

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Cornwall College

April 1995

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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 FEFC's quality assessment committee.

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

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

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

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 42/95

**CORNWALL COLLEGE
SOUTH WEST REGION**

Inspected September – December 1994

Summary

Cornwall College, which includes Duchy College, is working successfully towards the achievement of its mission and meeting its growth targets. It offers a wide range of provision which reflects its responsiveness and flexibility, in catering for a variety of clients. It has an experienced and committed governing body. Senior managers work as an effective team providing vision and leadership and delegate wide responsibilities to the heads of centre. Staff are well qualified and experienced. They provide effective teaching, particularly in practical areas of work. Good support systems for students are in place on the Pool campus. Other strengths include: a thoroughly-documented quality assurance system; some high-quality specialist teaching areas; a good learning-resources centre, which includes subject-based workshops; and some spacious and attractive sites. The college should: strengthen its planning for enrolments; improve aspects of its management information system; examine the widely varying experience of students at different centres; ensure that students receive a consistent quality of induction and tutorial support; improve retention rates and levels of attendance on some of its courses; extend quality assurance procedures to its adult students studying in schools in and out of the county; and deal with some weaknesses in the level of technician support, level of equipment, and teaching accommodation.

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

| Aspects of cross-college provision | | Grade |
|---|------------------------------|--------------|
| Responsiveness and range of provision | | 1 |
| Governance and management | | 2 |
| Students' recruitment, guidance and support | | 2 |
| Quality assurance | | 2 |
| Resources: | staffing | 2 |
| | equipment/learning resources | 2 |
| | accommodation | 3 |

| Curriculum area | Grade | Curriculum area | Grade |
|---|--------------|---|--------------|
| Mathematics, science and information technology | 2 | Catering, leisure and tourism | 2 |
| Agriculture | 2 | Health and community care | 2 |
| Horticulture | 3 | | |
| Construction | 2 | Humanities | 2 |
| Engineering | 2 | Courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities | 1 |
| Business studies | 2 | | |

CONTENTS

| | Paragraph |
|---|------------------|
| Summary | |
| Introduction | 1 |
| The college and its aims | 2 |
| Responsiveness and range of provision | 8 |
| Governance and management | 19 |
| Students' recruitment, guidance and support | 31 |
| Teaching and the promotion of learning | 46 |
| Students' achievements | 53 |
| Quality assurance | 63 |
| Resources | 76 |
| Conclusions and issues | 91 |
| Figures | |

INTRODUCTION

1 Cornwall College was inspected between September and December 1994. A team of inspectors spent 60 days on curriculum inspections and 36 days on the cross-college team visit. Inspectors visited 271 learning sessions to observe 3,528 students at work. Specialist curriculum areas inspected were: agriculture; horticulture; engineering; construction; foundation studies (courses for students with learning difficulties); humanities (including art, media and performing arts); health and social care (including hairdressing); catering, leisure, travel and tourism; science, mathematics and information technology; and business studies. Inspectors examined samples of students' work and held discussions with students, staff and members of the college corporation. They inspected college documents including the college's strategic plan, self-assessment report, policy statements and position papers. Meetings were held with local employers, parents, community representatives and staff from the University of Plymouth and the Devon and Cornwall Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Cornwall College is the largest provider of education and training in Cornwall with six sites throughout the county. The main site is at Pool, between Camborne and Redruth, and there is a smaller campus in Falmouth 12 miles away. The college shares its main site with the Camborne School of Mines which is part of the University of Exeter. The Camborne and Redruth Adult and Community Education Service is a part of the college. Further education provided by Falmouth College of Arts is also located on the same site but this work is in the process of being transferred to Cornwall College. The Duchy College of Agriculture and Horticulture is part of Cornwall College and its work is organised on the college's other four sites, at Stoke Climsland, 59 miles from Pool, at a small centre at the Royal Cornwall Show ground in Wadebridge, at Rosewarne, and at Portreath, where there is a small farm. Both Portreath and Rosewarne are within three miles of Pool. The college also maintains an office in Birmingham for the organisation and promotion of educational conferences.

3 Cornwall College operates under a number of distinctive names, including Duchy College. Others titles include Trevenson House from which management and professional development programmes are organised, and the Accredited Training Centre located in Pool, Exeter and Swindon. Each has its own logo and/or house style. The Accredited Training Centre, which originally provided training programmes for Devon and Cornwall TEC now offers training and consultancy, largely outside Cornwall, to a diverse range of clients in management, interpersonal skills and assessor/verifier training.

4 The college's main campus is situated in a travel-to-work area in which unemployment is the highest in the south west, and well above the

national average. In October 1994, the figure for Redruth and Camborne was 13.8 per cent, compared with an average for Cornwall of 10.1 per cent and a national figure of 8.7 per cent. Over the past 10 years, there has been a substantial decline in agricultural employment. Employment in the tourist industry, the largest employment sector, fluctuates seasonally but is static overall. Growth areas include information technology, food processing, marine leisure, alternative energy and the services sector. Defence reductions, for example at Plymouth dockyard and St. Mawgan air base, have had an effect on business and employment. Cornwall is an economy dominated by small companies. Ninety per cent of firms employ fewer than 10 people, and 60 per cent fewer than five. The largest public employer is the county council and the largest private employer is English China Clays. The college itself is a substantial employer in the Camborne/Redruth area.

5 In November 1994, there were 8,787 students on roll, of which 6,735 were on further education courses, 1,030 on higher education courses and 1,022 on adult leisure and recreation classes. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3. The college employs 576 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 309 are teachers and 267 are support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

6 Competition for 16-19 year old students, particularly in west and central Cornwall is strong. The college has 12 main feeder schools, five of which have sixth forms. Other institutions offering post-16 provision are Truro College, 12 miles to the east, Penwith College, 14 miles to the west, and St. Austell College, 26 miles to the east. The college franchises General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses to two local 11-18 schools and one school in Bristol. It has also enrolled approximately 250 students, mainly part-time adult students, who join the sixth forms of their local schools for their studies. Most attend schools in Cornwall, although some of the 16 schools involved in the scheme are as far away as Mansfield, Leominster and Wimborne.

7 The college, in its mission statement, asserts that it is 'contributing to the prosperity of Cornwall through the provision of quality education and training'. Its size, the range and diversity of its provision, its emphasis on enterprise and outreach activities, and its provision of higher education in a county with no university mean that the college has an important role to play in the life and economy of the area.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 The college offers a wide range of academic and vocational courses delivered by 14 centres: adult education; foundation studies; leisure, tourism and sport; hotel, catering and bakery; arts media and social sciences; science; community and health studies; Trevithick business centre; management and professional development (Trevenson House);

secretarial and administrative studies; Falmouth marine school; automotive engineering; engineering; and construction. Duchy College manages its own curriculum.

9 There are GNVQ programmes in business, leisure and tourism, health and social care, art and design, science, and hospitality and catering. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are offered in many vocational areas, including business administration, furniture craft, engineering, hairdressing and catering. In areas for which GNVQs and NVQs are not available, students are prepared for nationally-recognised certificates and diplomas, for example in journalism, medical and legal secretarial studies, media studies and performing arts. Floristry and animal care courses, as well as vocational countryside programmes such as agriculture, horticulture and equestrian studies, are marketed under the Duchy College name. The college offers a number of distinctive programmes specific to its location, for example in marine leisure and boatbuilding. Twenty-two General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) and 10 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects are on offer during the day. The college plans to establish a sixth-form centre in September 1995 in collaboration with Pool School to provide GCE A level and GCE advanced supplementary (AS) courses.

10 All centres provide part-time day programmes for adult students and some vocational programmes are offered in the evenings. A separate programme of adult GCE A level, GCSE, non-vocational and recreational courses is run by the adult and continuing education office. Lack of co-ordination has resulted in similar programmes being offered with different pricing structures, for example in secretarial studies, computing and photography.

11 There are over 200 open-learning enrolments, co-ordinated by the learning-resources centre for courses in GCSE and GCE A level subjects, information technology, management, construction, and hotel and catering studies. Demand for open learning is growing but knowledge by staff of the range of opportunities available to enquirers is limited.

12 Sports leadership, Duke of Edinburgh's awards and many sporting activities are offered to full-time students, although timetabling constraints sometimes restrict attendance at the main Wednesday afternoon programme. Students on public services and catering courses are the main participants. GCE A level and GCSE students have an additional programme of optional activities which includes computing, languages and other GCSEs.

13 There are currently over 100 students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enrolled on specific courses at the college. Links with two local special schools and with external agencies help with the planning of these courses. A range of course options allows students to experience several vocational areas and many of these courses include opportunities for simulated and/or actual work experience. The courses prepare students

for progression to mainstream courses. Examples of provision include the Pathfinder programme at Duchy College which allows students to combine the development of independent living and countryside skills. Examples of support given to students attending mainstream courses include the college audiology unit which is currently supporting 19 students with hearing difficulties. There are also some part-time courses for students with learning difficulties at the college and at other sites in the community.

14 Higher education in Cornwall is provided by Falmouth College of Arts, Camborne School of Mines and by Cornwall College. The college wishes to increase its higher education provision from approximately 11.7 per cent of enrolments. The majority of the work is franchised from the University of Plymouth with whom the college has associate college status. Links with other higher education institutions are developing. There are approximately 650 students on higher national diploma, certificate and first-year degree programmes in environmental monitoring, science, social science, business and management, information technology, engineering and marine studies. Foundation programmes, leading to the first year of degree courses, are available in engineering and science. Access to higher education courses, validated by the South West Access Federation, are offered in humanities and social sciences.

15 Strong links have been established with schools both through central college initiatives and directly through each centre. For example, at Pool School, the college provides NVQ levels 1 and 2 in technology, business administration, catering and bakery. Marketing to schools is undertaken through regular visits and through attendance at careers conventions, presentations and parents' evenings. A comprehensive programme of 'taster' days operates college wide. Centres promote their own special relationships with schools by offering regular sampling of activities for pupils.

16 The main college prospectus for programmes on offer the following year is widely distributed to schools, careers staff and libraries each September, and is supported by individual leaflets. A higher education prospectus is published in February. A summary booklet detailing all part-time and evening provision, and offering students the opportunity to enrol by post, is distributed widely during August.

17 The business development centre was established in July 1994 to co-ordinate central marketing activities and to generate new business, much of it outside Cornwall. The centres provide many and diverse services to business and other external clients, including language training, accreditation of prior learning and secretarial services. Entrepreneurial activity is encouraged. Centres take responsibility for marketing and pricing their own programmes, and the business development unit acts as a point of contact and advice. There is no effective co-ordination of visits to employers nor of the pricing policy. There is also no publicity material which summarises the total provision available to corporate clients.

Employers are actively involved in many aspects of college work, such as providing work experience placements and as members of advisory committees.

18 Relations with Devon and Cornwall TEC are generally good. Examples of projects where the college and the TEC have worked together to meet local training needs include the Nanpean Initiative which aims to provide opportunities for engineers without formal qualifications to achieve higher national certificates or diplomas. The college is involved in training credits through its own approved training organisations, Duchy College Training and Cornwall College Training. The principal is a member of the TEC area board for Cornwall. The quality assurance and development manager serves on the main TEC board.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

19 The governance and management of the college benefit from the experience, breadth of expertise and commitment of the board of governors and the vision and leadership of the directorate. The board of governors has, through its chairman and vice-chairman, a close working relationship with the principal and there is a clear separation of functions and responsibilities.

20 The board of governors consists of 18 members including the principal and deputy-principal, two members of staff and a student. Board members have experience in the construction industry, local government, tourism, marketing and public relations, the law, banking, engineering, farming and accountancy. They bring to the college a wide range of relevant expertise, have a particular depth of knowledge in financial, legal and personnel matters, and are deeply committed to the college and its role in the life and economy of Cornwall.

21 The board has appropriate committees: remuneration, audit, finance and general purposes, staffing and industrial relations. Buildings and other estate matters are subsumed within the brief of the finance and general purposes committee. This committee, which is scheduled to meet every two months, has as its chairman the chairman of the main board. The committees have appropriate terms of reference and membership. The board makes use of ad-hoc working parties as required. The Duchy College has a specialised and much-valued advisory committee chaired by a member of the corporation board, and although it is not legally constituted as such, it is known as the governing body of the Duchy College.

22 The directorate has a team of five: the principal, the deputy principal and the respective directors of resources, programmes and operations. Members of the directorate work well together and have developed a valuable knowledge and understanding of each other's roles. The deputy principal has line management responsibility for the centre heads as well as the principalship of the Duchy College. A limited restructuring of directorate roles was approved, at the time of inspection, in order to allocate responsibilities more evenly.

23 The curriculum and its delivery are managed by the centre heads who have a considerable degree of operational autonomy. The different policies followed by the centres sometimes result in substantial differences in the quality of experience for students. There are no formal mechanisms for disseminating good practice between centres.

24 Centre heads report to the deputy principal and meet with him at least once a fortnight. At other times, they approach and receive information from any member of the directorate. This flexibility helps to ensure a swift response but requires effective and regular communication between members of the directorate.

25 There are a number of cross-college managers including those for personnel, business development, quality assurance and development, student services, estates, information technology, college services, computer support, the learning-resources centre, and the college accountant. The business development centre manages enterprise activities, marketing and liaison with schools.

26 Strategic objectives are determined by the board of governors following discussion amongst members of the directorate. Policy proposals are similarly discussed and approved by the board following recommendations from the principal. Such policy and planning proposals are also the subject of internal consultation with centre heads and, where appropriate, the academic board. Policies are subject to continual monitoring by an identified individual or committee. This responsibility is in turn assessed, where appropriate, as part of the staff-appraisal process.

27 Centre development and operating plans are used by centre heads in their bids for funding, which is allocated after deductions for college-wide costs and a fund set aside for new initiatives. However, centre heads are unclear about the rationale behind allocations to centres.

28 The central management information system provides budget holders with monthly reports showing both actual and committed expenditure. Management information systems for student performance, personnel management and staff training require further development.

29 Target enrolments are determined centre by centre, primarily on the advice of heads of centre. Growth in the number of units for 1994-95 was planned at 14.2 per cent. Present figures indicate a substantial number of units above this target. These additional enrolments represent an impressive commitment to growth but the college has already strictly controlled its staffing costs and should ensure that planning for enrolment and its consequences is as effective as possible.

30 The college's income and expenditure for the 16 months to July 1994 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college's average level of funding for 1994-95 is £19.76 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £18.17 and the median for all the sector colleges is £19.02.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

31 The admissions process is shared effectively between the centres and student services. The latter includes a reception and information centre, and adult and financial guidance. Some enquirers contact student services directly and some are referred to them from reception. This process works smoothly, although neither student services nor the centres have a complete record of all contacts.

32 A schools' liaison officer makes initial contact with schools, visits their careers and parents' evenings and speaks to classes. Co-operation with 11-16 schools is good. There is strong competition from 11-18 schools. Links between school and college staff are actively encouraged.

33 The business development manager is responsible for ensuring that there is a consistent level of information on courses. He provides guidelines and monitors the information which is presented in schools, at college advice evenings, in the prospectus, in a well-defined range of course leaflets and through the local media.

34 Full-time students, and many part-time students, are interviewed, usually by course managers and their teams. Students and parents refer favourably to the supportive and informative nature of the interviews. The college's open-access policy is recognised by interview staff who offer firm advice on applicants' suitability for courses and suggest referrals to a different level or centre, if appropriate.

35 A full-time adult guidance counsellor has recently been appointed. She provides guidance to individual students, including advice on the assessment and accreditation of previous learning and experience, and acts as a point of referral to the centres. She is supported by an accommodation and welfare team, specialising in advice on financial problems. Support for evening students is provided by adult education staff.

36 As a consequence of recent reorganisation, a qualified and experienced student counsellor has joined the careers officer and the head receptionist to form the student services team, responsible to the director of operations. The team meets regularly, is conveniently located and well accommodated, and provides attractively-presented course and careers information for students. Student services on the Pool campus, which has 65 per cent of the college's students, have a high profile. However, the concentration of facilities and expertise on this site raises concerns about the service at other locations. The student services team visits other sites but much of the responsibility for support services at these sites devolves to course managers and tutors, who do not have the resources and expertise of the central team.

37 The college is committed to a policy for the assessment and accreditation of students' prior learning. The adult guidance counsellor provides an initial contact point and students are subsequently referred to

centres. The catering, management, and leisure and tourism centres have trained staff who are implementing innovative approaches to the collection of evidence. In the engineering centre, links have been established between the college scheme for accrediting prior learning and local companies. In many areas of work, however, little progress has been made in promoting the college's scheme.

38 Staff and students are familiar with the checklist of activities for student induction which is part of the college's quality assurance system. Nevertheless induction programmes vary in their objectives, duration and effectiveness. Successful induction programmes cover not only familiarisation with the college, but also introduce methods of learning and assessment for particular courses. For example, students on some GNVQ courses are able by 'tasting' courses to reconsider their choices. Personal tutors successfully support students in making changes. Student services staff meet some tutor groups during induction. Student questionnaires provide feedback on induction and some centres have responded swiftly to students' views.

39 Personal tutors are identified early and take part in the interviewing and induction of students. Most students are also taught by their tutors and this strengthens personal contacts. Most full-time tutor groups have weekly timetabled meetings and some staff fulfil their tutorial responsibilities by arranging meetings with individual students. Students expressed satisfaction with the relationship between them and their personal tutors. Part-time day students receive support from their subject tutors but evening students have fewer such opportunities because of the relatively limited time they spend in college. The GCE A level course profile refers to action planning, which involves students in setting their own learning objectives and evaluating their own progress, to a skills checklist, career planning, and the development of curricula vitae. Together, these provide a good basis for a tutorial programme. Where there is concern about students' performance, concern notes passed between GCE A level subject and personal tutors facilitate communication about progress and performance. However, tutorial support varies considerably between centres. In some, there is incomplete record keeping, irregular liaison between student services and tutor systems, and a lack of planned programmes. There is no tutorial handbook aimed at providing a common experience and standard.

40 Students can refer to the full-time counsellor through tutors or directly. The counsellor maintains close contacts with external agencies including a trained male counsellor. She makes visits to other campuses, sometimes in response to individual requests. Staff and students are informed of the service by leaflets and by liaison with personal tutors. The latter have responded co-operatively to invitations to participate in staff development on counselling. Further basic counselling training for tutors could ease the existing pressure on the full-time counsellor.

41 The careers guidance officer works with the schools liaison officer to ensure that careers advice is available to students before they come to college. She also supplies information on higher education. Staff from the local careers service visit the college three days a week to offer guidance by appointment. A wide range of careers information, in print and on computer, is immediately available in the reception area. Some centres, for example, construction and business, make good use of their own links with employers to organise group visits and guest speakers. Support for students applying to higher education is devolved to personal tutors and there is little college-wide co-ordination of procedures for completing references.

42 The college has made a firm commitment to learning support by appointing a learning support counsellor and by introducing a policy that all students receive an initial assessment of basic skills. Some centres use the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit test, and referrals from these centres to the learning support counsellor have resulted in appropriate action. Other centres use different arrangements, or assume that if students meet the entry requirements for courses they have no need for learning support. The introduction of diagnostic testing at all centres is likely to stretch existing provision. Links between the learning support service, the tutorial system and the centres should be strengthened, if the provision of learning support for students is to be implemented effectively. Currently, this is not the case: for example, of 51 students recently referred to learning support only 16 attended.

43 All applicants are encouraged to bring their school records of achievement to their initial interview. The recent work of a college co-ordinator for records of achievement has resulted in general acceptance in all centres of the importance of recording achievement for all full-time students.

44 Responsibility for monitoring attendance is shared between personal and subject tutors, but information on absences is not brought together centrally, and the effectiveness of subsequent action varies. Many centres have good levels of attendance as well as effective monitoring and follow-up by the centres. However, attendance on some GCE A level and GCSE courses is unsatisfactory.

45 Both the college charter and the student college agreement provide clear statements of students' entitlement to teaching, opportunities for learning, guidance and counselling, as well as students' responsibilities in respect of attitudes to work and behaviour. All students indicated their familiarity with the agreement which they sign in conjunction with the head of their centre.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

46 Of the 271 sessions observed, 62 per cent had strengths outweighing weaknesses. Ten per cent of sessions had more weaknesses than strengths. The grades awarded as a result of the inspection are shown in the following table.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

| Programmes | Grade | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Totals |
|-------------------|--------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|----------|---------------|
| GCE AS/A level | | 4 | 21 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 36 |
| GCSE | | 1 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 8 |
| GNVQ | | 2 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 17 |
| NVQ | | 6 | 8 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 23 |
| Other | | 32 | 83 | 53 | 17 | 2 | 187 |
| Total | | 45 | 123 | 75 | 24 | 4 | 271 |

47 Much of the teaching and learning at Cornwall College is effectively planned. Courses are fully documented and include appropriate programmes of work for teachers to follow. For example, in performing arts and media studies, individual session plans are carefully related to the programme for the whole course. Information technology teaching also featured well-planned sessions with objectives which were clearly linked to the course structure. Programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities include planned opportunities for them to progress to mainstream vocational courses, where appropriate. In a few curriculum areas the programmes of work and lessons plans were incomplete or used less effectively.

48 Students were well motivated. Friendly and productive working relationships between staff and students were the norm. In social care, students contributed freely to discussion and were appropriately challenged on their assumptions. Teachers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were particularly successful at building strong working relationships and students were encouraged to be supportive of each other. In agriculture, students engaged in a variety of learning activities which maintained their interest and motivation. In secretarial classes there were different activities to suit students of differing ability, including well-organised group work and learning materials which allowed students to work effectively on their own. In a few areas, however, the range of teaching methods was narrow, and some students had insufficient opportunity to take their own initiatives, to think for themselves, or to discuss their ideas with other students.

49 Many students enjoyed their practical work more than their study of theory. Engineering students were well motivated, but more reluctant to contribute in theory classes than in practical sessions. Practical work in hairdressing was well managed but the conduct of theory sessions was over formal. In contrast, catering students enjoyed well-structured theory sessions, in which there was lots of activity, as well as challenging practical sessions. In both types of work students were given every opportunity to use their creative and research skills. Science students were involved in effective investigative work, which encouraged them to develop problem-

solving techniques. In mathematics, students received good teaching which included high-quality support for individuals. In agriculture, firm links were established between theory and practice and students experienced a variety of activities. Students' practical work including farm duties was well supervised.

50 Whole-class discussions were frequent but varied in their effectiveness. In arts, media and social sciences students were lively and willing to contribute to discussion, although in approximately one-third of the sessions inspected only a minority of students participated. Some sessions required firmer direction and more checks on the learning of all students as opposed to the most responsive members. In some GCSE sessions, some teachers failed to sustain students' attention and interest throughout the three-hour sessions.

51 In many areas, practical learning was linked to real-life applications. For example, a recent design and build competition at the Southampton Boat Show was won by students from the Falmouth marine school. Agricultural engineering students worked well in small teams on tractor overhaul using job sheets derived from those in use by a local dealer. Advanced students worked on a 'jobbing' basis on nearby farms, overhauling equipment. For students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities the college offers excellent opportunities for realistic work practice through enterprise initiatives such as the college gift shop.

52 The assignments presented to students are generally well planned in relation to course objectives, set to an appropriate standard, and fairly and helpfully marked. In construction, deadlines for the submission of work are clearly established in advance. In business administration, students' work is regularly set and carefully marked. Students at the Falmouth marine school are set assignments which have a good balance between theory and practical skills. Catering assignments are set regularly, thoroughly marked and feature supportive comments. On some courses, however, there was no explanation of why students received certain grades, teachers' comments were cursory, or technical errors went uncorrected. There were also differences between teachers on the same course. For example, some horticulture assignments received detailed and constructive written feedback, but some were more briefly marked and had little comment to encourage students.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

53 Many students were highly motivated and industrious. Art and design students were well-informed about their courses and possible routes for progression. Horticulture students were well motivated and knowledgeable particularly when they were responsible for the completion of interesting and appropriate tasks. On the few occasions where students were poorly motivated there was a link to be made with inappropriate teaching styles.

54 Much of the coursework showed students to be working successfully at an appropriate level, developing their knowledge, understanding and skills. Business studies students in NVQ programmes achieved high standards. High levels of achievement were also evident in catering, where 11 national and international prizes have been won recently. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities won a certificate of merit in the Daily Telegraph school's newspaper competition for 1993 and £500 from a Whitbread tall ships project. They also received a special olympics participation award. Some tourism and leisure studies assignments were of a high standard, but others contained too much description and too little analysis.

55 There are some good opportunities, both within programmes of study and in extra activities, for students to develop the skills of working on their own and operating effectively as members of a team. In construction, and on the full-time GCE A level programme, students were able to review their own targets and identify areas of weakness. Health and social care students were shown to be making considerable progress in their personal development as their course of study progressed. Some of the first-year students were shy and reticent whereas students observed in year two of the course were markedly more competent, confident and enthusiastic.

56 Core skills in information technology, numeracy and literacy are developed with differing degrees of success in different areas of the college. A college policy for testing the literacy of all new students is applied more in some centres than others. In the Falmouth marine school, all students were working on both mathematics and information technology skills at an appropriate level. Science students were generally competent at using information technology although it was used more for vocational assignments than by GCSE and GCE A level students. This was also the case in arts media and social studies. In business studies, teachers' expectations of information technology competence and students' ready access to information technology facilities helped students to develop their skills effectively.

57 GCE A levels represent a small proportion of the college's work. Forty-eight full-time students and 76 part-time students of all ages entered for GCE A levels in 1994. Students aged 16-18 scored on average four points per entry (where A=10, E=2). This places the college in the middle third of the further education sector on this performance measure, based on data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education. There were excellent results in GCE A level English: the pass rate was 96 per cent and 62 per cent gained passes at grades A-C. Other subjects have highly variable pass rates. For example in the past three years the pass rate in sociology has fluctuated between 77 and 44 per cent. In 1994, it was 75 per cent.

58 In 1994, the 19 full-time students taking a one-year GCSE course achieved a pass rate, grades A-C, of 55 per cent. This compares with a 1993 pass rate of 50 per cent for all sector colleges.

59 Amongst the more outstanding vocational results were 100 per cent pass rates on full-time and part-time equine studies courses, 90 per cent on the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diplomas in information technology applications and computer studies, including a high number of merits and distinctions for individual modules, and 100 per cent pass rates for BTEC national and first diplomas in leisure and travel and tourism, in both Duchy and Cornwall Colleges. Thirteen out of 14 students in Duchy College achieved their BTEC national diplomas in agriculture. In some areas there was considerable disparity between full-time and part-time success rates. In horticulture, for example, 80 per cent of full-time students entered for their qualification achieved it, whereas the success rate for part-time students was 55 per cent. Within some centres, success rates varied considerably. Many of the Falmouth marine school's students achieved well, but the BTEC national certificate in engineering (boatbuilding and design) had a 47 per cent pass rate compared with the college diploma course pass rate of 88 per cent. Ninety-four external qualifications achieved by 62 students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities included City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) wordpower and numberpower qualifications, the Gateway award, and elements of NVQ level 1 in fast food preparation and hotel cleaning.

60 Seventy-four per cent of the 398 students, aged 16-18, in the final year of study on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education's 1994 performance tables were successful. This places the college among the bottom third of colleges on this performance measure. However, some adult pass rates for vocational qualifications were better than those for 16-18 year olds. For example, on GNVQ advanced programmes and other advanced courses such as BTEC national diplomas, 81 per cent of full-time students aged 19 and over, who were enrolled at the start of the year, gained their qualifications.

61 Although there are wide variations between courses, overall, approximately 85 per cent of those who enrol for a programme complete it. The average retention rates on health and social care courses are high at 90 per cent. Science courses have a good retention rate of 85 per cent. However, the full-time GCE A level retention rate, 1992-94, is poor at 57 per cent, and the retention rate for the GCSE full-time course is 70 per cent. Courses in the same area sometimes have very different retention rates. For example, the BTEC national diploma for travel and tourism retained 91 per cent of its students whereas the rate for the BTEC first diploma in leisure travel and tourism was only 64 per cent.

62 The ready availability of information on student progression and post-course destinations varies between centres. In 1993, the Duchy College equestrian courses saw 63 per cent of their students enter related employment, and most other students went on to further or higher education courses at Duchy College or elsewhere. Fifteen out of 19 full-time GCSE students completing the course moved onto GCE A level courses.

Eighty-four per cent of the BTEC first diploma in public services students went on to further education, employment or the armed services, entry to the latter being one of the course's main objectives. Most students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress either onto other separate specialist courses for such students, or on to mainstream courses or work training.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

63 The self-assessment report produced by the college provided a useful context for the cross-college team inspection and made clear reference to valuable additional material. Inspectors found that judgements on resources lacked rigour, but that the report was generally fair and helpful, particularly when amplified by the principal's presentation at the beginning of the inspection.

64 Cornwall College's quality assurance arrangements make extensive use of a set of procedures accredited under British Standards (BS) 5750. These procedures are based largely on course reviews and course management processes. They cover the progress of students from arrival to course completion, staff appointments, student and staff induction and the purchasing of goods and services. Procedures are carried out according to uniform documentation and are overseen by the college's quality assurance and development manager. There are regular audits by trained staff. Centre heads are responsible for the effective working of the system within each centre, although in practice the system depends to a considerable degree on course managers who collate student feedback, run student review meetings and are expected to deal with course-related issues. Improvements have been achieved as a result of the system.

65 Student questionnaires cover course content, standards and methods of teaching and fairness of marking. Responses are considered in a scheduled cycle of course team meetings which generate minutes and recommendations for action for each centre's board of studies. Individual accountability is established and a timescale set for action to be taken. Boards of study minutes go forward to the college's academic board. Issues arising which can be dealt with at course team level, are more likely to receive an answer than those which require a corporate response. The system as documented has no requirement for a response, whether positive or negative, to matters raised by staff and students. Failure to respond has sometimes resulted in staff and student disenchantment with the system.

66 The academic board receives from each centre an annual digest of course review reports which includes a summary of student responses to questionnaires together with staff comments and a record of the actions proposed. A profile of students' age and gender and the examination pass rates for each course are also included. The summaries contain much useful information for improving the quality of provision. However, the

course review process is not well suited to GCSE and GCE A level courses since it does not report effectively on the quality of individual subjects.

67 Retention rates and examination rates are reported to the academic board and to the governors separately from the reports which arrive through the quality assurance system. The procedure for monitoring students performance is generally effective, but course managers do not have readily available data against which to measure their students' performance.

68 Course managers are required to keep comprehensive course files. They cover schemes of work, course team membership details, student review meeting minutes and student feedback profiles. The quality of these files varies, but they are valuable course management resources and are seen as such by staff.

69 Each centre has a quality representative who acts as its adviser. Meetings of quality representatives identify good practice and monitor the effectiveness of the system. Suggestions for improvements are evaluated and, if it is appropriate, the manual is amended by the quality systems manager, who reports annually to the academic board.

70 Care has been taken to inform staff about the system. Quality assurance is included in staff induction. Job descriptions for new staff include reference to their quality assurance responsibilities. Staff understand the system. Attitudes towards it vary. Some staff see it as an unwelcome addition to their non-teaching workload. Many however, are committed to its operation and value the improvements it has brought about: increasingly consistent course management, greater professional accountability and raised awareness of the quality of provision. Some staff see it as improving the college's credibility with business client groups, although tutors of some part-time groups report resistance from their clients towards the questionnaire-based review process. The standardisation of procedures and consistent record keeping which the quality system demands increase the reliability of staff appointment procedures.

71 At the time of inspection, the college had no quality assurance procedures in place for its adult students working in school sixth forms and evening classes around the country. For example, college staff had not visited the students to monitor the quality of work. The college acknowledges the need to implement such procedures as soon as possible.

72 The quality-assurance system developed by the college does not include quality improvement targets, benchmarks or service standards, apart from some service standards introduced in the college charter.

73 Half of the support staff and most of the teaching staff have been appraised. A new appraisal procedure which involves the identification of competencies is under development. At present, the appraisal process recommends rather than requires the observation of teaching and learning.

As part of appraisal, staff draw up personal-development plans which identify their training needs and link them to a timescale. These individual staff-development plans are not directly influenced by the college's strategic objectives, although they are subsequently recorded under strategic plan objectives. There has been no college-wide analysis of training needs. Events and activities are evaluated by the individuals taking part in them. The college collates, but does not evaluate them. Some agreed development needs have not been met because of financial limitations. However, NVQ assessor training is a priority, and is progressing well. Over 70 staff have been involved and a further 14 have registered for units. There is a one-day staff-induction programme with supporting documentation to which all new staff, full time and part time, are invited. Staff new to teaching are also allocated a mentor.

74 The college is committed to the Investors in People award, with a possible assessment date in the first half of 1996. A steering group is managing developments and members of it are piloting employee surveys in their own centres. So far 100 staff have taken part in a sample survey.

75 The college charter, containing the college's mission statement, outlines students' rights and contains useful related information. The quality assurance system is identified and the complaints procedure is clearly described.

RESOURCES

Staffing

76 Teaching staff are generally well qualified and experienced. In most vocational areas there is a range of relevant industrial experience. The low turnover of full-time staff means that industrial experience is often dated, but close links with industry ensure that many teachers keep aware of current developments. There is some effective team work, for example in construction and catering. In a few cases, teams within a centre operate in isolation and/or part-time teachers are not fully integrated with other members of the team.

77 Increasing use is made of part-time staff. The proportion of part-time staff in the centres varies from 25 per cent to 50 per cent. Most bring specialist knowledge and current experience of working in industry. The use of part-time teachers enables centres to respond more effectively to changes in enrolments, although in some centres, high part-time staffing ratios have significantly increased the workload on some full-time staff who carry excessive administrative responsibilities for programmes. There is some effective use of non-teaching posts to support learning. Some centres use trained assessors alongside qualified teachers to provide cost-effective staffing.

78 The levels of clerical and secretarial support are appropriate, and support staff are generally well qualified. Local administrative offices are shared by centres but their location makes access to them difficult for

some staff. Merlin Office Services provides an excellent service for all staff and is used as a realistic working environment by the students.

79 Technician staff are well qualified. The level of technician support is adequate except in performing arts, art and design, and in information technology. The support for information technology fails to match the development of a large network for teaching and administration. Most technicians have diverse duties. The demands made upon them to maintain equipment, including computers, are increasing. In some areas, the deployment and availability of technicians requires review. There is little flexibility in the use of technicians between centres.

Equipment/learning resources

80 About half the curriculum areas are well supported by equipment and learning materials. Courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well equipped, with a variety of computer applications and well-stocked specialist areas. Catering service equipment provides students with good examples of commercial practice. A computerised stock and cost control system is fully integrated into the curriculum. The marine studies centre has good equipment, which includes scientific apparatus, navigation charts, tools and boats. In agriculture and agricultural engineering, there is a good range of machines for students to work on; in addition to the college's own equipment, machines are obtained from local businesses. Travel students have access to a well-equipped office on the main site and the Stoke Climsland site is well resourced with outdoor pursuits equipment. Business studies students generally benefit from good resources.

81 There is a well-designed construction resource centre but some woodworking machinery is out of date and the fume extraction system is inefficient. There is a reasonable range of horticultural equipment and in most cases it is available in sufficient quantity. Much of the science equipment is dated and in need of cleaning. There are too few microscopes and some fume cupboards are in a poor state of repair. In areas such as catering and engineering, the staff have shown considerable initiative in obtaining specialist facilities that match industrial practice. However, some high-cost equipment is dated or unreliable. Forward planning for the purchase of equipment varies between centres. Some have a rolling programme for replacement and purchase which is monitored as part of the budget cycle; other centres lack such planning. Although maintenance contracts are used for some equipment, much technician time is devoted to keeping equipment operational. Despite some joint use of resources between centres, the largely autonomous management of centres inhibits such developments.

82 There is a well-defined strategy for developing information technology. The college has some 700 workstations at a favourable ratio of seven full-time equivalent students to one workstation. Over 300 workstations have been connected to the recently-commissioned communications network, which is being developed to support both

teaching and administration. Information technology support for agriculture and horticulture is inadequate but access to information technology is generally good, and there is excellent provision in business studies and computer-aided engineering design. Different computer systems are in operation, and this reduces the overall effectiveness of information technology, particularly as many of the older workstations cannot support the full range of software.

83 The learning-resource centre on the main Trevenson campus is a good resource. The combination of audio-visual, information technology and library facilities in workshops which are linked to specific subject areas works well. Collections of abstracts and information files provide high-quality support for project and assignment work. Collaboration between the learning resource centre and teaching staff is effective. In science and aspects of humanities, the bookstock is small and dated, but for most areas of work the provision of specialist books and periodicals is adequate. Students respond well to the supportive environment provided by the resource centres. Resources are exceptionally well used. On a number of occasions recently, transactions have exceeded 3,000 per week. The study area is well maintained but there are not enough study spaces. The learning-resource centre provides excellent accommodation and support for the increasingly important open-learning centres at both Pool and Falmouth. Learning support for basic core-skills development is now offered within the learning-resource centre and is developing well. Library provision for the work in agriculture and horticulture at the Duchy College is inadequate. At Stoke Climsland many of the books are missing or outdated. There is no index and there are too few study spaces. On the Rosewarne campus, there is insufficient literature in the library, and there is no quiet study area for students or staff as the library is used for tutorials and classwork.

Accommodation

84 The Pool site is attractive and spacious. Apart from a few mobile classrooms allocated to foundation studies, none of the buildings on the main site or at Falmouth provide full access to students with limited mobility. The construction of new lifts in two of the main buildings is planned. Most of the accommodation is in permanent buildings which, because of the method of construction, have high maintenance costs. There is a popular and attractive creche on the main site. The main canteen is spacious and adequately furnished and there is a more comfortable annexe for adult students. Several snack bars, located around the main site and at most of the other sites, provide a popular service. There is a well-designed reception area on the main site adjacent to the student services area. Office accommodation is generally of a high standard. There are effective systems for site security and emergency maintenance.

85 The college has an outline accommodation strategy, closely linked to the strategic plan, which it intends to implement fully now that an agreement has been reached with the Falmouth College of Arts about the

future of the tower block in the middle of the Trevenson site. Centres have to pay from their budgets for the space which they use, and this encourages them to use space efficiently. The allocation of accommodation to centres is linked to enrolment targets and reviewed annually as part of the planning process. Daytime usage is high in most centres and some centres occasionally share accommodation. Utilisation in the evenings is low.

86 There is a wide variety of general teaching accommodation. Most areas are clean, suitably decorated and furnished. There is appropriate audio-visual equipment in many rooms. In some centres, good use is made of wall space to create a stimulating learning environment. In a minority of areas, teaching rooms are too small for the size of the groups which occupy them.

87 Well-maintained catering service outlets provide realistic working environments and the accommodation is clean and up to date. Rooms for foundation studies are spacious and displays create a stimulating environment. Students are given opportunities for retail experience through the five college shops. Information technology suites and the training office provide good specialist accommodation for business studies students. The new language centre is well accommodated. Some of the large science laboratories have recently been refurbished but teachers in their working practices are not making best use of preparation and storage areas. Although the hairdressing salons are well maintained, they are dated and not representative of industrial practice.

88 The marine studies science laboratory is a poor facility and the practical workshops for boatbuilding are too small. On the Falmouth site, care students have no core science laboratory and there is poor access for students with restricted mobility. Many classes are conducted in overcrowded rooms.

89 The college farm at Stoke Climsland is used extensively for practical work and management exercises. The enterprises on the farm are on a commercial scale and provide realistic working environments. The performance of individual enterprises and the general appearance of the farm provide a good model for students. There are effective links between academic staff and staff on the farm, and the farm is increasingly used to support new course developments. Special habitats have been established to provide study areas for students on conservation courses. The farm lacks an integrated management plan for drawing together its commercial and non-commercial aspects. Detailed information on the performance of the farm is available but is not readily accessible to students.

90 The significant increase in student numbers at Stoke Climsland has put considerable pressure on specialist facilities. There is only one science laboratory and this has basic equipment only. Machinery workshop accommodation is generally adequate but under pressure at peak times. The layout of machines, including those partially repaired, reduces the space available. The equine unit is being progressively developed as

student numbers expand. Specialist equine facilities, including riding areas, cross-country course, stabling and tack rooms, are of high quality. The residential accommodation at the centre is clean, tidy and of a high standard. The staff offices at the centre are dispersed and many are too small. The agricultural engineering workshop at Rosewarne is spacious, modern and clean.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

91 Cornwall College is achieving success in the pursuit of its mission. Its strengths are:

- the wide range of provision and flexible forms of delivery, which are responsive to clients' needs
- strong links with schools, employers and the community
- an experienced and committed board of governors
- an effective directorate
- centre heads working autonomously with a range of delegated responsibilities
- student services which provide well for students at the Pool campus
- well-qualified and experienced staff working effectively in teams
- well-planned, effective teaching, particularly in practical areas of work
- a thoroughly-documented quality assurance system which is improving course management
- a good learning-resource centre which includes subject-based workshops
- some high-quality specialist teaching areas
- some spacious and attractive sites.

92 If the college is to improve the quality of its provision further, it should:

- strengthen its planning for enrolments
- improve its management information system, particularly in the areas of student performance, personnel management and staff training
- examine widely-varying experiences received by students in different centres
- extend quality assurance arrangements to its adult students studying in schools
- improve examination results for 16-18 year old students on vocational courses
- improve retention rates and levels of attendance in some areas of work
- improve student services at sites other than Pool
- ensure the consistent quality of induction and tutorial support

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- raise the level of technician support in some areas
 - improve some of its teaching accommodation
 - correct the shortages of equipment for some courses.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1994)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1994)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1994)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1994)

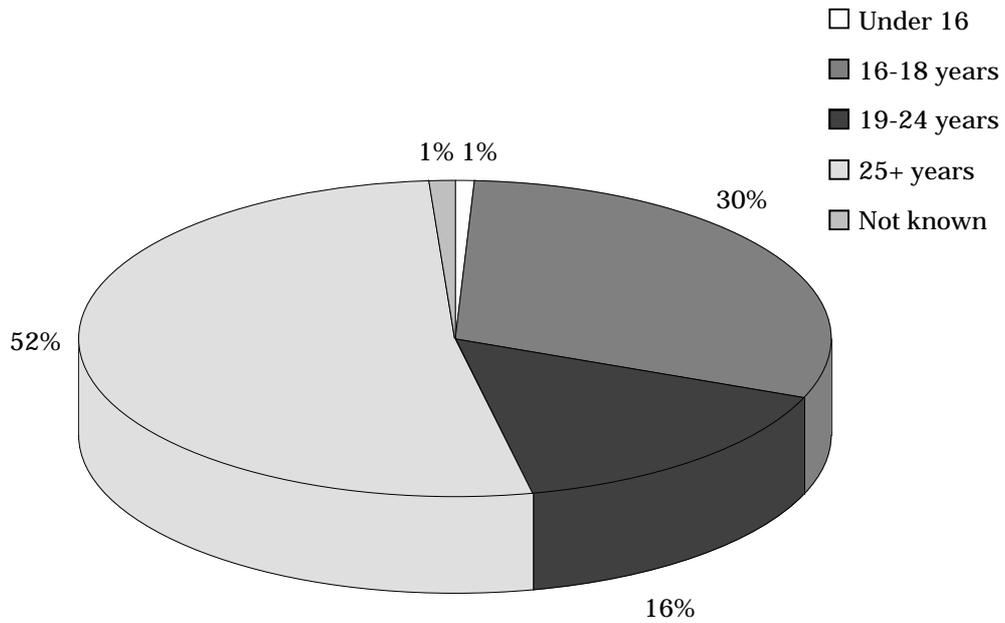
 - 5 Income (for 16 months to July 1994)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

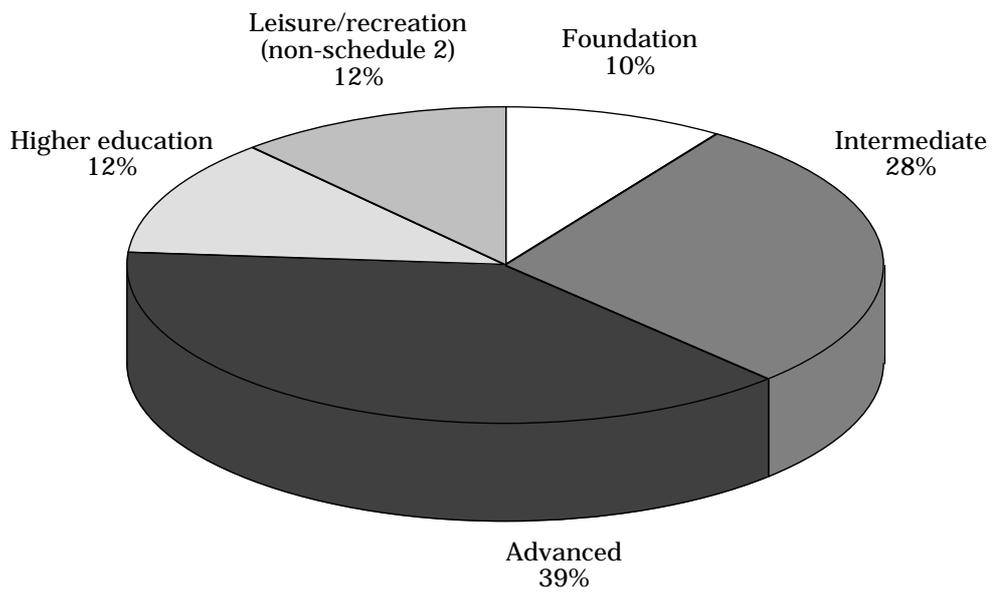
Cornwall College: percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1994)



Enrolments: 8,787

Figure 2

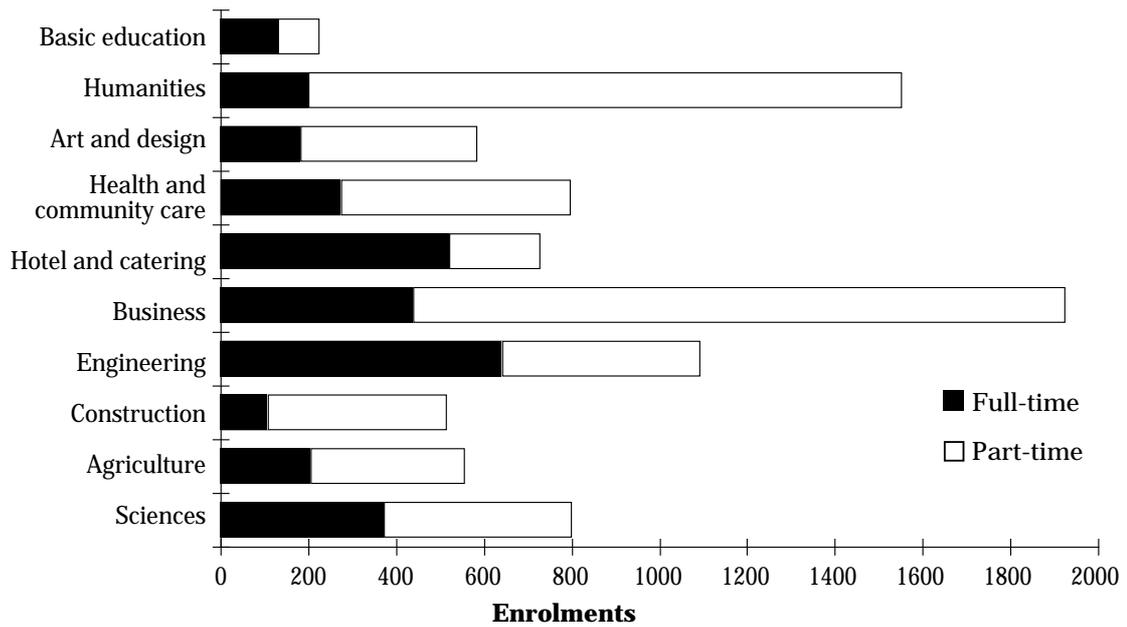
Cornwall College: percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1994)



Enrolments: 8,787

Figure 3

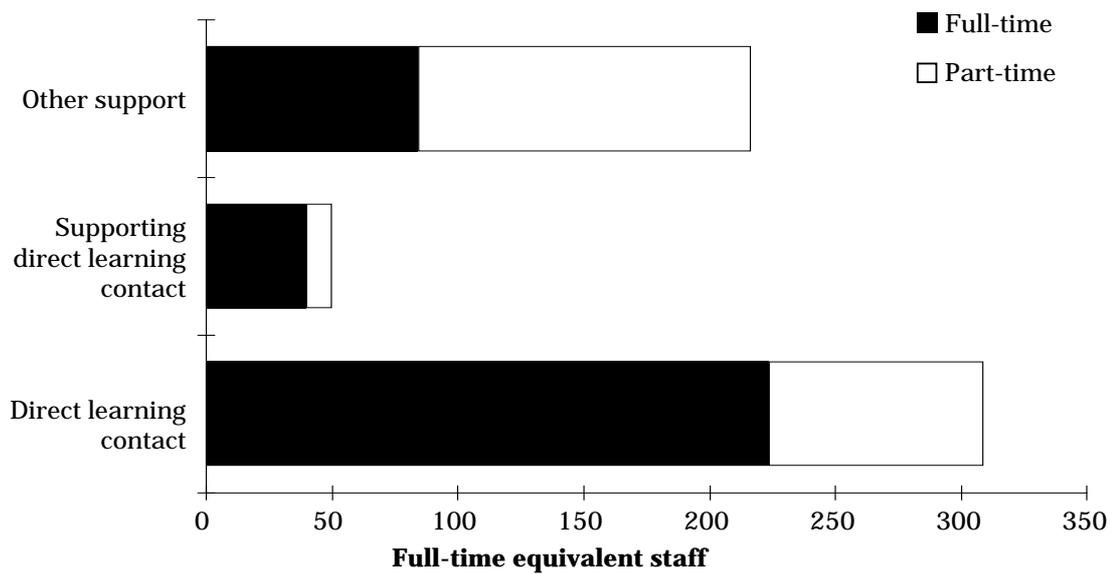
**Cornwall College enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area
(as at November 1994)**



Enrolments: 8,787

Figure 4

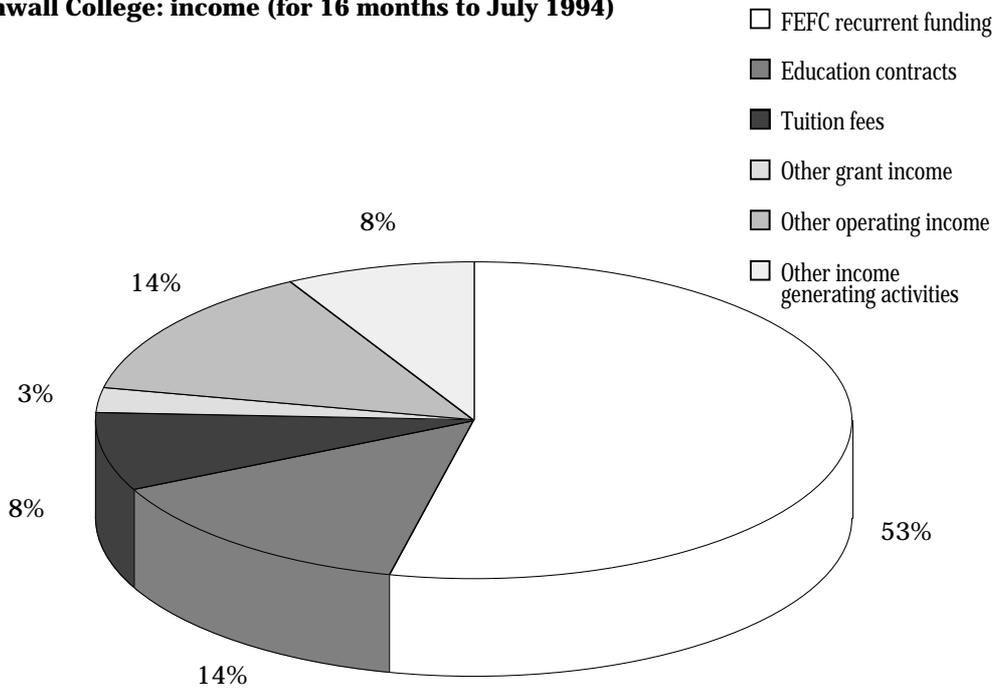
**Cornwall College staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents
(as at November 1994)**



Full-time equivalent staff: 576

Figure 5

Cornwall College: income (for 16 months to July 1994)

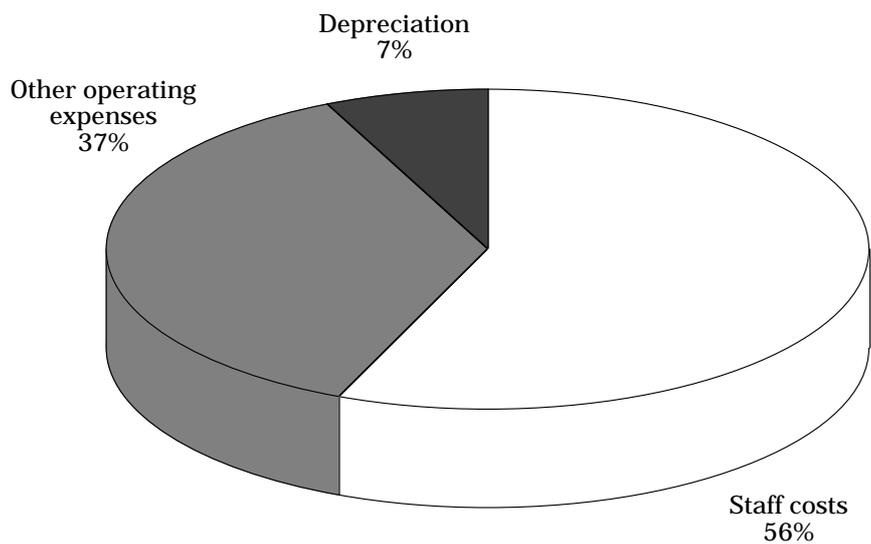


Income: £22,344,000

Note: this chart excludes £24,000 capital grants.

Figure 6

Cornwall College: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)



Expenditure: £22,258,000

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