- grade 4 – provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- grade 5 – provision which has many weaknesses and very few strengths.*

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 53/95

BLACKPOOL AND THE FYLDE COLLEGE

NORTH WEST REGION

Inspected October 1994–January 1995

Summary

Blackpool and The Fylde College provides an extensive range of further and higher education courses for the local population and, increasingly, for students from further afield. In recent years it has extended opportunities to enable students with no formal qualifications to progress from basic courses through to higher education. There are productive partnerships with industry. Liaison with local high schools is well organised. The board of the corporation is effective and has established a sound relationship with the college management. Curriculum and resource management is delegated to five schools within the college. Arrangements for sharing good practice between schools and for close collaboration in cross-curricular initiatives are underdeveloped. Well-qualified and experienced staff have good relations with students. The central student services unit provides a sound service for students. In many areas students are encouraged to review their progress and identify steps for further action. There are examples of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities being well provided for but the college should ensure that all staff receive appropriate support and guidance to cater for the varying needs of students. Students' pass rates for most vocational awards compare favourably with national averages. Adult students are particularly successful. The college should: consider measures to reduce the number of students who leave their courses before completion; continue to improve its quality assurance procedures; revise its student charter as it defines more comprehensive standards of service.

The grades awarded as a result of the inspection are given below.

Aspects of cross-college provision		Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision		1
Governance and management		2
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		2
Quality assurance		2
Resources:	staffing	1
	equipment/learning resources	2
	accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Sciences	2	Health and community care	2
Construction	2	Art and design	1
Engineering	1	Humanities	2
Business	2	Adult basic education	2
Hotel and catering	1	Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3

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INTRODUCTION

1 Blackpool and The Fylde College in Lancashire was inspected in the winter of the academic year 1994-95. Thirty-two inspectors visited the college for a total of 114 days. The college's provision for enrolment and induction of students was inspected in September. Specialist inspection of subject and course programmes and preliminary cross-college investigation took place in the week commencing 24 October 1994. Cross-college inspection was completed in the week commencing 23 January 1995.

2 Inspectors visited 308 learning sessions, examined a sample of students' written and practical work and looked at a range of college documentation. Discussions took place with college governors, managers, teachers, staff responsible for support services, and students. Meetings were held with representatives from local industry, the local community, the Lancashire Area West Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), the careers service, a local high school and Lancaster University. Inspectors attended meetings of the college board and of the college curriculum quality assurance committee.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 Blackpool and The Fylde College is one of the largest colleges providing further and higher education in the north west of England. Its sites are located in the administrative districts of Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre and range from the nautical campus at Fleetwood in the north to the St Annes Campus 17 miles to the south. The administrative centre of the college is at the Bispham site to the north of Blackpool. The town centre complex at Palatine road includes the original site of the Blackpool College of Technology and Art. Sixty-seven smaller centres throughout the area house a large programme of non-examination and leisure classes. The college also provides the education service to prisons at Preston and Kirkham and has a residential/assessment facility for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at Singleton Hall.

4 Blackpool claims to be Europe's busiest seaside resort. The town depends heavily upon tourism, leisure and related services, which between them account for an estimated annual income of £445 million. Recent initiatives, including the centenary celebrations of the Tower and the opening of the world's largest roller coaster at the Pleasure Beach, represent attempts to arrest the drift of tourism away from the coastal resorts of Britain. Manufacturing activity in the area, especially in the aerospace industry, has undergone significant restructuring in response to market and technological change. One in five of the area's working population is employed in the manufacturing industry, compared with just over one in three in the service sector. Several major government agencies are located in the vicinity, including National Savings and the regional centre of the department of social security. A notable feature of the area is the high proportion of small businesses, mainly related to the tourism industry. These account for 55 per cent of business organisations.

5 The college's main catchment area is the narrow coastal strip of urban development between the Ribble and Wyre rivers. Population and employment in the area is subject to seasonal fluctuations associated with the tourist industry. A population of around 316,000 drops by between 4,000 and 7,000 in the winter months when seasonal workers leave the area. Unemployment rates for 1994 varied from 9.7 per cent in the summer months to 8.7 per cent in the winter. Many residents commute to work in Preston, Manchester and other north Lancashire towns. A large retired population, especially on the south Fylde coast, accounts for one in five of the area's residents.

6 Seventeen secondary schools are the main source of the college's intake of school leavers. The increasingly competitive market for 16 year olds includes five schools with sixth forms, the Blackpool Sixth Form College, a college of agriculture at Myerscough and two colleges in the Preston conurbation, all within a 25-mile radius. Private sector training providers also compete for school leavers. Despite the competition and the diversification of some schools into areas such as General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs), the college's overall share of the population of school leavers decreased by only 0.2 per cent in 1994 compared with the previous year. Sixty-one per cent of the area's school leavers entered further education in 1994.

7 Full-time and sandwich programmes of higher education attract approximately 17 per cent of the student population, many coming from other parts of the United Kingdom. Recent growth in student numbers at the college is attributable to higher education students. Total student enrolments on courses of further education declined between the academic years 1991-92 and 1993-94 by just over 9 per cent. Enrolments on courses of higher education increased during the same period by over 25 per cent. Higher education provision has been extended in recent years to include degree programmes in design, hotel and catering and photography. There is also a wide range of higher national diplomas validated by the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC). The college is an associate college of Lancaster University.

8 A business and industrial centre co-ordinates the college's commercial and income-generating activities. There are international links with colleges in other European countries and further afield. The maritime courses at Fleetwood attract students from all over the world.

9 The college's management structure is headed by an executive comprising the principal, deputy principal and two vice-principals. A senior management team consists of the executive plus the directors of finance and quality support, and heads of schools. Teaching programmes in the college are organised into five schools. The school of technology was recently formed from schools of engineering technology, construction and engineering. Other schools include business and information technology, communication and social sciences, management hospitality and food, and general education. The deputy principal manages heads of

schools and staff responsible for marketing, student services, residential services and learning resources. A vice-principal who is college secretary oversees college estates, personnel, registry, finance and management information systems. A second vice-principal is responsible for quality support, research and innovation, the technical and vocational education initiative, prison education, programmes of leisure and recreation, and other work in the community.

10 The mission of the college is to promote personal development through high-quality education and training. The primary aims arising from the mission include:

- to meet local, regional and national needs for employment and training
- to offer flexible-learning opportunities in modes of attendance and learning situations
- to enable students to develop skills to adapt to changes in the employment market
- to provide a learning environment and support which enables students to achieve their aspirations, recognise their potential and develop aspirations for further progress
- to develop a total quality management approach to the design, delivery and evaluation of its services.

11 At the time of the inspection, the college employed 411 full-time equivalent teaching staff and 340 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile with staff expressed as full-time equivalents is shown in figure 1. The number of students enrolled to December 1994 totalled 23,023 which includes 3,912 full-time students. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 2 and 3. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 4.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

12 Blackpool and The Fylde College predominantly serves a local and regional catchment area but it also meets the needs of national and international clients. It has an extensive range of provision which is the product of successive phases of expansion to meet the changing needs of the wider community. It now offers over 500 separate programmes leading to vocational qualifications and general education awards together with a variety of leisure and recreational activities. School leavers and mature students have opportunities to progress in their studies from foundation level to higher education, including degree level. A wide range of professional courses is also available.

13 The range of provision covers the following programmes:

- eight schemes at foundation level
- 21 schemes at first diploma and GNVQ intermediate level
- 20 schemes at national diploma, National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) or GNVQ advanced
- 23 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and 27 General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects
- vocational and professional courses, ranging from NVQ levels 1 to 5
- youth training programmes (as an approved training organisation)
- adult education
- prison education
- higher education provision at sub-degree, undergraduate and postgraduate level
- programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities including residential/assessment facilities.

14 Distinctive features of the provision at Blackpool have been the emphasis on innovation and enterprise in meeting identified needs. This is reflected in a number of curriculum developments in which the college took an early lead, for example in piloting the accreditation of prior achievement, in introducing a full programme of GNVQ at all levels and in launching associate degrees. It has also been active in developing commercial activities and projects with local schools aimed at easing the transition for pupils as they move on to courses at the college. The college plays an important part in the Fylde Education Forum which arose from the technical and vocational education initiative consortium.

15 Each of the college's schools has taken steps to introduce more flexible modes of curriculum delivery and to develop resource-based learning. However, these improvements have yet to be fully co-ordinated across the college. The college recognises that scope exists for developing more comprehensive strategies for open and distance learning and for curriculum modularisation. Both in higher and further education programmes there are examples of courses being tailored to allow students access at different points of entry throughout the year.

16 Full-time students have access to a number of activities which enhance their academic or vocational programmes. A range of educational visits are organised in some subjects and there are a number of societies and sporting activities. These do not form part of a comprehensive or planned college provision but are often developed at school level, particularly in general education. The college should review its current range of provision and make available a more coherent programme.

17 There are well-developed links with industry and employers. There are examples of close working relationships with individual companies at school and course team level. Collaborative partnerships with major firms include the development of off-shore training with British Hydrocarbons, construction and engineering services with British Nuclear Fuels Limited and the delivery of secretarial, information technology, administrative and management training up to NVQ level 5 for British Aerospace. The college receives part-time and evening trainees from over 300 companies. The central marketing unit co-ordinates the arrangements for employers making initial contact with the college. A database of the 60 major companies with which the college works has been established to ensure that a more consistent corporate approach is adopted by individual schools.

18 Income-generating activities are co-ordinated through the college's business and industrial centre. There is a good range of full-cost activity; a significant proportion of total earnings from this work is generated by the school of engineering technology. There are examples of student activity being successfully incorporated into some of this work. For example, in media studies students have developed promotional material, including a sales video, for a local firm.

19 The college has a central marketing unit. It has a well-considered annual marketing plan and an associated calendar of action. The operating statement for the unit is derived from its clearly defined mission. An enthusiastic team of staff conducts the work of the unit; clear roles have been identified for information, recruitment, publicity and market research. Staff across the college recognise the importance of meeting national targets for education and training. The marketing unit regularly provides updates on labour market information and demographic data to schools, to assist in course planning. In a college which has a strong tradition of autonomy at school level, the unit faces particular challenges in securing a corporate approach to marketing activities.

20 A team of staff drawn from across the college, co-ordinated by the recruitment officer in the college marketing team, has successfully developed arrangements for liaison with local schools. Most college promotional material is well presented. A programme, including careers conventions, college presentations in schools and information days, is effectively managed and well received by the schools. Visits by year 11 pupils to the college are appreciated by pupils. More detail on the destinations of students could be reported to feeder schools.

21 Opportunities exist for adults to undertake a wide programme of adult basic education and non-vocational classes. A recent initiative has been to develop accelerated part-time courses which allow adults to choose from a menu of GCSE, GCE A level, open-college and vocational units. The scheme has been tailored to match the interests of people who are unwaged and unemployed. In terms of gaining access to higher education, adults can join open-college courses as an alternative to obtaining more

traditional qualifications. There is also a range of options which provide bridging mechanisms for adults to go on to undergraduate courses.

22 The college enjoys a productive working relationship with the Lancashire Area West TEC and there are a number of well-conceived joint initiatives, including a GNVQ project with four local schools. Special programmes related to local skill shortages have been designed to retrain those who seek to return to work. College staff are represented on some of the Lancashire Area West TEC working groups, for example, those associated with labour market analysis and with the introduction of youth credits.

23 The college has an international dimension to its work. Some of this is undertaken through membership of a commercial consortium, International Resource Development, which has led to overseas projects in Fiji, Kenya, Malaysia and Nigeria. The college has undertaken consultancy work in a range of overseas countries including Eastern Europe. There have been useful benefits for the college from international work, including student placements, residential opportunities and exchange programmes.

24 The college makes provision for students with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Programmes have been carefully structured to enable students to progress from pre-foundation level to mainstream courses. However, more thorough analysis of individual needs would improve the planning of these programmes. Links with external agencies to help students at Singleton Hall make the transition to the next phase of their lives are inadequate.

25 There is an equal opportunities policy statement, which is included in the handbook distributed to students. A committee of staff and students promotes awareness and discussion of a wide range of issues related to equal opportunities. Its terms of reference include the task of monitoring the curriculum to ensure that it reflects college policy. Recent initiatives have included the development of a code of practice covering harassment.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

26 The board of the corporation comprises 12 members including the principal. Six members have experience in business or public services and two are drawn from the professions. One member has considerable experience in regional trade union work, one is a local 11-16 school head teacher and the chairman is a county councillor. A vice-principal acts as clerk to the board. A small remuneration committee, responsible for senior staff salaries, meets annually. The audit committee and the finance and general purpose committee meet simultaneously three times a year. All board members sit on one or the other of these committees and meetings are usually held on the same day as the full board meeting. The agendas for meetings are set on an annual basis and are co-ordinated with the college's planning cycle.

27 Members have a clear view of their role and a strong commitment to the college. They have attended conferences in the United Kingdom and the United States of America as well as other training events as part of their personal development as governors. They played a leading part in determining the college's mission statement. The board receives regular reports from college managers and senior staff brief them on current developments. Meetings of the board are well attended and managers are often rigorously questioned by board members and challenged to account for their actions. Individual members' expertise in law and personnel matters has helped the college's development since incorporation and their commercial experience has been used to develop income-earning activities in some curriculum areas. However, members could have more contact with staff, other than the senior management team, to experience at first hand the challenges which the college faces.

28 The executive consists of the principal, the deputy principal and two vice-principals, one of whom acts as the college secretary. The principal's role has been defined as providing leadership, long-term planning and working with the board. With the support of the board the principal is involved with national and international initiatives which regularly take him out of the college. He delegates responsibility for operational matters in the college to his deputy. The executive has successfully led the college through a period of expansion and change. Many staff would welcome more effective communication from the executive on college strategy and direction. The executive recognises this and has produced a clear statement of management values which is to be disseminated to all staff.

29 The senior management team includes the executive, the heads of the five schools, the director of finance and the quality support manager. It meets once a fortnight, with extra meetings convened as required.

30 Schools play a significant role in the college's management structure. Heads of schools are responsible for managing most operational policies and procedures in their schools, and for delegated budgets that include all staffing, equipment, and accommodation refurbishment costs. They have a clear understanding of their management responsibilities, a strong sense of autonomy and attract the loyalty of their staff. Schools have fostered entrepreneurial approaches to curriculum development which have contributed to the achievement of provision of good quality in many programme areas. The internal competitiveness between them gives rise to tensions, particularly in relation to resource allocation and cross-school curriculum development. For example, the adoption of a largely school-based approach for the management of information technology has led to variations in the extent to which curriculum needs have been met. Some examples exist of whole college initiatives, such as the common funding of an electronic information network. There remain areas, however, where the competitive tensions between schools inhibit co-operation, for example, in GNVQ and GCE A level programme management and the availability of opportunities for full-time students.

31 The internal organisation within each school differs. Some have clear management structures but others, particularly where the school has been recently formed, have less well-developed lines of responsibility. The college recognises that the complexity of operating large and diverse units, often over a number of dispersed sites, can impede the efficient management of resources and the maintenance of effective communications. Regular schedules of meetings, and in some cases staff newsletters, help to alleviate the problems, but instances of poor communication remain.

32 The management of academic programmes is generally effective. There is an effective mechanism for schools to submit proposals for new courses to the executive who scrutinise them for viability and the match to market needs.

33 The planning cycle in the college is clear and understood at all levels of management. Heads of schools are required to produce detailed annual development plans to common headings. The most comprehensive school plans include details of responsibilities and target dates for action. These plans are considered individually by the deputy principal who clarifies issues or negotiates changes, prior to their incorporation into the college development plan. In the majority of schools, individual course or programme leaders are active in the school planning process. Some staff, however, expressed a lack of awareness of the process and of the opportunity to contribute towards it. School plans are used routinely by the heads to monitor their school's performance and a review of progress is submitted with the following year's plan.

34 Heads of schools and other managers are supported in their work by a comprehensive operations document. This outlines the academic framework of the college, includes all the college policies and gives some detailed guidelines and procedures to be followed. College policy documents vary significantly in style, length and content. As schools are charged with managing their activities within the framework of these policies, the college might usefully review both their presentation and distribution to ensure that those who need to act on them are fully aware of their contents. Policies and procedures applying to the provision at Singleton Hall are being reviewed and developed, but currently they offer insufficient protection to students.

35 The college has recently established an academic board with a sub-group for curriculum quality assurance and an innovation network. This network has a number of associated groups including the forum for course managers responsible for degree-level programmes; a research group bringing together those staff actively engaged in research in their various subject areas; and a curriculum initiatives forum that consists of a number of groups of staff responsible for shared initiatives in the schools. The introduction of GNVQ schemes across the college was supported by one of the curriculum initiative groups. Although responsibility for

delivering these GNVQs lies within the schools, the work of the group continues in relation to the cross-college foundation level scheme and curriculum links with secondary schools. The learning resources initiatives group was influential in promoting the new information technology network. It is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of the academic board but its role and constitution are not well understood by staff and its decisions could be more effectively communicated to them.

36 The centralised management information system is administered by a professional team. Through a communications network it offers basic support for student records and finance, but as yet there are no links between these two elements of the system. The college recognises that the system does not yet meet the needs of a large multi-site college. Administration staff share a network, but there are some incompatibilities between computer systems and there is no coherent use of facilities such as electronic mail. Some hardware is in need of updating. Work has started on the installation of a multi-site communications network which is designed to provide administrative and curriculum links between college sites and to link with other networks both in the United Kingdom and overseas.

37 The college's total recurrent funding from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) for 1994-95, as recorded in the FEFC report, *Funding Allocations 1994-95*, is £11,949,009. The college's average level of funding is recorded as £18.24 per unit. This compares with the median average level of funding for general further education and tertiary colleges of £18.17 and the median for the sector of £19.01. Summaries of the college's income and expenditure for the 16 months to July 1994 are shown in figures 5 and 6. Almost half the college income comes from the FEFC and two-thirds of its expenditure is on staffing. The director of finance has recently joined the senior management team but is not a member of the executive. No member of the board has a formal qualification in finance. The college is actively seeking to clarify with the FEFC the future funding arrangements for Singleton Hall so that planning can commence for the forthcoming academic year.

38 The college revised its procedure for allocating funds to cost centres in 1994, to take account of the unit approach introduced by the FEFC. Some key staff in schools are not fully aware of the unit approach to funding and its implications for their area of work. A transitional arrangement has been made to cushion the effect of a loss of income to some schools where the new method reduces their allocation below 90 per cent of their 1993-94 figure. In some schools a major restructuring of income and expenditure is required to meet the unit-based budget. Some action has already been taken to meet the shortfall of income, for example through the expansion of higher education provision, the early retirement of some staff and a reduction in taught hours on courses. A variety of financial control systems operate across schools.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

39 A well-organised student services unit provides effective support and guidance. Based in a building housing the students association at Bispham, it has offices on all main sites. Records show that the unit attracts an average of 250 to 300 student users each week. A team of suitably-qualified staff offer impartial pre-course information and guidance, counselling and welfare services. The unit has, over the last year, attempted to work more closely with the college's schools which make their own arrangements for recruiting students to courses. Progress is being made to ensure a more consistent approach across schools in areas such as record keeping, career action planning, diagnostic testing and tutorial provision. After some early reluctance, schools generally welcome the attempt to standardise practice and staff now recognise the benefits of such an approach. The process has been assisted by a recently formed committee of guidance co-ordinators, chaired by the head of student services, which brings together co-ordinators from each school.

40 Much of the college publicity material is of a very high standard. The college is keen to raise its corporate image through the use of the college logo on all publicity materials and has produced a manual to ensure that they are designed in a common house style. The prospectus is a colourful and clearly illustrated handbook which lists the courses on offer and the support services available. The marketing team makes effective use of the materials, in particular through its school liaison activities, when initial guidance is offered to prospective students.

41 Schools use a variety of practices to identify students' needs for additional learning support. This is generally carried out informally, either through individuals asking for help or through personal tutor or subject tutor referral. This results in an uneven level of support both within and across the schools for students who have learning difficulties. A newly-appointed cross-college co-ordinator is working with schools to identify and implement student entitlement to learning support. Some schools have used tests produced by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, or similar standard screening tests, to identify basic skills needs. However, support has been taken up by only a small number of students. Where students' support needs attract additional funding, there is a comprehensive support service and students' needs are well met.

42 The college offers to accredit students for their prior achievement in most subject areas. In some areas such as business and catering, all students following NVQ and GNVQ programmes are given sound guidance on the accreditation of prior achievement and they are helped to collect the evidence required. In these areas, fully-qualified advisers work effectively with internal candidates and assessors in a range of workplaces. In some other subject areas the accreditation of prior achievement service requires better promotion.

43 Arrangements for students' enrolment are well organised and there are clear and detailed procedures for staff carrying out administrative and guidance functions. The marketing unit effectively channels requests for information to schools. Over the summer period 1,000 enrolments generated over £20,000 of early fee payment. Successful arrangements were made to enrol students from key employers on their own premises.

44 College-wide guidelines on induction have been set by the student services unit but allow for a degree of interpretation by schools. In the best practice induction involved students in stimulating, informative activities which helped them to decide whether or not they had chosen the right course. In some schools, group visits and team building exercises formed part of the induction process. In a few cases, induction involved an over-emphasis on regulations and sessions where students were passive recipients of information. The college's student handbook is useful and informative, but the quality and style of supplementary school and programme information vary considerably. Following induction, opportunities exist for students to transfer between courses. This is more easily arranged if the new course is within the same school than if administrative boundaries between schools have to be crossed.

45 All full-time students have a personal tutor and students appreciate the help they receive. Tutors have had appropriate training and a handbook for tutors, produced by the student services unit, provides a useful framework and list of tutor responsibilities. However, the time tutors give to tutorial work and their tutoring styles vary. Tutors in some schools record their guidance activities and use these records as a means of identifying students at risk.

46 Careers guidance is available from three sources. There is an agreement with external careers advisers to offer general careers advice, either at their own offices or on their regular visits to the college; there is a student careers adviser based within student services; and personal tutors also provide advice through their regular contact with students in their tutor groups. Careers education is rarely a timetabled activity except in general education and where tutors give advice to applicants for higher education. Student services offer a useful facility for psychometric and aptitude testing as a part of careers counselling.

47 Students on some programmes, including general education and engineering, are encouraged to maintain records of achievement. Students can use computers to wordprocess their statements and have them printed in an appropriate format. Students at Singleton Hall, however, have no record of achievement which reflects their progress over the whole curriculum. The college should ensure that all schools provide encouragement for students to update their records of achievement.

48 Students have access to counselling support both through the personal tutor system and the professional counselling services available in the student services building. Several staff within schools already possess

counselling qualifications and the college plans to offer training in counselling techniques to tutors.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

49 In 68 per cent of the sessions inspected, strengths clearly outweighed weaknesses. Only 5 per cent of the 308 sessions had more weaknesses than strengths. The following table summarises the grades given for the classes inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Access to higher education		3	6	3	0	0	12
GCE AS/A level		6	18	14	2	0	40
Basic education		3	5	2	1	0	11
GCSE		4	5	7	2	0	18
GNVQ		11	23	16	4	0	54
NVQ		16	28	13	0	0	57
Other vocational		28	23	17	1	0	69
Higher education		4	1	0	1	0	6
Other		6	18	13	4	0	41
Total		81	127	85	15	0	308

50 In science, teaching is of a high quality and teachers have a sound knowledge of their subject. There are comprehensive schemes of work and lessons are well planned. Students on the GNVQ course are given the opportunity to develop as independent learners by taking responsibility for planning activities and assessing their own achievements. Teaching takes due account of students' previous experience and learning, although not all teachers thoroughly check students' understanding of topics. In most lessons, practical activities and theoretical topics are well integrated. Practical work is carried out in a professional manner with due regard to health and safety regulations. A handbook for biological science students provides them with good support for developing laboratory investigative skills, study skills and reporting skills, as well as guiding them through their course of study.

51 In the better classes, in mathematics and computing, students are well motivated and engaged in a range of tasks. In one outstanding open-college computing session, mature students obtained support and encouragement which was tailored to the needs of adults. Teaching sessions seen are well planned, and there are good relationships between staff and students. However, in several sessions, particularly in mathematics, the pace of teaching is insufficiently challenging and students

are asked to undertake only a limited range of activities. In some mathematics classes set tasks take insufficient account of the differing needs of students. Some students are unclear about the purpose and need for supervised private study periods.

52 In construction, staff have a sound knowledge and experience of the construction industry which they convey to students in a helpful and supportive manner. Schemes of work are generally of a high quality. Many lessons are challenging. Teachers actively involve students in class activities and check their understanding of previous work. Teachers use a range of audio-visual aids and vary their presentation of material to develop and maintain students' interest. Group work is encouraged, especially in BTEC programmes. In workshops, appropriate levels of activity are conducted with due regard to safety. The college has developed imaginative and realistic training facilities to develop students' competence in construction trades. Students' core skills are comprehensively developed in BTEC programmes but to a lesser extent in programmes leading to NVQ qualifications. The criteria used for assessment on some BTEC programmes lack clarity and objectivity. Some assessment materials used in the construction craft area are poorly reproduced.

53 In maritime studies, staff have a good rapport with their students. All teaching programmes have clear schemes of work. The standard of teaching is generally good. A variety of teaching methods is used and the pace of work is appropriate in most cases. Thorough records of students' achievements are kept by teachers and students are regularly informed of their progress. Assignments are well defined, present appropriate challenges to students and identify the outcomes expected of them. Work is conscientiously marked. The additional workshop unit in one course is a particularly good feature of provision which allows students to develop skills in constructing, testing and diagnosing faults in electronic systems. This unit includes a project in which students construct and commission items of test equipment for use during later stages of their course.

54 Teaching and the promotion of learning in mechanical and manufacturing engineering is generally of a high standard. In a few sessions the pace of presentation is too slow, the level of work undemanding or too much reliance is placed on dictation or students copying information from the board. Teachers, who are well qualified and knowledgeable in their subjects, draw on their own and students' industrial experience to illustrate aspects of the work. The principles of engineering and their application in industry are regularly highlighted and discussed. Course documentation, including attendance records, is scrupulously maintained. Coursework and assignments are challenging. Teachers are conscientious in their marking of work and in their recording of students' progress. Marked work is returned promptly. Project work carried out as part of a full-time BTEC higher national certificate programme in engineering is a notable aspect of the provision. The project

is industry based and starts with students being required to identify and arrange their own work placement. Students are given help in writing a curriculum vitae, identifying job opportunities and composing letters of application. Once a work placement is arranged, each student selects a project topic with the help of the work placement provider. Teachers visit each student on a regular basis to provide guidance on the project and to assess progress.

55 Business studies teachers are refreshingly self-critical in their approach to their work. They display versatility and respond positively to the numerous curricular changes and developments which are taking place. Some staff have recent commercial experience and maintain good contacts with their professional bodies. Good teaching occurs across the provision and this has been sustained even where recent staff changes have occurred. Activities are designed to provide students with a varied learning experience. A brisk but appropriate teaching pace in many lessons is accompanied by clear learning objectives and good cross-referencing between subject topics. There are well-planned opportunities for students to build their confidence through role play, problem solving and through working in realistic environments. Teachers regularly check students' understanding and comprehension of business concepts. On GNVQ courses there are good learning packages which help students develop communication skills early in their course. However, there is insufficient opportunity for students to develop numeracy skills and some instances where students' learning in group work is not properly consolidated. The wide range of ability and behaviour of students on the GNVQ intermediate course on occasion disrupts the otherwise effective classroom discipline. There are good examples of teachers and students rigorously negotiating the content of portfolios of work to provide suitable evidence for the assessment of students' achievements on NVQ management courses.

56 In catering, standards of professional practice are high. Sessions are characterised by careful planning and a variety of aids is used to promote students' learning. In class, teachers maintain a good balance between supporting students in their work and allowing them to develop at their own pace by taking responsibility for their own learning. NVQ courses are a major strength of the work in catering. They are taught very effectively and promote the development of students' core skills. The standard of food produced on them is often high. A particularly good theory class for students on an NVQ intermediate course in catering focused on issues relating to health and safety at work by referring to the safety aspects of the environment in which the students were working. The session was also used to allow students to collect information for their portfolios of work. In another example of good practice, a teacher gave a sparkling presentation on the topic of marketing to a group of students on a BTEC higher national certificate course in hospitality, catering and institutional

management. The teacher referred to examples drawn from everyday life, and the employment experience of students, to illustrate aspects of marketing in a proper professional context. Teachers use target setting and performance review on a regular basis to stimulate students' learning and to monitor their progress. However, the written feedback on students' assignment work is sometimes too sparse to be helpful.

57 Teachers of leisure and tourism courses are well qualified. Several teachers have recent experience in the industry which is used to good effect. In the majority of classes the teachers use a number of strategies to enliven their presentation and to challenge students. Written assignments are reviewed in a constructive dialogue between students and their teachers. Courses provide good opportunities for students to develop their information technology skills. Students make good use of opportunities to learn from their work placements and from industrial visits organised as part of their college-based work. Although the overall provision for GNVQs is well managed, few GCE A level subjects and no NVQ units are available to students to supplement their study. Students do not fully understand the assessment criteria and so they are not clear how their final GNVQ summative grades are determined nor, in some instances, the basis upon which individual assignments are judged to be of a standard worthy of merit or distinction.

58 In health care, teachers bring a wealth of industrial and teaching experience to their work and this is reflected in classroom practice. Considerable efforts are made to relate theory to professional health care practice. Work placement opportunities are well integrated into courses, providing enjoyable and relevant assignment work. Literacy, numeracy and information technology are successfully incorporated and integrated into students' programmes of study. In some classes the pace of teaching is too slow for the more able students; in others, not all students are encouraged to make an effective contribution to class activity. Lessons are sometimes teacher directed for long periods of time; the three-hour teaching sessions should be subdivided into a series of shorter activities to aid students' learning. Where GNVQ students take additional units taught by staff from other schools there is inadequate communication between tutors about students' progress.

59 Hairdressing and beauty therapy is taught by enthusiastic staff. A range of approaches and a variety of aids are used to promote learning. Good links are demonstrated between all parts of the curriculum and core skills development is assisted by relevant information technology timetabled sessions. Schemes of work and lesson plans take account of students' differing levels of ability and reinforce links between elements of the curriculum. Good use is made of learning packages in modular-based programmes. Careful records are kept of students' achievements; students are aware of their progress against targets which have been identified and agreed with teachers. Some students of beauty therapy have encountered

difficulties because of delays in accrediting their course and the changes which have been made to their programme of study.

60 In art and design the teaching ensures that different elements of the curriculum are clearly linked. Staff work effectively to maintain good group dynamics and activities in many sessions build on students' previous experience. Interactive teaching on most programmes generally stimulates a high level of response. Of particular note is the recently introduced integrated programme of music and dance: two groups of students explore rhythm and dynamics and then acquire a range of skills which they build naturally into more demanding choreography and musical composition. Assignments are planned to ensure good coverage of the curriculum and they are particularly systematic on the GNVQ programme. On most courses, up-to-date records are kept of the regular assessment and grading of students.

61 In almost all cases the schemes of work developed by teachers of modern foreign languages provide them with useful support for their lesson planning. Where students are following a GNVQ course, the lessons and content are in some instances carefully aligned to its vocational aspects. Assignments are assessed according to clearly-stated criteria and procedures which have been communicated to students. Elsewhere in language teaching there is some inconsistency in the marking of students' written work. Some staff make extensive use of the foreign language although there are many instances of the unnecessary use of English in class. The pace of the work is often good and some teachers make good use of video and other audio-visual aids. In GCE A level language work, students are set challenging tasks. In a session involving discussion of a text students responded with sophisticated and knowledgeable comments. However, there is little differentiation in the teaching to deal with students' individual needs within groups. In several sessions, a number of students remained uninvolved because they could not cope with the demands of the work, both written and oral. Some tasks which teachers set are inappropriate for the level of course or for the skill being developed.

62 In teacher education, geography and history, the relationships between teachers and students are relaxed and conducive to learning. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and most have considerable experience of teaching. Varied approaches are adopted to promote learning and a balance is maintained between teacher presentations and student activities. Resource materials are of high quality and provide effective support for the learning. Sessions are usually clearly linked with the work previously covered. Although most work in geography and history is carefully marked with detailed summary comments by teachers, there is no common marking policy nor planned follow-up activity for the student.

63 In English, teaching is generally sound and the teaching of adults and GCE A level courses is consistently good. Relationships between staff and students are friendly and support for individual students is good. Most sessions include clear exposition by teachers and appropriate tasks set for students. In the best sessions, there is a range of tasks and strategies which engage students in demanding activities and provide effective support for their learning. In a small number of poorer sessions, teaching was unstructured, poorly planned and lacked pace. The planning of GCE A level courses is coherent and well structured although for open-college and GCSE courses it is more variable. Some staff keep detailed lesson records; marking and assessment is generally thorough, systematic and accurate, particularly for GCE A level course work.

64 Sociology and psychology lessons are well prepared and effectively taught. Teachers frequently test students' understanding by direct and group questioning. Course work and assignments are regularly set and marked. Teachers use a judicious mix of overhead projector transparencies, video recorders and whiteboards to enrich their presentations. In some classes, students are expected to design practical research exercises which they then carry out as part of their course. They are provided with good photocopied material to supplement the information acquired from textbooks.

65 In adult basic education, teachers are enthusiastic and supportive and students enjoy their work. Most staff are exceptionally competent at helping students to learn at their own pace and work hard to provide tasks of an appropriate level for the individual. Some less experienced staff have difficulty coping with the teaching methods of adult basic education. Others are adept at assessing students' individual needs and at quickly establishing the rapport needed for successful work. Students are given opportunities to achieve in all the areas of reading, writing, numeracy and basic skills. However, the more able are not always fully stretched and those changing groups sometimes have to repeat work unnecessarily. There are very few examples of computers being used as an aid to learning.

66 On programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities staff provide good support. Staff recognise the importance of defining the overall aim of a student's programme and a good start has been made in establishing individual programmes for students. Lessons are well organised and the learning materials in use are appropriate for the age of the students. In one particularly good session in a catering kitchen, students with learning difficulties were preparing food for sale in the college's bistro; in so doing they were able to learn vocational skills and see the relevance and purpose of their work in a real working environment. However, much teaching is driven by the need to produce evidence for external accreditation rather than to meet students' needs. There is too great an emphasis on teacher-directed, whole-group tasks which do not encourage students to take responsibility for contributing to their own learning. Core skills are often taught in isolation from vocational

work and insufficient use is made of information technology. Particular weaknesses of the provision are the arrangements for the assessment and recording of students' progress in the residential accommodation at Singleton Hall.

67 The college promotes access to mainstream courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as part of its commitment to give equality of opportunity to all students. In business studies, the students on GNVQ courses at foundation level and intermediate level are sensitively supported by committed staff. Engineering staff provide appropriate support to students with learning difficulties through their vocational studies. The level of support received by catering students is more variable. Some overseas students with a limited command of English receive good support and additional help from teachers when this is needed. A leisure and tourism student with a severe physical disability has successfully completed a GNVQ intermediate course. The student has progressed to, and is enjoying, a GNVQ advanced course. A number of students with moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities study on mainstream care programmes. Each student is supported by a member of staff who is well briefed on their individual needs and additional care support is given if required. Students are encouraged to participate fully in class activities and they receive good support from other students. In languages, students with learning difficulties are given insufficient support, partly because of the nature of the tasks they are asked to carry out and partly because of the teaching strategies adopted.

68 The college makes good provision for adult students. In mathematics and computing, for instance, several sessions are provided specifically for adults, including open-college courses and classes for mature part-time students. In catering and leisure, most classes contain adults who integrate well with younger students. Outstandingly good support is provided for adult students on the BTEC higher national certificate course in hotel, catering and institutional management. Creche facilities are part of the support provided for mature students in health and care. In sociology and psychology, adult students often form a large proportion of classes at all levels, both during the day and in the evening. The teaching approach adopted is appropriate to their needs.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

69 Students are well motivated; the majority work purposefully and enjoy their studies. Significant numbers of students completing their courses go on to higher levels of provision in the college.

70 In the majority of courses, students demonstrate a good grasp of course content and are able to apply their knowledge and skills effectively within the context of their chosen subject or vocational area. The standard of student achievement in written work is at a level appropriate to course objectives. On GCE A level programmes, written work often reveals a good grasp of subject knowledge and understanding. Assignments on

vocational courses show evidence of suitable expression and presentation of material. Some impressive project work on higher level courses demonstrates that students can apply concepts to real work situations. The range and quality of reading undertaken by many students on both academic and vocational courses is limited, however, and scope exists on some courses to develop students' study skills more.

71 The development of students' oral and communication skills is a prominent feature of many courses; most students are able to express their ideas clearly and unambiguously. By the second year of most BTEC and GNVQ courses, students clearly gain confidence in group work and presentational skills. In visual and performing arts, students develop the ability to express their ideas in creative and experimental ways. On vocational courses where foreign languages are offered as an option, gains in fluency and linguistic skills are sometimes limited as a result of insufficient practice in using the language.

72 Levels of achievement in practical work are consistently good and generally well integrated with theory. The engineering workshop enables the effective development of craft skills. There are excellent facilities for sea safety and survival to allow students on maritime courses to develop specialist skills. In general, students' attention to safety standards and awareness in workshop and practical areas is good. In hair and beauty, catering, leisure and in business studies, the use of work placements and realistic working environments enable students to develop both specialist knowledge and practical competence.

73 Most students have opportunities to develop their information technology skills effectively and to build on their varying degrees of prior experience. On some GNVQ programmes, teaching strategies enable students to develop their information technology skills at a pace consistent with their ability and experience. Not all students are able to develop these skills fully within their programme of study, sometimes because of a lack of access to appropriate equipment, or, as in a number of engineering courses, because these skills are insufficiently represented in assignment work.

74 Across a substantial range of the college provision on both full-time and part-time courses, there are wide variations in the proportion of students who complete their courses. On two-year courses, student dropout is largely concentrated in the first year and there are generally good rates of completion for those who continue to the second year of their studies. Retention rates for many of the full-time and part-time courses are, however, poor. The college closely monitors retention rates, and its presentation of examination data compares pass rates against those entered and against the numbers initially enrolled.

75 Students aged 16-18 entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1993-94 scored on average 3.7 points per entry (where A=10, E=2). This places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further

education sector on this performance measure based on the data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education. Information provided by the college shows that the average pass rate for full-time GCE A level students at grades A-E was 74 per cent for 1993-94. This compares with a provisional pass rate for further education sector colleges of 68 per cent. Achievements were below national averages in chemistry, biology, sociology, computing, business studies, English literature and German. The college operates an open-access policy on recruitment to these programmes. In view of the achievements of some students at entry, the college might usefully review how appropriate their choice of subject was, particularly in the context of high drop-out rates on some subjects.

76 College data for 1994 shows that, for GCSE examinations in all subjects, 55 per cent of full-time students who completed their courses achieved passes at grades A-C. Results in sciences, computer studies, sociology and history were poor. Pass rates for part-time and evening students were 65 per cent and 70 per cent respectively; adult students in general are achieving well.

77 The outcomes for NVQ courses at levels 1 to 3 show a high proportion of students gaining awards, including a good number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who achieve NVQ level 1 certification. Success at NVQ levels 4 and 5 is significantly lower, due to students leaving before the end of their courses, but outcomes are not dissimilar to the national picture. There are good pass rates across the college's range of higher national certificate courses.

78 Pass rates on full-time intermediate programmes for GNVQ are at or above national norms for art and design, business studies, health and social care, and leisure and tourism. Poorer results were evident on the BTEC national diploma in technology and GNVQ science. At advanced level GNVQ, outcomes were generally high, with pass rates ranging from 76 per cent to 100 per cent. The tables published by the Department for Education in 1994 indicate that 69 per cent of students aged 16-18 were successful in achieving their vocational qualifications in 1994. This places the college in the bottom third of colleges in the sector on this performance measure. However, the college has revised its returns to the department to show that, in 1994, 81 per cent of 16-18 year old students achieved their vocational qualifications. On this basis, the college's performance would place it in the middle third of colleges in the sector. These statistics do not reflect the achievements of the considerable number of post-19 students in the college on a wide range of vocational and professional courses.

79 The college has a good record of students gaining recognition for their achievement with national awards and trophies in some of its vocational work such as visual and performing arts, craft courses in engineering, meat and bakery, and post-graduate secretarial courses.

For adult basic education students, achievement levels are generally appropriate to student ability, a significant number of students gaining external accreditation. A number of students progress to other courses, but some find it difficult to transfer to mainstream provision. Some of the more able students are not being fully stretched. College data on destinations of students show that 47 per cent go on to higher education, 19 per cent to other further education provision, 26 per cent to employment and the destinations of 8 per cent are unknown.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

80 A carefully constructed three-year strategic plan for quality assurance sets out appropriate themes and related action plans. It aims to make the approach to quality assurance more coherent and places it in the context of demands for efficiency in an increasingly competitive market. A senior member of staff has been appointed director of quality support to implement the strategy. The focus of quality assurance, until recently, was curriculum delivery, but this has now been extended to cover some central services, including catering and accommodation. There are, however, no arrangements to ensure the quality of provision at Singleton Hall. There has been little staff development for quality assurance and staff commitment to it varies.

81 In May 1991, the then department of engineering technology achieved registration to BS 5750 (part 2). Later the communications engineering division, the offshore survival centre and maritime operations were successfully incorporated into registration. The application of the framework has had a positive impact on the improvement of quality assurance in these areas. Other parts of the college, including the Bispham refectory services, have adopted the approach of BS 5750 (now ISO 9002) to quality assurance, although some schools regard the approach as inappropriate for their portfolios.

82 A curriculum quality assurance committee reports to the academic board. It receives detailed reports from the quality committees operating in the schools and from internal validation panels which review new course proposals. Each school committee includes representatives from staff from another school and this provides a valuable wider perspective. School annual reports include reference to their performance against targets and indicate areas for future development. Some reports would benefit from a more detailed breakdown of performance to identify areas within the school where variations occur.

83 A feature of the quality system is the use of quality probes or checklists of quality features against which performance is reviewed. These were originally designed for use at three levels, college, faculty and course/programme. A new set of probes is currently being piloted at programme level; college and faculty level probes have yet to be revised. The new programme probes have been carefully rewritten to take into

account the requirements of validating and funding bodies. During the pilots, an audit approach has been adopted, bringing in staff from outside the programme team to conduct the review with the course manager. The process does not include direct observation of students' experience in the classroom. Clear performance standards are not explicitly incorporated into the probes.

84 Course and programme evaluation is well established at Blackpool. The process involves student feedback through questionnaires and student membership of programme review teams. In most cases, programme managers produce an analysis of issues raised in the evaluation and propose remedial action. Follow up action is not always closely monitored and effective feedback to teams on the action taken by management varies between schools. Central college services, such as marketing and student services and part-time staff are not always involved in programme reviews.

85 The college has developed its student charter alongside its learner agreement and these have been distributed to students. Charters for employers and the community are in draft form. The student charter does not express precise targets or service standards which lend themselves to measurement and no arrangements are currently in place, or planned, to monitor performance against charter statements.

86 As required, the college prepared a self-assessment report for the inspection. Following the headings in the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*, it builds on a similar exercise conducted at individual school level which was made available on request to the inspectors. It did not suggest grades for cross-college headings. Although it tended to overstate strengths in some areas, it nevertheless represented an open and self-critical approach to self-assessment.

87 Some progress has been made towards the college's aim of achieving the Investors in People award. The original target of December 1994 has been revised and the action plan rewritten with a view to obtaining the award in 1995. The delay has, in part, been associated with negotiations between management and unions on the proposed staff-appraisal system, but it has also been influenced by disaffection amongst some teaching staff, relating to disputes over proposed new contracts. A voluntary appraisal system has been successfully operating amongst teaching staff for several years but the college plans to introduce an agreed system for all staff this term. The proposed system is based on the identification of staff-development needs and is not linked to a review of an individual's performance against college expectations. A pilot performance review system which includes an appropriate review of managers' performance against school and college objectives has, however, been introduced at senior management level. Heads of schools have had their performance reviewed but, to date, members of the college executive have not been included in the process other than as reviewers.

88 School-development plans include a statement of staff-development requirements but the extent to which these are translated into detailed plans varies. A budget of £86,000 has been allocated in the current financial year to support staff training; three-quarters of this is devolved to schools. Most schools provide additional funding for staff-development activities from their internal resources. A project is currently in place to identify the true level of investment by the college in staff development and to identify ways of evaluating outcomes in terms of the college and school-development plans. The college supports staff development for both teaching and support staff. Many administrative and support staff have acquired advanced qualifications which have enabled them to progress to more demanding positions in the college. Care staff at Singleton Hall, however, are inadequately trained for the curriculum responsibilities they undertake. Teaching staff are encouraged to gain experience on national and regional bodies, for example, as examiners, verifiers and moderators. Staff are required to undertake evaluations of the courses they attend.

89 Full-time staff new to the college appreciate the induction programme organised at college level and the useful staff handbook. The effectiveness of induction at school level is more variable. In some schools, a mentor system operates successfully and new staff welcome the opportunities to obtain support from an experienced member of staff. In one school, a new lecturer joined a course as a student for four days as a way of informing him of the teaching approaches adopted by that programme area. This was particularly appreciated by the lecturer concerned. Arrangements for the induction and support of part-time staff vary between schools.

RESOURCES

Staffing

90 Teaching staff, both full time and part time, are well qualified for the subjects they teach. Many staff are graduates and some have, or are studying for, higher degrees. Sufficient well-qualified teaching staff are available for the courses taught in the college. Some schools, notably technology and management, hospitality and food, have high staffing costs associated with the relatively large number of staff holding posts equivalent to senior or principal lecturer. Staff in vocational areas have good industrial or commercial experience, especially in construction, engineering, art and design, and business; this is often used to establish and maintain good links with firms. The college does not have arrangements for the systematic updating of staff commercial and industrial experience. Staff teaching NVQ or GNVQ courses have obtained or are in the process of obtaining appropriate awards from the Training and Development Lead Body. The college's overall target for the proportion of part-time staff is 20 per cent, but there is a substantial variation between schools and there are particularly large numbers of part-time staff in general education.

91 Learning is supported in each school by administrative, technical and clerical staff. The overall college ratio of staff with direct learning contact to staff supporting direct learning contact is 3.37:1. There are sufficient technicians and staff supporting most courses. However, in some areas, for example art and design, the level of technician support is inadequate.

Equipment/learning resources

92 Levels of equipment in almost all schools are good. For example, in engineering, construction, maritime and nautical studies, catering and business studies, much of the equipment is of high quality and of industrial and commercial standard. In some areas, equipment is coming to the end of its useful life, and whilst well maintained and currently fit for purpose, it will soon need to be replaced. There is an adequate supply of appropriate small equipment and materials in most areas. However, in art and design, there are limited amounts of consumable items and students have to purchase their own. In hairdressing, insufficient items of small equipment are available for some sessions.

93 Much of the information technology provision has been purchased by, and is retained for use within, schools. However, there is also access to computing hardware and software in the learning-resource centres located at each of the main sites of the college. The overall quality and quantity of computing hardware and software available to students is, in most areas, adequate and in some cases good. The learning-resource centre located at the Bispham site is equipped to a high standard; there are plans to network resources and develop the centres at the other sites to a similar quality. In some other areas, including general education, a high proportion of computing equipment is out of date and in need of replacement. In business studies and maritime and nautical studies, some computing hardware needs upgrading to allow more students access to up-to-date software. Resources available to computing students during timetabled periods are good, but those outside class time are inadequate. In health care, students have insufficient access on a drop-in basis to information technology facilities. The specialist computing resources available to adult basic education students and foundation studies students on the Bispham site are insufficient and out of date.

94 There is a plentiful supply of teaching aids and equipment to support learning. Most rooms have whiteboards, overhead projectors and screens, and there is an ample supply of video units and televisions. Good-quality printed packages to support individual learning, some produced by college staff, are used extensively. Some rooms have been developed as specialist subject teaching and resource rooms, and staff have assembled a good range of display materials and teaching aids to support students' learning.

95 In the main, the library facilities are adequate and offer a good range of books and journals. Some schools have developed their own specialist

collections of reference books and texts and these are well used. There are, however, subject areas where the stock of books is inadequate or inappropriate. At the Bispham library, there is a shortage of books to support learning in construction. In health care, the library bookstock is neither up to date nor in sufficient supply for the increased student numbers. There are deficiencies in texts for poetry and GCE A level English.

96 Learning-resource centres have been established at Bispham, Palatine, Fleetwood and St Annes. Each has a range of printed material, for reference and loan, including books, journals, magazines and newspapers, together with compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases and, in appropriate centres, information on slides, video and audio cassette.

Accommodation

97 Teaching accommodation is generally of a good standard and the majority of buildings are in good or satisfactory condition. Rooms are well furnished, clean and well maintained. Whilst all areas of work have at least adequate space, in some areas the rooms are too small for larger class groups, whilst other accommodation is underutilised. A few areas of work operate across two or more sites and this leads to some inefficiencies. College management are aware of this and are seeking to make better use of the space at their disposal.

98 Public areas of the college are welcoming. Much of the accommodation is accessible to students and staff who have mobility difficulties, with the exception of the Clifton Drive site, at St Annes. There are creche facilities, each for 20 children, at the Bispham and the Ansdell sites.

99 Accommodation for specialist activities is generally good. In vocational areas much of the accommodation reflects the very best that is available in industry and commerce. In particular, accommodation for computing, maritime and nautical studies, catering, hair and beauty, leisure and tourism, and art and design is good. The performing arts section has an excellent dance studio and the Clifton Theatre is a well-resourced and popular venue. Accommodation for the teaching of plastering is, however, unsatisfactory. Rooms at the St Annes site are bleak, but some have been successfully converted into more attractive social science teaching spaces. In some general teaching rooms there is an absence of stimulating display materials. The teacher-training room in particular is drab and lacks display space. Accommodation used by adult basic education students is generally good.

100 A particular strength of the college's accommodation is the fully-equipped catering kitchen, which provides opportunities for students with learning difficulties to experience work in a professional environment. Some improvements have recently been made to the accommodation at Singleton Hall in an effort to give students more privacy.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

101 Blackpool and The Fylde College has a well-deserved reputation as a major institution of further and higher education in Lancashire. Its major strengths include:

- an extensive range of vocational, professional, general education and leisure and recreation courses
- opportunities for students to progress from foundation courses through to higher education
- innovative and entrepreneurial approaches to course development for individuals and corporate clients
- a well-organised student services unit which offers professional advice and guidance to students
- an effective board of governors
- an internal school structure with a strong sense of autonomy and control of the curriculum
- good teaching and learning provided by well-qualified and experienced teaching staff in all programme areas
- effective development of approaches to assure quality in the curriculum
- good-quality and up-to-date equipment in many schools.

102 If the college is to make further progress towards achieving its mission, it should:

- ensure more effective collaboration across schools in sharing good practice and in developing the curriculum
- develop further college initiatives for flexible and modular modes of curriculum delivery
- enhance and promote a programme of activities for full-time students to extend their experience beyond their course of study
- provide more support and guidance for teachers to cater for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- take further steps to integrate college-level activities in marketing, curriculum development, innovation and research with development planning and review at school level
- continue to develop the management information system
- improve retention rates on some courses
- improve the student charter
- continue to define more comprehensive standards of service which can be measured as part of quality assurance.

FIGURES

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- 1 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at December 1994)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by age (as at December 1994)

 - 3 Percentage enrolments by level of study (as at December 1994)

 - 4 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at December 1994)

 - 5 Income (for 16 months to July 1994)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

Note: the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.

Figure 1

Blackpool and The Fylde College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at December 1994)

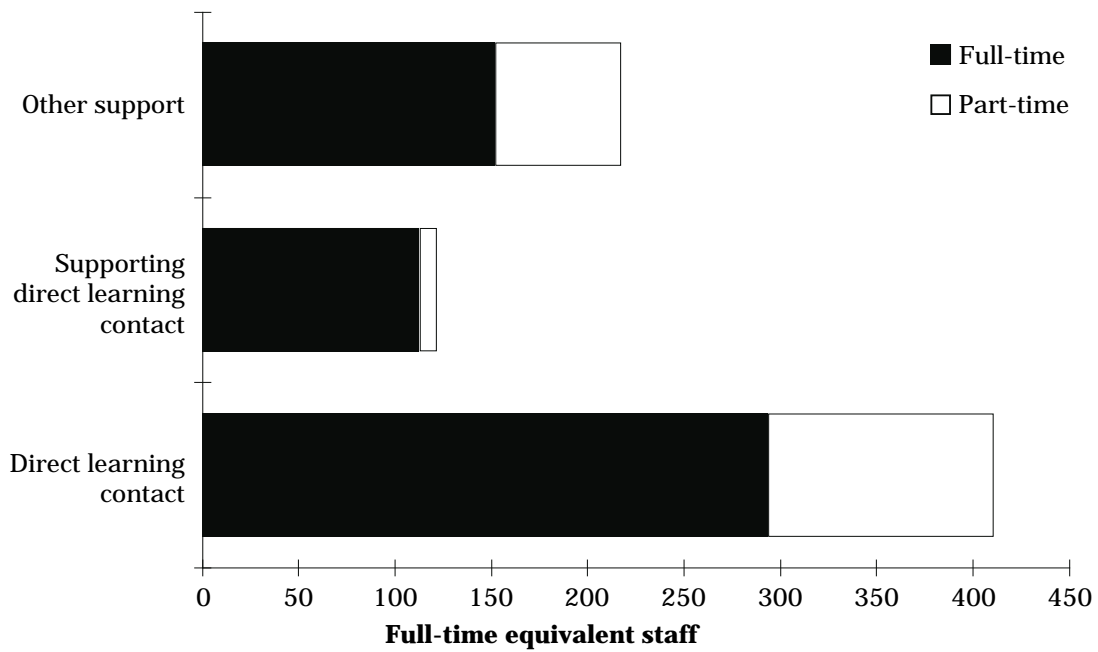
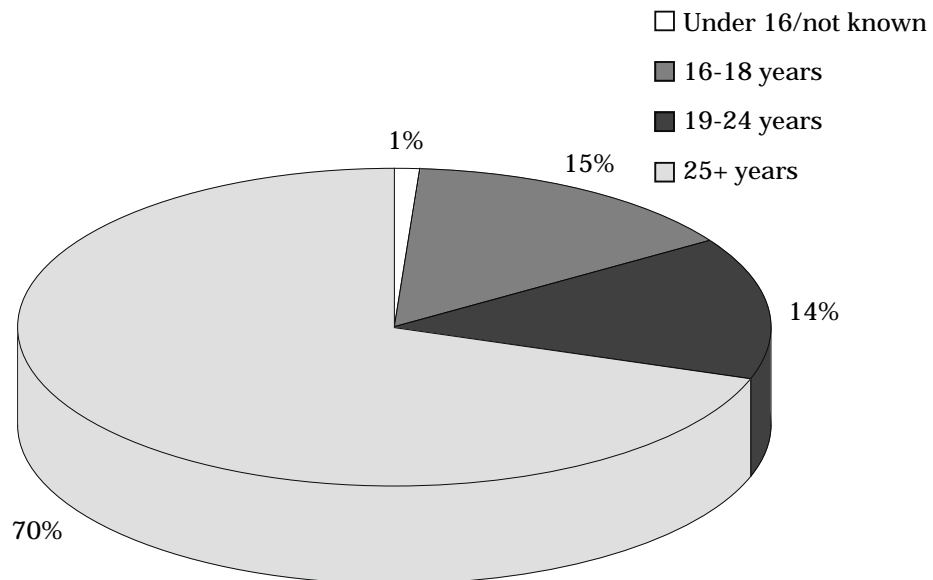


Figure 2

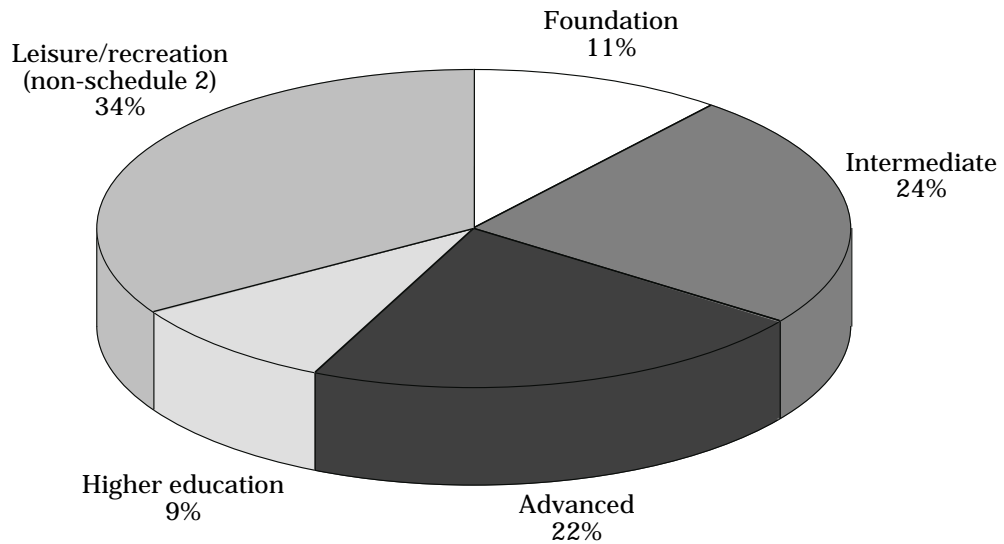
Blackpool and The Fylde College: percentage enrolments by age (as at December 1994)



Enrolments: 23,023

Figure 3

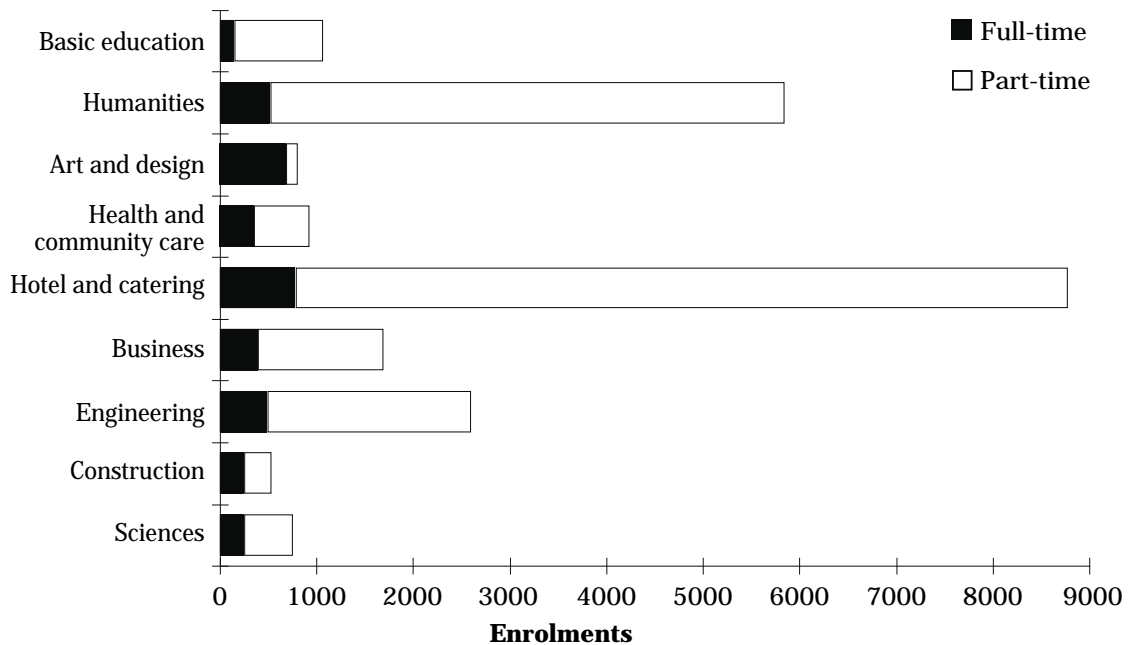
**Blackpool and The Fylde College: percentage enrolments by level of study
(as at December 1994)**



Enrolments: 23,023

Figure 4

Blackpool and The Fylde College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at December 1994)



Enrolments: 23,023

Figure 5

Blackpool and The Fylde College: income (for 16 months to July 1994)

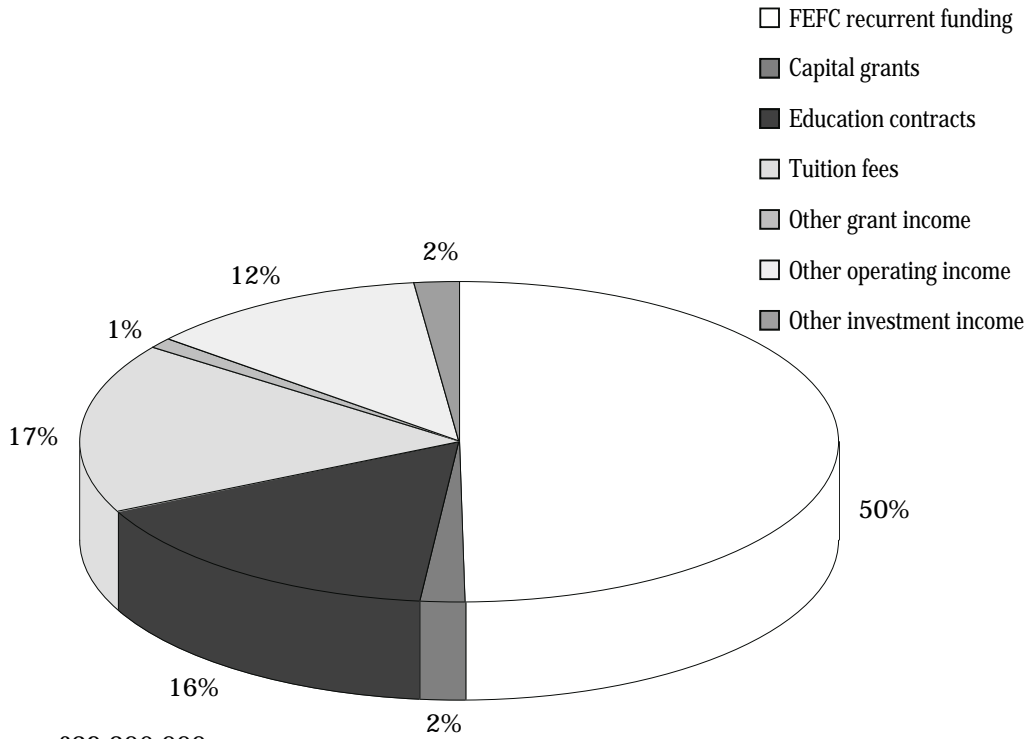
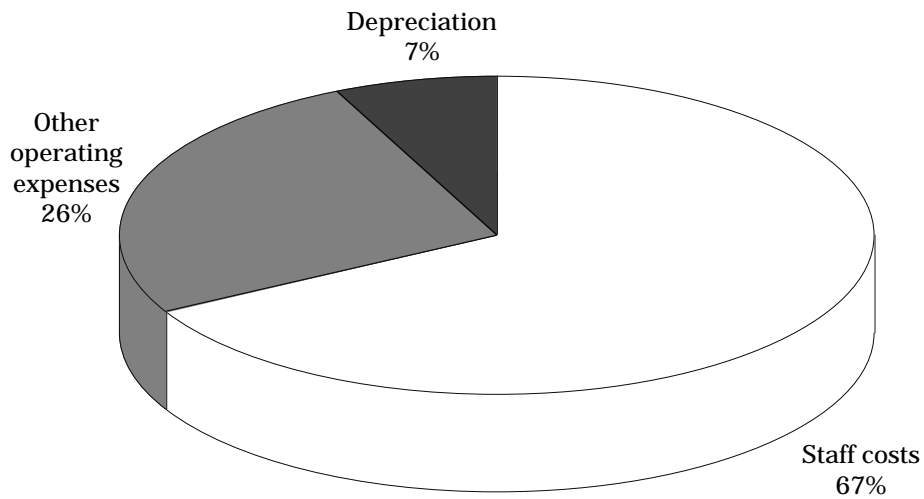


Figure 6

Blackpool and The Fylde College: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)



Expenditure: £31,623,000

Note: this chart excludes £95,000 interest payable.

Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
May 1995