

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

City and Islington College

June 1997

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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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 75/97

CITY AND ISLINGTON COLLEGE

GREATER LONDON REGION

Inspected September 1996-March 1997

Summary

City and Islington College offers a wide range of vocational, academic and adult education courses in response to the needs of the local community. The college has been innovative and successful in attracting students from groups who are under represented in further education, and in helping them to improve on their achievements. The college is effectively governed and it is well managed. There are sound arrangements for enrolment and induction. Students have access to services which offer them good personal support. Teaching staff are committed, well qualified and experienced. There is much good teaching across the curriculum areas. The range and quality of access to higher education courses are outstanding, particularly in humanities. The courses in English and modern foreign languages are excellent. The achievements of most students are good. Staff at all levels are willing to evaluate their own work critically. There is a comprehensive and effective programme of staff development. Quality assurance systems are good but their implementation needs to be more closely monitored. The college should improve: its market research in order to identify gaps in provision; its liaison with employers in order to identify and meet their training needs; teaching and learning methods on some courses; the pass rates on some vocational courses, particularly at intermediate level; the attendance and completion rates on some courses; and some of its specialist equipment and accommodation.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision	Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision	2
Governance and management	2
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	2
Quality assurance	3
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	3
accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and optics	2	English and modern foreign languages	1
Computing and mathematics	2	Access to higher education in humanities	1
Engineering	3	Government and politics, history and sociology	2
Business	2	ESOL	3
Health and community care	2	Adult basic education, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3
Art and design, performing arts and media	2		

INTRODUCTION

1 City and Islington College was inspected between September 1996 and March 1997 by 23 inspectors who spent 96 days in the college. Inspectors visited 248 classes attended by almost 3,000 students, and they inspected a range of students' work. Two courses were inspected which were offered through collaborative arrangements on premises which were not part of the college. Inspectors met with members of the corporation, senior and middle managers, teaching and support staff, students, employers, and representatives of the City and Inner London North Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), the community and local schools. Inspectors also scrutinised documentation relating to the college and its courses.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 City and Islington College was established in April 1993 through the amalgamation of two existing further education colleges, a sixth form centre and the borough of Islington adult education service. The college's chief locations are in the north of the borough of Islington and on the edge of the City of London. The college comprises: the Islington campus, the City campus and the sixth form centre. Altogether, the college has 11 main sites and a further 34 community venues. The college competes with six other further education colleges in neighbouring boroughs, three specialist adult education colleges, two school sixth form consortia and three sixth form colleges. In Islington, there are nine secondary schools, four of which have small sixth forms. The other five schools are partner schools of the college. Three local universities provide further and continuing education courses. There are three special schools which cater for young people aged 16 to 18 who have moderate learning difficulties. The college has signed a preferred partnership agreement with the University of North London and also with Kingsway College. This commits the organisations to collaborate in areas of mutual interest.

3 Islington had a population of 164,686 at the time of the 1991 census. About half of the college's students are residents of Islington. Other students come mainly from the surrounding boroughs. The borough contains areas of marked poverty and of affluence. In 1996-97, 52.4 per cent of Islington schoolchildren were eligible for free school meals. The proportion of children who achieved grade C or above in five general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects in 1995-96, was 23 per cent, compared with a national figure of 40 per cent. The percentage of pupils staying on at school or entering full-time further education at age 16 in the borough is 63 per cent, compared with a figure of 70 per cent in England as a whole. Fifty-four per cent of pupils in schools in Islington are of minority ethnic origin. The college is in the City and Inner London North TEC area, which comprises Islington, Hackney, and the City of London. Unemployment in the TEC area is high: it stands at 18.5 per cent, compared with 9.1 per cent for Greater London as a whole. The TEC estimates that 35 per cent of people of minority ethnic origin in its area are unemployed.

4 The labour market in London is complex. The central London economy is dominated by the service sector and in particular by financial, professional and business services; tourist-related industries; creative industries; and higher education. Jobs in these areas require employees with higher level qualifications; 50 per cent of London residents, however, have qualifications below national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 3. Residents in Islington face competition for jobs from across the whole of the Greater London 'travel-to-work' area. Seventy-one per cent of jobs in central London are held by commuters from Greater London and the south east. Most local jobs are with small and medium sized employers. Self-employment is expanding, particularly in fields such as information technology, health therapies, the performing arts and various crafts.

5 In November 1996, there were 14,083 students of whom 4,682 were studying full time. Fifty-nine per cent of students were over 25 years of age. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds formed 57 per cent of the college's intake in November 1996. The two largest minority ethnic groups were black African and black Caribbean. The proportion of students whose first language is not English, which includes many refugees, is about 32 per cent.

6 The college's senior management team is made up of nine members of staff, of whom two are female. It comprises the principal; two executive directors, who deal with curriculum and quality and with finance and corporate planning, respectively; the director of student services; the director of human resources; the college secretary; and the three campus directors. There is an assistant director at each campus. The curriculum at each campus is subdivided into a number of areas, each of which is headed by a curriculum area manager or, in the case of the sixth form centre, by a subject co-ordinator. At each campus, there are managers for the provision of support for students, for administrative services, for facilities and premises. In addition, the college has corporate services dealing with course information and advice, learning centres, finance, estates and facilities, personnel and college information. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4. About 23 per cent of staff have identified themselves as being from minority ethnic groups, and 53 per cent are women.

7 The college's mission statement makes it clear that the college's main purpose is to offer 'the widest and most accessible range of study opportunities from foundation to university level'. The college intends that its provision will enable all its students 'to achieve success in terms of learning, gaining valuable qualifications and moving on afterwards to the next goal'. The college wants to maintain the distinctive traditions of further education, part-time community adult education and sixth form education which it has inherited. In offering these three key forms of

post-16 education, the college aims to provide wider and more accessible learning opportunities for the diverse communities it serves.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 The college offers a wide range of academic, vocational and non-vocational courses in nine Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas. Vocational courses form 64.5 per cent of the provision financed by the FEFC. There are courses leading to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at foundation level, intermediate level and advanced level in six, eight and seven vocational areas, respectively. In addition, courses leading to Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) first and national diplomas are offered in computer studies and information technology, engineering, media, performing arts and science. The college's ophthalmic courses are an important provision nationally and they attract students from abroad as well as from many parts of the United Kingdom. Courses leading to NVQs are offered at levels 1, 2 and 3. The college's provision at level 2 is extensive and it offers programmes in accounting, administration, building services, electronics, electrical installation, information technology, leisure and recreation management. The provision at foundation level is underdeveloped in areas such as health and care, and in mathematics and numeracy. The college is responsive to changing trends and adapts its provision accordingly to meet these. For instance, surface mount technology has been introduced in engineering. This technology is widely used in industry but it is seldom found in colleges. The college is taking steps to increase the use of information and learning technology in the curriculum.

9 Eighteen per cent of students at the college are enrolled on general certificate of education advanced supplementary/advanced level (GCE AS/A level), and on GCSE courses. The college offers 48 GCE subjects; there are 200 GCE A level courses and seven GCE AS courses. Twenty-nine GCSE subjects are offered. The college recognises that its provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is limited. It has set up a strategy group which aims to increase participation by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and to enhance the quality of the provision. A member of staff has recently been appointed to co-ordinate work with these students. There are some enrichment activities which students can undertake in addition to their main course. Sporting opportunities for students are variable across the college. At the sixth form centre, students can participate in performing arts and they can study languages and creative writing. At the City campus there is a history and a media society. Conferences are held for access and GCE A level students across the college. There are few enrichment activities for students at the Islington campus.

10 The college provides many courses for the local community in 34 venues. Although it responds well to requests for new courses, the college does not systematically research its market or take the initiative in

starting new courses. The routes by which students can progress from community courses to vocational or academic courses have not been systematically mapped. The college runs two courses on a collaborative basis with two local community organisations; these are, an access to theatre in the community course at the Clean Break theatre company for women ex-offenders, and the RSA Examinations Board (RSA) diploma course in sound recording and technology, at the Islington Music Workshop. The provision in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) is extensive. Classes take place at five main sites and at eight community venues, and there is a home tuition scheme. Special courses include provision for the unemployed funded by the European Social Fund. Levels of study range from beginners' literacy to advanced, including pre-access and access to higher education courses. Each centre aims to meet local needs. There is a common framework which grades classes according to level. This makes it easier for students to move between centres and to progress in their studies.

11 Access to higher education courses are a major strength of the college's provision. The college currently provides 46 access courses across a broad range of subjects and it is constantly seeking to maintain and improve the variety of these courses. This year, the college introduced an access course in classics which includes study skills, philosophy and classical Greek. A course for speakers of other languages who have attained high academic achievement in their home countries, aims to prepare them for university in the United Kingdom. Pre-access courses and a series of adult foundation introductory units are offered to help students decide whether the access programme is appropriate for them. Several staff have roles within the open college network at regional level.

12 There are strong links with higher education institutions. Compact agreements have been negotiated with the University of North London and Middlesex University. These guarantee a university place to those students who successfully complete their course. Arrangements with numerous other universities also guarantee students a place or an interview. Students on business, leisure and tourism and humanities courses attend 'taster' modules at the University of North London as an introduction to the study of these subjects at a higher level. Franchise agreements with two universities allow the college to provide higher national level courses and the foundation year of degree programmes, in engineering, electronics, business studies and humanities. The college is working with the University of North London to develop opportunities for computing students to access higher education learning materials through a computer network, and thus to commence their higher education studies whilst still at college.

13 The college and the TEC enjoy a good working relationship. The TEC considers that the college is innovative in its curriculum and in some of its developments, but that it is insufficiently active in identifying and meeting the training needs of local businesses. The college has some good links

with employers who provide work experience and support the curriculum in areas such as performing arts, engineering, childcare and optics. Course materials for electronics have been produced in conjunction with employers. Guest lecturers from industry contribute to ophthalmic courses and the college has received donations of equipment from ophthalmic firms. There are strong links with employers in performing arts. Professional theatre and dance companies conduct workshops and projects for the students, and provide work experience placements. Childcare staff liaise regularly with employers who provide work placements for students. There is an advisory panel made up of childcare employers. There is little involvement of employers in some curriculum areas, such as art and design.

14 There are good relationships between the college and local schools. The college guarantees a place to pupils from its five partner schools. The school liaison team regularly visits schools, both in and outside the borough. The college holds open days for school pupils, and provides them with opportunities in the summer term to find out about science courses at the college. In one primary school, the college runs a craft class for both senior citizens and eight year olds.

15 Some firm links have been established with European colleges. These links have arisen in an ad-hoc manner, however, and they are not the result of any strategy. Humanities staff recently undertook teacher placements in Sweden to develop teaching materials on citizenship. Students taking modern languages at GCE A level regularly participate in exchange visits in Hamburg, Madrid and Modena and in work experience in Lyons. Students on art and business studies courses visit a European city as part of their studies.

16 The college has been cautious in its approach to marketing. It has not systematically researched its markets in order to identify gaps in its provision, or to capitalise on the more unusual aspects of its provision. It has recently adopted a marketing strategy to provide a clearer focus for its activities. This strategy is supervised by an operational marketing team which includes six senior members of staff. They meet regularly and report to the marketing strategy team which consists of the principal and two directors. The team is supported and advised by external consultants. The college promotes itself through the borough's neighbourhood offices; staff attend school training fairs and they organise events to publicise courses. The prospectus and course information leaflets are the main promotional literature. There is a separate prospectus for students with learning difficulties. The college does not produce any promotional material in any language other than English. The college is successful in achieving coverage in both local and national media.

17 The college is firmly committed to equality of opportunity. The equal opportunities policy is revised and updated each year, and its implementation is regularly reviewed by the equal opportunities committee. The college's commitment to the policy is demonstrated

through the emphasis given to the promotion of equal opportunities in the college curriculum, and through the support which the college gives to all its students. In 1994, the college was awarded one of the Queen's Anniversary Prizes, in recognition of its 'innovative and imaginative schemes for increasing the uptake of higher education' for inner city students, and in particular, for increasing the participation of people of minority ethnic origin in higher education. Through a mentoring scheme the college helps black students to succeed and reach a high level of educational achievement. Approximately 120 mentors, drawn from a wide range of professions, including business, the law, public service and the performing arts, support about 170 black students. The mentors meet the students, welcome them to their place of work, and arrange work experience for them. Other examples of the college's commitment to equal opportunities include the exceptional range of programmes offering adults access to higher education, and the wide range of courses in ESOL. The college has developed flexible ways of organising its courses to meet the needs of adults. It participated in a national project to develop a curriculum made up of units of learning. This allows students to accumulate credit for each unit when they are ready to do so, rather than through an end-of-course examination. Some GCE A level subjects have been organised into units of learning. Adults on access programmes can enrich their studies by taking accredited units of a GCE A level subject. They study for these with students who are following the full GCE A level programme.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

18 The college has faced complex circumstances since it was established. The task of bringing together different traditions and systems and of meeting a wide range of expectations has been challenging and is not yet complete. The college has evolved considerably since incorporation. During the inspection, restructuring of the college's management system was announced. The continuous process of change in the college is taking its toll on both staff and managers. It has led to increased anxiety amongst staff and they sometimes do not understand the rationale behind management decisions.

19 There is an effective governing body of 20 governors. This has three vacancies at present. As well as the principal and two staff governors, the governing body includes people with experience and expertise in finance, law, personnel, property and education, including the London Open College Federation. It has recently co-opted a former student to serve instead of a student governor. There are six female governors, but only one member is from a minority ethnic background. The board is trying to recruit more minority ethnic governors. There is a code of conduct and a register of interests and there are training sessions for governors about twice a year.

20 The governors meet twice termly and do much of their work through seven committees. These include one on college governance to ensure its

probity and effective operation, a student affairs committee and a recently established curriculum committee. In 1995-96, overall attendance at board meetings averaged 67 per cent but in 1996-97, it has risen to 80 per cent. There has been considerable turnover in membership since incorporation, because members have changed jobs or have left the area; only four members, including the current chair, have served on the board since 1993. The board has a clear view of its strategic role. It is committed to open and critical discussion. For example, at a recent meeting to discuss the contentious closure of a site, members debated the matter long and hard in the presence of four observers, two students and two members of staff from the site protest group. The decision to close the site was confirmed, but arrangements to secure effective transition arrangements were considerably strengthened as a result of the debate.

21 The principal and senior managers have provided staff and students with a clear sense of direction and purpose. They have established strong principles to guide the development of the college. When the college was created from the merger of various former providers, it was decided to maintain the separate identity of the sixth form centre and operate two other campuses, one at each end of the borough. The disposition of the college across the borough has led to complex management arrangements. The structure of the campuses and the role and structure of central functions are clear and they are understood by staff. Lines of management and responsibility generally function effectively. The sixth form centre operates on different rates of pay and conditions of service from the rest of the college, and it is resourced more generously. These resource differences have diminished since the college was created, but they remain a continuing bone of contention for some staff.

22 In many respects, the college's curriculum is effectively managed. There is, however, some duplication on different campuses and sites. The sixth form centre operates separately, and has a different timetable, from the other parts of the college. Its curriculum is not fully integrated with the rest of the college's provision. These differences make it difficult for the college to exploit the strengths of the sixth form centre for the benefit of other students. There is a lack of curriculum managers with responsibilities across all campuses and there is little co-ordination of subject provision and curriculum areas across the college. There are insufficient opportunities for staff from different campuses to meet and to discuss good practice. The college is aware of the need for there to be more co-ordination of its provision, and boards of study have been recently introduced in order that curriculum areas may be brought closer together across the college.

23 The college has a sound process for developing its strategic and operational plans. The process involves the governors and it takes the self-assessment reports of curriculum areas and campuses into account. The college's first strategic plan set a strong framework for the development of the college over a three-year period. The current process

for developing the next plan is comprehensive; it involves senior managers as well as governors in a series of presentations to staff. The first draft of the new plan sets a good agenda for action, although the section on curriculum areas is insufficiently developed. The operational statement is used as the basis for setting targets for the performance of senior managers when they carry out their review of management performance. Managers measure their own individual performance against these targets. Staff said that they sometimes found it hard to recognise their own contribution to the college's plans.

24 Communication in the college is effective, especially at campus level. There are a number of channels for communication, including a cycle of meetings at campus, curriculum area and team level which aim to disseminate information passed down from senior managers. The principal and two executive directors meet weekly, and the senior management team meets fortnightly. An extended college management team of up to 38 people, which includes the senior management team, the assistant directors, the curriculum area managers, subject co-ordinators and heads of services, meets twice a term and its meetings are mainly concerned with the sharing of information. There are weekly campus bulletins, and the monthly college newsletter provides information on internal and external events; it also includes regular information and feedback from board meetings. Despite all this activity, the executive team is seen by some staff as remote; this perception is, to some extent, strengthened by the team's geographical location.

25 The college's finances were satisfactory in the first year after incorporation. In 1994-95, however, the college failed to achieve ambitious growth; its targets were poor and it incurred a substantial deficit. From this precarious position, the college's financial health has improved and managers anticipate that the college will be able to add to its reserves. At incorporation, the college inherited inadequate and unsophisticated financial systems; since then, the establishment of effective financial management and budgetary control has been a college priority. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college receives approximately 88 per cent of its recurrent funding from FEFC funds. Its average level of funding for 1996-97 is £20.80 per unit, compared with an average level of funding for 1995-96 of £21.27 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges in 1996-97 is £17.97 per unit, and in 1995-96 was £18.13 per unit.

26 Budgets for part-time staff, consumables and other items are delegated to the three campuses. The budgets are determined on the basis of planned provision to which the campuses are committed, and anticipated enrolments, using a resourcing model agreed by the senior management team. Campus directors allocate funds as they see fit, using the resourcing model for guidance. Although the current financial position is satisfactory, managers are concerned about the level of future funding

and they are addressing ways of adjusting to it. Costs overall have been reduced, partly by increasing the ratio of students to staff, but also by vigilance, by trimming uneconomic provision and by reducing the number of sites used by the college. The squeeze on spending is having a discernible impact in some areas on the availability of facilities and resources for courses. The workload for a number of staff, especially middle managers and those managing large numbers of part-time staff, is demanding.

27 The college is continuing to experience problems with the computerised management information system in relation to students' records. As part of its overall strategy for generating management information, a new management information system was introduced in September 1996. There is evidence that this new system is increasingly able to provide accurate data and information to assist college managers in making decisions. College management and certain areas of the college, for example the sixth form centre, have benefited from a marked improvement in the quality of the information. However, there are still problems associated with entering data and the accuracy of information, particularly where a number of sites are involved in, or a large number of part-time courses is provided by, a curriculum area. The necessity for staff to supply, check and re-check data for the college's central information system means that many staff see the management information system as an additional demand rather than a service. Staff and managers still lack confidence in the college's management information system and many maintain their own paper records.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

28 Prospective students receive initial information and guidance through a centralised course information and guidance service. There are two 'drop-in' centres: one is located in the north of the borough at the Islington campus and the other in the south of the borough. Staff at both centres are welcoming and knowledgeable about the college's provision. When enquirers ask about courses listed in the attractive prospectus, they are provided with further details. Admission arrangements for pupils from partner schools are firmly established.

29 There are effective procedures for enrolling students across the college. Advice on careers, welfare, financial and childcare issues and personal counselling are all available to prospective students. Staff are well briefed for the enrolment process and they are provided with good supporting materials. The course information units provide prospective students with information and they receive impartial guidance from specialist staff. Pre-enrolment and initial guidance given to prospective students is exemplary at the sixth form centre. There are well-organised induction programmes for new students. Tutors who implement the induction programmes receive helpful documentation on the induction process. A good-quality students' handbook and diary, which incorporates the college charter, is given to students during induction.

The arrangements for inducting late enrollers and some part-time students, especially those who are speakers of languages other than English, are more effective in some parts of the college than in others. There are some opportunities for students to accredit their prior learning when joining their courses, and particularly on courses leading to NVQs, for example in business administration and engineering. However, the college has not placed a high priority on developing opportunities for students to have their prior learning accredited. The college does not hold any information centrally on which courses offer accreditation of students' prior learning and experience.

30 The overall quality of tutorial support is good. Staff are working hard to ensure that tutorial support is of consistently high quality for all full-time and for all part-time students with substantial programmes of study. A tutorial handbook, with helpful guidelines based upon existing good tutorial practice, is available to course tutors. Tutors receive training in their roles, and are provided with good support from student services. Group tutorials vary in the extent to which they hold the students' interest and further the students' personal development. Some tutors are skilled in building a group identity. In one impressive tutorial, students gave a display of dancing as part of a programme in which students made presentations on their home cultures. After they had given their presentation, the students answered questions and the group held a discussion. Some students do not receive the tutorial time to which they are entitled. Monitoring of tutorial practice across the college has identified some good tutorial practice. This monitoring has not been robust enough to enable managers to detect weaknesses in tutorial practice which they can address.

31 The college is working towards a more coherent policy on attendance and punctuality. Strategies include setting a minimum level of attendance which students must achieve as a condition for remaining on their course, and refusing to admit to classes students who are more than ten minutes late. The handbook for students at the sixth form centre, contains a code of conduct specifying the college's expectations of students in terms of their punctuality and attendance. There are periodical reviews at which staff identify students who may be at risk of dropping out or underachieving, and decide upon action to be taken to help them. On some courses, especially those which contain mostly adults, students' absenteeism and poor punctuality are insufficiently checked by teachers and have an unsettling effect on the rest of the class.

32 Other aspects of students' support are consistently good. Good careers education and advice are provided by the careers service and, at the sixth form centre, by a careers department. Careers advisers have produced a useful handbook for tutors which gives comprehensive guidance on ways of helping students with their higher education applications. There is some careers guidance for adults who are speakers

of languages other than English. Careers advice for most adults, however, is provided in a less systematic fashion than that available to students aged 16 to 19. A team of well-qualified, experienced counsellors and advisers provides confidential personal counselling and advice. More than 4,800 students received advice on finance, legal rights and other issues during 1995-96, and more than 1,800 students received personal counselling. The Brook Advisory Service, which provides advice for young people on sexual matters, offers a weekly clinic at the Marlborough site and this is well attended. The college has a generous policy on fee remission; the college contributes towards the costs of tuition for some students who do not qualify for full remission but could not otherwise afford to study. It also contributes £50,000 to a hardship fund. In 1995-96, 791 students received grants totalling almost £120,000 from the access and hardship funds and from charitable foundations. Other support for students includes childcare facilities on five sites, in four creches and a nursery, which are free or subsidised for most users. These facilities cost the college £230,000 a year, and between September 1996 and March 1997, they were used by 268 students.

33 A co-ordinator has recently been appointed to develop further the arrangements for identifying and meeting students' learning needs are well managed. All full-time and all part-time students with substantial programmes of study are tested in literacy and numeracy during induction. Help in literacy and numeracy is provided in several different ways, including one-to-one tuition or through tuition in small groups or through workshops. A common and comprehensive system of record keeping has recently been introduced to log details of students' support needs, their progress and their attendance at support sessions. Most students are referred for help by their teachers or tutors, but they can and do refer themselves for assistance. Students particularly value the help they are given with assignments which are set as part of their course. In some instances, there is insufficient liaison between learning support staff and subject teachers. The quality and quantity of learning support materials vary greatly between campuses.

34 A co-ordinator has recently been appointed to develop further the support systems for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are well-established links with some special schools for students with moderate learning difficulties. There are procedures for meeting the needs of applicants with restricted mobility. Students with restricted mobility or sensory impairments receive special support to enable them to study on mainstream courses, although there are relatively few such students at present. There is a disability statement, made available to the public, which sets out the college's policy and arrangements for these students. A leaflet giving details of the accessibility of, and the support facilities available on, each site has been published. The college plans to make many of the sites more accessible to students with restricted mobility as from September 1997.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

35 In 64 per cent of the 248 sessions inspected, the strengths outweighed the weaknesses. The weaknesses outweighed the strengths in 6 per cent of lessons. Overall attendance in these lessons was 72 per cent. The following table summarises the inspection grades awarded to the lessons inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Access to further/ higher education	17	16	5	0	0	38
GCE AS/A level	15	21	11	0	0	47
GCSE	3	6	7	1	0	17
GNVQ	3	7	8	2	2	22
NVQ	3	7	6	1	0	17
Other vocational	3	20	17	3	0	43
Basic education	9	18	17	4	2	50
Other*	3	7	4	0	0	14
Total	56	102	75	11	4	248

*includes higher education.

36 Teachers showed sound knowledge of their subjects. They had developed good relationships with their students and were responsive to their students' educational and cultural backgrounds. Courses were generally well organised, although schemes of work varied in quality. Some schemes were no more than lists of topics to be covered. The best lessons maintained students' attention through the use of relevant subject matter. In these lessons, the teacher frequently checked that the students understood what was being taught. On many courses, teachers paid considerable attention to the development of study skills and key skills in communication and English. In some areas, information technology was underused by teachers in their teaching of the course and they did not provide students with sufficient opportunity to develop information technology skills. Teachers helped students to improve their numeracy skills when these skills were included in the course syllabus.

37 The teaching of modern foreign languages and English was of high quality. All courses were well planned, and schemes of work were well developed. In modern foreign languages, the language being taught was the medium of communication in all lessons. The subject matter and teaching materials were well chosen to stimulate the students' interest. In a GCE A level class in French, the students watched a French film and studied an analytical passage about the film in French. They had developed sufficient vocabulary to discuss the film in some depth. There are regular

exchange schemes with secondary schools and colleges in other European countries, and students are well prepared to take part in these and benefit from them fully. Individual students received good support for their learning, particularly in workshop sessions. In English, lessons were well planned, and a variety of appropriate teaching styles was used. Teachers helped students to prepare for their assignments carefully by giving them appropriate classwork and by providing them with handouts and other learning aids such as video recordings. Teachers marked students' written work thoroughly and provided them with a helpful written commentary on their performance. Posters, pictures and students' work were displayed in classrooms as stimuli for learning.

38 The teaching was of a high standard on access to higher education courses in humanities. Teaching methods were tailored to meet the needs of mature students. Teachers gave praise and encouragement to students, but they also provided them with constructive criticism when necessary. Teachers gave students clear explanations of the tasks they wanted them to carry out. They marked students' work to consistent standards. In addition, they provided individual students with detailed and constructive written commentary on their work, in order to help them to improve their performance. Teachers were effective in helping students to develop study skills and the ability to think analytically. In an evening class on the access to humanities and social science course, students were preparing for a debate on the desirability of a bill of rights. The class was divided by the teacher into two groups; one group was in favour of the bill and the other was against it. Using materials provided for them, and their own ideas, students in the groups enthusiastically discussed how they would present their arguments and pre-empt those of the opposition, while the teacher moved between groups and offered advice when this was required.

39 Lessons in science were well planned and managed, and they were skilfully tailored to meet the needs of students in each group. They contained a good balance of theory, problem solving and practical work. Tutorials and workshops were used to good effect to support individual students' learning. Homework was set and marked regularly. Teachers held discussions with students on the quality of their completed homework; the amount of written comment which teachers provided on homework was, however, sometimes inadequate. Students made good use of information technology in laboratory sessions. For example, computers were used to record data in practical sessions and students used compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases in project work. Group sizes were too large for some experimental work to be carried out effectively.

40 In the best sessions in computing, teachers used their sound subject knowledge effectively to extend students' skills and understanding. The stimulating way in which teachers explained concepts was appreciated by the students. However, some lesson planning was inadequate, and lesson objectives were not clearly set. On the access to higher education

course in computing, tasks were carefully graded in terms of their difficulty. The adult students, most of whom were returners to education, were provided with high-quality worksheets to help them study effectively on their own. On most of the other courses, however, the quality of handouts was poor. In mathematics, most staff used a variety of appropriate teaching methods and resources and made the lessons enjoyable and productive for their students. At the sixth form centre, GCE A level students used an informal 'lunchtime workshop' well in order to develop their mathematical skills. Mathematics students did not use information technology as a learning aid. In mathematics and computing, some of the written feedback which teachers gave students on their work was inadequate.

41 In business, most lessons were well planned and effectively taught. The tasks and assignments undertaken by students in lessons related to the world of business. Students were enabled to test theories against practice, sometimes by questioning external speakers and through visits. Students on a foundation GNVQ programme visited the factory of a major company where they learned about the company's approach to matters such as health and safety and personnel procedures. They then had to draft an advertisement for a job vacancy at the factory. Most students made good use of well-equipped learning areas where computing facilities were available. Teachers paid careful attention to key skills, particularly communication skills. In a NVQ level 3 class, the students worked in small groups to plan a manager's day. The students worked constructively on this simulated exercise, and responded well when the teacher introduced new information which required them to reorganise the manager's schedule. In some weaker lessons in business which lacked momentum, the students lost concentration.

42 There was much good teaching in health and community care. Record-keeping, the assessment of students' work and feedback from teachers to students about their work, were exemplary. Students were able to extend their learning on many courses, including GNVQ programmes, through work placements. Staff on childcare courses used their experience and expertise effectively during classroom discussion to present challenging arguments to the students and extend their thinking on issues; teachers also made links between theoretical and practical work and encouraged the students to draw on their work placement experiences. The teaching of key skills, particularly in number and information technology, was not sufficiently developed on some courses. Some weaker lessons lost their initial impetus and failed to stimulate the students.

43 There was a good range of appropriate activities in art and design lessons which encouraged the students to develop personal styles; students carried out these activities individually and in groups. In many lessons, the quality of teaching was good. Teachers identified and met the different abilities of their students and gave them challenging tasks. Staff used teaching methods with classes of adults which helped students to increase their self-confidence and achieve success. Teachers marked assignments

in detail and they encouraged the students to evaluate their work. A few assignments were set at an inappropriate level. The use of information technology by art and design students is underdeveloped. On media courses, good use was made of group work in both lessons and in project work. There was much good teaching. Teachers gave the students well-produced and relevant handouts to aid them in their revision. Teachers brought out the best in many students through encouragement and good classroom discipline. In one lesson on the access course leading to higher education in video, students were asked to assess each other's video productions. They did this in a responsible and supportive manner. The marking of assignments was fair and teachers provided helpful written feedback for students. A few lessons were not well managed: some were conducted at too slow a pace, or they failed to sustain the students' interest and were insufficiently demanding.

44 In performing arts, the teaching was of high quality. Stimulating activities captured students' attention and developed their skills and understanding. In one lesson, BTEC national diploma students explored the subtext of Shakespeare's language using modern dialogue. The teacher helped the students to see the relevance of the play to contemporary experience. Assignments were realistic and related to careers in the performing arts. The students' learning was enriched by such activities as visits to theatres which teachers were able to arrange through their own contacts with the theatrical profession. For example, students on the BTEC first diploma course observed a technical rehearsal led by a famous writer and director. Assessment procedures were thorough.

45 In sociology, government and politics and history, programmes of study were coherent and well planned. Some teaching was of high quality. In a GCE A level politics class, the teacher helped the students to draw thoughtfully on their own multicultural backgrounds to consider and discuss nationalism and national identities and cultures. The teacher was skilful in ensuring that potentially contentious topics were treated in a balanced, rational and well-informed way. In all three subjects, some lessons took the form of workshop sessions in which students carried out specific tasks on their own, or in small groups. At the sixth form centre, teachers supervised students closely and kept good records of their work. Most marking was of good quality; teachers corrected students' errors and they provided the students with useful written comments on ways of improving their work. Some schemes of work and lesson plans were insufficiently detailed and they lacked clear aims and objectives. Some teachers' expectations of their students were too low. In some lessons, teachers paid insufficient attention to students' individual learning needs.

46 In the best lessons in engineering, teachers were enthusiastic and they encouraged the students to become closely involved in their work. Most lessons were well planned, and in some, there was an effective combination of theory and practice. In a successful lesson in electrical

applications on a BTEC national diploma course, the teacher introduced the topic and checked students' understanding through questioning. A short video extract illustrated practices used in industry. This was followed by a demonstration by the teacher using workshop equipment. The students then carried out a practical exercise to see how the equipment operated under varying conditions. In the majority of lessons, however, teachers failed to stimulate the students' interest and some students took little part in learning activities. The quality of marking of students' work was variable, and in some instances, teachers provided students with little written feedback on the quality of their work.

47 In ESOL, there was some thorough course planning, which included the identification of the skills students needed at every level, in order to achieve progression to more advanced courses. Some teaching was of a high standard. There were well-managed opportunities for students to work together productively in small groups. Teachers used well-presented and relevant materials and handouts. In a beginners' class, the teacher used the theme of leisure to introduce the past tense. Students were encouraged to talk about what they had done the previous weekend and they made good use of well-produced learning materials. Teachers set written work regularly; usually they marked this carefully, provided students with encouraging comments when these were justified, and kept good records of students' progress. In some poorly planned lessons, learning activities were unrelated, and inappropriate for the different levels of ability in the group. Teachers did not provide part-time students with sufficient feedback on their progress.

48 In the best lessons in adult basic education, and for students with learning difficulties, there was competent teaching which took account of individuals' needs and goals. Teachers provided students with helpful feedback on their work and progress. In a lively and interesting session for students with moderate learning difficulties, the group developed skills for independent living which were subject to open college accreditation. Whilst carrying out practical cookery tasks, the students also developed key skills and general skills related to hygiene. The teacher had used a computer to prepare useful learning materials for non-readers. In many lessons, however, learning activities lacked variety. The use of information technology, audio-visual and other stimulating material was underdeveloped. Programmes for those with learning difficulties lacked a vocational dimension. There was a lack of consistency in the extent to which teachers recorded students' achievements.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

49 Most students were well motivated and were making steady progress. They enjoyed their studies, showed a clear understanding of the subjects they were studying, and were positive about their experience at the college.

50 Students of English were confident in discussion. Their written work displayed originality and perception and it showed that they put a great deal of effort into their studies. In modern languages, the students' ability to speak and use the foreign language was impressive and students' contributions in lessons were often enthusiastic and articulate. Students on the access to higher education in humanities courses demonstrated good writing skills and achieved high standards in the planning and delivery of their oral presentations. The standard of students' oral and written work on courses for ESOL was of an appropriate standard. Some particularly good written work was produced by students on media courses. Students studying history, politics and sociology were developing suitable levels of oral and literacy skills, and they produced well-informed, coherently argued essays. In a few subjects, such as mathematics and engineering, skills in written work were less well developed.

51 Art and design students demonstrated a wide range of practical skills and many were developing individual styles. Practical work by media students was, generally, of a satisfactory standard, and in a few instances, it was of very high quality. Practical and project work was good on science courses. In business studies, students took pride in their work. Their assignments were well presented and often made good use of information technology. The portfolios of students on the diploma in nursery nursing course were of a consistently high standard. Performing arts students worked with skill and confidence, and they often displayed a high level of professionalism. In engineering, some practical work, particularly in electronics, was good. In a few areas, some students' work was less satisfactory. For example, students' drawing on fashion courses was sometimes below an acceptable standard.

52 Over 600 students are enrolled on GNVQ courses and approximately the same number are on BTEC national diploma courses or their equivalent. Completion rates vary between levels of study and between similar programmes at different campuses. Overall, the completion rates for foundation and intermediate level courses in 1995-96 were 56 per cent and 80 per cent, respectively. The completion rate for students on two-year advanced level courses, was 88 per cent.

53 Pass rates in external examinations on vocational courses were generally good in 1995-96. There was a mistake in the performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), owing to an error in the college's returns. The tables should show that of the 46 students, aged 16 to 18, in their final year of study on courses leading to the advanced vocational qualifications included in the 1996 performance tables, 72 per cent were successful. This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. Seventy-eight per cent of the college's students are aged over 19; their achievements are not represented in these performance tables.

54 Overall, pass rates on GNVQ courses in 1996 were well above national figures at foundation and advanced levels, but were below national figures

at intermediate level. At foundation level, pass rates were high in art and design (84 per cent), health and social care (86 per cent), and science (70 per cent). Results in business studies at foundation level varied considerably; on one campus the pass rate was 75 per cent and on another it was 53 per cent. At intermediate level, there were some good pass rates in art and design (84 per cent) and in health and social care (75 per cent). Pass rates in business studies courses at intermediate level, on different campuses, ranged between 100 per cent and 25 per cent. Pass rates on some leisure and tourism and engineering courses were well below national figures at 25 per cent. At advanced level, students achieved good results in business and finance, engineering, furniture craft, performing arts and science; and their pass rate in these subjects was about 90 per cent. There were some good results on other vocational courses. Pass rates on the diploma in nursery nursing courses were good. The pass rates on specialist ophthalmic courses have been consistently good and some were over 80 per cent in 1996.

55 In 1996, there were 1,175 entries across the college for GCE AS/A level examinations in 48 subjects. The 440 students aged 16 to 18 who entered for one or more GCE AS/A level examination scored, on average, 4.5 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2), based on the data in the performance tables published by the DfEE. This is an improvement on the figure for 1995 and places the college in the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. The average points score for candidates taking two or more GCE A levels for the college as a whole was 11.3 in 1994, 12.1 in 1995 and 11.8 in 1996. The majority of GCE A level students is at the sixth form centre where the average point score in 1996 was 13.1.

56 The overall GCE A level pass rate at the sixth form centre in 1995-96 was 87.5 per cent. There were 100 per cent pass rates at grades A to E in many subject areas, including French, theatre studies, psychology, further mathematics and media studies; in these subjects, students also obtained pass rates at grades A to C that were well above national figures. Over 90 per cent of students entered for English literature, chemistry, history, geography, sociology, economics, art and design obtained grades A to E. Pass rates in art and design, biology, chemistry, and computer studies were above the national figures, in terms of both grades A to E, and grades A to C.

57 In 1996, there were 1,268 entries in 29 GCSE subjects across the college. The proportion of students who gained grades A* to C was about 59 per cent. Sixty-eight per cent of students studying English achieved grades A* to C compared with the national figure of 47 per cent. In computer studies, 73 per cent of students achieved grade A* to C, compared with the national figure of 50 per cent. However, in several subjects including art and design, biology, business studies, geography,

mathematics and physics, the proportion of students who gained grades A* to C was below national figures.

58 In 1996, the college offered 46 access courses which prepared students for progression into further and higher education. Students' achievements on these courses in 1995-96 were generally good. There were some notable achievements in computing, drama, human and biomedical science, media for women, law, history and politics, social sciences, and speech therapy. There is good progression from access courses to higher education. For example, 90 per cent of the students completing the access courses in the humanities in 1995-96, entered higher education; this proportion is higher than the national figure of about 82 per cent. The destinations of students from one access course in humanities and social science in 1995-96, included King's College, Queen Mary and Westfield College and the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London, and the universities of North London, Keele, Warwick, Sussex and Essex.

59 Information on students' destinations shows that a total of 1,141 students entered higher education in 1996. This represents an increase of 21 per cent since 1994. At the sixth form centre, 72 per cent of students who successfully complete their GCE A level course, progressed to higher education. About 60 per cent of students who completed vocational courses at the Islington and City campuses progressed to higher education; this proportion includes students of business studies, computing, health and community care, humanities, media studies, and performing arts. The remainder of students who went on to higher education were adults on GCE A level courses and access courses.

60 Students are successful in a number of fields and activities. Some have gained national awards in the specialist area of furniture craft which provides students with an opportunity to develop traditional craft skills. Students in engineering have also won national prizes for City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) work. Performing arts students benefit from working on joint projects with the Almeida, the Royal Court and the Lyric theatres. Students from across the college joined in a musical theatre production of 'Hair' which was in rehearsal during the inspection, as part of the enrichment programme at the sixth form centre.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

61 Managers have worked hard to draw up a framework of quality assurance for the whole college. Staff have continuously refined policy on, and procedures for, quality assurance, by drawing on good practice in quality assurance from across the college. In some areas of the college's work, processes for reviewing and evaluating the quality of provision were well established, but in other areas they have been introduced comparatively recently. As a result of these endeavours, there is now a climate in the college in which staff at all levels are willing to evaluate their

own work critically. Following consultation with all staff, a handbook on improving the quality of provision was approved in January 1997. The handbook contains a coherent policy for quality assurance across the college; clearly outlines procedures for quality assurance; defines performance indicators; states who has responsibility for carrying out quality assurance processes and specifies the timescales within which these must be completed. The director for curriculum and quality has overall responsibility for quality assurance. Each campus director is responsible for implementing the quality assurance policy and for monitoring the quality of provision on his or her campus. There have been some inconsistencies in the way the new quality assurance system has been implemented across the college. There is scope for governors and managers to co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of the quality assurance policy and procedures more closely.

62 The college's system for monitoring the quality of the curriculum is based on a cumulative process of course reviews, curriculum area reviews, and campus reviews. Each course or subject team has produced a review in the summer term for the last two years. The reviews have improved over this period and they are now produced to a standard format. Many reviews are thorough; some, however, are imprecise and they lack clear specification of action needed to secure improvement of provision, or of targets against which progress may be measured. Examination results are often not available at the time when reviews are carried out, and course teams are not required to comment on completion rates and the destinations of students. From 1997, course reviews will include analysis of students' achievements. In September 1996, course organisation files were introduced for every course, and these are proving valuable in helping staff to manage and monitor courses effectively.

63 Staff at all levels are developing skills of self-assessment. In 1995-96, all curriculum area managers produced their second self-assessment report. Many of the curriculum area reports provide a thorough analysis of strengths and weaknesses and identify action to be taken to improve the quality of provision. Some reports are much less detailed and evaluative than others; they do not contain an analysis of students' achievements, or give clear identification of the action needed to improve the quality of provision, and especially the action which should be taken by course teams. Campus directors use the curriculum reports as the basis for self-assessment reports on the quality of provision on their campuses. In some instances, the campus reports dilute important messages from, or fail to include priorities for action specified in, the curriculum reports. Cross-college services produced their first self-assessment report for 1996-97. Corporate services are developing an appropriate format for their self-assessment report. The self-assessment reports for learning resources, staff development and course guidance and admissions are detailed and evaluative. They include issues identified in curriculum area and campus reports, make good use of statistical

information and incorporate the views of students on the quality of provision. Other reports are more descriptive and they do not include an action plan. The college's self-assessment report is candid. It is generally accurate in its identification of strengths and weaknesses, and these correspond with the findings of the inspection. The report was discussed thoroughly by the curriculum board and by governors. The governors have established a curriculum committee through which they aim to address the monitoring of the quality and planning of the curriculum more effectively. The report draws on the self-assessment reports prepared at curriculum area and at campus levels and it includes, as an appendix, priorities for action and identifies who is responsible for ensuring that the action is carried out. There are some significant variations in the content of the reports, and omissions in some reports, in relation to management, staffing, support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and students' achievements. The reports contain little commentary or evidence on the quality of teaching and the promotion of learning.

64 Questionnaires were distributed to students during the autumn term of 1996, and these invited students to offer their views on the quality of information they received from the college before they began their course, and also on induction, teaching, coursework, feedback from teachers and tutorial support. Some staff felt that it was inappropriate to ask the students for their views so early in the academic year as the autumn, and students will be asked to respond to the questionnaire again, in the summer. The head of information services has carried out a useful analysis of marketing information and has produced an ethnic profile of students in each curriculum area. This profile has been distributed to managers and committees, but it has not been taken into account in the compiling of reviews. Other surveys have been conducted by managers of college services and by course tutors. There is scope for streamlining the methods by which students' views are gathered, in order to ensure that students are not asked the same questions in different questionnaires. The college has no college-wide system for gathering employers' views on the services which the college provides for them.

65 The college has a curriculum board, rather than an academic board, and this has a 'quality and curriculum' subcommittee. The subcommittee comprises the directors for curriculum and quality and for student services and learning resources; campus assistant directors; the staff-development manager, the head of learning resources, the head of guidance and the GNVQ co-ordinator. It has a broad remit to advise on the planning and development of courses and academic standards. Its main function is to monitor moderators' and verifiers' reports and to consider new course approvals and deletions. In January 1997, eight boards of study were established to address curriculum planning across the college, to develop good practice in teaching and the promotion of learning, and to develop consistent practice in quality assurance. A representative elected from each board of study will attend the curriculum board. The boards of study

met for the first time in February 1997, mainly to address the weaknesses identified in FEFC inspection reports on curriculum areas.

66 Staff development is comprehensive and effective. The college is committed by its mission, by its equal opportunities policy, and by its staff development and training policy, to enable all its staff to further their professional development. There are two staff-development managers. The staff-development budget is £200,000, which is about 0.8 per cent of the college's budget. Half of this budget is held centrally and the rest is delegated to curriculum areas and to service managers to be used according to priorities within an agreed training strategy and plan. This plan is developed from the college's strategic and operational plan, and it is drawn up after consultation with senior and curriculum area managers and after a training needs analysis has been carried out. The training plan is agreed and evaluated by a staff-development group which includes the campus assistant directors. Three college development days are held annually for all the college's staff. Topics focused upon in training have included preparation for inspection and quality assurance. There is a management development programme and training is provided for tutors. All new staff take part in an induction programme which is organised centrally and provided on each of the campuses. At the sixth form centre, there is a mentoring scheme for new teaching staff. Mentoring exists in other parts of the college but it is not universal. Staff are entitled to join college courses free of charge. Some bursaries are available to help staff pay the cost of fees for external courses which they wish to attend and which the college considers would be beneficial to their professional development.

67 The lack of a formal appraisal scheme for staff is inhibiting the college's progress towards achieving formal recognition as an Investor in People. Some good practice in staff appraisal takes place in the college, including appraisal for managers; some staff have been trained in appraisal techniques. A scheme is being piloted whereby managers observe teachers taking a lesson. Most staff have discussed their training needs at interviews with their line managers or their curriculum area managers. The college's training needs analysis takes into account staff-development needs which have been identified at these interviews. In a few instances, however, curriculum area managers failed to interview staff, or they did not interview them in time for their training needs to be included in the training needs analysis. Teachers who worked in those curriculum areas where curriculum managers did not hold interviews with staff, were not well informed about training opportunities available to them.

68 The college's charter is straightforward in its language and layout. It describes the services which students can expect from the college. The charter is regularly reviewed. There is, however, no process for monitoring whether the college honours the commitments it makes in the charter, in respect of the quality of teaching; these commitments are not monitored through course reviews. The charter explains how complaints

can be lodged. All complaints are logged and reported to the relevant manager. The director of student services and learning resources checks that action has been taken on complaints and he reports annually to governors.

RESOURCES

Staffing

69 The college employs 442 full-time equivalent teaching staff. Sixty-seven per cent of these are on full-time or fractional contracts. Most teachers have appropriate experience and they are well qualified. Eighty per cent of the teaching staff have degrees and 76 per cent have teaching qualifications. The proportion of part-time teachers who hold teaching qualifications is low at about 27 per cent; these staff have, however, appropriate academic and professional qualifications. In some areas, such as health and care and engineering, staff have been successful in gaining assessor and verifier qualifications. In other areas, such as business skills, staff have made slower progress in gaining these qualifications. Teachers of some subjects, such as English, the performing arts and engineering have had substantial commercial, industrial and professional experience. Some staff, however, have had little recent commercial or professional experience. Some part-time staff, such as those who teach media studies, are practitioners in their respective fields and students benefit from the up-to-date professional knowledge which these part-time teachers have. In those curriculum areas where a high proportion of part-time staff is employed, curriculum managers have additional administrative and curriculum management duties.

70 There are 181 full-time equivalent staff in non-teaching roles. Of these, 78 full-time equivalent staff support learning and 103 full-time equivalent staff serve in a range of other roles across the college. Staff responsible for central support functions such as estates, finance, information technology, learning resources centres, and human resources are well qualified and suitably experienced. The level of technical support for teaching varies, and it is insufficient for some subjects. Information technology is well served by a small team of technicians. In engineering, support staff are well qualified, and the level of support is good on some engineering courses. In some areas of media studies, technical support is good but in others, it is insufficient. In performing arts, there is a lack of technical staff for performance work.

71 The college is developing a human resources strategy. There is no up-to-date computerised information available on the ethnicity or age profile of the staff. The deployment of staff is based on the central resourcing policy, and is monitored by curriculum areas. The effectiveness of this monitoring varies from area to area. The majority of staff at the City and Islington campuses is on new contracts but staff at the sixth form centre, including recently appointed teachers, are employed on new sixth form college contracts.

Equipment/learning resources

72 The quality of classroom and specialist equipment varies. The classrooms used by access students at Pitfield Street are well equipped and they have overhead projectors and video playback facilities. Language students are taught in well-equipped rooms and they have access to three language laboratories. Most of the laboratories used by science students are well resourced, but those used by vocational students have old equipment and are not up to industrial standards. The dance studio, music suite, and theatre used by performing arts students are all well equipped. On the other hand, the general level and quality of media equipment, especially for courses in video techniques at Willen House, are poor. In art and design, there is good studio furniture at Benwell Road, but much of the equipment at Shepperton Arts Centre is old and out of date. Students on basic education courses, especially those studying at community centres, have insufficient access to video and audio equipment.

73 There are learning resource centres on seven of the college sites and these vary in size and quality. Overall, the college does not have enough private study spaces for students. It has secured funds from the TEC to increase the number of study spaces at two centres. The college's libraries contain almost 100,000 books, and a good range of CD-ROM databases, cassettes, newspapers and periodicals. The annual budget for books and other stock in the various centres totals £160,000 in 1996-97. There is effective liaison between library and teaching staff, and students are consulted on the quality of library provision. As a result of this liaison and consultation, the library stock has improved particularly in English and science. In some areas, such as mathematics the library stock is not satisfactory; many reference texts are out of date, and there are insufficient learning materials for students to use on their own through private study. In some humanities subjects, the stock is insufficient for the current number of students.

74 Most students have access to information technology equipment. There are more than 700 computers for students' use in the college, and one-third of these are less than two years old. With external funding, the college is providing access to the Internet in six of its learning resource centres. There are weaknesses in the availability or quality of the information technology resources in certain areas, such as science, higher level micro-electronics, media, art and design, and in some aspects of specialist computing. There are fewer than 100 computers which are available for use by students at any time when the college is open. There are additional computers which could be made available to students in this way if the college had staff available to supervise the use of the machines, and if their security could be ensured. There is no policy on the replacement of information technology equipment. The college has made it a priority that its information technology systems should be reliable. Equipment is purchased which requires minimum maintenance and the college aims to achieve the continuous improvement of its computer network.

Accommodation

75 The quality of general teaching accommodation varies. The best general purpose classrooms are in the newly refurbished Marlborough House, and the college regards these rooms as models for all future improvements. Some extensive work has been carried out in other buildings in order to provide teaching accommodation of good quality. Some of the older accommodation is in a poor decorative state. There is some poor-quality hatted accommodation at the sixth form centre. Most students do not have to move between sites. Students at the sixth form centre, however, have to move between sites at the lunch break, although the timetable is structured to keep this to a minimum. As a result, timetabled lessons at the centre are long. Some of the specialist teaching accommodation is good. There are good facilities for performance and dance classes in performing arts. There are some good general studio areas for art and design, although there is a lack of separate specialist accommodation for printmaking, wood and metal work. Some of the rooms used by media students are not up to commercial standards. Social facilities for students are limited. On all sites, there are canteens which are adequate in size. Two of the campuses have a separate students' common room, and another two each have a gymnasium.

76 The college has put considerable effort into managing and improving its estate. Over a two-year period the college has spent over £3,500,000 on maintenance work. It has made many improvements to its buildings and to the learning environment. The accommodation strategy aims to reduce the number of sites from 13 to nine by September 1997. The plan is to locate all specialist accommodation for a particular curriculum area within one building where appropriate. A specialist centre for access course students is to be developed. There are plans to improve access to the college for wheelchair users. At present, only the ground floor of buildings on most sites is accessible to people with restricted mobility.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

77 City and Islington College is making good progress towards achieving its mission. The strengths of the college are:

- a wide range of vocational, academic and adult education courses, which meets the needs of the community
- successful initiatives which have attracted students from groups who are under represented in further education and which have helped them to improve on their achievements
- effective governance and good management
- senior managers with a clear vision of the college's future direction
- effective arrangements for enrolment and induction
- good personal support and guidance for students
- committed staff who are well qualified and experienced and who are willing to evaluate their own work critically

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- much good teaching
 - good students' achievements on many courses
 - some good practice in quality assurance
 - comprehensive and effective staff development.
- 78 If the college is to continue to raise its standards it should improve:
- its market research in order to identify gaps in its provision, and to develop further opportunities for working with employers
 - the quality of teaching and learning on some courses
 - attendance and completion rates on some courses
 - pass rates on some vocational courses, particularly at intermediate level
 - the co-ordination of quality assurance across the college, and the use of performance indicators at course team level
 - the equipment for some courses
 - the accommodation for some courses.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)

 - 2 Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)

 - 3 Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1996)

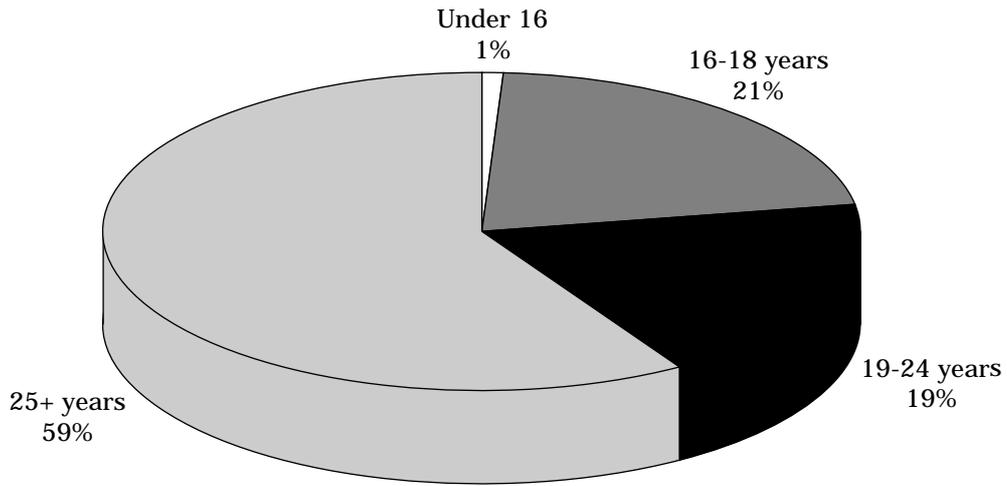
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

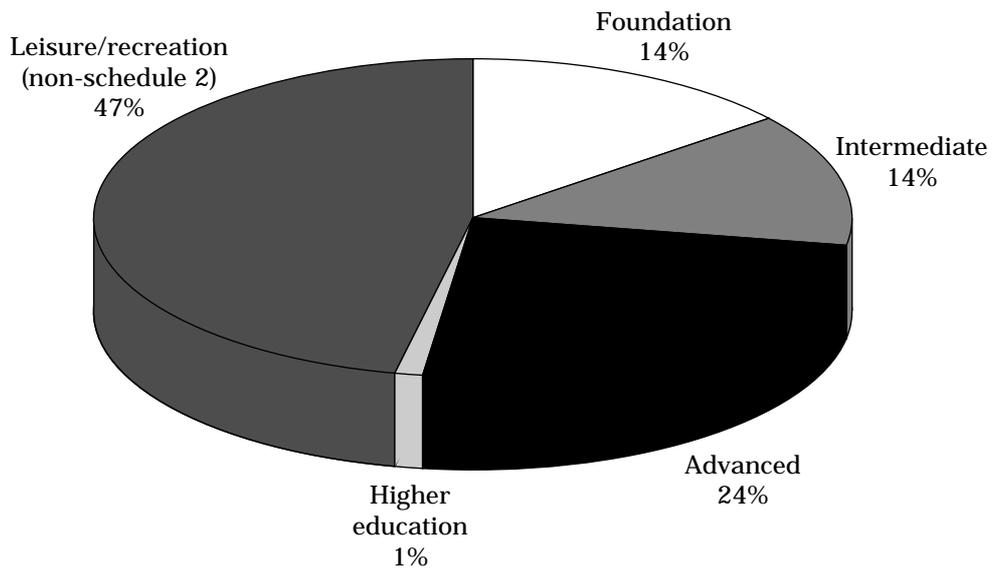
**City and Islington College: percentage student numbers by age
(as at November 1996)**



Student numbers: 14,083

Figure 2

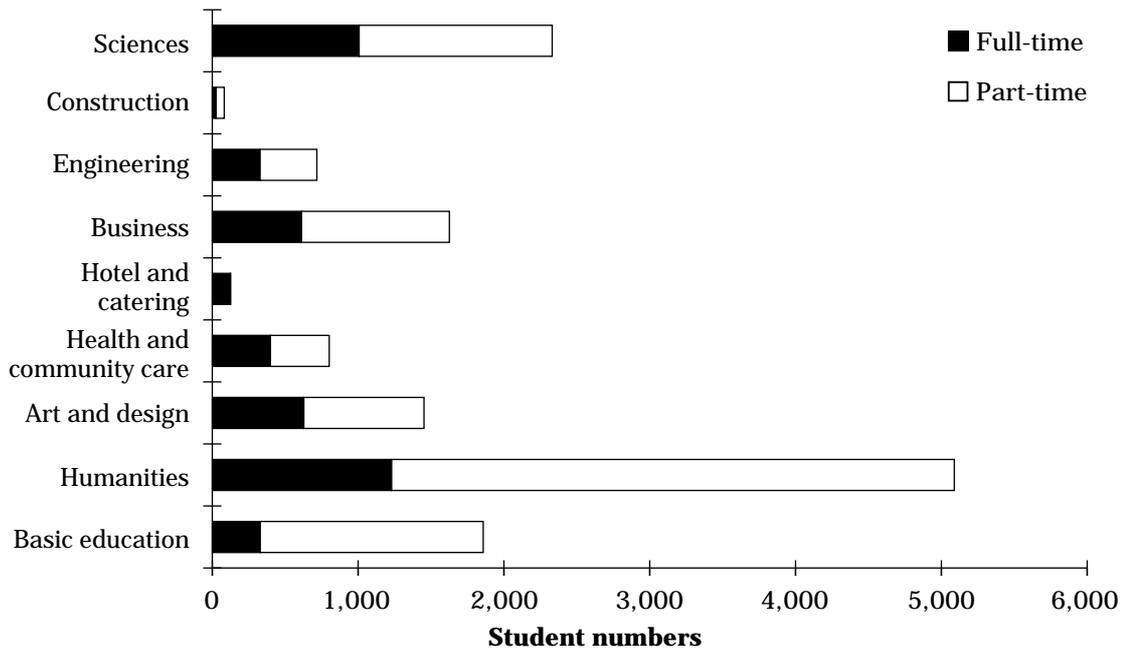
**City and Islington College: percentage student numbers by level of study
(as at November 1996)**



Student numbers: 14,083

Figure 3

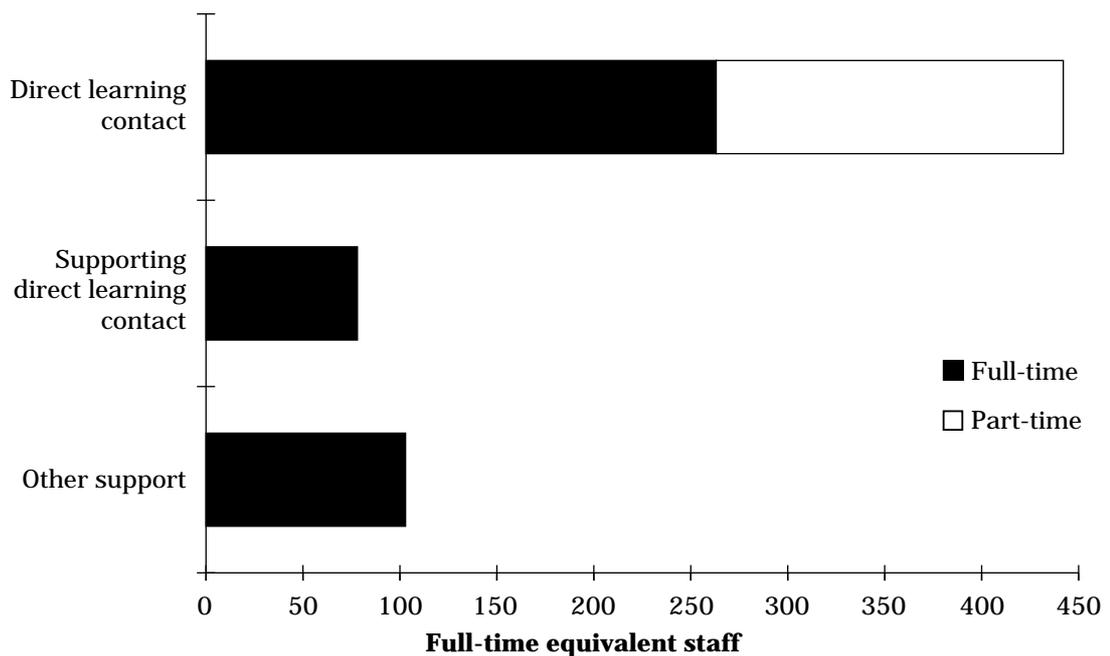
City and Islington College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 14,083

Figure 4

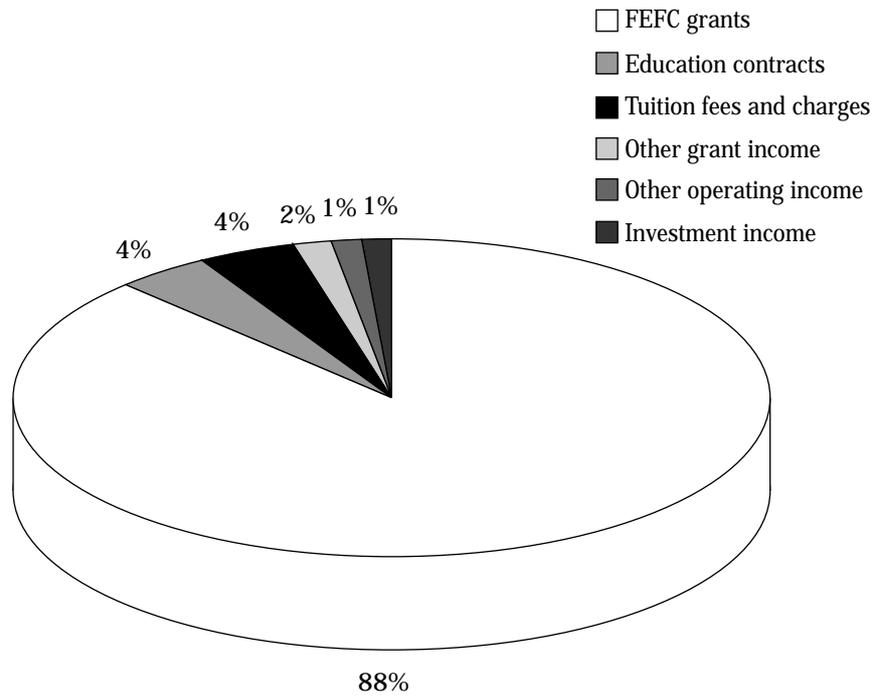
City and Islington College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1996)



Full-time equivalent staff: 623

Figure 5

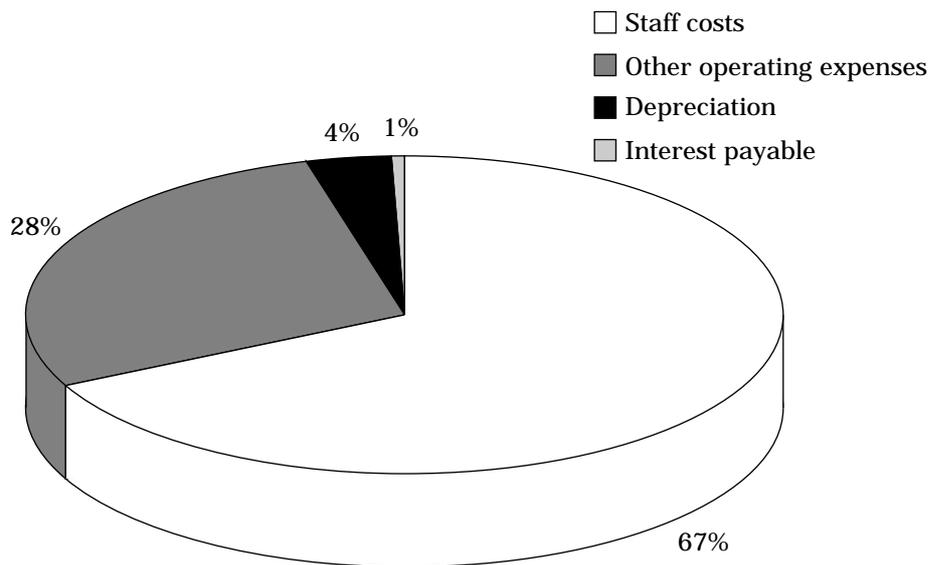
City and Islington College: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £23,496,000

Figure 6

City and Islington College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Expenditure: £23,623,000

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