

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

**Warwickshire
College, Royal
Leamington Spa
and Moreton
Morrell**

August 1997

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

College grade profiles 1993-96

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 103/97

**WARWICKSHIRE COLLEGE, ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA
AND MORETON MORRELL
WEST MIDLANDS REGION
Inspected March 1996-May 1997**

Summary

Warwickshire College, Royal Leamington Spa and Moreton Morrell was established in 1996 following the well-planned and well-managed merger of a general further education college and an agricultural college. The college provides a wide range of courses designed to meet the needs of students and employers. There are close links with local communities, employers, the local Chamber, and other education providers. The college places strong emphasis on equality of opportunity. Most students receive good support from teachers and personal tutors. Standards of teaching are good. Students' achievements are high on most courses. The college is well governed and well managed. It has consistently met its enrolment targets and has been successful in increasing the proportion of its income from non-FEFC sources. Resources and accommodation are generally good. The college has clearly-documented quality assurance arrangements and a well-organised staff-development programme. The college should improve: some aspects of learning support provision; access to information technology for some students; students' attendance, retention and achievement rates in a few areas; the consistency with which cross-college policies are implemented; the industrial and commercial expertise of some teachers; and the quality of some of its 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	1
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	2
Quality assurance	2
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and mathematics	2	Art and design	2
Construction	2	Humanities	2
Engineering	2	Modern languages and EFL	2
Business and professional studies	2	Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2
Hairdressing, beauty and therapy	2	Access and community studies	2
Caring and health studies	2		

INTRODUCTION

1 Warwickshire College, Royal Leamington Spa and Moreton Morrell was formed on 1 August 1996 as a result of a merger between Mid-Warwickshire College and the Warwickshire College for Agriculture, Horticulture and Equine Studies. The Warwickshire College for Agriculture had been inspected in 1994-95 and the inspection findings were published in *Inspection Report 67/95* in June 1995.

2 Warwickshire College, Royal Leamington Spa and Moreton Morrell was inspected between March 1996 and May 1997. The specialist subject areas of the former college of agriculture were not reinspected. Some curriculum areas in the former Mid-Warwickshire College were inspected before the merger took place and enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the start of the autumn term 1996. Curriculum areas were inspected in March, October and December 1996 and in January 1997. Aspects of cross-college provision were inspected in April and May 1997. Twenty-six inspectors spent 94 days on the inspection. They visited 260 lessons, involving some 2,500 students, inspected students' work and scrutinised college documentation. They held meetings with members of the corporation, college senior managers and staff, students, parents, local employers and representatives from Warwickshire County Council, local community organisations, universities and local schools. Discussions also took place with representatives of the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise (the Chamber).

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 The college is situated in a relatively prosperous part of the West Midlands. The Royal Leamington Spa centre, formerly Mid-Warwickshire College, is situated between Leamington Spa and Warwick. There are also two smaller specialist centres in Leamington Spa: the York Road centre for art and design and the Thornbank centre for commercial and work-based training activities. At Royal Leamington Spa, there is provision in all of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) programme areas except agriculture. Students are drawn mainly from central and south Warwickshire but also from further afield. The college provides adult education in 43 other locations. The Moreton Morrell centre, the former Warwickshire College for Agriculture, Horticulture and Equine Studies, is the only major provider of specialist further education for the land-based industries in Warwickshire. It recruits locally, nationally and internationally. The college subsidises transport to its main centres and between them.

4 There is strong competition in the area for students aged 16 to 19. There are nine secondary schools in Leamington Spa and the immediate locality, and several independent schools, all with sixth forms. The proportion of 16 year olds in central Warwickshire continuing in full-time education or training is high, at 78 per cent. The nearest further

education colleges are in Coventry and Stratford-upon-Avon and there are 10 other colleges within a 25-mile radius.

5 The population of Warwickshire is expected to increase from the current figure of 499,000 to 507,000 by the year 2001. The opening up of the area as part of the M40 corridor has led to Warwick and Stratford being identified as two of the top 25 growth areas in the United Kingdom. Leamington Spa was voted the top town in the country for success in business in a national survey in 1996. Unemployment in central Warwickshire is relatively low, at 2.1 per cent, but slightly higher in the rural areas of south Warwickshire. In central Warwickshire, the loss in manufacturing jobs in recent years has been balanced by a rapid growth in the number of jobs in service industries, especially in retail services, leisure and tourism, and hospitality.

6 A total of 12,112 students were enrolled at the college on 1 November 1996, of whom 3,063 were full time. This included the 350 overseas students who were attending courses at the college during 1996-97. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3. The college's organisational structure is based on academic and support teams operating across the college and located in one of six academic directorates or within central support services. The six directors are line managers and also have cross-college responsibilities. The college principalship comprises the principal, the deputy principal responsible for resources, the vice-principal responsible for management information systems and business development, and the college secretary. Together with the financial controller and the directors, they form the college management team. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

7 The vision statement of the merged college is 'to be the best choice for lifelong learning'. It aims to achieve this vision through its statement of purpose which is to:

- 'encourage and facilitate participation in initial and continuing education and training
- provide access for individuals and groups to a wide choice of learning programmes and services
- identify, respond to and meet the needs of individuals and private and public sector organisations for training, consultancy, research and other services
- enable those who learn in and work with the college to develop in ways which achieve progress, fulfilment and success'.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 The college provides over 1,200 courses at different levels from basic to higher education. There are many opportunities for students to progress

from one level to another. Students can choose from 20 subjects at general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and 20 at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) level. Separate GCE A level revision courses cater for students retaking these examinations and a 'flexi-study centre' provides support for students studying for examinations such as GCE A level and GCSE in their own time. There are general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at foundation, intermediate and advanced level in many programme areas and a wide range of Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma and certificate courses. National vocational qualifications (NVQs) are offered at levels 1, 2 and 3 in a wide range of occupational areas. The substantial higher education programme includes several BTEC higher national certificate and higher national diploma courses and eight degree courses run in partnership with local universities. There are special courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The 'pathway' courses cater for adult students wishing to return to education. There are also many access to higher education courses. Opportunities for study offered on Saturday mornings include computing, fitness training and activities for children. The college regularly reviews the range of courses it offers and makes appropriate changes as necessary.

9 The college has a substantial enrichment programme which includes a wide range of sporting and cultural activities. About 500 students enter for the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network further education awards. The college is remodelling its curriculum to increase opportunities for students to take additional qualifications and develop their key skills.

10 Some useful collaborative links with schools have been developed. For example, through a consortium arrangement, pupils from four local schools are taught vocational elements of GNVQ intermediate courses at the college. Other links include the provision of a GNVQ intermediate business course for a local school. School representatives commented that the opportunities for pupils to work in the college encouraged their continuation in education beyond the age of 16. The college is assisting four local schools in the development of their own foundation GNVQ in engineering. Performing arts students have taken productions to local schools and art students have painted murals for them. Other links with schools include the use of school premises for adult education courses. NVQs in sports and leisure and for parent helpers have been provided in some primary and middle schools.

11 There are strong links with higher education. The college is an associate college of the universities of Coventry and Warwick. It is the largest single source of students who progress to degree courses at Coventry University; more than 400 students are studying for the university's awards at the college. There are good links for art and design with the University of Central England. Representatives from universities reported that

students who had completed the college's access to higher education courses were particularly well prepared for entry into higher education.

12 The college has close and effective links with the Chamber. The college training agency, Mid-Warwickshire Training, has substantial contracts for work-based training. The college has played a major role in the successful development of modern apprenticeships in association with local companies. There has been close collaboration between the college and the Chamber over strategic planning. College staff are involved in many Chamber committees and initiatives.

13 Links with the local community, including a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies, are very strong. They include work with the local council in a programme funded by the single regeneration budget to provide education and training for disadvantaged groups. The college works with the local education authority in the local education forum and with the careers service. Collaboration with the community education service of the county council results in the provision of adult education in 43 venues; in some cases, this brings education and training to people who are unable to attend the main college centres. Other valuable links include the provision of adult literacy programmes for students with learning difficulties or mental health problems. There are close relations with the local police. Relations with local minority ethnic communities are good. There is a useful college-village liaison group at the Moreton Morrell centre which deals with issues of common interest to the college and the community.

14 Local employers make useful contributions to the college's industrial advisory committees and some employers visit the college to talk to students about up-to-date commercial practice. Increasingly, work-based assessments are carried out in companies rather than in the college. Those employers interviewed by inspectors were satisfied with the quality of training received by their employees, but wanted more frequent reports on their employees' progress and more prompt information on employees' absence from lessons. Mid-Warwickshire Training carries out surveys of employers' satisfaction with its short courses but the college as a whole does not routinely seek employers' views. The college undertakes market research in order to widen its range of full-cost courses. It has developed training packages in engineering and food hygiene, and a design consultancy for local companies. It has won two national training awards in partnership with employers. Full-cost work includes training for overseas students. The college's international office has been successful in securing training contracts from the Malaysian government and from a major company in Kuwait.

15 Marketing and public relations are well managed. The college uses a consultant to assist in the analysis of labour market intelligence and the resulting information is used in strategic planning. There is a corporate marketing policy, within which, in practice, much activity takes place at

directorates level. The marketing team has considered reports on the directorates' marketing targets and the extent to which these have been achieved but the college has recognised the need to have more precise information on the directorate's marketing plans. Some market research has been carried out, for example, on the use and effectiveness of the college's prospectus. An enquiry centre in the main shopping centre of Leamington Spa has proved valuable in providing information and giving advice to prospective students. The college is successful in obtaining regular coverage of its activities and achievements in the local press.

16 The college has a well-developed equal opportunities policy that includes references to age, disability, ethnicity and gender. All staff receive a useful equal opportunities guide. The implementation of the policy is reviewed by an equal opportunities team which has representatives from all sections of the college. A particularly valuable feature of the college's approach to equal opportunities is the use of committees with external representatives to review its policies. All areas of the college have equal opportunities targets and the achievement of these is monitored effectively and reviewed annually.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

17 The college has a highly committed, experienced and well-qualified board of governors. There are 20 members, including four governors who joined the board from the former Warwickshire College of Agriculture, Horticulture and Equine Studies at the time of the merger. Of the 20 members, 11 are independent, one is the nominee of the local Chamber, five are co-opted and three, including the principal, are members of the college staff. Only four members are women. There is no student governor, but a student attends meetings of the full corporation as an observer. The board is concerned that it has no member from a minority ethnic group and intends to redress this as the opportunity arises. Members have a wide range of expertise relevant to the activities of the college. They are drawn from industry and commerce, including agriculture and manufacturing, and from the professions, including education, finance, and the law. Co-opted members include the chair of the local authority education committee, the chief executive of the district council and a training manager from an international motor vehicle manufacturer. Attendance at meetings has been generally good, although some members have found it difficult to meet all the additional commitments relating to the recent merger.

18 The corporation has an appropriate range of committees. There are the following subcommittees: finance and general purposes; audit; personnel; remuneration; academic standards and development; and a search committee to recruit new members. All committees, apart from the remuneration committee, have terms of reference although most of these are undated and some are insufficiently detailed. The college secretary acts as clerk to the corporation and supports its work effectively.

However, the corporation has not formally approved a separate job description for this part of his work. He is assisted by other members of the principalship, some of whom act as clerks to committees of the corporation. The corporation has established a register of members' interests and has adopted a code of conduct. It has recently begun to evaluate its own performance.

19 The business of governance is conducted effectively. There is a well-planned schedule of meetings of the corporation and its committees. Members receive timely and clear agendas accompanied by useful briefing papers. Committees receive appropriate reports, regular statistical updates and financial information. Good working relationships ensure that members feel able to ask challenging questions of senior managers and to engage in lively and frank debate. Governors are well informed about college affairs and further education issues through regular training events and briefings. They are clear about their strategic role and do not interfere in the day-to-day management of the college. Minutes of meetings are generally clear and concise and issued promptly. There has recently been an increase in the number of items marked as confidential, including the entire minutes of some committee meetings.

20 Governors make an appropriate contribution to strategic planning and regularly review the college's financial and academic performance. They have been closely involved with college managers in planning, and successfully implementing, the recent merger. The academic standards and development committee of the corporation has a remit which links its work to that of the college's academic board. It receives detailed reports on curriculum developments and students' achievements. The work of the committee and the academic board is influential in guiding the curriculum development of the college. Governors have recently begun to develop direct links with subject areas of the college in order to improve their understanding of curricular matters.

21 The principal takes the lead in strategic planning. The planning process is effective and well documented. Wide consultation takes place, both internally and externally, before the plan is finalised and approved by the corporation. The college's strategic and operating plans include clear aims and objectives. The setting of quantifiable targets and performance indicators at individual team level has only just begun; it has not yet been extended to all areas of college activity. Nevertheless, the college has key performance indicators which are carefully monitored: trends in performance are analysed, reported and acted upon. The college is a founder member of a national project on 'benchmarking' which is helping it to identify performance indicators against which it can measure its own performance.

22 The management structure of the college is well understood. There is a cycle of meetings at various levels, each with clear agendas and minutes which feed through to senior management. Teaching is well managed.

There is effective leadership and teamwork in all programme areas. Responsibilities for developing cross-college policies are clearly assigned. Comprehensive policies have been developed by cross-college teams in a number of areas, including equal opportunities, health and safety and student support. There is some variability in the implementation and monitoring of these policies. For example, all aspects of the equal opportunities policy are effectively planned and monitored but there are some shortcomings in the monitoring of the health and safety policy.

23 Communications within the college are generally good. There are weekly newsletters for staff and students. The principal, deputy principal and vice-principal meet all staff at the beginning of each term. Directorates hold meetings for part-time staff and there is an annual meeting for all part-time staff with the college principalship. In spite of these efforts, there are occasional communication problems at course team level in areas where large numbers of part-time staff are employed. Although plans for a college-wide network for electronic communication are in hand, much information remains paper based and staff sometimes feel overwhelmed by the amount of paper they receive.

24 The college operates a sophisticated system of resource allocation based on delegated budgets. Staff with responsibility for delegated budgets are well trained in the process of budgetary management and control. Directors understand and apply the principles of unit-costing. The college has held training events to help staff to understand the basis for resource allocation and budgetary control. The college has been very successful in obtaining income from sources other than the FEFC. One-third of the college's income is now derived from non-FEFC sources. The principal and the college management team review the financial position of the college on a monthly basis. Reasons for budget variances are closely investigated, reported to the corporation, and lead to appropriate action. Careful husbandry has enabled the college to maintain a healthy financial position while undertaking a demanding and successful merger.

25 Enrolment targets are set across the college, carefully monitored and linked to budget allocations. The college has slightly exceeded its enrolment targets for the past two years and is on target to meet or exceed them in the current year. Retention rates are closely monitored by course teams and at college level. Action is taken to address any unusually high levels of withdrawal from courses. The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £17.53 per unit. The median for general further education colleges is £17.97 per unit. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

26 The college installed a new computerised management information system in June 1996. The system integrates student records and finance and is producing more accurate management information and better access to data for college managers than the former system. There have been some teething troubles but managers are generally satisfied that

they can now obtain the information they require when they request it. The new system has considerable potential to support a wide range of college management functions but this will not be fully realised until more staff have access to it.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

27 Pre-entry information and guidance procedures are effective. College publicity material is attractive and easy to read. Programme and course leaflets and booklets are well designed and informative. The college is effective in recruiting students in a competitive environment. College staff visit schools to advise pupils on the courses available to them at the college. Many schools welcome the college giving information to pupils about all its courses but some only allow information to be presented about courses which the school itself does not offer. There is a college-wide open evening each year for prospective students and their parents and many information sessions are provided separately by the directorates. There are opportunities for students to take 'taster' courses in the summer before entry to the course in the autumn. Students reported that these were useful in helping them to decide which course to choose.

28 Applications and enrolments are dealt with efficiently by a central admissions unit. All full-time students receive an individual interview. Care is taken to help students make well-informed course choices. Adult students recruited to access to higher education programmes receive sensitive initial guidance which ensures that they are placed on an appropriate programme. For students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities there are well-defined progression routes to college courses supported by good-quality promotional material sensitive to the language needs of these students. Good contacts with local special schools help students to make a smooth transition to the college.

29 Induction is well organised. There are clear, carefully-implemented college policies. Induction programmes follow agreed college-wide guidelines and include appropriate course-specific elements. Activities designed to introduce students to the college as a whole are well planned. Course-specific induction is more variable. Students are informed about their rights and responsibilities through the issue of the student charter during induction. The charter is also referred to in the student handbook which contains useful information and a diary. A newsletter for students is distributed regularly during tutorials and is displayed on noticeboards. It provides a useful method of communicating with students.

30 Tutorial support for students is generally effective. There is a policy which outlines students' entitlement to tutorial support. A common college time for tutorials ensures that all full-time students have a minimum of 30 minutes tutorial each week, including at least one individual tutorial each term. Clear and comprehensive guidelines for tutorial activities are contained in programme management handbooks. There is a

suggested term-by-term tutorial programme for two-year courses. The documentation and materials to support the tutorial process are plentiful and useful. In addition, student services, in conjunction with the college's welfare team, provide a comprehensive programme covering aspects of personal development, health, careers and other topics during the allocated tutorial time. Individual students or tutorial groups can elect to attend. Responsibility for the delivery of the programme lies with the individual directorates and the allocation of time varies from the mandatory 30 minutes to one-and-a-half hours. Not all courses implement the guidelines on tutorials and there is some variability in the quality of students' experience. The effectiveness of tutorial support is monitored within directorates but no evaluation of the quality of tutorial support is undertaken across the college. For GCE A level students, academic tutorials to provide support for specific subjects are offered each day between 16.00 and 17.30 hours. Attendance is optional. This is a valuable initiative aimed at improving performance and it is appreciated by students, particularly those on one-year resit programmes.

31 Good use is made of national records of achievement during pre-entry guidance sessions. Students are encouraged to develop and complete their records of achievement during tutorial time. Tutors receive guidelines on the completion of records of achievement; information and updates on the national records of achievement are included in the staff newsletter. Posters displayed around the college remind students of the deadlines for updating their records.

32 Students' performance and attendance are discussed during tutorials. Records of attendance are kept by tutors and reasons for absence have to be written into the records and signed by the student. There is some variability in the rigour with which absences are pursued.

33 Provision of learning support is developing. The college has a learning support policy. All full-time students are screened to assess their need for additional support in numeracy and literacy. They receive confidential feedback about the results from their personal tutors. Those students who agree to take up the offer of support have an interview to discuss their needs, but little diagnostic testing is undertaken to identify more clearly their specific support requirements. Appointments with learning support tutors are made on an individual basis and last for 15 minutes. Reviews and reports are completed at set intervals and sent to personal tutors and students. The support provided for those who attend is good but many students identified as requiring learning support do not attend for interview. There is no facility for students to obtain support without making a prior appointment. Between directorates, there are considerable differences in the number of students using the learning support facilities. The college recognises that it needs to tighten the procedures for monitoring and analysing take-up and for ensuring that students are encouraged to attend by tutors. The college is beginning to provide some learning support for students as part of their vocational courses. There

has been some useful development of support for numeracy in vocational courses, but learning support for literacy and communication skills is not well developed in these courses.

34 Provision for the accreditation of students' prior learning has been developing since the college's involvement in a national project in 1991. There is a policy statement and systems have been set up, including a common set of procedures suitable for many NVQ-related programmes. Each directorate has at least one trained adviser for the accreditation of prior learning and there are three advisers in student services who deal with initial enquiries. A number of vocational courses include opportunities for accreditation of prior learning.

35 Careers advice and guidance are provided effectively by members of the student services team with the assistance of careers advisers contracted from Warwickshire Careers Service Ltd. These advisers are present during enrolment sessions and provide impartial advice and guidance for students during their courses. They work with tutor groups and contribute to the comprehensive careers advice and guidance programmes organised and delivered by student services. Personal tutors and careers staff provide students with support and guidance in completing their applications to higher education.

36 Students receive comprehensive and effective support from the student welfare team, which comprises a counsellor, a nurse and student liaison officers. The counsellor is professionally qualified and provides a full-time confidential service which has recently been extended to the Moreton Morrell campus. The nurse provides a full-time health care service including an initial health screening for residential students. There is a well-planned health promotion programme open to all students. The college has a modern, purpose-built nursery on the main site which is registered to take up to 35 children aged from six months to five years. The student liaison officers provide help for students with queries or problems and act as a link between the students' union and college staff. The students' union has been more active since the merger of the two institutions. Efforts are being made to merge committees and joint events are being mounted. The students' union president is the student observer on the corporation board and its academic standards and development committee and on the college's academic board.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

37 Two hundred and sixty teaching sessions were observed. There was a good standard of teaching in all subjects. Strengths outweighed weaknesses in 68 per cent of the teaching sessions inspected. This is slightly higher than the average of 63 per cent for all lessons observed during the 1995-96 inspection programme, according to the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. The average attendance was 73 per cent, slightly below the 76 per cent also recorded in the same report.

On average, 10 students were present in the lessons observed. In a number of areas, attendance and punctuality should be improved. 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 AS/A level	8	18	9	1	0	36
GCSE	2	9	7	1	0	19
GNVQ	4	14	15	6	0	39
NVQ	5	23	10	0	0	38
Other vocational	7	16	6	2	0	31
Higher education	2	8	0	0	0	10
Access to higher education	3	7	6	0	0	16
Access to further education	2	5	2	0	0	9
Basic education	0	6	6	0	0	12
Other	13	24	11	2	0	50
Total	46	130	72	12	0	260

38 With only a few exceptions, schemes of work were well devised and appropriately related to the relevant syllabus. The generally good relations between staff and students contributed to the success of many lessons. In many areas, a wide variety of teaching methods were used. Information technology was often well integrated with other aspects of the curriculum. Students' skills in wordprocessing and in using spreadsheets were well developed. Some students could have made more use of the Internet and compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases. The college organises work experience for many students. There is a common work experience procedures booklet which offers clear guidance on matters such as health and safety and insurance. Students receive good advice on preparation for placements and on their conduct during them. There is a briefing document for employers, who provide reports on students' performance during their placement.

39 In science, teachers used well-structured lessons plans and maintained clear records of their work. Teachers communicated enthusiasm for the subject and used a wide variety of teaching methods. The quality of practical work was particularly high. Teachers' marking and comments on students' work were useful in helping students to improve their performance. However, there were weaknesses in some of the teaching. The more able students were not always encouraged to achieve the higher standards of which they were capable. Information technology was used effectively in physics and, to a lesser extent, in chemistry but it was not well used in biology. Overhead transparencies were sometimes of poor quality and could not easily be read by students.

In mathematics, teachers explained concepts clearly and were skilled at dividing their time between the students in their classes. The particular needs of students taking mathematics as part of vocational programmes were well addressed. All coursework and homework was thoroughly marked.

40 In construction, lessons had clear aims and objectives and were well organised. The teaching was of good quality. Teachers took careful account of students' different abilities. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were successfully included in mainstream programmes. In most craft courses, teachers made effective use of well-prepared learning packs and supporting reference material. There was a good balance between theory and practical work and teachers used their industrial experience to develop realistic working environments. In one successful lesson, a well-managed experiment using a controlled explosion in a food tin was highly effective in demonstrating to students the dangers of allowing heat and dust to mix during dust extraction. Sometimes, teachers failed to check students' understanding of the topic being covered or to allow students sufficient opportunities to ask questions. Students' work was regularly assessed but teachers' comments were not always full enough or clear enough to alert students to their weaknesses. Some assignments lacked written assessment criteria. Teachers kept careful records of students' progress.

41 In engineering, some teachers made good use of a variety of teaching methods. Well-planned theory lessons were supported by appropriate practical demonstrations which enabled students to acquire relevant skills in areas such as motor vehicle work and welding. Workshop wall charts, files and record books were used effectively to monitor students' progress. In some lessons, laborious copying from the board resulted in some students becoming bored. Some teachers addressed their questions to a minority of students in the class.

42 Business and professional studies lessons were well planned and had clear aims and objectives. Teachers used a suitable variety of teaching methods to encourage students' learning. Students were engaged in activities that enabled them to learn effectively and which gave them a sense of achievement. They were encouraged to develop their own ideas. Teachers were skilled at asking questions to test students' understanding. In workshop sessions, teachers gave frequent and immediate feedback to students on the progress they were making and constantly emphasised the importance of good communication skills. Some students were able to engage in realistic work experience on the college premises, for example on reception, clerical and stock-taking tasks. Teachers gave students good support in developing their portfolios. A few lessons were not well organised, did not stretch students to the limits of their ability or did not relate the development of skills to the real commercial world. Students on higher level courses would have benefited from opportunities to work in a

real business environment and from earlier exposure to business applications of information technology.

43 Students in hairdressing and beauty therapy benefited from the up-to-date commercial experience of some of their teachers. The best sessions were conducted at a brisk pace and included some well-organised theory and demonstration sessions attended by large numbers of students. Care was taken to balance the needs of students and the requirements of customers in the salons. Opportunities for students to work on reception duties strengthened their understanding of the real commercial world. Students worked well in teams. However, they did not have enough opportunities to gain practical experience in the dispensary and in salon management. Practical work was assessed at the end of each session and the results were carefully recorded. The feedback given to students was sometimes insufficient to give them clear guidance on how to improve their work. There was no work schedule, so students did not have clear information on when they should hand in work for assessment.

44 In health and community care, teachers provided clear lesson objectives which were linked to what students had learned in previous lessons. They set class tasks and assignments at an appropriate level. They used a wide variety of teaching techniques, including group work, seminars, case studies and student presentations. Audio-visual aids were used effectively. Teachers were careful to check that learning was taking place. Their knowledge of current research findings ensured that students were provided with up-to-date information. Students' assignments were marked to an appropriate standard but teachers' comments were often too brief to help students to improve their performance. In a few lessons, teachers failed to ensure that all students took part in discussions.

45 Art and design teachers used a wide and appropriate range of teaching methods. They were careful to explain project briefs thoroughly to students. In a first diploma lesson introducing scale drawings, the teacher's clear explanation of technical and mathematical concepts was designed to take careful account of students' different needs and abilities. Teachers drew on their own professional experience to illustrate creative and technical concepts and to help students understand them. They maintained detailed records of students' performance. A minority of lessons were not well planned and some teachers tended to give students answers rather than allow them to find their own solutions. Some project and assignment briefs did not have clear aims and objectives. Some students reported delays in the returning of marked work.

46 In most humanities lessons the strengths clearly outweighed weaknesses. Teachers used handouts to good effect in many classes and made appropriate use of audio-visual aids. They frequently checked students' understanding. In a minority of lessons, students' differing needs were not well met. The marking of students' work was generally rigorous. In English, teachers' written comments on students' work were constructive but, in other subjects, students would have benefited from

more specific guidance. Schemes of work in English were well devised and included helpful comments on assessment requirements. This was less so in other humanities subjects. In modern foreign languages and English as a foreign language (EFL), lessons were well planned and well managed and the work was supported by appropriate resources. The best teaching was conducted at a lively pace. Teachers maintained students' interests by providing a variety of learning activities including work on authentic resources such as songs, newspapers and videos. Most teachers made extensive use of the foreign language as a means of classroom communication. Students' knowledge and understanding were regularly assessed through homework, tests and assignments. Their work was carefully marked and teachers provided helpful comments to enable them to improve their performance.

47 Lessons for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were carefully planned and broken down into separate elements to help students to learn more effectively. Enthusiastic and well-prepared teachers were able to hold the interest of students. All students received regular verbal feedback from teachers. Visits from outside speakers added variety and enrichment to the programmes. A few teachers failed to take sufficient account of students' differing learning needs in planning their lessons or did not provide enough comment on students' assessed work.

48 In access to further education courses, adult basic education and English for speakers of other languages courses schemes of work are well structured and provide a good basis for systematic learning. Most lessons were well planned and had clear aims and objectives. Records of students' work were carefully maintained. However, in a significant minority of lessons, teaching methods were inappropriate or unimaginative and opportunities were missed to strengthen and develop students' basic skills. Most teachers were sensitive to the individual needs of students, but in a few classes, teachers took too little account of the students' differing experience and ability. Students on access to higher education courses benefited from a comprehensive course guide. Schemes of work and lesson plans were well organised and teachers kept good records of work. There were clear criteria for assessment and arrangements for students to hand in work were well managed. Teachers gave thorough feedback on students' written work. Students were required to write an assessment of their own work and they benefited from this exercise. In a few lessons, teachers made poor use of audio-visual aids and students were not given enough guidance on how to take notes.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

49 Most students could demonstrate appropriate understanding of the subjects they were studying and were able to apply their knowledge and skills effectively. In art and design, health and social care, English and modern languages, students worked well in small groups or pairs; they could also work effectively on their own when required to do so.

Construction and engineering students had good practical skills and were acquiring technical competence appropriate to their level of study. Hairdressing and beauty therapy students were achieving good practical and customer care skills. Students on higher level courses in business and health studies displayed well-developed analytical and problem-solving skills. Health and community care students were able to give effective presentations. In most humanities subjects, students displayed good oral skills and were keen to take part in class discussions.

50 In all subjects, the general standard of coursework and assignments was good. In several science subjects and in higher level courses in construction, students demonstrated effective research skills. English students in their essays showed that they were able to use language accurately, and to analyse; many wrote in various modes with flair and imagination. Many modern foreign languages students also wrote fluently, and in GCE A level French they showed an ability to appreciate and write poetry. Engineering students' assignments were often well organised; students displayed technical expertise though some had difficulty in applying their mathematical knowledge effectively. In business studies, part-time students drew successfully on their work experience and their portfolios contained appropriate references to commercial practice. Students' work in art and design was generally technically competent but sometimes lacked imagination.

51 In 1996, the 301 students aged 16 to 18 entered for GCE A level examinations scored, on average, 3.8 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2) according to the tables published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. In 1995 and 1994, the average points score per candidate was 4.7, placing Mid-Warwickshire College in the top third of colleges in the sector on this performance measure. In GCE A level English, pass rates at grades A to E have been at or above the national average for the last three years. The proportion gaining grade C or above was also higher than the national average, with the exception of students aged 16 to 18 in 1996. In GCE A level mathematics, pass rates for students aged 19 years and over and the proportion gaining grade C or above have been higher than the national average for three years. Mathematics results for students aged 16 to 18 have been more variable. Pass rates for these students were well above the national average in 1994 but have been below for the last two years. The proportion gaining grade C or above was at or above the national average in 1994 and 1996, but below in 1995. In 1996, those GCE A level subjects with a substantial number of entries in which there were good results for students aged 19 years or over included: biology, chemistry, economics, law, psychology, and sociology. The 1996 GCE A level results for students aged 16 to 18 were less good; only a few subjects had pass rates at or above the national average. These included art, biology, chemistry and physics.

52 Twenty subjects were offered at GCSE from 1994 to 1996:

- in GCSE English, pass rates were above the national average in 1994 and 1996, but below in 1995
- pass rates in English literature and mathematics have been well above the national average in all three years
- in other subjects with more than 10 entries, pass rates at grade C or above in 1996 were above the national average in information systems, business studies, biology, chemistry, physics and sociology, but below the national average in geography and psychology.

53 In 1996, approximately 4,300 students were on courses leading to vocational qualifications and according to data supplied by the college, 72 per cent obtained an award. A substantial and growing number of students also achieve qualifications through the open college network.

54 Of the 233 students in their final year of study on advanced vocational courses included in the DfEE's 1996 performance tables, 91 per cent achieved the qualification for which they were aiming. This places the college in the top 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. The DfEE tables also record that 81 per cent of the 151 students studying intermediate vocational courses were successful. This places the college in the top third of colleges on this performance measure.

55 GNVQ results for 1996 show that pass rates at or above the national average were achieved in many areas, including:

- foundation level in business
- intermediate level in health and social care, art and design, business, leisure and tourism, engineering, and built environment
- advanced level in health and social care, business, leisure and tourism and engineering.

Pass rates were below the national average in leisure and tourism at foundation level and business at advanced level.

56 Results on courses leading to NVQs and other vocational qualifications are generally good. In construction there have been good pass rates in recent years in brickwork, carpentry and joinery, and plumbing. Results in the higher national certificate in building studies in 1996 were exceptionally good; all 17 students passed. In engineering, pass rates were above the national average on most courses; they were poor on a few courses. Pass rates in most business and administration courses were at or above the national averages; exceptions included accountancy courses and the higher national certificate in business and finance. On the RSA Examinations Board (RSA) wordprocessing stage 2 course, 89 per cent of the 154 students passed and 134 gained merits or distinctions. In art and design, students' achievements were variable. Good results were achieved in the national diploma in performing arts and the national diploma in

design. The art and design access to higher education courses and some national diplomas had pass rates of only 50 per cent. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, most of the results for full-time students over the past three years have been good. Results on part-time courses over the same period have been more variable. Pass rates are consistently high on most health and care courses.

57 Retention rates in 1995-96 were 89 per cent for full-time students and 87 per cent for part-time students. On some courses, retention rates are low. For example, the retention rate on the two-year, full-time GCE A level course in 1996 was only 72 per cent. Some vocational courses also had low retention rates; for example, 54 per cent on the GNVQ advanced level leisure and tourism course in 1996.

58 Individual students have achieved some outstanding successes. In 1995 and 1996, students won the bronze and silver medals awarded by the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) for plumbing. A student following the higher national diploma in design engineering was awarded the BTEC engineering student of the year award in 1995. An overseas student on the higher national diploma course in administration procedures won the bronze medal in 1995 from the RSA for her outstanding performance. A student of BA equine studies won three gold medals at the paraplegic games for dressage in 1996 and two gold medals at the paraplegic world championships in 1994.

59 The destinations of students completing their courses in 1996 are shown in the following table. A third of destinations, mainly those of part-time students on short courses, are unknown.

Destinations of students in 1996

Destination	Number	Percentage
Higher education	612	6%
Further education	2,666	24%
Employment	3,393	31%
Other	573	5%
Unknown	3,845	34%
Total	11,089	100%

QUALITY ASSURANCE

60 The college's quality assurance policy, principles and procedures are clearly documented. The policy statements derive in the main from Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*, and have recently been updated to include a statement on self-assessment. Two staff hold cross-college responsibility for quality assurance: one of the college's directors, as an element of his role, and a quality systems manager who works to him. Each directorate also has an assistant director with specific responsibility

for quality development. The director with responsibility for quality assurance chairs the two standing subcommittees of the academic board, the quality assurance committee and the curriculum committee. Each directorate elects staff to serve on these committees. The academic board, which is chaired by the principal, and its associated committees meet three times a year. The academic board has set up a system of college programme reviews to examine all programmes on a systematic basis by a group of staff from across the college. To date, the system has focused on obtaining accreditation from BTEC for the college to validate its own courses. Only a small number of higher level courses have so far been scrutinised.

61 The key elements of the college's quality assurance system are well established. The system depends for its operation on well over 100 teams. All staff belong to at least one team, all of which meet regularly. Meetings are carefully timetabled so as to minimise absence and the possibility of clashes with other meetings. The principalship and directors receive copies of all minutes. This enables them to be well informed on activities in all areas of the college and gives them the opportunity to respond to issues raised at team level.

62 Course teams are required to identify one meeting each year at which they will review their performance against the past year's targets and set the targets for the coming year that will contribute to directorate and college-wide plans. The review takes account of information from a variety of sources. The meeting has three stages. The first two focus on the completion of a standard review and evaluation checklist. Team members are required to confirm that they have been working in line with the indicators on the checklist and that evidence is available to prove this. In practice, they are seldom asked to produce the evidence. There is a tendency to record the action taken rather than to evaluate its effectiveness. The third stage of the meeting focuses on the review and setting of team-specific objectives. Some teams review and assess their performance more thoroughly and rigorously than others. Quality assurance procedures are less well developed for service and administrative teams than for curriculum teams. However, some of the service teams in the college have developed standards against which their service to clients can be measured. These include the library and student services teams. Others are starting to make progress on setting such standards.

63 The college gathers the views of its students through a well-developed and efficiently-administered system of questionnaires. One-third of all full-time students are surveyed each year. They complete a college services survey early in the first term, a teaching survey in the second term and an exit survey on leaving the college. An analysis of the results is sent to managers and to appropriate staff teams, and steps are taken to ensure that action is taken where needed. Changes brought about as a result of the surveys are publicised in newsletters and on posters displayed around the college. Many teams use additional questionnaires to elicit more

specific information relating to courses or services. There is no systematic college-wide gathering of the views of parents or employers.

64 The outcomes from the various quality assurance activities undertaken in the college are aggregated into directorate self-assessment reports. Shortly before the cross-college inspection in April 1997 the college produced its first college-wide, self-assessment report based on the directorate reports. At both levels the reports were poorly organised. The statements they contained mixed facts with judgements. There was no cross-referencing to evidence or sources of evidence in the college-wide report and the effectiveness of the cross-referencing in directorate reports varied. Weaknesses and areas for improvement were not rigorously identified. However, the grades allocated by the college were broadly similar to those of the inspectorate.

65 One of the college's directors, supported by a co-ordinator, has responsibility for human resource development in the college. Arrangements for staff training and appraisal are well organised and well documented. They are underpinned by a clear and detailed human resource development policy. The college gained the Investor in People award in 1994, one of the first colleges to do so. It is now preparing for its second assessment. Staff-development needs are identified at the level of the individual, the team, and the college. Five days a year are designated as whole-college training days. Three days are given over to meeting the needs identified by teams; the other two are centrally organised. In addition, each directorate has funds to meet individual or group training needs identified, for example, as a result of appraisal. In 1994, the college recognised the need to prioritise training for administrative staff and allocated funding to directorates specifically for this purpose. The college recognises the need to link development activity more explicitly to targets in the strategic plan. New staff undertake a thorough induction. Those interviewed during the inspection were unanimous in their praise of the process. All new members of staff have a mentor. All new teachers are observed teaching as a part of their induction. The observations are recorded in detail and discussed with the teacher concerned. Those who do not have a teaching qualification are strongly encouraged to acquire one.

66 The college has operated an appraisal scheme since September 1994. A revised system was introduced in 1996 which applies equally to all staff in the college. It is designed around a two-year cycle with three intermediate reviews. For teachers, appraisal includes observation of teaching. Staff spoke appreciatively of the process. The outcomes of the observation process are not made public and do not inform team evaluation and review.

67 A summary booklet about the college charter is issued to all students at enrolment. It is written in clear, easily understandable language. It does not refer to parents or the community. A college document setting

out an undertaking to employers is sent to those employers whose students attend the college. The charter contains few explicit commitments to standards of service. Achievement of some of these standards is not monitored.

RESOURCES

Staffing

68 Most teaching staff are suitably qualified and experienced for the courses they teach. Seventy per cent of full-time and 84 per cent of part-time teachers hold a first degree. Most of those teaching vocational subjects who are not graduates have other relevant qualifications. Seventy-four per cent of full-time and 67 per cent of part-time teachers hold a recognised teaching qualification. Training and development lead body assessor and verifier qualifications have been obtained by 49 per cent of full-time teachers and 15 per cent of part-time teachers. In some areas, progress towards the achievement of these awards has been slow. Teachers in some areas, including engineering, have recent industrial or commercial experience but, in other areas, there is a need for teachers to update their vocational skills. Teachers are generally appropriately and efficiently deployed. Eighty per cent of the full-time teaching staff are on new flexible contracts. There are management guidelines to help determine workloads. All part-time academic staff initially have a full-time staff member as a personal mentor.

69 Technical and administrative staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. However, there are not enough of them in some areas. There is a shortage of technicians to support three-dimensional studies in art and design, and a shortage of learning and care assistants in practical sessions for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The use of programme administrators to find work placements for students is proving useful.

70 College personnel policies and procedures apply equally to all staff. Guidelines for the recruitment and selection of staff are clear. There is a useful and newly-revised staff handbook. There are approximately equal numbers of men and women full-time teachers. Of the 33 staff who make up the senior and extended management teams, only eight are women. Thirteen per cent of students but only 2 per cent of full-time teachers are from minority ethnic groups.

Equipment/learning resources

71 The college is generally well equipped and resources are effectively deployed in most areas to support learning. Most teaching rooms have appropriate teaching aids. All full-time students are provided with free textbooks. The college has been successful in attracting significant funding for equipment from local companies, for example, in construction and engineering. Most specialist areas are well equipped. Weaknesses include

a lack of specialised equipment for some construction technician courses and of basic audio-visual equipment in some outreach centres. There are clear procedures for bidding for funds for capital items. Where major developments are planned, there are accompanying equipment plans. However, there is no specific document setting out a long-term college plan for upgrading and replacing equipment.

72 The college has developed an information technology strategy and established a working party chaired by the principal to implement and update it. The use of information technology within curriculum areas is growing. Most of the computers are of current industrial standard. The ratio of students to computers is 8.6:1. However, there are not enough computers available on an open access basis to meet all students' demands at the Leamington Spa centre. The provision is split between the main information technology centre and three other curriculum centres, where students can use computers only when they are not needed for teaching. The college will shortly be increasing the number of computers available to students. Technician support is adequate and support for students is always available in the main information technology centre. The key information technology centres on the Leamington Spa campus are networked but there is no college-wide network. At Moreton Morrell, provision is adequate and residential students can use computers in the evenings until midnight and at weekends, although there is no technician support at these times. There is partial networking of computers in staff rooms. Lecturers have limited access to electronic mail facilities.

73 The Leamington Spa centre library does not have enough study places to meet the needs of all students. The library has sufficient qualified staff, some of whom are located in study areas to provide help and assistance to students. Opening hours are convenient. The library catalogue is fully computerised. There is a comprehensive range of facilities, including a good range of study guides and adequate stocks of books and periodicals. The provision for art and design and humanities is particularly good. Links between library staff and teachers in some other curriculum areas need strengthening. There are six terminals for CD-ROM databases; the library holds only 19 CD-ROMs but they provide a good range for general purposes. A further 45 CD-ROMs are held in curriculum areas.

Accommodation

74 The college's main centres, at Leamington Spa and Moreton Morrell, are attractively landscaped and well maintained. The main buildings at the Leamington Spa centre date from the late 1950s to the early 1980s. Other buildings, some of which are listed, date from the nineteenth century. Reception areas at Leamington Spa and Moreton Morrell are welcoming. Car parking for students at the Leamington Spa centre does not meet demand at busy periods.

75 Following the merger, the college is reviewing and revising its accommodation strategy. Most classrooms and workshop areas are adequate in size and layout to meet teaching and learning needs. There is some excellent accommodation at Leamington Spa, including the business information technology centre, student services, the 'Bistro' restaurant and the hairdressing and beauty therapy salons. The school of farriery at Moreton Morrell provides a distinctive training area which successfully combines good architectural design with effective layout. Some classroom and workshop areas are inadequate for the size of the classes that use them. Ventilation of rooms is poor in a number of curriculum areas, including catering. Some staff rooms are overcrowded. Some parts of the three-storey block at the Leamington Spa centre, including the student refectory need refurbishing.

76 Access for wheelchair users is generally good. There are a few exceptions to this at Leamington Spa, which include the Victorian houses and the York Road and Thornbank centres, where students have access only to parts of the ground floor. Some of the ramps for wheelchair users need attention.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

77 The main strengths of the college are:

- the well-planned and well-managed merger
- the wide range of courses which meets the needs of students and employers
- well-developed links with local communities, employers, the Chamber, and other education providers
- the strong emphasis on equality of opportunity
- effective governance and management
- consistent achievement of enrolment targets
- success in developing new sources of income
- good standards of teaching
- good pass rates on most courses
- effective systems for supporting students
- resources and accommodation of good quality
- the clearly-documented quality assurance system and well-organised staff development.

78 If the college is to build on these strengths it should:

- improve some aspects of additional learning support
- improve students' attendance, retention and achievement rates in areas where they are low
- ensure that all cross-college policies are implemented consistently

-
- strengthen some aspects of quality assurance, including self-assessment
 - update the industrial and commercial experience of some teachers
 - increase some students' access to information technology equipment
 - continue to improve the accommodation, including access for students with restricted mobility.

FIGURES

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

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

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

 - 4 Staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at February 1997)

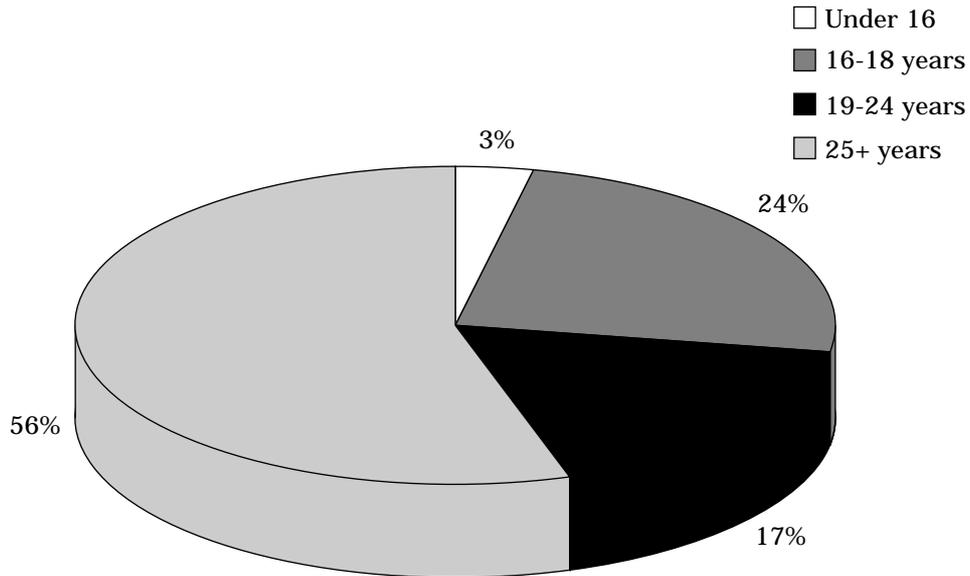
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

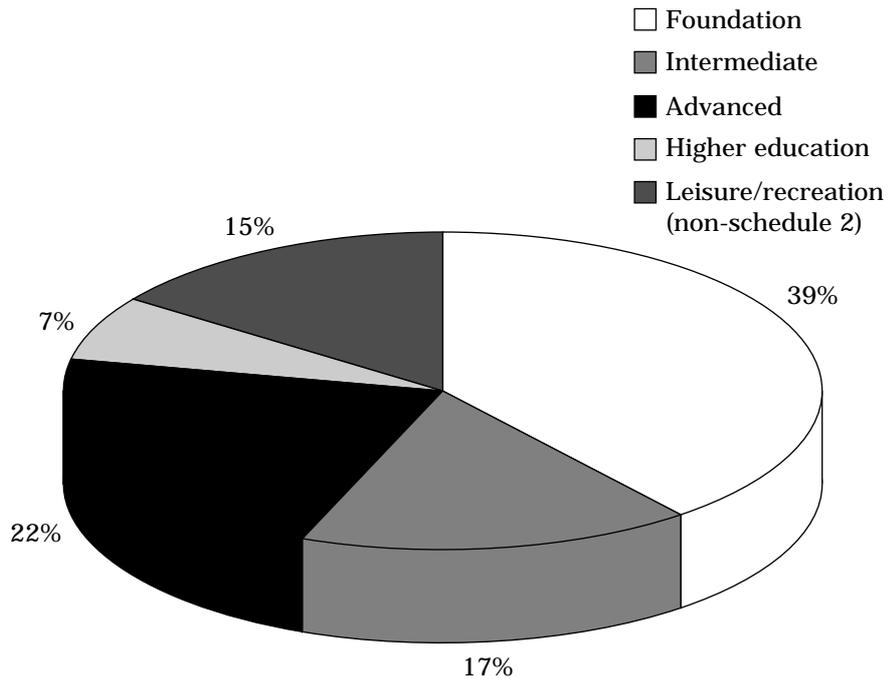
Warwickshire College, Royal Leamington Spa and Moreton Morrell: percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 12,112

Figure 2

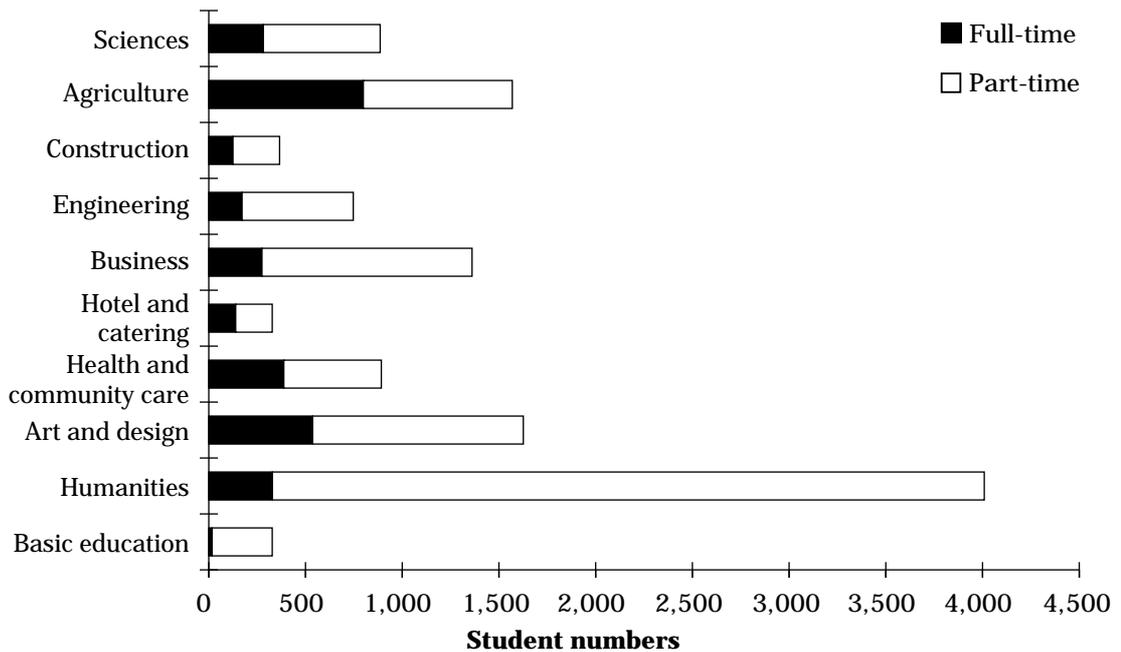
Warwickshire College, Royal Leamington Spa and Moreton Morrell: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 12,112

Figure 3

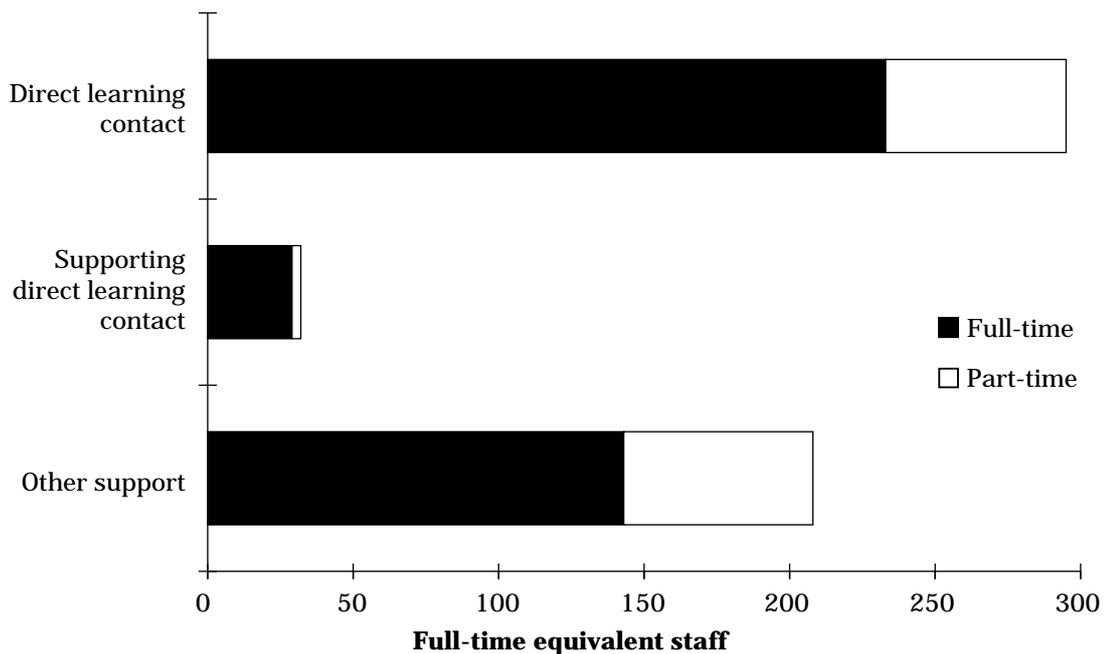
Warwickshire College, Royal Leamington Spa and Moreton Morrell: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 12,112

Figure 4

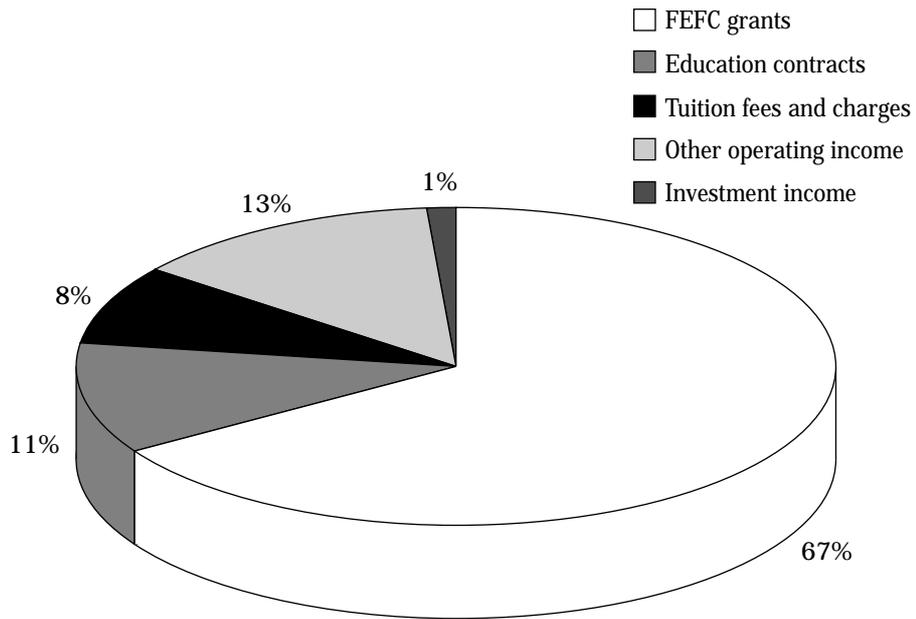
Warwickshire College, Royal Leamington Spa and Moreton Morrell: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at February 1997)



Full-time equivalent staff: 535

Figure 5

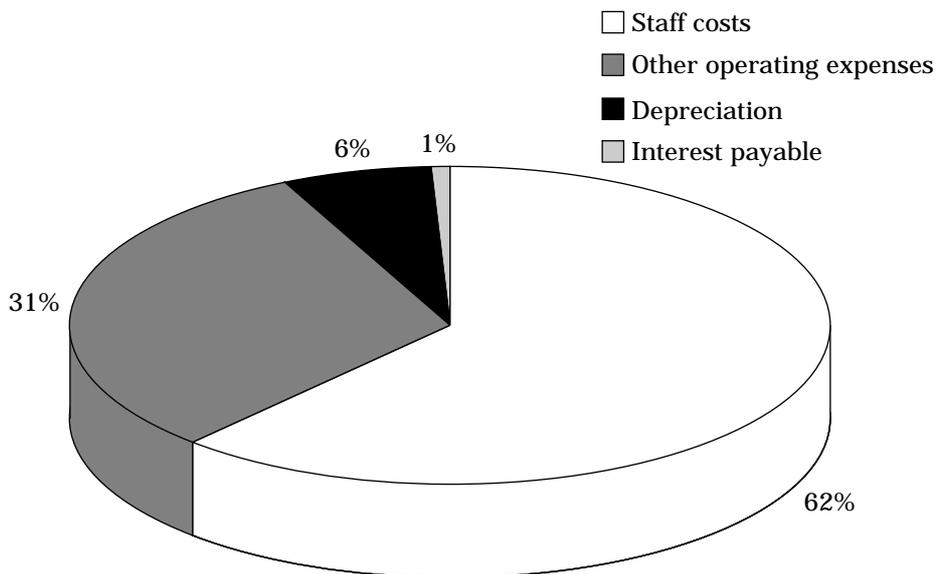
**Warwickshire College, Royal Leamington Spa and Moreton Morrell: income
(for 12 months to July 1996)**



Income: £16,970,000

Figure 6

**Warwickshire College, Royal Leamington Spa and Moreton Morrell: expenditure
(for 12 months to July 1996)**



Expenditure: £17,576,000

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