Filton College

*THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL*

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has a statutory duty to ensure that there are satisfactory arrangements to assess the quality of provision in the further education sector. It discharges the duty in part through its inspectorate, which inspects and reports on each college in the sector every four years. The Council's inspectorate also assesses and reports on a national basis on specific curriculum areas and advises the Council's quality assessment committee.

College inspections involve both full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have specialist knowledge and experience in the areas they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member from outside the world of education and a nominated member of staff from the college being inspected.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are described in the Council Circular 93/28. In the course of inspecting colleges, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also summarise their judgements on the balance between strengths and weaknesses using a five-point scale. 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.*

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 47/94

FILTON COLLEGE
SOUTH WEST REGION
Inspected December 1993 - March 1994

Summary

Filton College, Bristol, is a major provider of further education serving the north Bristol and south Gloucestershire area. The college provides a wide range of GCE A level, GCSE and vocational courses and is broadening its provision while maintaining existing strengths. There has been a significant growth in student enrolments this year. Particular strengths are the support and guidance given to students, the effective recruitment process and the generally high levels of achievement in public examinations. Students benefit from much good teaching. The college has strong community links and is responsive to those who may have missed out on educational opportunities. The new management team, fully supported by the governors, is providing direction and leadership. There is active commitment to staff development and appraisal. The college has plans for improving management information systems, training for middle management and co-ordination of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Other matters to be addressed are: the gaps in course provision at foundation level; issues identified in certain subject areas; the co-ordination of quality assurance; staffing arrangements for cross-college learning support and the learning centres; market research and marketing strategy; some poor quality accommodation; and the inadequate equipment in some areas of work.

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	1
Quality assurance	3
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	3
accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science, maths, technology	2	Art & design	2
Computing	2		
Business studies & leisure	2	Humanities	2
		Languages	2
Care	3	Access programme	3
		Adult & community education	2
		Students with learning difficulties	2

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INTRODUCTION

1   Filton College, Bristol, was inspected during the period December 1993 to March l994. Thirteen inspectors spent a total of 63 inspector days in the college, 33 of which were spent on specialist subject areas and 30 on aspects of cross-college provision. The team inspected care, languages, provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, adult and community education, the access programme, humanities, art and design, business studies and leisure, computing, science, maths, and technology. Inspectors visited 177 classes, examined samples of students' written work and had access to a wide range of college documentation. There were meetings with college governors, senior managers, staff, full-time and part-time students, parents, staff from local schools, and representatives of employers and the local community.

2   The inspection was carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines in Council Circular 93/28. The framework describes a four-year inspection cycle. When this cycle becomes fully established, colleges will have the opportunity to respond to the findings of earlier inspection visits before their quadrennial inspection and the subsequent published report. As the inspection of Filton College occurred early in the cycle, the opportunity for such a response has been limited.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3   Filton College, established in 1960, is situated on the northern edge of the city of Bristol. It operates from two main sites, one at Filton Avenue and the other half-a-mile away at Shield House. Further provision is offered at two annexes, Charborough Road and Bishop Road, and at the school of art and design in Clifton near the centre of Bristol.

4   The college employs 256 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 174 are teachers and 82 are support staff (figure 1). Approximately 21 per cent of the teaching is undertaken by part-time staff. At the time the inspection report was written, there were 9,950 enrolments, 1,500 of whom were full time. Approximately 41 per cent of full-time students were following General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) or General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) courses. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 2 and 3, respectively.

5   Students are recruited from a wide area, which includes inner-city Bristol to the south, the rural areas of Northavon to the north, the established new town of Yate and the rapidly-expanding new town of Bradley Stoke. Northavon alone has a population of 130,000 and is the fastest growing district in Avon. Secondary schools in the immediate area of the college have their own sixth forms and there are two other further education colleges within a distance of five miles.

6   Filton College is located in an area of rapid growth and investment. The nearby M4/M5 motorway interchange has led to a number of large multi-national companies relocating to the area.   Close to the college are

the long-established companies, Rolls Royce and British Aerospace. There are also significant numbers of small and medium-size employers.

7   The college is organised into three main faculties; general education, vocational studies, and training education and enterprise. A fourth area, client services, provides a number of cross college services including admissions, marketing, welfare counselling, and careers. The three faculties and client services report to the vice-principal (operations and planning). Personnel, finance and resource functions are grouped under the vice- principal (finance and resources). There is a senior management team of nine.

8   The college's mission statement is summarised as the provision of quality, access and opportunity. The strategic plan sets out how these principles are applied to 16-19 year old students, employed and unemployed adults, overseas students, and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9   The college is a major provider of GCE A level and advanced supplementary (AS) courses, GCSE and vocational courses. Recently, it has been broadening its provision to attract new client groups. A wide range of subjects is available to both full-time and part-time students. There is major provision in art and design including photography, business studies, and a varied adult and basic education programme. Other vocational courses are offered in performing arts, social care, leisure studies, and computing. Flexible part-time provision, which includes accreditation for prior learning, is available in business and management studies. A distinctive feature of the college's part-time provision is the range of specialist art and design courses accredited by the Open College Network.

10   General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) are currently offered in health and social care at intermediate level, and art and design at advanced level. An expansion of GNVQ provision is planned for September 1994, with the intention that GCE A level subjects will be offered alongside GNVQs. Foundation level vocational provision is limited in range. There is a higher national diploma in leisure management. The college's investment in two open-learning centres has significantly assisted the development of open and flexible learning. Full-time equivalent enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 4.

11   The extensive provision for adults includes a varied programme of vocational and non-vocational adult and basic education, access to higher education courses and Department of Employment sponsored schemes for the unemployed offered through the Avon Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). The college also has the contract for providing education programmes at Leyhill and Gloucester prisons.

12   The college has specialist provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. At present there is little integration between specialist and other courses. Action has been taken to remedy this with the recent appointment of a cross-college co-ordinator. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities will be co-ordinated by bringing together the pathway course for school leavers and part-time courses for adults who have learning difficulties.

13   The college has a number of links with local employers. Advisory boards, which include employers as members, have recently been established. The college enterprise unit is developing short courses and providing consultancy for local businesses and there is a close relationship with the Northavon Chamber of Commerce, whose chief executive is a member of the college's governing body. The gas installation and maintenance programme provided by the college is an example of the college's response to employers' specific training needs. Nevertheless, the college would benefit from a more systematic analysis of the training needs of local businesses. There are close links with the local TEC, including two staff secondments to development projects on open learning and access to NVQ assessment.

14   Despite the competitive environment created by 11-18 schools, the college has good links with local schools and there is active involvement in the Technical and Vocational Education Extension programme. The college is franchising a first diploma course to a local school and there are sessions on occupational gender stereotypes for final- year pupils from local schools. There are good working relationships with higher education establishments in the region, and regular liaison with the local education authority and with other colleges through the Avon principals group.

15   Strong community links are reflected in the wide-ranging adult and community education programme supported by a network of informal community contacts. European Social Funding is supporting the provision of adult guidance in the community, which emphasises return-to-study programmes for women. The college is represented on the Avon Coalition of Disabled People.

16   The college publicises its activities through a variety of distribution points but there has been little systematic market research or strategic direction to marketing initiatives. The college would benefit from the involvement of employers in its marketing and publicity activities.

17   An equal opportunities policy is in place and an action plan prepared, supported by staff development activities. Plans are well advanced to establish a monitoring group. The access to higher education programme has been successful in recruiting students from ethnic minority backgrounds. There are creche facilities at the annexe at the Charborough Road site but none at the two main sites.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

18   The college has a committed and supportive board of governors. In

addition to the principal, staff and students, there are representatives from the business community, the wider local community, other local providers of education, and the local member of parliament. Twenty-five per cent of the members are women. Meetings are well attended and the minutes clearly reflect the good use being made of individual members' strengths and professional interests. The board is provided with sufficient information to enable it to perform its decision-making function effectively. Subcommittees have been established. Their delegated powers are limited. Recommendations are made to the full board, where most decisions are taken. There is a clear distinction between the strategic role of the governing body and the management role of senior staff.

19   The college was restructured 18 months ago. A new senior management team was appointed, including two vice-principals. The principalship is now providing direction and leadership to the wider management team which meets approximately three times a term, though much of the detailed work takes place in frequent and well-recorded meetings between individual members. The roles and responsibilities of senior managers are clear and understood.

20   There is a strong team ethos in the college. However, the effectiveness of the team structure is variable. Most teams hold regular meetings and there is effective communication and discussion. In a few areas, changes in team leadership have led to a lack of curriculum co-ordination. The college has identified the need to provide management training for middle managers.

21   The college's unit of funding for 1992-93, as recorded in the FEFC report, *Funding Allocations 1993-94,* was £3,004 per weighted full-time equivalent student. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges was £2,444. There is thorough monitoring of finances by the senior management team and the full board of governors. Unit cost calculations are undertaken. Middle managers are not yet fully confident in their use of the centrally-generated data provided by the computerised management information system and continue to use manual systems. The extent to which budgets are devolved varies across the college. Some team leaders have greater financial responsibility than others.

22   Strategic planning procedures are consultative and thorough. The strategic plan is underpinned by detailed faculty and cross-college plans. Understanding of the process is good at senior management level, but more variable among middle managers. Planning involves the setting of targets with timescales, allocation of responsibilities and procedures for monitoring.

23   Management information is generated through a number of computerised systems which are currently undergoing further development. Information is available on student admissions, enrolments, examinations, and to a limited extent on student destinations. A separate system provides financial information; personnel and payroll modules will

be added from April 1994. Attendance is recorded through a software package which, after early difficulties, is proving to be an effective and versatile system which produces useful information for faculty heads, team leaders and tutors. The package has the capacity to produce specific reports on staff activity, accommodation utilisation, and student retention. There are signs of growing staff confidence in these systems. However, further work is required to develop a fully effective management information system.

24　The college has achieved its planned growth targets. There has been a significant increase in student enrolments. Enrolment and retention targets are included in the planning and approval of new courses. They are monitored with an increasing degree of success, although practice is variable in different areas of the college. Basic destination data is collected for full-time students but there is little information on the destinations of part-time students.

25　 The college is working to develop policies on health and safety to replace those inherited from the local authority.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

26　Student recruitment and support is managed jointly by the client services section and the three faculties. Procedures are new and developing but the college has managed successfully to combine central co-ordination and direct contact between course managers and students. For example, client services co-ordinate the interview and entry arrangements for students and the faculties manage student selection and tutorial support. Recording and tracking of student recruitment is now computerised and the central admissions unit is able to feed back regular information to faculties to assist in course, group, and accommodation planning. For the predominantly short course and part-time provision in the training, education and enterprise faculty, recruitment is largely handled within the faculty.

27　There is a wide range of opportunities for potential students to obtain information about the college prior to entry. College staff visit a large number of local schools who appreciate the objective advice given to final-year pupils facing the range of competing alternatives open to them, including, in most cases, studying in a sixth form within their own school. Open days, taster and information events are held at the college and the college is represented at schools' careers events. Advice is also provided for part-time and adult students and many of these take advantage of the welfare and careers services at the college for pre-course advice and information. Considerable efforts are made to ensure that comprehensive advice and support is given at this early stage of students' careers. Students applying from abroad who wish to study English as a foreign language have accommodation arranged for them in the Bristol area. Some of the student information, and particularly the student handbook, is geared largely to the 16-19 year age group and takes insuffient account of the interests of older students.

28   The college offers opportunities for the accreditation of prior learning on a number of courses including management studies, business administration, and information technology.   Approximately 70 staff are taking part in training courses to become assessors for the accreditation of prior learning. One member of staff has been appointed as an accreditation of prior learning co-ordinator and another has responsibility for promoting accreditation with employers.   A consultation process has recently been completed on the establishment of a college policy to open up accreditation of prior learning to all students.

29   In all three faculties, there are arrangements for identifying learning support needs at entry. For example, in the vocational studies faculty, all full-time students take part in screening exercises. Core skills have been identified across the GCE A level provision and an enhancement programme established to develop specific skills. In the training, education and enterprise faculty there are examples of good practice in assessing at entry the individual needs of students of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

30   Core skills support is provided by part-time staff in the newly-established learning centres. Additional staff time should be provided if the co-ordination of the entire learning support process from screening to analysis, referral and the development of individual support programmes is to be effective. Consideration should also be given to the sensitivities of students attending core skills sessions in an open-plan learning centre.

31   The nature and form of induction programmes vary between faculties and courses. All programmes provide essential college information and information on the overall structure of courses, but some students receive much more detailed and helpful information on assignment schedules than others.

32   The college places a strong emphasis on the guidance and support of students. There is coherent tutorial support throughout the college, and effective arrangements for course transfer. In all faculties there is a strong emphasis on action planning which involves students in setting their own learning objectives and determining the action required to achieve them. In the faculty of general education, there are clear procedures for planning and reviewing full-time students' progress, linked to parents' evenings at set points in the year. In vocational studies, all full-time students have one hour a week allocated for tutorial activity and each part-time student has a personal tutor. In the training, education and enterprise faculty, small group work and one-to-one activity between students and tutors underpin many of the courses and ensure that students receive effective tutorial support. In general, the arrangements across the college for supporting part-time students are satisfactory. In a few cases, staff were not allocated sufficient time to undertake the work effectively. There is no overall college statement on tutorial support. Consideration should be given to using the examples of evident good practice to construct policy guidelines.

33   The arrangements for monitoring attendance have been improved by the development of a computerised system. Registers are collected each day and the data entered on computer. There are prompts for action when absence reaches a particular level. The system is currently operating in two faculties, and there are plans to extend it to other courses where appropriate.

34   The college has a full-time counsellor and three part-time counsellors who work for three hours each a week. They provide a comprehensive service which is well used by students and which is particularly appreciated by adult students. There is a need for appropriate accommodation for confidential counselling.

35   Careers advice is effectively provided by a careers co-ordinator with additional support from a senior careers officer from the Avon Guidance Service. There is a well-used appointment and drop-in service. Careers staff also work with groups of students in liaison with course tutors, arrange a higher education information programme and organise meetings on general careers issues. While recognising the importance of progression to higher education, there is a positive strategy to provide advice for students seeking employment. The careers library includes computerised databases.

36   The students' union has recently been revitalised and is taking an increasing role in representing the interests of students. The college has appointed a full-time administrator to work with the union executive. Two members of staff have responsibility for organising a range of student leisure activities at lunch times, evenings, and weekends. Most courses have student representatives who can express students' collective views to staff.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

37   Of the 177 teaching sessions inspected, 59 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses, 31 per cent had a balance of strengths and weaknesses, and 10 per cent had weaknesses which outweighed the strengths. This pattern was broadly consistent across subject areas. The following table summarises the grades given to the sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE A/AS level		7	22	22	10	0	61
GCSE		1	6	4	1	0	12
GNVQ		0	3	2	0	0	5
NVQ		2	6	1	0	0	9
Other		11	46	26	7	0	90
Total		21	83	55	18	0	177

38   There were examples of effective teaching in all subject areas. Teachers showed a good command of their subjects. Relationships between staff and student were positive and high levels of individual support were provided during teaching sessions. Students were generally well motivated and learning was purposeful.

39   Good teaching was characterised by thorough preparation and clear schemes of work. In many subjects, including computing, management studies, art and design, humanities, science, mathematics and technology there were detailed lesson plans setting out the aims of the session, timings for changes of activity, intended outcomes, and the teaching materials required. Much of the teaching was well structured. The content of lessons was appropriate to students' abilities and carefully related to course outcomes. Teachers employed a suitable range of methods including whole-group teaching, discussions in large and small groups, and independent study. Students were generally encouraged to take some responsibility for organising their own work. While the standard of teaching was generally high there were some examples of weak course organisation and unsatisfactory lesson planning.

40   An all-day session for adult students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was carefully planned and structured to include regular changes of activity. Expectations of the students were high and staff and students worked well together to achieve learning objectives. In several of the foreign language lessons, there was consistent encouragement for students to be self reliant and to develop their study skills. The foreign language being studied was used consistently as the medium for explanation and communication.

41   In some humanities classes, teachers constantly referred to work previously undertaken by students as a means of consolidating knowledge and understanding. There were also timely reminders of examination requirements. In whole-class discussions teachers provided active guidance through sensitive and rigorous questioning. Teachers in business and management studies demonstrated sound technical teaching skills which included supportive handouts, and good use of video materials.

42   In a number of subjects, individual and small group work was a central teaching method. In performing arts, for example, students worked independently on clearly- defined tasks with effective support from teachers. In adult basic education classes, there was a strong emphasis on individually-planned programmes negotiated with the students following an assessment of their learning needs. Students in these classes were often highly motivated and committed to study. In access to higher education courses, teachers used good discussion techniques though some discussions lacked a clear focus or structure. On the pathway course for 16-19 year old students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, teachers should encourage more small group work and take greater care to ensure that tasks given to students involve appropriate levels of literacy and comprehension.

43   The college places a strong emphasis on individual learning support and the personal development of students. Personal tutors generally teach their own students and are able to give support from direct knowledge of students' academic progress. In art and design, guidance is conscientiously recorded and students sign learning statements jointly agreed with staff. This positive approach makes heavy demands on staff time. The BTEC national diploma course in leisure studies has an appropriate programme for the development of students' interpersonal skills.

44   Procedures for the setting of assignments are generally thorough. Students are given clear deadlines for the completion of work. In humanities, tasks were generally well structured and supported by teacher-generated materials as well as text books. Performing arts are taught through a programme of integrated assignments. There are clearly-defined objectives and assessment criteria and the supporting documentation for the programme is good. In most subjects, assignment schedules are given to the students during the induction period.   On GCE A level programmes, and in other areas where students' programmes consist of a number of subjects, there are examples of the bunching of dates for the submission of completed assignments. This should be monitored by the college.

45   Teachers' written comments on students' assignments are generally thorough and helpful. In science, mathematics and technology, students' achievements on assignments are used to inform subsequent teaching. In art and design, students are particularly well informed about their assessment schemes, including the criteria for grading.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

46   Students find the initial information received before entry to the college helpful and the induction programmes give them a good start to college life. Those interviewed during the inspection talked positively about their work. Students grow in self confidence as they progress in their studies. For many older students, returning to education after a long gap, this is particularly evident.

47   The emphasis on tutorial support and early guidance is reflected in the small percentage of course withdrawals, 5.8 per cent for all part-time and full-time students, and the similarly low level of course transfers. Evidence of a clear development of knowledge and understanding was seen in all subject areas. In art and design, students' work was rarely less than satisfactory and there were individual examples of very good work. In GCE A level computing, assignments were generally presented to a high standard using a good range of applications. Students in science, mathematics, and technology displayed good levels of knowledge and understanding of key principles. Some students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities produced some excellent work in recording their own achievements.   In a number of other subjects, however, students' achievements were more variable. For example, standards of written

work in leisure studies ranged widely; there should be a greater focus on written analysis to support presentations and visual work.

48   There were many examples of students achieving well as a result of their work in small groups. For example, students on the BTEC national diploma in leisure studies tackled a demanding assignment which required them to raise funds and organise a study visit. This year, groups are going to Morocco, Thailand, India and Egypt. They will film the visit, and deliver presentations on their return.

49   In vocational studies, 25 per cent of students were identified on entry to the college as needing study skills support. The college places a strong emphasis on study skills and recent developments, including more extensive assessment at entry and core skills sessions are having a positive effect. In humanities, student files were well organised. In art and design standards of presentation were high. In other subjects there were a few examples of poor presentation and organisation of course work where students required more guidance on basic skills, such as portfolio organisation.

50   Practical work is a feature of a number of courses. In art and design, practical activities are appropriately supported by theoretical studies. The recent introduction of information technology and the use of computers should be extended. In NVQ business administration, students achieve good standards of practical competence.

51   Overall, examination results are good. At GCE A level in 1993, there was an 85 per cent pass rate for full-time students and a 77 per cent rate for part-time students, compared with a national pass rate of 77 per cent for all schools and colleges and 66 per cent for further education sector colleges other than sixth form colleges. Subjects with good pass rates included art and design, biology, communication studies, classical civilisation, computing, English literature, film studies, French, Spanish, human biology, applied mathematics, photography, physics. In languages, there has been a steady rise in the percentage pass rates in French and Spanish. In communication studies, English literature and AS level English, an increasing number of students achieve passes at grades A and B. History results are improving from a low base. A table, published recently by the Department for Education, shows that the 263 Filton College students, aged 16-18, entered for two or more A levels, scored an average of 13 points (where A=10, E=2). This puts the college in the top 25 per cent of colleges within the further education sector.

52   In GCSE examinations, there was a 66 per cent pass rate at grades A-C for full-time students. This compares with a national average of 50 per cent. Good results were achieved in craft design technology, design and realisation, communication studies, electronics, English language, media studies, and Spanish.

53   In vocational subjects, there were good results in the BTEC national diplomas in business and finance, leisure studies, family and community care and in the certificate in pre-vocational education. In 1993, 99 per cent of the 81 students, aged 16-18, in their final year of study for BTEC national diplomas achieved their qualifications. This performance places the college in the top 10 per cent of institutions within the sector. There were also good results in NVQ secretarial and personal assistants courses and on foundation courses in art and design and photography.

54   Other student achievements included art and design students exhibiting work in Germany and America, prizes won by foundation photography students, and a regional award for writing achieved by a 43 year-old who left school at 12 unable to read or write.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

55   In response to the charter for further education, the college has submitted draft proposals for its own charter to the academic board.

56   The commitment to develop an effective quality assurance system is clearly stated in the college's mission statement and strategic plan.

57   The college's approach to quality assurance has been approved by the academic board. Responsibility for quality assurance is included in the remit of a recently-appointed vice-principal. The college is developing a cross-college approach but more work is required to establish consistent practice. The three college faculties and client services have devised procedures which are specified in quality manuals. These incorporate criteria for course review and evaluation, qualitative and quantitative indicators and a range of student surveys and questionnaires. While faculties and teams have been encouraged to develop systems which reflect the needs and character of the curriculum in their area, there is a lack of consistency in course reporting processes and the analysis of outcomes.

58   Students' views are sought through a series of surveys and questionnaires developed through client services. These are potentially sound, but their usefulness has been hindered by a lack of collation and analysis.

59   Course reviews do not systematically take into account performance indicators such as retention rates. Improvements are being made in tracking course withdrawals through the new computerised attendance records. Data on student destinations are collected, but they do not as yet provide a comprehensive picture.

60   The central services of the college are not included in the quality review procedures. Proposals for quality developments in these areas are currently being considered.

61   The college's development plan reflects a strong commitment to the professional and personal development of the staff. There are well co-ordinated arrangements for staff development and these have been strengthened by the appointment of a full-time training officer. Induction

arrangements have been organised for new staff, which ensure a uniformity of approach across the college.

62   A wide range of staff development activities are available for both teaching and non-teaching staff. A useful analysis of training needs was undertaken to highlight priority areas and produce a training plan. Whilst a strong emphasis on needs analysis is apparent, there remains a weakness in the link between outcomes from the quality assurance process and the identification of specific staff training needs.

63   There is a staff development review and appraisal scheme for academic staff. The two-year rolling programme is currently half way through its cycle, and about 45 per cent of staff have been through the process. The scheme includes classroom observation by managers.

64   Progress is being made towards attaining the Investors in People Award. A survey of managers and staff has been undertaken and a draft action plan is now under consideration by the senior management team prior to implementation. A cross-college staff development group will steer and monitor this initiative.

RESOURCES

Staffing

65   Teaching staff are well qualified and experienced. Staff teaching on GCE A level and GCSE courses generally hold a relevant degree, and a teaching qualification. Some staff hold higher degrees and many have substantial teaching, examining and/or commercial and industrial experience. On other course programmes, teaching staff typically hold a degree and/or professional qualification, and have relevant work experience, although in some areas this is dated. A number of industrial and commercial placements for college staff have been arranged for this summer to help staff to update their experience. Part-time staff bring valuable recent experience from outside the world of education. However, where there is significant use of hourly-paid part-time staff it is placing high administrative burdens on some full-time staff.

66   Support staff are allocated to faculty teams and central services. The amount of specialist clerical and technician support provided within faculties is good. There is a high degree of satisfaction with the level of support received.   However, with the growth in cross-college administrative activities, the number of staff allocated to some central service functions, for example admissions, is at times inadequate. There are insufficient numbers of technician staff to provide adequate central information technology and audio- visual aids support services. For example, routine cleaning and maintenance of information technology hardware is rarely undertaken. In some areas, non-teaching staff are involved in the supervision and guidance of students undertaking practical activities, for example, in the student training office and in the learning centres.   In modern languages, teaching and learning support are

enhanced by the use of foreign language assistants. Recent changes in caretaking arrangements have improved the quality and flexibility of the service offered.

Equipment

67   The amount and quality of support materials and specialist equipment available varies between subjects. For instance, in modern languages, fuel services, and business and management, the provision of specialist materials and equipment is generally good. In science, performing arts, and art and design, further investment is required to bring equipment up to a satisfactory standard.

68   Comprehensive library facilities including books, journals, reports, reference materials, careers reference material, CD-ROM and video playback facilities are provided at Filton Avenue and at Shield House. Overall, the services provided meet the needs of most student groups, although there are weaknesses in a few subject areas including science. Opening hours and library staffing levels are satisfactory and there is sensible deployment of resources between the two sites. Links between the library and teaching staff are largely informal and would benefit from the establishment of a cross-curricular planning group for learning resources. Learning resource facilities at Queen's Road are restricted.

69   A mixed range of computing equipment is in use across the college. Most of the equipment available for teaching purposes is concentrated within the vocational studies faculty. There are some opportunities for students based in the general education faculty to attend formal information technology skills classes through the curriculum enhancement programme. Overall, there is an adequate ratio of approximately 10 students to each computer terminal. However, some of the equipment is old and pressures on technician staff inhibit the development of a planned maintenance programme. Basic wordprocessing, spreadsheet, database and presentational software is provided on all machines, but in some rooms the variety of machines creates problems when the use of applications packages is being taught.

70   There has been little cross-college planning and co-ordination of information technology, although a working group, chaired by a vice-principal is beginning to address these issues. A successful recent initiative has been the equipping of learning centres at Filton Avenue and Shield House with computer equipment. In addition to information technology, the new learning centre at Filton Avenue offers a valuable central facility for students which includes core skills support and access to audio-visual aids facilities. At present, there are only small collections of open-learning and information technology support materials. A smaller centre at Shield House is combined with the library facility. These centres are increasingly well used by students.

Accommodation

71   Teaching accommodation is allocated to faculties who are then responsible for timetabling courses. The system of informal negotiations between faculties, when accommodation shortages occur, works effectively at present. Overall, accommodation is variable in its quality and suitability for teaching purposes. Strengths in central facilities include the library and the new learning centres, the central lecture theatre and the conference area.   At the main Filton site, much of the permanent teaching accommodation is of a satisfactory standard, although many of the teaching rooms are too small to allow the teaching of students in larger groups. There is also a shortage of small rooms for meetings, interviewing and counselling purposes. The temporary accommodation at Filton Avenue is variable in quality and some blocks are in a poor state of repair.

72   Some Shield House teaching rooms have been refurbished to provide a pleasant teaching and learning environment. However, the quality of some of the art and design accommodation at both Shield House and Queen's Road is poor. Despite this, staff and students are positive about the location and atmosphere of the Queen's Road site.

73   Wheelchair access at Filton Avenue is generally good, but access at Shield House is restricted to the ground floor where much of the provision is located. There is sufficient car parking space at Filton Avenue and Shield House.

74   Refectory and common room facilities at Filton Avenue and Shield House offer a satisfactory level of service, including early evening opening. In general, buildings are clean and well cared for.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

75   The college is making progress towards the achievements of the mission set out in its strategic plan. The main strengths of the provision inspected are:

- the extensive range of GCE A level, GCSE and vocational courses
- the broadening of provision to attract new client groups while maintaining existing strengths
- the generally high levels of achievement in public examinations
- effective procedures for student recruitment, guidance, and support
- good-quality teaching across the college
- responsiveness to those who have missed out on educational opportunities
- a committed and supportive board of governors
- a developing management structure providing increasing direction and leadership
- strong community links
- achievement of enrolment targets

- commitment to staff development and appraisal.

76 In order to raise further the quality of its provision, the college should:
- continue to improve its management information systems

- improve the overall co-ordination of quality assurance

- continue the development of a more co-ordinated approach to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and increase opportunities for their integration into mainstream provision

- improve the staffing arrangements for cross-college learning support and the learning centres

- establish systematic market research and strategic direction for marketing initiatives.

- sustain middle-management training with particular emphasis on the needs of team leaders

- address issues identified in certain curriculum areas

- address gaps in the curriculum range at foundation level

- continue to improve areas of poor accommodation

- improve the standards of equipment in some subject areas.

FIGURES

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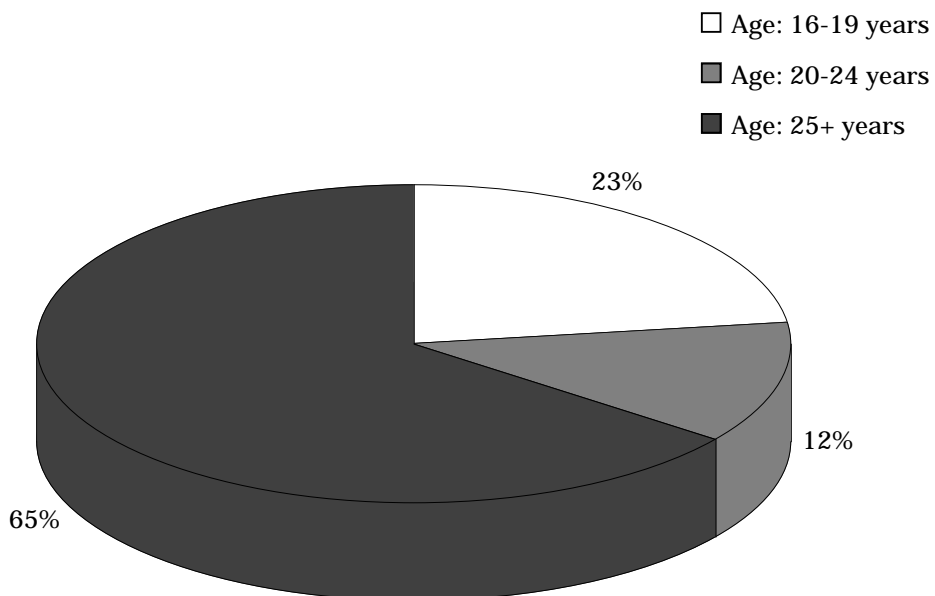
Figure 1

Filton College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)
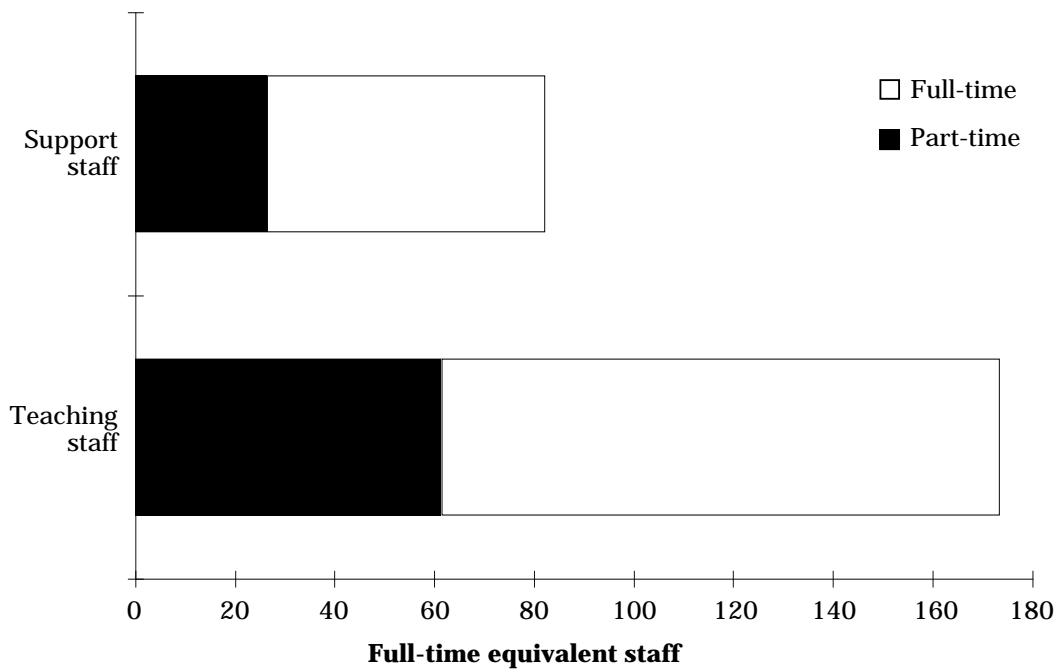
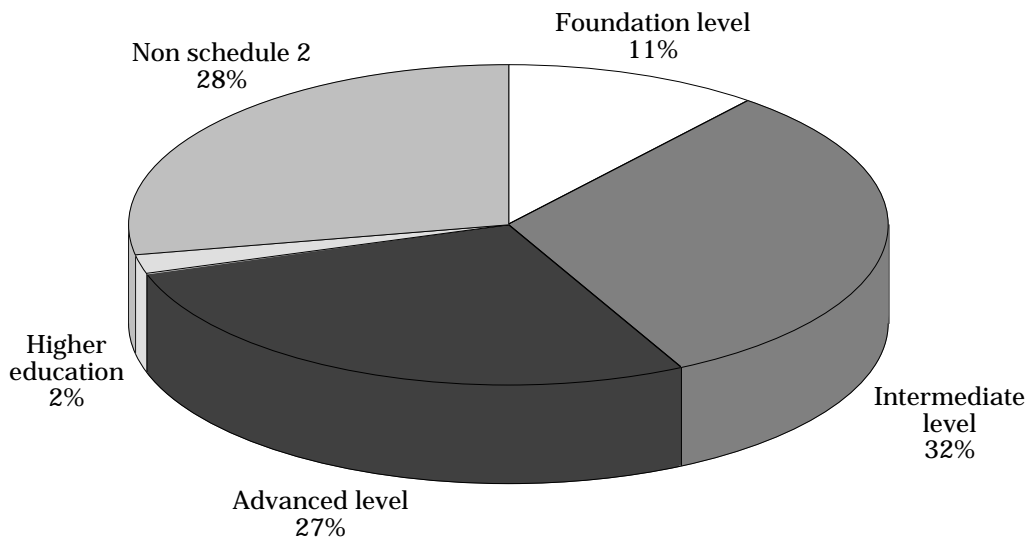
Full-time equivalent staff: 256

Figure 2

Filton College: percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)
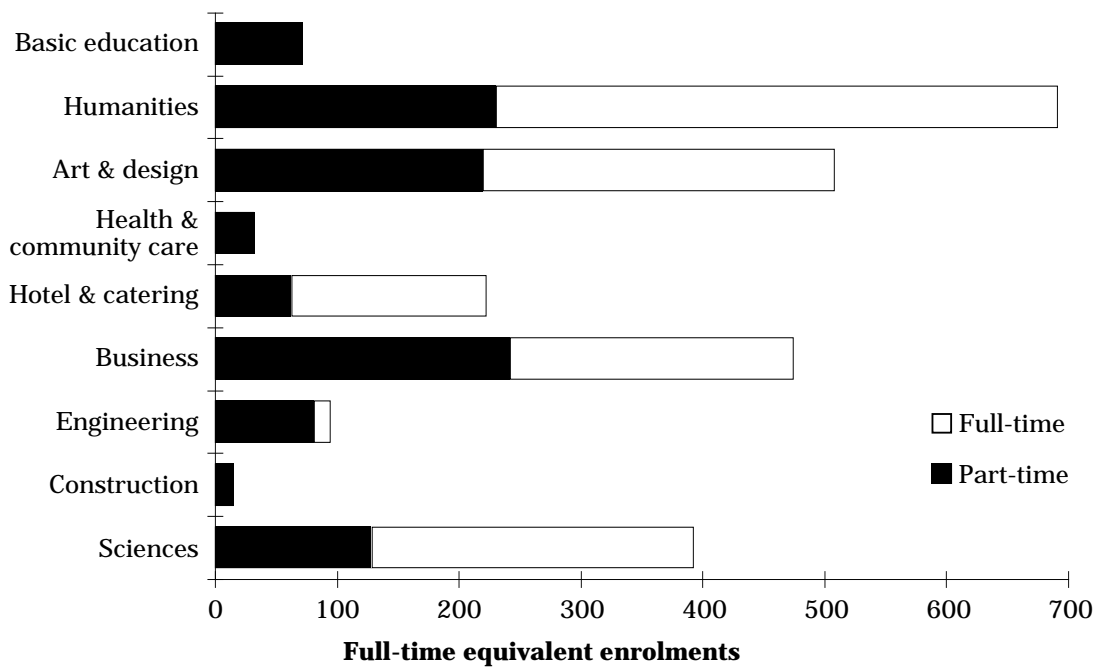

Enrolments: 9,950

Figure 3

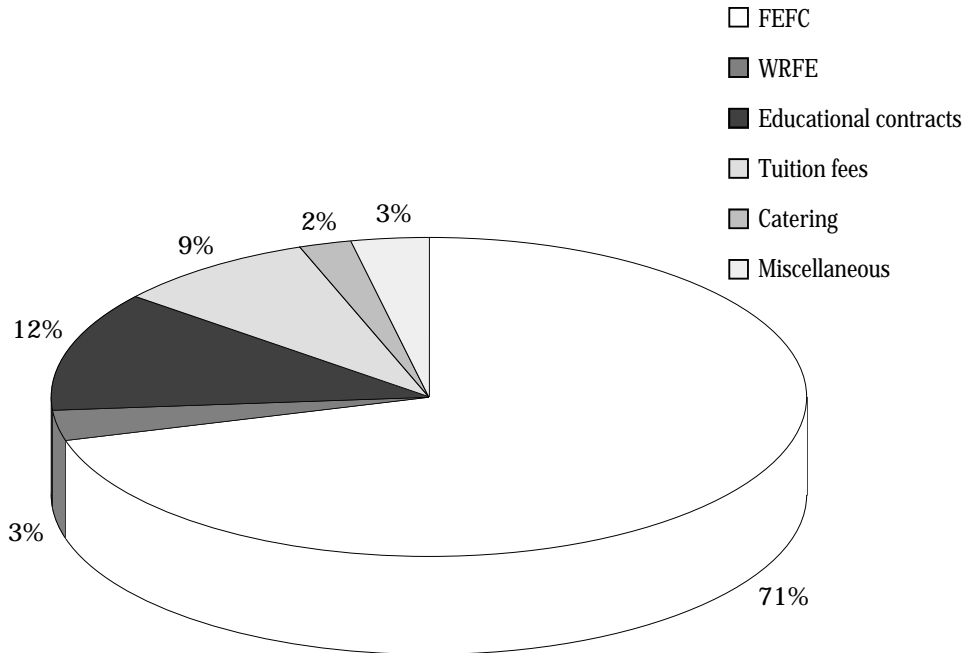**Filton College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1993-94)**

Non schedule 2
28%

Foundation level
11%

Higher
education
2%

Intermediate
level
32%

Advanced level
27%

Enrolments: 9,950

Figure 4

Filton College: enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)

Basic education

Humanities

Art & design

Health &
community care

Hotel & catering

Business

Engineering

Construction

Sciences

☐ Full-time

■ Part-time

Full-time equivalent enrolments

Full-time equivalent enrolments: 2,506

Figure 5

Filton College: recurrent income (for 16 months to July 1994)

Legend:
- ☐ FEFC
- ▨ WRFE
- ■ Educational contracts
- ☐ Tuition fees
- ▨ Catering
- ☐ Miscellaneous

Pie chart values: 71%, 3%, 12%, 9%, 2%, 3%

Recurrent income: £9,565,000

Figure 6

Filton College: estimated expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

Pie chart values:
- Non-teaching pay 17%
- Non-pay 26%
- Teachers' pay 57%

Non-pay	%
Teaching departments	6.5
Teaching support services	1.1
Other support services	2.1
Admin and central services	4.7
General education expenditure	2.0
Premises	7.9
Catering and residences	1.4
Total	**25.7**
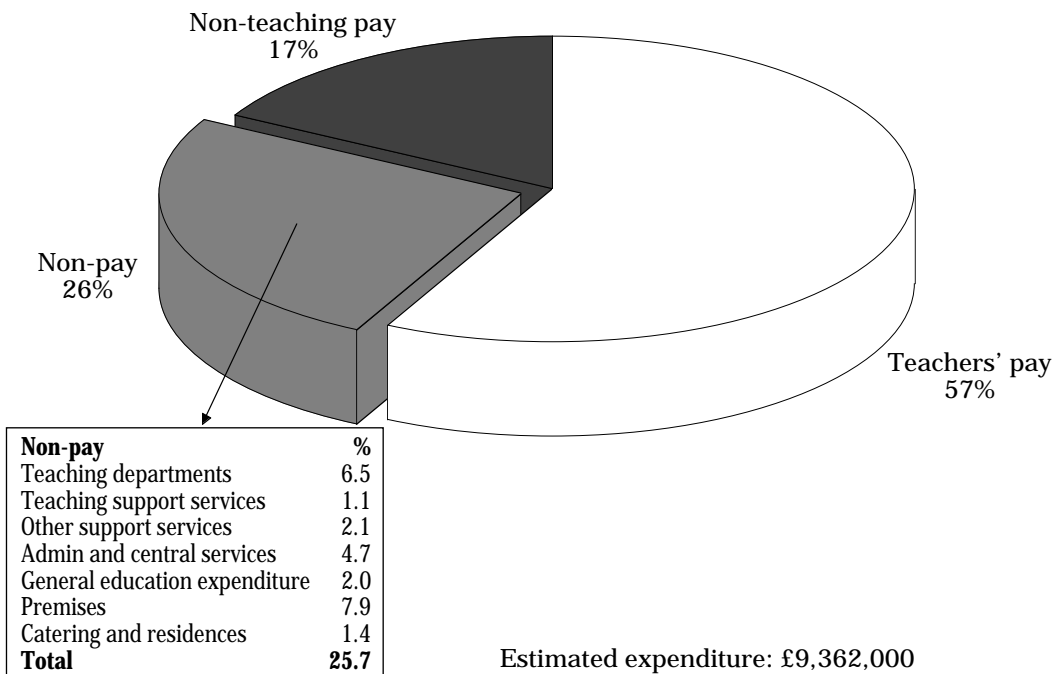
Estimated expenditure: £9,362,000