Brighton College of Technology

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL***

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 the 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.

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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.*

By June 1996, some 329 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 329 colleges are shown in the following table.

College grade profiles 1993-96

Activity	Inspection grades				
	1	2	3	4	5
Programme area	9%	59%	29%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	14%	50%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	12%	54%	30%	4%	<1%

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 115/97

BRIGHTON COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
SOUTH EAST REGION
Inspected May 1996-May 1997

Summary

Brighton College of Technology is a large general further education college in East Sussex. Its governors are committed to its development and they work enthusiastically with senior managers to assure the college's financial health. The strategic planning procedure is particularly good. Management structures have been reorganised recently and they work well. There is an effective student services unit. The quality of teaching and learning observed by inspectors was average for the further education sector but teaching standards among part-time teachers working with students with learning difficulties were low. There are several areas of the curriculum in which the college has been innovative, including its courses for unemployed and disadvantaged people, courses for overseas students and courses which provide smooth progression to higher education. Neither the governors nor the academic board provides effective oversight of quality assurance in the curriculum. The college's quality assurance procedures were weak but they have recently been improved substantially. The college should: clarify the role of the academic board; improve management information concerning students; address the poor teaching on courses for students with learning difficulties; take steps to improve poor retention rates and poor examination results on many courses; address inconsistencies in students' recruitment and guidance, and tutorial provision; and encourage students to take up the learning support which is offered to them.

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	3
Quality assurance	3
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	3
accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Mathematics, science and computing	3	Health and social care	2
		Hairdressing and beauty	2
Construction	3	Art and design and media	2
Engineering	3	Humanities	3
Business	3	Basic education	4
Hotel and catering, leisure and tourism	3		

INTRODUCTION

1   Brighton College of Technology was inspected between May 1996 and May 1997. In May 1996 and April 1997, 12 inspectors spent 40 days assessing curriculum areas. They visited 204 classes involving 1,905 students, and examined students' work and documentation relating to the college and its courses. In May 1997 and during September 1996 when enrolment and induction procedures were inspected, eight inspectors spent 24 days assessing aspects of cross-college provision. During the inspection, there were meetings with members of the corporation, college managers and staff, students, parents, head teachers of local schools, the principal of a local sixth form college and representatives of Sussex Enterprise (the TEC), local industry and commerce, and higher education.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2   Brighton College of Technology is a large general further education college on the south coast. The college grew from a number of separate Victorian educational institutions. In the early 1960s, Brighton College of Technology was split into Brighton Polytechnic, which eventually became the University of Brighton, and the present general further education college. The new unitary local authority of Brighton and Hove includes two sixth form colleges, four 11 to 18 schools and six 11 to 16 high schools in Brighton. There are also seven special day schools and three public schools. There are two other further education colleges within 15 miles of the college.

3   Brighton is the commercial and cultural centre of a large area of urban development. It is close to the whole range of public transport services, which include Gatwick Airport and the ferry port in Newhaven. Its economy is dominated by the service sector, including financial services, public administration, hotels, catering and leisure. There are no large manufacturing companies in its environs. Unemployment is significantly above the south-eastern and national averages. In February 1997, 13.3 per cent of the workforce in Brighton was unemployed. This compares with an average of 5.9 per cent for the south east. Unemployment in central Brighton, from which the college draws many of its students, reached 31.4 per cent in October 1996. Central Brighton has a population density greater than the inner London boroughs and a higher proportion of young people than the rest of the south east. The population is mobile, with almost a quarter having lived in the town for less than a year. Over 50 per cent of the residents of central Brighton live alone, compared with an average of 28 per cent for the south east generally.

4   The college is organised into the following nine curriculum areas: sciences; art, design and media; business and management; catering and hospitality; construction and the built environment; hair, beauty and community care; humanities; special education; and engineering. There are central administrative and support services.

5   The college achieved 9.7 per cent growth in full-time students and 3 per cent growth in part-time enrolments between 1995 and 1996. The number of overseas students increased by 95 per cent during the same period. Students from Brighton and Hove constitute 74 per cent of total enrolments. Student numbers by age, by level of study, and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4. The college aims to provide efficient, high-quality education and training to its students and other clients.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

6   The college offers an extensive range of programmes for school-leavers, adults, employers and for groups of people which have not usually undertaken further education courses. There are over 1,800 full-time and 11,000 part-time students on day and evening courses. Vocational courses account for about 80 per cent of full-time and about 60 per cent of part-time provision. There is a range of general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels and a number of national diplomas and certificates validated by the Edexcel Foundation. There is an extensive programme of secretarial units examined by the RSA Examinations Board (RSA). National vocational qualifications (NVQs) are available in a number of specialisms. There are one-year intensive courses in 30 general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects, two GCE A level subjects are taught on a two-year programme and 22 general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects are available. Students may combine these academic programmes or add them to vocational courses. There are teacher education courses and a growing number of programmes accredited by the Open College Network, notably in modern foreign languages.

7   There are over 220 part-time day and evening courses. The college is responsible for adult education in the area and has some 10,000 adult students. About 1,500 adult students follow courses funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), mainly in art and modern foreign languages. The college takes into account the circumstances of adult students and offers flexible starting and finishing times whenever possible. The college has a learning centre that provides courses in information technology, wordprocessing, desktop publishing, book-keeping and some GCE A levels and GCSEs. Over 700 students are enrolled at the centre, which has a waiting list of more than 200. The college is also responsible for the area youth service and it serves over 7,000 young people on 20 sites. The college works closely with voluntary agencies to provide sport, drama, art, music and health education for them.

8   The college has extensive links with continental Europe and other countries. More than 200 foreign students follow mainstream courses with English language support. This year, with the assistance of European

Union funds, more than 500 European students have undertaken short courses in English as a foreign language (EFL) or courses in some vocational areas. The college has been accredited recently by the British Association of State Colleges in English Language Training and has launched an ambitious summer programme for foreign students. Full-time students are involved in a well-established programme of overseas visits. For example, motor vehicle engineering students visit Mercedes Benz in Germany and Ferrari in Italy, and catering students visit European countries and those in the Middle East and Far East.

9   There are two courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This year, 52 students aged between 16 and 19 are studying at GNVQ foundation level in five curriculum areas and 10 adult students are studying for the NVQ level 1 in horticulture. Additional units at levels 1 and 2 in other curriculum areas are planned for September 1997. Classroom assistants help students with visual or hearing impairment.

10   The college has close links with six local secondary schools for pupils aged 11 to 16, and with three special schools. The college works with these schools to help pupils transfer to the college and to introduce them to courses or careers. There is a well-established, 10-week programme of 'taster' visits for pupils from special schools. Links with schools with sixth forms are more limited, but there are good relations with the two local sixth form colleges which enable their students who have completed one-year courses to transfer to appropriate vocational programmes at the college.

11   The college has well-established links with the University of Brighton. It offers a comprehensive range of higher national certificates and diplomas which are promoted both by the college and the university. These courses enable students to progress from foundation level to higher education in the college. Higher national diploma students are encouraged to extend their studies to degree level at the university. The college has a successful access to higher education programme which is validated by the University of Sussex. It enrols over 150 students each year. In 1996, the college introduced an access course for international students that is proving successful. A programme which is managed jointly by the college and the university encourages women to consider an engineering career. There is a similar programme for construction.

12   Links with employers are generally good. In construction and in hospitality and catering, teachers have developed productive contacts with companies at home and abroad. Most curriculum areas have consultative committees. Teachers regularly attend conferences where they meet both local and national employers. Senior staff attend meetings of the local chamber of commerce, the TEC and the annual conference of the European Forum for Technical and Vocational Education, for which the principal is the British member of the steering committee.

13   The college is funded by the TEC to provide youth training, some engineering programmes and modern apprenticeships. It has been successful in obtaining money from the competitiveness and development funds for market research to develop courses in modern languages and catering. The college receives funding from the European Social Fund to provide basic skills and vocational, language and information technology training for unemployed people. Almost 200 trainees have enrolled in these programmes in each of the two last years. The college has led the development of the unique Brighton Foyer Project which will provide residential accommodation on a college site for 50 unemployed and disadvantaged people, 10 of whom will be nominated by the college.

14   The college marketing unit is concerned primarily with promotional activities, developing links with external agencies and, where possible, providing market intelligence for curriculum managers. The college recognises a need to improve some of its promotional materials, for example, by providing taped information for visually impaired people. There is a comprehensive equal opportunities policy which is monitored by a committee consisting mainly of managers. The committee meets every term and reports to the principal. There is no student member of this group.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

15   The corporation board has 15 members. There are eight independent members, two co-opted members, a TEC nominee, the principal, two members of staff and one student. At the time of the inspection there was one vacancy. Governors have a broad range of expertise in the law, accountancy, personnel management, estates, media, higher education and general management. Governors are enthusiastic about the college and they are committed to furthering the interests of the local community. There are good working relationships between governors and senior managers. Attendance at board meetings has been 75 per cent over the last year.

16   There are four committees of the board: finance, policy and resources; audit; staffing; and remuneration. The clerk to the board, who is a lawyer, gives members good advice and support. The board receives timely, well-prepared papers. Agendas and minutes are well organised. Governors have adopted a code of conduct and a register of their interests. In order to contribute to the college's self-assessment report they reviewed their own work to a limited extent. The induction programme for new governors consists mainly of informal briefings by the principal and the chairman. Governor training consists of occasional introductions to aspects of the college's work. There is no formal procedure for recruiting new members to the board and replacements are nominated by existing governors.

17   The board monitors financial matters closely and individual members contribute substantially to the consideration of personnel and property

matters. Governors have set about improving their understanding of the context in which the college works, but they are not yet well informed about its curriculum. Governors are becoming more familiar with the college by linking with curriculum areas. This year, the board has discussed students' achievements and retention rates for the first time. There is an appropriate range of college policies which are approved by the governors.

18   In 1995, the college's faculty structure was disbanded and the 16 schools were reorganised to create nine new curriculum areas. There is a college executive of three, comprising the principal, deputy principal and the finance director. Each of the nine curriculum areas is managed by a director and an assistant director. Aspects of their work are co-ordinated by cross-college directors for student services, curriculum and quality, and learning resources. There are four business support directors covering finance, estates, human resources and marketing. All the directors form the middle management team which reports to the college executive.

19   The college executive meets at least once a week. Once or twice a month, the principal or the deputy principal meets all the directors and they also hold separate meetings with curriculum directors, business support directors and assistant curriculum directors. These meetings are effective in reaching decisions and improving communication, but their agendas are dominated by issues raised by the executive.

20   Curriculum directors and their assistant directors share the management of each area. Their roles and responsibilities are normally clearly defined and the arrangement works well. They are jointly responsible for the curriculum, for staff development, quality assurance, student guidance, accommodation, technician support, personnel functions, and for the budgets for consumable materials and part-time staffing. Curriculum directors have a substantial teaching commitment which, in some cases, hampers their effectiveness as managers. Their workloads and the adequacy of the administrative support they are given should be reviewed. There are regular staff meetings in most areas. The quality of minutes and the extent to which decisions are followed up are uneven. There is a monthly bulletin which is issued to all staff and to the governors. It is supplemented by regular updates on quality assurance, staff development, marketing and other important issues.

21   Strategic planning is carried out effectively. Curriculum and support unit directors produce comprehensive operational plans for one-year and three-year periods. These connect with college objectives. The deputy principal and the finance director draft the strategic plan and its associated budget based on these operational plans. They are assisted throughout by a governor. Directors and governors receive a copy of the draft plan for comment before it is considered formally by the corporation board. All staff receive a summary. The level of detail in the curriculum directors'

reports varies. The academic board contributes to the strategic plan. It meets once a term to discuss curriculum issues including new course approvals, curriculum developments, student support and examination results. It has a standing subcommittee dealing with staff development and it sets up working parties to consider special issues. The board discusses courses that have poor students' retention or examination results, but it does not review how effective any subsequent action has been in putting matters right. The activities of the academic board are not sufficiently focused for it to be effective.

22   The college is in good financial health. Budget determination and allocation are carried out efficiently as part of the college planning cycle. The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £20.60 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges for 1996-97 is £17.97 per unit. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. In the last two years, the college has achieved its target for units of student activity and it expects to do so in the current year.

23   The management information systems are at varying stages of development. The finance system provides accurate information for governors, senior managers and other budget holders. The student records system has recently been improved and it now provides regular statements of student numbers and units of activity. Course information and data on students' achievements and retention rates are still hard to obtain. As a consequence, the college is not yet able to set targets for its performance.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

24   The responsibility for students' recruitment, guidance and support is divided among the student services unit, the marketing unit and the curriculum directors. There is no college policy to help them co-ordinate their work and the result is a service to students which is sometimes inconsistent. There are, nevertheless, a number of innovative schemes to improve student guidance and support.

25   Attractively-presented prospectuses outline the courses provided by the college and the student support services that are available. More detailed information sheets are available for most courses. The college holds two open days each year which are well attended. Three curriculum areas invite new applicants to sample their courses and to meet their students. The college intends to extend this arrangement to all its curriculum areas. Members of the college's liaison team visit local schools regularly to offer advice and guidance to pupils. Individual advice for callers is also available at lunchtimes in the college. Guidance is impartial and, when it is appropriate, pupils are advised to consider other colleges. Careers advisers are invited to the college each year to be briefed on the range of courses that is to be offered.

26   All applicants for full-time courses are interviewed, but there are two systems in operation. Some applicants are interviewed by the schools liaison team without reference to subject specialists. Others are interviewed by specialist teachers alone. There is no central monitoring of admissions and no standard interview checklist. Interview practice is inconsistent. Some students receive insufficient information and they enrol on inappropriate courses. Applicants for part-time courses are interviewed at enrolment and advice days before the beginning of each college year. This arrangement allows sufficient time for each person to ensure that they enrol on an appropriate course.

27   The induction policy promotes students' introduction to the college as a process rather than as one event. Most curriculum areas draw students effectively into the college and their courses, but a few students are launched into study with little attempt to help them adjust. Some adults who are returning to study would welcome more help with the development of study skills. Students are advised of their rights and responsibilities in varying degrees of detail; some have only a cursory introduction. All full-time students are given the opportunity at induction to discuss whether or not their chosen course remains right for them. Such opportunities are rarer for part-time students and especially so for those attending evening classes. Accreditation of students' prior learning is not yet common in spite of a European Social Fund project, Guidance and Advice in Sussex, which was successful in helping the college to develop the necessary techniques for this service.

28   A tutorial policy has been introduced recently to help to ensure that all students receive their entitlement. A working group was established to implement the policy, but its progress has been slow. The group's terms of reference, and its relationship with the curriculum directors to whom it reports, are unresolved. All full-time students have a course tutor and a one-hour tutorial timetabled each week. The quality of these tutorials varies widely. The better tutorial programmes include preparation for work placements, guidance for entry to higher education or employment, discussion of personal and social issues, a review of progress and action planning. The poorer tutorials are irregular and tutors make only a minimal check on whether students have any problems. The monitoring of students' attendance is carried out effectively and appropriate action is taken to investigate absences.

29   A summary of the college charter and the students' code of conduct is published in the students' handbook. A summary of the charter is displayed on posters throughout the college and the full text is available on request. A complaints procedure sets out measures to help ensure that students are treated fairly and that dissatisfaction is dealt with quickly. Complaints are resolved informally.

30   All full-time students are assessed for basic literacy and numeracy at the start of their courses. These assessments are devised by the college in

consultation with employers where this is appropriate and they are specific to students' courses and career aspirations. The tests have revealed that about 20 per cent of full-time students need additional support, but only half of them pursue the additional learning programmes designed to help them. The quality of the support which is given is high and almost all students who do take up the offer of extra help complete their courses successfully. Support for students with sensory impairments or physical disabilities is very good.

31 The student services unit offers a comprehensive range of services. It responds quickly to requests for advice and guidance from staff, students and the general public. The unit has recently moved to be close to the main college entrance and the refectory, and more students are now using it. There is an increasing demand for counselling and financial advice. The senior counsellor is assisted by a qualified part-time counsellor and final-year counselling students. They are meeting the steadily increasing demand for their services. International students are well cared for and they value highly the efficient accommodation service. The work of Sussex Careers Services staff is hampered by the lack of a college co-ordinator. There is no college careers education and guidance programme. The student union is well managed and it provides a growing range of activities. The college has no creche or nursery of its own but there are places at local nurseries which are reserved for students.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

32 Of the 204 classes inspected, 62 per cent had strengths which outweighed weaknesses. This compares with the average of 63 per cent in 1995-96 for all lesson observed in colleges in the further education sector, according to the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. The average level of attendance in the lessons inspected was 76 per cent. The lowest attendances were in business and science and mathematics lessons at only 65 and 67 per cent, respectively. The highest attendance was in basic education at 92 per cent and care and childcare lessons at 86 per cent. The average class size was low, at nine students. Class sizes ranged from six in modern foreign languages to 11 in art and design. Poor punctuality among students often goes unchallenged. The following table summarises the grades given to the classes inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	4	10	10	1	0	25
GCSE	1	3	7	0	0	11
GNVQ	4	14	12	2	0	32
NVQ	9	20	12	5	0	46
Access to higher education	0	5	1	0	0	6
Basic education	2	2	3	6	0	13
Other vocational	14	23	11	4	0	52
Other	3	12	4	0	0	19
Total	**37**	**89**	**60**	**18**	**0**	**204**

33   The quality of schemes of work and teachers' planning varies. Some teachers have coherent schemes of work which state clear objectives. For example, in media studies, care, foreign languages and EFL, course schemes are carefully structured and well balanced so that they take account of the differing abilities of students. However, in some areas schemes are less detailed and they contain little about teaching and assessment methods. More attention should be paid to the development of lesson plans so that they identify clearly the learning outcomes which are intended. In much of the humanities area, schemes of work are scanty and teaching is often poorly structured and badly prepared.

34   In mathematics, science and computing, teachers are knowledgeable and confident but many of their lessons are uninspiring. In the better lessons, teachers present information with humour and enthusiasm and use teaching aids effectively to illustrate the content of lessons and to stimulate students' learning. For example, in one successful lesson on the mechanics of movement in science, students measured images of falling objects projected onto a screen to gather numerical data for their calculations. There is little use of information technology except in sessions which are specifically on computing.

35   In engineering, teachers have friendly working relationships with their students and provide them with challenging work. They are enthusiastic and teach their subjects effectively. In some of the better lessons, teachers use a variety of methods, including simulation and group work. Most teachers use a variety of teaching aids. In several theory lessons, students were taken into workshops so that they could use the equipment there to reinforce and extend their understanding of the topic. In electronics and information technology, teachers use a range of handouts to supplement students' notes. Many teachers maintain the work at a brisk pace and regularly check that students are learning. Appropriate attention is paid to health and safety matters in practical sessions.

36   In construction, the best teaching was characterised by good planning, the use of a variety of methods and work set at an appropriate level. Students respond well when they are given opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. In several practical craft classes students were completing their assessed projects. It was clear that they understood the task, and they worked conscientiously and skilfully without close supervision. However, much of the teaching was poor. Teachers dominated the lessons, repeated the same topic too often, and made few demands upon students. Two lessons which should have been informative and stimulating were poor because of a lack of detailed planning on the part of teachers and because students were insufficiently briefed.

37   In business studies, the quality of teaching and learning is uneven. There is some good practice, particularly in office technology. Teachers start and finish their lessons briskly, provide work which is challenging and check frequently that students understand the work. The quality of teaching and learning in professional courses is also better than in most other courses. In a part-time course in personnel practice, both the teacher's and the students' own experiences were brought into play to explain clearly the principles and skills underlying effective communication. However, many teachers do not take sufficient care to ensure that students of all abilities are able to learn.

38   Practical teaching in hospitality and catering is relevant and interesting. In one such session, NVQ level 1 students served in the public restaurant while level 3 students supervised them. They worked under the watchful eye of a skilled teacher. Theory sessions are often less successful; classroom management is poor, teachers make poor use of questioning and fail to provide work which is sufficiently challenging for the students. In GNVQ classes the quality of teaching is mixed. In leisure, lessons are sometimes unstructured and poorly prepared. Advanced GNVQ students in hospitality, leisure and tourism undertake well-organised work experience, however, NVQ students, for whom work experience should be an integral part of the course, do not have similar arrangements.

39   In care and childcare most teachers use an appropriate range of methods. Teachers make a strong connection between practice and theory and place a clear emphasis on client needs, confidentiality and equal opportunities. Many assignments require students to research topics while they are on work placements or study visits. In a minority of the classes observed, there was a lack of pace in the work. Teaching in most hairdressing and beauty lessons is good. In the salons teachers are supportive, use a variety of teaching styles and provide work which extends the students' knowledge and skills.

40   In art and design, students are encouraged to develop their skills and their individual approaches to their work. Practical design studies are underpinned with historical and contextual studies. Projects relate to

professional realities wherever possible. Assessments take a variety of forms, including informal daily discussions and formal group critiques. Students are encouraged to assess their own work and the work of others. Project briefs vary in layout and content. Assessment criteria are not always well defined and students do not always know clearly what is expected of them. In media, performing arts and photography, teachers create a good learning environment and most of the teaching is of a high standard; some is inspirational. Teachers use a wide variety of methods and in most lessons students' interest and application are maintained for long periods.

41   In humanities, teachers often use a narrow range of teaching methods. The standard of teaching on the access and teacher training programmes is better than that on GCE A level courses, although some of the GCE A level lessons that were seen included lively and enthusiastic discussion. In one successful GCE A level English lesson, Sylvia Plath's poem *The Bee Meeting* provoked a debate. The discovery among students that poetry can evoke deep emotion, expressing feelings which are difficult to put into words, led to many personal references which were handled expertly by the teacher. In other lessons the work lacked momentum and failed to involve students. For example, a GCE A level history revision session relied too heavily on hints and anecdotes rather than orderly coverage of any particular topic. EFL is consistently well taught. There is a good balance between formal teaching and students practising in pairs and groups. Foreign language teaching is more uneven. There is some exemplary teaching in GCE A level and Open College Network lessons where teachers make sure that students use the language they are learning and provide interesting activities to prepare students for examinations. In poorer lessons, teachers stuck to a well-worn formula of reading, explanation and exercise.

42   The quality of teaching for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities varies considerably. The better teaching was found only among the small number of full-time teachers. Most teaching is done by inexperienced or unqualified part-time teachers and vocational specialists. They are sympathetic and enthusiastic but they often lack the particular skills which are needed. Students often lack clear aims and learning goals. For example, a group of students was sent out to collect information about holidays, without clear guidance about the tasks they were to complete or the type of questions they were to ask of travel agents.

43   Most teachers set appropriate assignments for their students. In computing, mathematics and science, work is set regularly. In engineering, assignment work is used as a basis for classroom discussion. Assignments in hospitality, leisure and tourism are sometimes not returned promptly and they are not always thoroughly marked. In business, the grades awarded are sometimes overgenerous and, in a few cases, teachers made spelling mistakes in their comments. In business and engineering, some comments by teachers were so general that they

did not help students to improve their work. The college would benefit from adopting guidelines for assessment. Feedback sheets are not always completed by engineering teachers, and on some assignments there are no grading criteria.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

44   The majority of students taking GCE A level examinations at the college are over 19 and they study part time for a single subject. The 167 students aged 16 to 18 who entered for GCE A level examinations in 1996 scored, on average, 2.9 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This places the college in the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, according to the tables published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). The average points score has remained constant for the last three years.

45   The college calculates the value added to its students who are taking two or more GCE A levels, using a system developed in another college. This system compares students' GCE A level grades with those that were predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. The evidence is limited but it suggests that many students in the college do not fulfil their potential.

46   In 1996, 22 per cent of those students who completed GCE A level courses did not enter for the examination. In law, only five of the 17 students who completed the course took the examination and in film studies two students out of 26 took the examination. Pass rates in most subjects are poor, but modern language students did better than the national average. The following table shows the pass rates and success rates of students of all ages entered for a selection of GCE A level subjects in 1996.

Pass rates and success rates* on GCE A level courses in 1996

Subject	Number enrolled	Number completing the course	Number entered for examination	Pass rate	Success rate
Human biology	55	46	33	48%	29%
Mathematics (pure and mechanics)	25	22	13	31%	16%
Art and design	52	48	45	84%	73%
Film studies	37	26	2	100%	5%
Theatre studies	35	32	31	68%	60%
English language	51	37	36	61%	43%
French	36	32	34	85%	81%
Spanish	24	18	14	86%	50%
Psychology	103	71	61	79%	47%
Sociology	96	85	44	55%	25%

* pass rate is the percentage of those entered for examination who achieved a pass at grades A to E; success rate is the percentage of those enrolled on 1 November in the first year of study who subsequently achieved a pass at grades A to E.

47   The college offers a full-time GCSE course of four subjects which enrols about 50 students a year. Success rates on this course are very poor. In 1996, the best students achieved only two GCSE subjects at grades C or above; 28 per cent of students failed to gain any grades at C or above; and 43 per cent of students did not complete the course. In addition to this course, the college offered 23 individual GCSE subjects in 1995-96. The majority of students studying these subjects are over 19 years old, and 22 per cent of those who completed the course in 1996 did not enter the examination. Of those who did, only 32 per cent achieved grade C or above. This performance is below the national average for general further education colleges. In some subjects, success rates were very poor. The following table shows a typical sample of GCSE results.

Pass rates and success* rates on one-year GCSE courses in 1996

Subject	Number enrolled	Number completing the course	Number entered for examination	Pass rate at grades A* to C	Success rate
Mathematics	281	241	157	41%	23%
English	187	150	140	63%	47%
Drama	43	32	30	90%	63%
English literature	46	42	27	81%	48%
French	61	39	40	48%	31%
Chemistry	35	25	18	39%	20%
Information technology	51	37	17	41%	14%
Biology	47	34	32	34%	23%
Psychology	90	63	58	57%	37%
Sociology	56	41	37	49%	32%

* pass rate is the percentage of those entered for examination who achieved a pass at grades A* to C; success rate is the percentage of those enrolled on 1 November in the first year of study who subsequently achieved a pass at grades A* to C.

48   Seventy-seven per cent of the 176 students aged 16 to 18, in their final year of study on the advanced vocational courses included in the DfEE performance tables in 1996 were successful. This measure places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. In 1995, the college was in the top third of colleges in the further education sector. On intermediate vocational programmes, 40 per cent of the 131 students aged 16 to 18 in their final year were successful in 1996. This places the college in the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure.

49   The following table shows students' success rates at the college over the last three years on a typical sample of full-time national diploma and advanced GNVQ courses. Success rates on most full-time advanced vocational courses at the college are not good, and are depressed by the high proportion of students who fail to complete their courses. In many cases, where full-time advanced GNVQ courses have replaced national diplomas, the success rates have fallen sharply. The success rates of students on part-time advanced GNVQ courses are also poor, due largely to low retention rates.

Success rates* on advanced vocational courses (national diplomas and advanced GNVQs)

	1994	1995	1996
Science	55	60	47
Information technology	32	58	33[1]
Building studies	59	25	26[1]
Engineering	33	47	33[1]
Construction	59	25	27[1]
Business	38	41	45
Travel and tourism/leisure and tourism	74	57	22[1]
Hospitality and catering	60	60	31[1]
Beauty therapy	87	63	56
Childhood studies	–	86	56
Health and social care	–	–	66
Photography	50	69	54
Media	69	84	65
Design	–	76	67

*success rate is the percentage of those enrolled on 1 November on the first year on the course who achieved the qualification.

[1] results of the first cohort to take advanced GNVQ.

50   The success rates of students for courses leading to NVQs are mixed, but in many cases they are better than for GNVQ and national diploma courses. The following table shows students' success rates in a typical sample of NVQ courses, based on achievement during the normal target times of one or two years, as appropriate. Because NVQs can be completed in a period of up to five years, some of these success rates may eventually rise.

Success* rates on NVQs

	1994	1995	1996
NVQ level 1 floristry	70	69	67
NVQ level 1 horticulture	62	52	45
NVQ level 2 horticulture	85	67	55
NVQ levels 2 and 3 catering and hospitality	53	57	100
NVQ level 2 hairdressing	69	60	41
NVQ level 3 beauty therapy	66	40	67

*success rate is the percentage of those enrolled on 1 November on the first year of the course who completed their NVQ in the target time of one or two years, as appropriate.

51   Students' success rates have been particularly good in the courses listed below, which are followed mainly by students who are either seeking to progress to higher education or to advance in their careers.

Success rate* of students on a variety of advanced and professional qualifications

	1994	1995	1996
National Examination Board in Supervisory Management personnel practice	100	92	100
C&G advanced management of care	89	100	100
Foundation diploma art and design	98	94	95
Access to higher education	68	61	69
Further education teachers' certificate	82	73	74

* success rate is the percentage of those enrolled on 1 November on the first year of the course who achieved the qualification.

52   Students at the college do well in a range of sporting and cultural pursuits. This year, catering students won the national catering business game run by the Hotel and Catering Institutional Management Association, for the fifth consecutive time. The college restaurant was awarded the *Chaine des Rotisseurs* for its high culinary standards this year, beating some internationally renowned hotels in the town. Performing arts students took a number of plays on tour in 1996, including *Hansel and Gretel, Ashputtel* and *Iron Hans*. They also performed in schools in the Brighton and Hove area. A hairdressing student worked as a make-up

artist for the Meridian Television programme *On the Pier* in March 1996, creating a vampire look for the cast to celebrate the centenary of the publication of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. A carpentry and joinery student won the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) silver medal for excellence in wood occupations. The students' newspaper, Stop Press, which is produced by media students has done well in *The Daily Telegraph* schools newspaper competition, winning three times and being highly commended in 1997. A part-time printing, graphics and communication student became the England amateur lightweight kick-boxing champion in 1996.

53   The college has monitored the destinations of its full-time students for the last three years. During autumn 1996, students on the business administration NVQ level 3 course telephoned students who had left the previous academic year to find out what they were doing. This work has been accredited towards their award. The destinations of those students who completed full-time courses in each of the last three years are shown in the following table.

Students' destinations 1994 to 1996

	1993-94 (%)	1994-95 (%)	1995-96 (%)
To higher education	25	27	23
To further education	18	23	28
To employment	30	29	28
Other destinations	7	10	5
Not known	20	11	16

QUALITY ASSURANCE

54   The college amended its quality assurance arrangements in 1995, when new management responsibilities and a new course review and evaluation system were introduced. A quality assurance policy was approved early in 1996. These steps have strengthened quality assurance systems across the college. The director of curriculum and quality meets curriculum directors every month to review and improve the system. There are effective procedures for collecting data. Most staff accept the need for a quality assurance system and for robust course review, particularly staff at the more senior levels. The college recognises a need to involve teachers and administrative staff more widely.

55   The review and evaluation system requires teaching teams to monitor their courses against headings which are similar to those in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Teachers analyse student enrolment, retention and achievement data, the views of students and the reports of external moderators or verifiers. They also evaluate

cross-college services that affect their work. There is considerable variation in the quality of the reviews and in the soundness of objectives which are set for quality improvement. In the best examples, course teams evaluate their work, identify strengths and weaknesses and set appropriate targets. The scope of the changes they propose include better teaching methods. However, many review reports are descriptive and include little analysis. Some directors have run training sessions for teachers to promote better understanding of the system and of the need for rigour. Students are represented on some course review meetings. Improvements in course design, the timing of assignments and improvements in classroom practice have resulted from some course reviews.

56   The college charter has been modified recently. Few of the students to whom inspectors spoke could recall the scope and purpose of the charter but most knew who to contact to resolve any difficulties. The charter has no section on equal opportunities but refers students instead to the equal opportunities policy and the complaints procedure. The college uses questionnaires to monitor students' perceptions of their courses and of college services more generally. These questionnaires are issued three times a year: after induction, midway and towards the end of the year. Although the findings of the first questionnaire were analysed and circulated to directors quickly for use in course reviews, some teachers were unaware of them. Some students were also unaware of the outcomes and they doubted the value of completing questionnaires. Many course teams have devised their own questionnaires for students. The best practice from these initiatives is incorporated into the college system.

57   The academic board has an advisory role on planning, co-ordinating and developing the college's academic work. Although it contributes usefully to aspects of these tasks, it is not intended by managers that it should be central to the development of college quality assurance processes. This year it has discussed the review and evaluation reports of courses and subjects which have a record of poor students' achievements. The college's self-assessment report, written to the headings of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement* is comprehensive but it is more descriptive than analytical. Weaknesses are only implied. Many of the more carefully argued conclusions coincide with those of inspectors. The usefulness of the college's action plan is compromised by its failure to take weaknesses into account.

58   The college has operated an annual appraisal system for teachers for the last four years. It was revised two years ago. Almost all teachers have been appraised and they consider it helpful. This year, the appraisal system was revised and extended to include administrative and technical support staff. Staff training and development needs are identified through appraisal. Teachers are observed in class, but not as part of the appraisal process. So far, about 60 per cent of teachers have been observed, including all new teachers and some part-time teachers.

59   Staff development is generally effective. The staff-development plan is linked to the college strategic plan. It is developed from an analysis of the college's needs and from the issues that are raised during staff appraisals. Staff report that they are normally given the training they request. After attending a training event, staff are required to share the outcomes with their colleagues. The staff-development budget is 0.84 per cent of the college's expenditure; £106,000 in 1995-96. All new staff attend an induction programme that is run three times a year. The college does not have a mentoring system for new staff, but where there has been informal support it has been welcomed. The college is pursuing the Investors in People award and hopes to achieve it in October 1997.

RESOURCES

Staffing

60   The college employs 179 full-time and permanent associate lecturers, comprising a total of 163 full-time equivalents. Of these, 38 per cent are women. Of the college executive of three, one is a woman and in the team of 17 curriculum and business support directors there are five women. There are 335 part-time teachers, equating to 37 full-time equivalents. Full-time teachers and most part-time teachers are appropriately qualified. About 70 per cent hold a first degree or its equivalent. Eighty-eight per cent of full-time and associate lecturers have a teaching qualification. Part-time teachers of students with learning difficulties, and in modern foreign languages, lack expertise in the appropriate teaching methods. The college is making satisfactory progress towards achievement of training and development lead body awards to enable staff to assess GNVQ and NVQ awards. There are 262 full-time and part-time support staff (212 full-time equivalents), including youth workers. Fifty-six per cent of them are women. In most curriculum areas there is good administrative and technician support but it is not always sufficient.

61   The work of the human resource management unit is effective. Its staff are well qualified and have experience of personnel work in industry. The essential personnel policies and codes of practice are well established, and they are regularly updated. Detailed guidance is provided for the recruitment and selection of staff. There is no staff handbook, but useful packages of information are provided for all staff. Information about the age, disability and gender of applicants for full-time appointments is carefully monitored, trends are identified and they are subsequently discussed with curriculum directors. Staffing records are held on both electronic and paper files.

62   The college's expenditure on staffing is 69 per cent of its total budget, a reduction from 71 per cent last year. Staff are efficiently deployed. All staff have job descriptions and, in the case of management posts and recent appointments, they are expressed as detailed accountabilities. For some technician and business support posts, job descriptions are out of date.

Equipment/learning resources

63   Most classrooms are appropriately equipped with teaching aids such as overhead projectors, whiteboards and screens. The college took stock of the teaching equipment in every building before the inspection and remedied any deficiencies. Audio-visual equipment is available when required. Specialist areas are well equipped but much of the equipment is old. Some of the catering ovens are over 30 years old and, although they function adequately, they will soon need replacing. The electronics and the computer-aided design equipment is of a high standard. There is a new 20-place language laboratory. There are two workshops equipped with wood, metal and plastics machinery for art and design students. Equipment for hairdressing and beauty therapy, photography and media studies are all good. There are poor facilities for textile printing and the fine printmaking resources are insufficient for the number of students. There is no satellite television link for modern foreign languages and the learning materials and reading texts for students with learning difficulties and for teaching adult basic education are inappropriate. There is no simulated office which can be used to assess NVQ students' secretarial skills. There is no replacement policy for equipment and no systematic arrangements for equipment maintenance.

64   The college has significantly updated the standard and increased the number of computers. The ratio of full-time equivalent students to each modern computer is 10:1. Access for students is less good than this ratio might suggest, owing to the multiplicity of sites. The main computer bases are at the Pelham Tower and Richmond Terrace buildings.   Other computers are located near specialist areas such as art and design. Whilst the Pelham Tower centre has 140 modern machines, students at five sites have no modern computers at all. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in adult basic education and in horticulture at Stanmer Park, have insufficient or inappropriate computers and software. Students' access is sometimes restricted by timetabling or by the restricted daytime opening hours of the 'drop-in' facility in Pelham Tower. One of the computer rooms at Richmond Terrace was intended to be for open access, but its use is now partially timetabled. There is no policy entitling students to use computers which are not being used for lessons. There are small networks of computers throughout the college, but no college-wide system. An information technology unit has been established recently to manage computing across the college.

65   There are two libraries at the main Brighton site which are within walking distance of one another. The budget for library purchases this year was £55,000. The budget is not subdivided for the use of curriculum areas but teachers request items they need. There are improving links between library staff and teachers to help guide the purchase and review of stock. There are 44,000 books in the libraries, amounting to 12 items for each full-time equivalent student. There are no significant gaps in the

subject coverage. The libraries carry 314 periodicals, over 1,600 video cassettes and 65 compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases. The number of study spaces is inadequate. The catalogues are computerised. Library staff report on the use made by students and teachers from each curriculum area.

Accommodation

66   The college has eight sites in and around Brighton. There are 12 permanent buildings and six temporary structures. Five of the main buildings are located together in the centre of the town close to the Pelham Tower building. Four other buildings are within a few minutes walk of Pelham Tower. These include the original college site at Richmond Terrace. Two sites are in Hove, including Connaught Road, the adult education centre. Stanmer Park is some six miles to the north east of Brighton. It houses the horticulture and ecology courses. It has glasshouses, poly-tunnels and a range of temporary buildings which are used as classrooms and laboratories. Apart from Pelham Tower which has two passenger lifts, access at the other sites for wheelchair users is poor. Until recently, there was a ramp providing access to one of the two libraries. The closure of a door to improve security has made both libraries inaccessible to wheelchair users.

67   Of the 12 permanent buildings only two were purpose built. Richmond Terrace was constructed in the 1890s as the municipal college. This is a fine building with many original features and most of its teaching spaces are spacious and well lit. Pelham Tower was opened in 1970 and it offers accommodation which can be adapted to meet changing uses. The other buildings were constructed either as schools or for industrial use and they are between 30 and 150 years old. The college owns the freehold of most of its buildings. Temporary buildings are located alongside the main structures. The quality and condition of both the permanent and temporary buildings range from good to poor. Connaught Road is a good building which provides appropriate spaces for the courses taught there. It is well served by public transport and it has adequate parking for students and staff. Hanover Terrace, however, is unattractive and in poor structural condition. Adult basic education students and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are taught in poor accommodation for much of their time at college, mostly in two-storey huts.

68   Some subjects are taught in several buildings. This makes it difficult for staff to share good practice or work co-operatively. The most extreme examples of this are in construction and engineering where work takes place in five and four separate locations, respectively. Many other facilities are on two or more sites. Many rooms and some buildings are underused. Room timetabling is the responsibility of curriculum area managers. This approach results in inefficient use of space. The college aims to introduce central timetabling so that it can form a more accurate picture of room use.

69   The college accommodation strategy of 1994 sensibly evaluates the existing estate, defines the outstanding issues and provides five options for development. Decisions have not yet been made although a number of the proposals have been investigated in more depth. The college estate is well managed by a professionally-qualified director and teams of staff who are led by the facilities and building services managers. There are well-managed college catering services at five locations.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

70   The particular strengths of the college are:

•   its wide range of courses

•   its close liaison with higher education

•   prudent and effective management of finances

•   its clear and effective management structure

•   the strategic planning process

•   its responsive student services unit

•   the support offered to unemployed and disadvantaged people

•   well-managed staff development

•   its range of well-conceived personnel policies.

71   In order to improve further the quality of provision, the college should address the following issues:

•   the lack of clarity in the role of the academic board

•   the inadequate management information system for student data

•   poor teaching on courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

•   the significant number of courses with poor examination results and poor student retention

•   inconsistent students' recruitment and guidance, and tutorial provision

•   the poor uptake of learning support.

FIGURES

Note: the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.
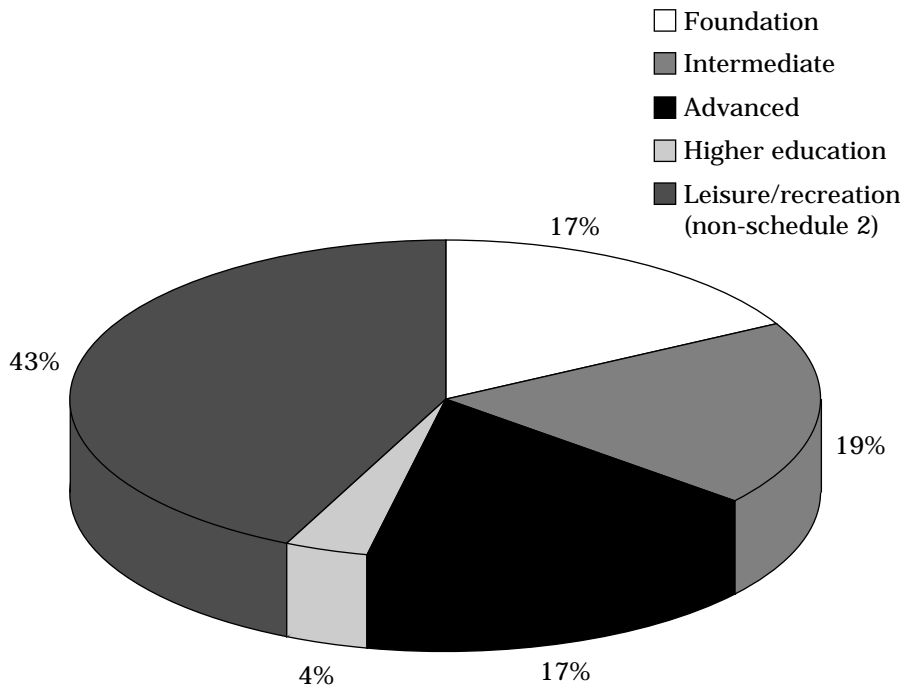
Figure 1

**Brighton College of Technology: percentage student numbers by age
(as at November 1996)**
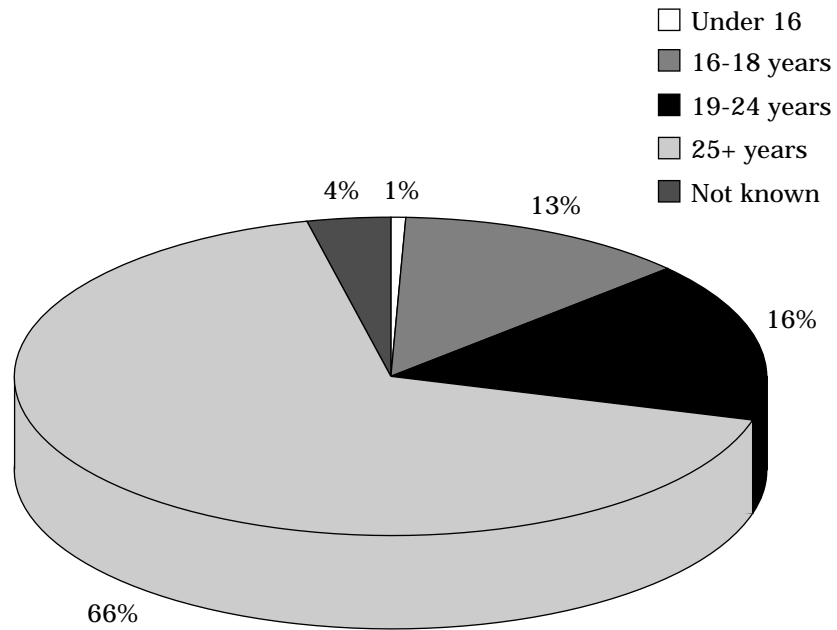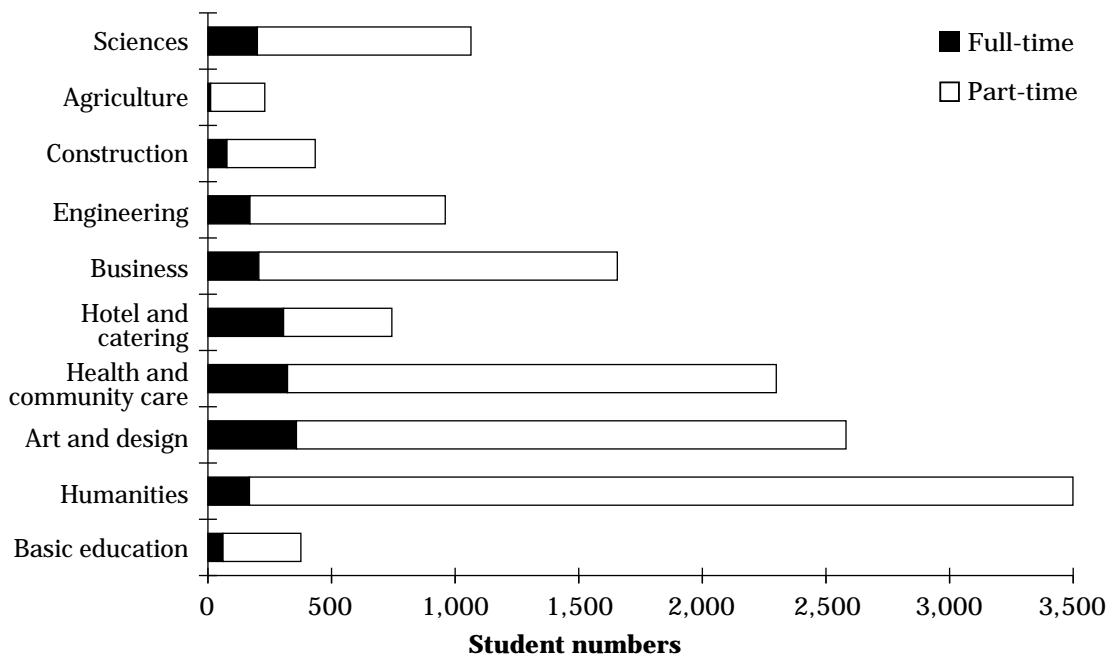

Student numbers: 13,843

Figure 2

**Brighton College of Technology: percentage student numbers by level of study
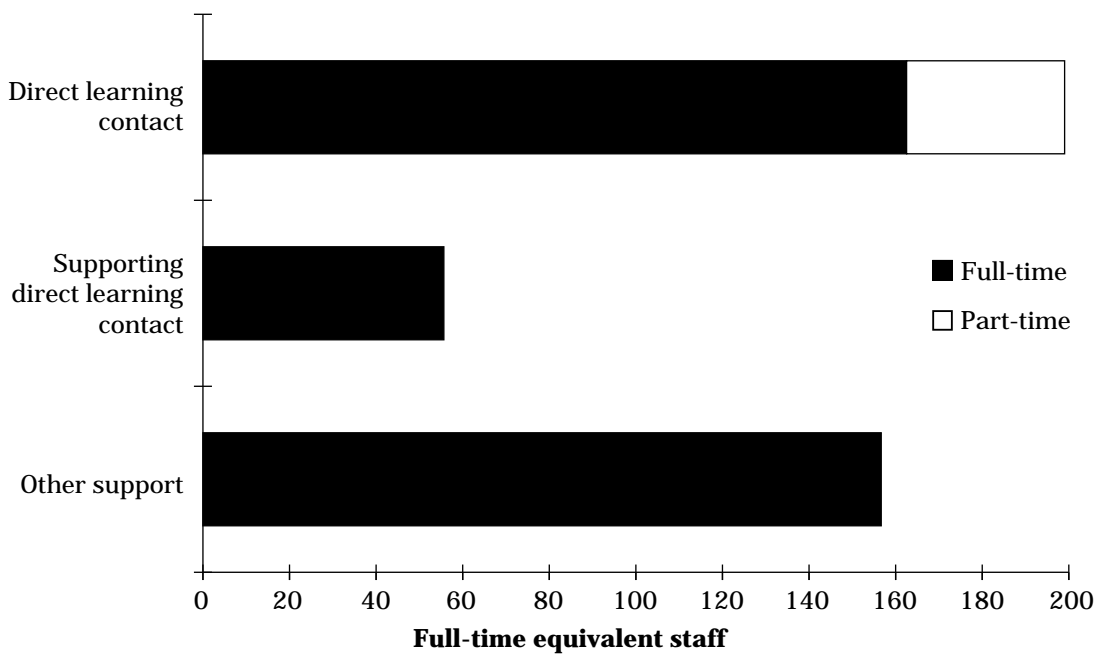(as at November 1996)**

Student numbers: 13,843

Figure 3

Brighton College of Technology: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)

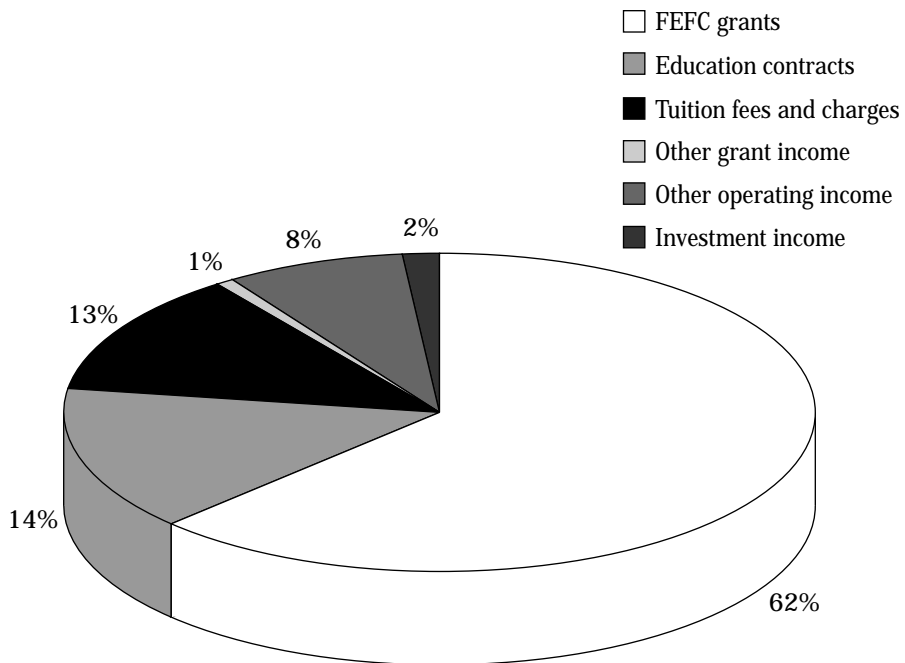
Student numbers: 13,843

Figure 4

Brighton College of Technology: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at May 1997)

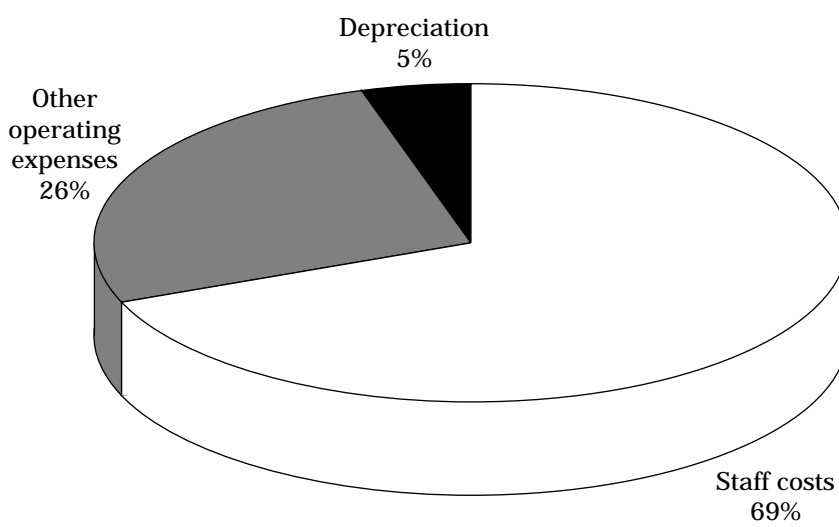Full-time equivalent staff: 411

Figure 5

Brighton College of Technology: income (for 12 months to July 1996)

☐ FEFC grants
▨ Education contracts
■ Tuition fees and charges
▢ Other grant income
▨ Other operating income
▨ Investment income

1%
8%
2%
13%
14%
62%

Income: £12,506,000

Figure 6

Brighton College of Technology: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

Depreciation
5%

Other
operating
expenses
26%

Staff costs
69%

Expenditure: £12,318,000