

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

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# **Oldham College**

**March 1996**

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**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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**THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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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 1995, some 208 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 208 colleges are shown in the following table.*

### **College grade profiles 1993-95**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Inspection grades</b>				
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Programme area	9%	60%	28%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	13%	51%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	11%	56%	29%	4%	<1%

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# FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 15/96

## OLDHAM COLLEGE

### NORTH WEST REGION

Inspected October-November 1995

#### Summary

Oldham College is a responsive college. It provides many different learning opportunities to meet the training and educational needs of local people. Links with a variety of organisations help it to shape its provision for different clients. Measures have been introduced to make it easier for adults to study. The college is well governed and well managed. The style of management promotes co-operation between staff at all levels. Course planning is carefully linked to decisions about marketing, finance and staffing. Students can obtain effective advice on personal and careers matters, some of which is available in minority ethnic languages. Teaching staff are well qualified and experienced. They do not always make the best use of the experience of older students. Examination results in many vocational courses compare favourably with national averages although pass rates have declined over the last two years. The data on students' achievements are not presented in a sufficiently concise and consistent form to enable managers and board members to evaluate them accurately. The college seeks students' opinions on their experience of the college and the complaints procedure is well publicised. Arrangements for quality assurance place too little emphasis on teaching and learning and many performance targets are not sufficiently specific. Some facilities to support specialist work are of a very high standard. A particular strength is the computer provision available for students to use outside lessons. There has been some refurbishment of teaching rooms and learning resource centres but corridors and some public areas remain drab and uninviting.

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

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Science	3	Health and care	1
Construction	2	Hair and beauty	2
Engineering	3	Art and design	3
Business	3	Humanities	3
Hotel and catering	2	Basic education	2
		Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1 Oldham College was inspected mainly during the autumn term of 1995. Eighteen inspectors visited the college for a total of 80 days. Enrolment and induction were inspected in August and September. The specialist inspection of construction took place in May; other curriculum areas were inspected in the week beginning 9 October. Aspects of cross-college provision were inspected in the week beginning 20 November.

2 Inspectors visited 202 classes and examined students' written and practical work. They looked at an extensive range of documentation including the college's self-assessment report, the strategic plan and position papers outlining the college's view of its current strengths in curriculum and cross-college areas. Inspectors held discussions with the college's governors, managers, teachers, students, staff responsible for support services, representatives of local minority ethnic groups, the careers service, Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council, heads of local secondary schools, local employers, the Oldham Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise and University College Salford. Inspectors attended routine meetings of academic and administrative staff, and of the college board of governors.

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

3 Oldham College, founded in 1893, is situated seven miles to the east of the centre of Manchester. It has grown from a college which served a predominantly manufacturing economy to become a more broadly-based institution. Its curriculum has altered to reflect the local decline in manufacturing, the growth in service related industries and the changing patterns of population. The college is located on two sites. Most of its work is based in the centre of the town on a site built in three phases between the mid 1950s and the mid 1980s. One-and-a-half miles away, a nineteenth-century grade II listed board school building accommodates the school of performing arts and media. Most of the construction crafts work has recently been moved to a new building on the main site. The recently-built children's centre, funded under the urban programme, provides care for 52 children.

4 The college is one of eight major general further education or tertiary colleges within a 10 mile radius of Oldham. A reorganisation within the borough in 1991 resulted in the closure of the majority of sixth forms and the creation of a new sixth form college within walking distance of the college's main site. Four voluntary-aided schools, a long established independent grammar school and one local authority school still retain sixth forms. Oldham Metropolitan Borough has a separate adult education service and a large managing agency for adult and youth training. The proportion of school leavers who stay on in education after the age of 16 has increased from 49 per cent in 1991-92 to 58 per cent in 1994-95. The proportion of school leavers choosing Oldham College has increased from 13.5 per cent in 1991-92 to 19 per cent in 1994-95.

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5 Until recently, manufacturing engineering has dominated the local economy and there has been a high number of plants operated by major national companies. The closure or reduction in size of these large plants is partly responsible for the local unemployment rate of 10.9 per cent. In the inner urban area surrounding the college the unemployment rate is as high as 22.2 per cent. Oldham is the thirty-eighth most disadvantaged borough of 366 according to an index of urban deprivation published in a report of the Oldham Borough Chief Executive's policy unit. In recent years, there has been a growth in the service sector and in smaller engineering companies. More people are now travelling to Manchester to find work, and this trend is forecast to continue.

6 Oldham has a population of 220,000 of which 35 per cent are 25 years of age or under. The number of 16 year olds has increased from 3,007 in 1991-92 to 3,363 in the current academic year. Minority ethnic groups make up 8.5 per cent of the local population, 16 per cent of the under 16 age group, and 14.2 per cent of the college's full-time students. They originate mainly from the Indian subcontinent; 47 per cent from Pakistan, 27 per cent from Bangladesh and 9 per cent from India. The Bangladeshi community is the third largest in Britain. The college recruits students primarily from the immediate locality but has a number of programmes that recruit nationally.

7 The college manages the curriculum through 11 schools: art and design; building and engineering services; business; construction crafts; engineering; general education and science; health and caring; hospitality and leisure; information business and technology; management and professional development; and performing arts and media. A group of seven functional managers support the work of the schools and have responsibility for curriculum, customer services and quality, estates, finance, human resources, marketing, systems development and administration. The post of deputy principal, vacated on the promotion of the present principal and chief executive, has been redefined to include responsibility for enterprise and business planning.

8 The college sets clear targets for growth. It has achieved or exceeded its enrolment targets since 1993-94 and forecasts recruitment slightly in excess of its target for 1995-96. At present it has 5,716 enrolments, 40 per cent of which are full time. This represents an increase of 14.6 per cent over the 1994-95 academic year. The number of school leavers as a proportion of total enrolments has declined following the opening of the new sixth form college in the locality. Enrolments by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. The college employs 354 full-time equivalent staff of whom 176 are teaching staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

9 Summaries of the college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The total allocation from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) for 1994-95 was £7,951,000

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of which 70 per cent was recurrent funding. An additional £687,000 was secured from the European Union. The average level of funding has reduced from £22.91 per unit in 1993-94 to £21.15 per unit in 1995-96. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.84. The college is attempting to diversify its income to secure its financial future.

10 The college has set itself eight key objectives to implement its mission. These are:

- to achieve the planned growth in student numbers
- to raise its image locally, nationally and, where appropriate, internationally
- to improve student retention
- to value and empower staff
- to improve flexibility of learning, students' experience, achievement and student support
- to improve continuously the quality of service
- to improve the physical environment
- to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the management of resources.

#### **RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION**

11 Oldham College offers a comprehensive range of courses and learning opportunities from basic education to higher national diplomas and the first year of a science degree. Students can choose to study part time, full time, or through more flexible patterns of learning. General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) are available across the college at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. A number of access courses prepare adults without formal qualifications for entry to universities. The college is expanding its links with higher education institutions to extend provision in engineering, art and design and business studies. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are being established, but progress has been slow in some areas including engineering, catering and leisure. There are 14 national diploma courses, 11 higher national diploma and higher national certificates, a small, declining programme of General Certificate of Education advanced levels (GCE A levels) in eight subjects, and a programme of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects. The college should continue to review these courses in the light of competition from other providers in the vicinity.

12 The college has many links with the local community. It responds well to the needs of different student groups. As a member of Oldham Partnership, a strategic alliance of private sector, voluntary sector and public bodies, it works with others to support the economic and social regeneration of Oldham. Programmes of study have been developed through close working relationships with local organisations. The college



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plays a major role with others, in helping to achieve the national targets for education and training, and in supporting initiatives funded by the government's single regeneration budget or by other grants from European and domestic public funds. The community education unit develops partnerships with local agencies to provide education for disadvantaged groups. The college has close links with the recently-reorganised careers service. It makes good use of local labour market information to help shape its response to changing local needs. Senior managers are actively involved in such initiatives but not all college staff are properly aware of the implications for the college of the national targets for education and training.

13 There are now many adult students at the college. More flexible course provision, easier enrolment procedures and Saturday morning courses have helped to increase the percentage of adult students from 58 per cent to 81 per cent in the last three years. When planning courses, staff do not always give sufficient attention to the different ways in which adults learn.

14 The college's marketing strategy is successful. Staff carefully analyse the available information about different client groups; school leavers, adults and the business sector. It regards as important the relationships which are built with individuals in organisations from which potential students are drawn. All staff are given some responsibility for marketing the college and its services, and they understand and act on this policy. There is a central marketing team working with a representative from each of the college's 11 curriculum schools. These people ensure that their colleagues develop appropriate responses to the needs which are identified. The team includes an expert in European funding who helps the college obtain finance for some of its curriculum initiatives. Staff responsible for marketing are closely involved in the college's core planning group which ensures that marketing, finance and accommodation issues support curriculum development.

15 Over the last five years, the age, gender and ethnic profile of the student population has changed. A policy statement covering issues of race, gender, special needs and learning difficulties expresses clearly the high priority the college places on equal opportunities. The student charter stresses this, and equal opportunities issues are emphasised during students' induction to the college. Facilities which assist the college to put its policies into practice include the JT Hilton centre which provides support for flexible patterns of learning, the community education unit and the SWITCH unit which is responsible for provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Other equal opportunities initiatives include the provision of a women-only common room, a mature students common room, a parent and child eating area and some bilingual reception staff. There is a manager designated for each aspect of the equal opportunities policy. Together with other college managers, they form the equal opportunities executive committee which is chaired by the principal.

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An effective staff-development programme has been drawn up to support the policy. Attempts have been made to audit and redress gender imbalances in student groups in some of the vocational areas but these have not produced significant changes. Students from different cultural backgrounds seldom share experiences or participate in multicultural activities, except for those established by the children's centre. Women from minority ethnic groups form a high proportion of female adult students. Learning groups are organised in homes and schools, bilingual course provision is available in college and, in collaboration with a local agency, a community bus provides both advice and teaching in the locality.

16 Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and adult basic education provision has expanded rapidly in the last two years. As well as linking with public and private providers of community education the college collaborates well with the five local special schools. Courses in numeracy, literacy and information technology are provided by the community education and the SWITCH units. The unit also works closely with the college's academic schools to provide vocational options and to provide advice, training and equipment which enable students on any course to be supported. The college aims to become a centre of excellence for the support of those with hearing or visual impairment.

17 The college has taken a number of measures to improve its links with local high schools. Staff-development activities have enabled college staff to work with teachers from local schools. Library and learning resources staff provide advice to schools and other college staff help school technology departments to deliver the national curriculum. Students successfully act as mentors in local schools, and a student tutoring and language support programme is in progress. An after-school study club, developed in collaboration with a local school, caters for pupils aged 12 to 15. A pilot scheme is being developed to accredit the achievements of 16-year-old pupils who leave school early with few or no examination passes. Of the eight pupils involved in 1994-95, seven are now enrolled on college courses. The number of pupils participating in taster courses has grown from 500 to over 900 in the last two years. The college accepts that it needs, as part of the evaluation of this activity, to discover how many of these pupils subsequently enrol on courses.

18 Relationships between the college and Oldham Careers Service are well established and the college is a regular and welcomed contributor to schools' careers events. Careers staff play an important role in providing advice and guidance to applicants, which ensures that they are made aware of changes taking place to the courses on offer.

19 There are examples of successful liaison with employers which should be more widely disseminated across the college. The modern apprenticeships programme in construction ensures that employers are involved in creating smooth links between college-based training and students' work experience.

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## **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

20 The composition of the governing body reflects the interests of the local community. The 20 members of the board include 11 with business or commercial backgrounds, a nominee from the Oldham Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise, a secondary school headteacher, a councillor from Oldham Metropolitan Council, the chair of the education committee, the local member of parliament, the principal, two members of staff and a student. One governor is experienced in working with people with disabilities, one is from the local Asian community and five, including the principal, are women. In the academic year 1994-95, the average attendance at board meetings was 73 per cent. The board has undertaken a review of the way it conducts its business and it has adopted a nationally-recommended code of conduct.

21 The board is involved in shaping the college's mission and strategic plan. Two special meetings in the annual cycle focus on strategic planning and governor development. There are four subcommittees: personnel; customer services; audit; and finance and general purposes. The personnel committee closely monitors the progress of negotiations between college management and unions aimed at resolving the dispute over lecturers' contracts. The finance and general purposes committee has overseen the plans to reduce the staffing costs of the college. Occasionally, specially constituted subcommittees make proposals to the board. For example, a subcommittee is currently advising the board on governance issues such as appointments to the board, legal advice for members and the register of members' interests. A cable committee is to recommend how the college can best utilise the developing local cable network. At the time of the inspection, the terms of reference of most of the subcommittees were in draft form and had not been approved by the board.

22 The board has recognised that it should do more to review the educational performance of the college. It has instructed the customer services committee to recommend better ways of presenting and analysing data on students' achievements which would allow the board to make a comparison of the college's performance over time and against national standards.

23 Change and development are well managed. The planning system encourages staff involvement both in the design and implementation of the strategic plan and staff welcome the opportunity to voice their opinions. Managers are encouraged to act on their own initiative. Schools are expected to match their priorities to the college's strategic plan. Most do so successfully. A minority give too much heed to their own priorities. Schools submit two plans, one which assumes no additional resources, and one which requires additional funding. Overall priorities then determine the choice of plan to be implemented and the targets which are set. Information derived from the college's quality assurance system often helps to determine the outcomes of this process. The schools of hospitality

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and leisure, construction crafts, business, management and professional development and art and design make good use of the college's planning procedures. Some of the weaker plans contain vague aims, proposals which are a reaction to events and few signs of innovation. Some schools and units monitor their targets rigorously; a few are lax, with the result that college managers receive inadequate reports.

24 The management structure of the college was revised in the autumn of 1994 and a tier of management removed. The aim was to delegate more authority to school and unit heads and to support them with better management information and improved finance systems. The benefits of this revision are beginning to show. Curriculum management in most areas has been strengthened. For example, engineering courses are now in one school so that more coherent curriculum plans can be developed. Some humanities subjects contribute to courses in more than one school, and are not adequately co-ordinated. The management of English teaching across the college is particularly unsatisfactory. Most staff are clear about their responsibilities and accountabilities. In catering and hairdressing, for example, line management is understood; each teacher has clearly-defined responsibilities, and the targets to which they work are monitored through team meetings. The job descriptions of staff whose roles have changed have yet to be updated.

25 Communication between staff at all levels is good. A briefing system ensures that information is disseminated throughout the college. Staff are able to feed their views through the line management system. Student representatives are included on school boards of studies which report to the college academic board. However, not all board meetings are recorded effectively, and minutes sometime fail to indicate who is responsible for taking action on decisions which have been reached. The best organised teams ensure that staff, including part-time staff, who cannot attend briefing meetings, are kept informed by other means. Senior managers form a core planning group to consider strategic issues. The meetings of this group include the regular review of progress towards the implementation of targets.

26 Inconsistencies exist in the management of some cross-college practices. There are standard documents for the recording of students' progress, but not all staff have adopted them. There is no agreed way to ensure that schemes of work are of an adequate standard; good examples exist in most schools but some schemes are little more than lists of topics to be covered. Guidelines on information technology do not have enough curriculum focus and do not guarantee a minimum level of provision for all students.

27 There is a clear strategy and accompanying timetable for improving management information systems and these are starting to have an impact on the running of the college. For example, the information on enrolment available at the start of this academic year was more accurate, more

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up-to-date and of more use to managers as a planning tool than in previous years. The college still has some way to go in achieving similar standards in other areas, such as the recording of attendance, retention rates, achievements and destinations of students. Some schools, notably the school of engineering and manufacturing, use efficient computer-based systems for all areas of school management. The school of construction crafts makes good use of its own comprehensive destination data, staff to student ratios and retention rates in planning its provision.

28 The college has begun to delegate budgets to schools and units, linking resources both to the college strategic plan and the schools' and units' own targets. The majority of schools and units use college information well to plan their allocation of resources. Managers receive regular financial reports. Schools and units manage their budgets well, and some generate additional income. For example, hairdressing sets an income target which must be met before surplus funds can be used. The college-wide register check in January prompted the school of art and design to make better use of its resources and accommodation so as to use spare capacity to generate additional income. Occasionally, courses start without being properly resourced, for example the course in popular music needs more appropriate personal computers.

29 There are good examples of performance indicators being set and monitored by schools and units, for example in health and social care, the SWITCH unit and teacher education. College records suggest that performance indicators such as attendance, retention and success rates are poor in some courses, yet corrective action does not appear to have been taken. The amalgamation of data sometimes leads to generalisations which are of limited use to managers. For example, the collection, collation and review of student achievement data for GCSE and GCE A level courses give an overview, but patterns within individual subjects are difficult to identify. The college examines consistently the targets which have been set, to see whether these have been achieved within the deadlines agreed.

### **STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

30 Prospective students find prospectuses and course leaflets attractive and easy to read. Versions are available in community languages. Useful information sessions are held in schools, in the college and elsewhere in the community. Taster courses are held for both school pupils and adults to help them make the right choice.

31 A central student services unit provides good support for prospective and existing students. It provides welfare and financial guidance as well as personal counselling, carried out to British Association of Counselling guidelines. It has a helpful link with Oldham Careers Service; four of their careers advisers provide impartial advice and guidance in the college, arrange special sessions for tutorial groups and drop-in workshops for students wishing to explore their career preferences. Student services

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link well with a wide range of support agencies to which students can be referred. Students speak highly of the support they receive but, because the unit is only open during the day, some part-time students are unable to take full advantage of the services it offers.

32 Enrolment was generally well organised. Full-time and part-time students were able to enrol for some courses on Wednesdays throughout the summer. Staff and students were asked their views of the process and changes have been made as a result. Most students spoke highly of the friendliness of staff, the efficiency of the service and of the subject advice provided by lecturers. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities appreciated the support which was provided to allow them to follow the same admissions procedures as other students. The physical arrangement under which courses enrolled their students in different rooms meant that central support and advisory staff were difficult to consult. There were also inadequate arrangements for staff to welcome students and advise them on such matters as completing the enrolment forms. Application forms do not allow students to indicate any uncertainty about their preferences, or to apply for more than one course. This can result in students being referred to a subject specialist too early, before they have had their course choice explored by an independent adviser. In a few cases, students are following inappropriate programmes of study.

33 There is a standard induction programme for all students. It is well planned and includes information about college facilities and resources, students' rights and responsibilities and equal opportunities. Some staff offer additional activities. In a minority of cases, induction was not delivered effectively, especially where the teacher dominated the process and allowed little or no time for students to raise their own concerns or queries. Most new students found induction particularly useful. Some students who had previously studied at the college expressed frustration at having to repeat a process which they had gone through at the beginning of their first year. A minority felt that the induction programme was too long.

34 The college has systems for accrediting students' prior learning, but they are not always well used. Accreditation of prior learning is used effectively in construction courses, especially in plumbing. In many other schools, students do not know this service is available. The college has recently started work on a pilot project to extend this form of accreditation.

35 Students value the opportunity to meet with their personal tutors. There is a well-planned college-wide tutorial programme for all full-time and some part-time students. It includes study skills, records of achievement, action planning which involves students in setting their own learning objectives, careers education and guidance, and personal and social education. Some students do not receive all the elements of the programme. In humanities, catering, leisure and business courses, some tutorial time is used for subject teaching. Records of achievement are used, but not well monitored. Art and design students have an excellent

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workbook in which to record achievements and action plans. Construction students use learning agreements, which are renegotiated as necessary, to plan the routes to their required qualifications. In other areas, action planning is not yet fully developed.

36 Attendance is carefully recorded and centrally monitored although schools vary in the effectiveness of the action they take when a student has a pattern of absence. In engineering, a computer-based system of recording and reporting absence keeps tutors and employers informed. Some schools set a clear deadline after which action is taken to follow up absences; in art and design it is after four days of absence and in construction it is after five. Others, such as the school of general education and science, respond less promptly.

37 Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is generally good. Course tutors check the literacy and numeracy skills of all full-time and some part-time students. Once students have been identified as being in need of extra support, however, the speed of response, the management of their support and the tracking of their progress is not always adequate. The support for students with sensory disabilities such as hearing and visual impairment is excellent. Signers, adapted equipment and Brailled information are available for students who need them. The 'case study' approach where different teams within the college provide support to students in danger of failing has been particularly successful.

38 Students receive sound advice and information regarding their progression to other courses or to employment, either from their tutors or from the student services unit. Literature providing information for higher education applicants is particularly useful. Support for job seekers is being developed to help students who do not wish to study further.

#### **TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING**

39 Sixty per cent of the sessions inspected had strengths which outweighed weaknesses. In 11 per cent of sessions the weaknesses outweighed the strengths. The following table shows the grades awarded for the teaching sessions inspected.

##### **Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Totals</b>
GCE AS/A level		0	0	4	1	1	6
GCSE		0	4	3	1	1	9
GNVQ		6	16	11	4	0	37
NVQ		14	17	7	2	0	40
Other vocational		9	21	20	7	1	58
Basic education		5	8	8	1	0	22
Other		10	11	6	2	1	30
<b>Total</b>		<b>44</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>202</b>

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40 The average level of student attendance for the teaching sessions inspected was 76 per cent of those on roll. The highest average attendance in a subject area (80 per cent) was in catering. The lowest, 70 per cent, was recorded in art and design. An average of 11 students were present in the classes inspected. The largest groups, averaging 19 students, were in health and social care. The smallest were in adult basic education and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities where attendance averaged nine and eight, respectively.

41 Science sessions were well prepared. Teachers worked to clear lesson plans. They varied their teaching methods, and ensured that students received well-constructed assignments and assessments which were set at levels appropriate to the course. In one national diploma class, students worked proficiently through a computer-based assignment; the teacher spent short periods giving explanations from the front of the class and then moved around the room to give close attention to individuals. In some classes the pace of learning was too slow and the work provided for students too undemanding. Low student numbers, for example in GNVQ intermediate and GCE A level mathematics classes, contributed to some dull learning experiences.

42 In construction, the schemes of work and lesson plans contained clear aims and objectives which were shared with students. Group work was carefully planned and students were encouraged to help and learn from each other. Theory and practice were strongly linked. Many teachers adopted a flexible approach to classwork, particularly in GNVQ and NVQ sessions, allowing students to progress at their own pace. Information technology sessions were timetabled to enable students to relate their developing skills to their vocational studies. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were effectively catered for on all courses. In a minority of lessons, students were expected to spend too much time listening to the teacher or copying notes from the blackboard or overhead transparency when other activities would have been more profitable. Students arriving late disrupted some lessons and were not dealt with effectively by the tutor.

43 Engineering course documents explained how core and common skills would be taught. There were planned links between units on modular-based courses; checks were made on students' progress within each unit and on the programme overall. Students agreed their targets for progress with their tutors and these were recorded in learning agreements. Cover sheets issued with project work and assessments in electrical and electronic engineering informed students clearly of the assignment criteria, the weighting given to each aspect of the assessment, and the deadline for the submission of work. Relationships between staff and students were good but, in a minority of cases, teachers failed to raise students' enthusiasm for the subject; classes, although competently taught, were dull and uninspiring. Some teachers ignored the mixed abilities of the students in their classes. More able students who had completed their



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tasks ahead of the rest had to wait for others to catch up before the teachers moved on to the next section of the work.

44 Overall, the teaching and learning in business studies had a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Most business studies teachers made good use of their subject knowledge and, in some cases, their work experience. Some assignments were planned well and successfully combined different elements of the curriculum. However, too many of the handouts for students were poorly produced and of a lower quality than might be expected in modern business courses. Students in a foundation GNVQ class, some of whom had learning difficulties, were enthusiastic about their experience of learning about the world of business but the large class located in a cramped room made it difficult for the teacher to give individuals the attention they required. Many teachers failed to use teaching styles which catered for the needs of mature students and did not draw upon the students' experience of work to illustrate the theory being taught. In several classes, including some which were timetabled for three hours, students tended to lose interest because the work lacked variety. The narrow range of learning activities also limited the development of some general and subject specific skills.

45 In hotel and catering courses students experienced a good variety of learning experiences. There were excellent relationships between students and staff. Students valued the guidance which staff provided, and benefited from their professional expertise. The realistic work environment helped students to be aware of the demands of work within the profession. In a minority of cases, students were completing assessments for NVQ in circumstances which failed to provide a sufficient idea of what it is to work under pressure. In most practical sessions teachers set clearly-defined tasks and constantly monitored and guided students' progress. Students understood the requirements of their courses and the arrangements for assessment. Relevant core skills were effectively integrated with other aspects of vocational work. There was a shortage of time for students to engage in action planning as a means of encouraging them to take greater responsibility for organising their own learning.

46 Hairdressing and beauty students can negotiate individual learning programmes to suit their needs. Schemes of work and lesson plans cater for different levels of ability. The quality of leadership and good communications between staff contribute to high standards of teaching and learning. Theory and practical sessions are clearly linked and teachers provide well-produced learning packages. In information technology sessions good use is made of relevant and up-to-date software. All of the teaching sessions observed in hair and beauty were held in the practical salons. This generally meant that students had to balance their books on their knees and that overhead projectors were focused onto unsuitable walls.

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47 Health and care programmes had clearly-identified aims. Staff were well qualified and experienced. The teaching was stimulating and students engaged in appropriately challenging work. Theory was linked effectively to practice; the experience students had gained in work placement was used well. Core skills were taught as an integral part of courses. Tutorials were used to monitor and reinforce learning. In one class, a well-prepared handout was used as the basis for a discussion. The teachers' questioning technique ensured that discussion was focused and that all students were encouraged to participate. There were good relationships between teachers and students.

48 Students of media and performing arts are provided with a good range of challenging learning activities and this helps to create an exciting curriculum. Teaching and learning aids were used effectively although opportunities to use information technology to improve learning were sometimes missed. A workshop for adults with learning difficulties was provided within the popular music national diploma. The severely disabled had opportunities to sing, make instruments and learn about sound and light. Students working with these adults had been well prepared and were sensitive to their needs. In art and design, teachers, although knowledgeable, sometimes used inappropriate methods of working. For instance, there was over reliance on a trial and error approach to learning. They could have made better use of teaching aids. In a number of sessions, for example, the teacher passed a book around the class to illustrate a point when alternative methods of demonstration would have been more appropriate. Studio work was often assessed during a critical feedback session and this provided an opportunity for lively interaction which students valued. In some art and design classes the relaxed relationship between staff and students led to complacency; teachers placed too much reliance on students' ability to motivate themselves.

49 The quality of students' experiences varied considerably in humanities and social studies sessions. Teacher education and counselling courses were of a high standard; the work was well planned and topics were developed in a logical order. Students were encouraged to express their views as a way of developing their learning. In some access, GCE A level and GCSE classes, however, students experienced too narrow a range of learning activities. Vocabulary used by teachers was sometimes of an inappropriate standard; students' understanding was not checked regularly and in some cases teachers revealed gaps in their own subject knowledge. In half the GCSE classes inspected little effective learning took place; inappropriate teaching methods were often imposed on increasingly restless students. In one social studies class, the tutor lectured from his chair to a small group of students for an hour using many words and concepts which the students did not understand. Too many humanities teachers plan their lessons without considering the students' level of ability.

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50 Teaching and learning in adult basic education were well planned and students were made aware of the aims and objectives to be achieved. Tutors reviewed, checked and reinforced learning and, wherever possible, tried to build upon the students' own knowledge and background. One session for students for whom English was a second language catered effectively for students who joined the group later than others. The materials used were relevant; they combined language development with help for students to learn how to enrol for adult education classes. Some of the teaching materials used on courses failed to reflect the cultural background of students and there were few bilingual resources available.

51 Many students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were successfully taught on the college's mainstream programmes. In most cases, they related well to other students and were encouraged to be independent and active learners. Literacy and numeracy work was closely linked to the vocational interest of the student. Links between the college SWITCH unit and course tutors were good. Tutors received help from the unit in preparing materials to meet the needs of individuals. In a minority of sessions, tutors failed to check that students were learning effectively or that the aims of the tasks set were sufficiently clear.

#### **STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

52 Most students are enthusiastic about their courses and demonstrate a positive attitude to their studies. For many, this is reflected in their intention to progress to further study, including higher education. Some students, for example in health and social care and art, have a very clear career direction and this gives purpose to their efforts. Mature students show particular industry and application. Where motivation is weaker, for example in some GCSE, diploma of vocational education and GCE A level classes, it is often associated with poor discipline and disruptive behaviour by a minority of younger students.

53 The range and balance of assessments are generally appropriate to the level of the course being followed. There are clearly-stated criteria for assignments, so that students know what standard is required for the content, presentation and structure of written work. The quality of teachers' written comments on students' work is more variable. On access courses, marking is thorough but comments do not always indicate to students how they are to improve their work. In business studies, an over reliance on a few major assignments in some courses makes the regular monitoring of learning and achievement difficult. In catering, assignment and assessment deadlines are not always kept; it then becomes difficult to test the ability of students to achieve within a set timescale. In performing arts, not all students are sufficiently aware of the assessment requirements for their courses.

54 Many assignments in performing arts and media are appropriately challenging and help to develop students' personal, academic and practical

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skills but some work is not sufficiently rigorous to enable students to achieve their full potential. Internal assessments in engineering show that students generally understand the topics covered, but there are wide variations in the standards achieved by individuals. The coursework and classwork of older students are often of a high standard. Mature students in social care respond particularly well in their coursework. In GCSE and GCE A level English, standards are appropriate and a good range of work is covered although some marking is overgenerous.

55 There are clear links between theory and practice in many courses. In engineering, well-planned assignments on Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national and higher national courses ensure that students make effective progress. However, GNVQ engineering students' written work is below the level required to ensure successful progression through the course. Access and pre-access students are clearly developing the vocabulary and mastering the concepts required of the course. Students for whom English is a second language learn quickly; community language skills are used for additional explanations, and English is used to check the students' understanding. Students with learning difficulties are generally well supported and make clear gains in understanding. A minority of these students struggle with their assignments and their achievements are disappointing. In mathematics the pace of work is sometimes too slow and students make less progress than they should.

56 Students perform well in practical classes. Engineering and construction students achieve high standards in their project work. In catering, students know what is required of them and work well in realistic working environments and industrial placements. Appropriate standards of professional practice are demanded in hair and beauty. A high degree of technical competence is achieved by art and design students. In general, practical work is conducted with due regard to health and safety requirements and students receive appropriate training in these aspects.

57 Most students have the opportunity to develop the core skills of communication, numeracy and information technology. Attainments are uneven. Not all students take full advantage of the support available and there is insufficient tracking of individual students' achievements. In engineering, where there are good levels of information technology equipment, it is rare for students to make effective use of the resources. The majority of assignment work is handwritten rather than wordprocessed. In more specialist applications, however, students of computer-aided engineering demonstrate good skills in the use of sophisticated workstations. Construction students learn their information technology skills during specialist lessons. Some classroom tasks in business are designed to help students develop their numeracy and communication skills, but business studies programmes often fail to capitalise on information technology skills which some students have

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developed before entering college. There are few opportunities to develop information technology skills in engineering, basic education, catering, hairdressing and beauty, and art and design.

58 Group work skills are developed on many courses. In catering, hair and beauty, caring, art and design and teacher education, students often work in groups and pairs to develop their team work. In office skills courses, students work well together but on some business courses team working skills are not given enough attention.

59 The Department for Education and Employment performance tables published in 1995 record that 72 per cent of the 248 students aged 16-19 in their final year of study on vocational courses were successful. This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. The pass rates for 1993 and 1994 were 77 per cent and 80 per cent, respectively.

60 Levels of achievement for vocational provision in 1995 vary significantly between courses and programme areas. On two-year full-time vocational courses at level 3, pass rates for those completing their programmes are generally satisfactory although too many students leave some courses after the first year. A number of courses show a decline in the level of achievement compared with the previous year, in some cases where new or revised schemes have been introduced. Achievements are good on BTEC national programmes in hotel and catering, travel and tourism, nursery nursing, science (health) and information technology. In engineering, outcomes are poorer, there is an average pass rate across two-year full-time programmes of only 41 per cent. Too many students on engineering courses fail to complete their programmes of study within the planned period as a result of their non-completion of project and assignment work.

61 Pass rates on GNVQ advanced courses for those completing the course within the normal period of time are above the national average in business studies; 19 out of 27 students achieved their full award. However, the retention rate is low; only 55 per cent of students remained by the end of the course. In construction, only six students out of the 18 who completed the GNVQ in the built environment achieved their full award. On two-year courses in art and design there are good results in GNVQ advanced, BTEC national diplomas in media, visual communication and design fashion, but weaker results in foundation studies in art and design, popular music, design and theatre studies. Students on full-time office skills courses achieve well in individual subject examinations, but often fail one or two elements of the full award. This is particularly true of the legal secretaries course where only 14 per cent achieved the full certificate. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, completing students generally obtain their intended qualifications and at level 3, work of distinction led to the award of the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) silver medal national award.

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62 Pass rates on one-year full-time foundation and intermediate level GNVQ business courses compare favourably with national rates, as do those at intermediate level in art and design. Students following BTEC first diplomas in science and engineering had pass rates of only 50 per cent and 58 per cent respectively. Full-time courses leading to NVQ levels 3 and 4 for accounting technicians had disappointing outcomes; no students achieved the full awards by the completion of the course. Pass rates of around 50 per cent on the diploma in vocational education at intermediate and foundation levels showed a substantial downturn on the previous year's performance.

63 Adult students following part-time vocational courses work hard and many achieve well. On BTEC national certificate courses there are good pass rates for students who complete courses in mechanical engineering, business and finance, social care and information technology. Whilst results on a number of professional and management courses compare favourably with national averages, a significant number of students fail.

64 Full-time students taking GCSE subjects generally achieve results below the national average. In humanities subjects, out of a total of 127 entries, only 42 (33 per cent) achieved passes at grades A-C. This is below the national average of 38 per cent for further education colleges. In science subjects, out of a total of 217 entries only 43 (20 per cent) achieved passes at grades A-C. There were particularly poor results in geography, sociology, biology, human biology and mathematics. A number of students on vocational courses take individual subjects relevant to their course or retake mathematics and English. Results are often poor. Adult students taking GCSE generally perform better. From 107 entries across the range of subjects, 62 per cent passed at grades A-C and there were good pass rates in English.

65 The numbers of students entered for GCE A level are modest and represent a small proportion of the college's total student numbers. In 1994-95 students aged 16-18 taking GCE AS/A level examinations scored on average 3.5 points per entry (where A=10, E=2) according to the 1995 tables published by the Department for Education and Employment. This places the college amongst the middle third of colleges in the further education sector. The performance represents an improvement on the 1993-94 figure of 2.5 points per entry. In 1995, 48 students sat GCE A level subjects, of whom 29 were aged 16-18. Information supplied by the college shows that the overall pass rate for students on two-year full-time GCE A level courses in 1994-95 averaged 64 per cent. In general, better outcomes were attained in science subjects than in humanities, although the results for law were above the national average. The small number of predominantly adult students attempting GCE A level by part-time attendance achieve better results. Students on GCSE, GCE A level and pre-access courses often miss classes and withdraw from their courses early. Too many who complete their studies achieve results below national norms.

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66 The proportion of students who fail to complete their full-time courses is high. Three-quarters of the 40 full-time, two-year vocational courses offered by the college had early withdrawal rates in excess of 25 per cent. For one-year, full-time vocational programmes, retention rates are better but approximately half had withdrawals of 15 per cent or more. On some of these courses, students leave for positive reasons; for example, some diploma of vocational education students are accepted onto other courses or obtain employment. Retention on part-time courses is good in many of the programme areas. The college should review its methods of monitoring attendance and withdrawal and improve its retention and completion rates.

67 Destinations of students completing full-time courses are compiled in the autumn term and are compared with those of previous years. Data on part-time students are not compiled. Information for 1995 leavers was not complete at the time of the inspection. Of those who completed their full-time courses in 1994, 41 per cent continued in full-time education, 38 per cent obtained employment. This compares with figures for 1993 of 37 per cent and 38 per cent, respectively. Many students progress from foundation provision through to intermediate and advanced levels. The majority of students who progress to higher education attend one of four institutions in the region: Manchester Metropolitan University, Salford University, Bolton Institute of Higher Education and Huddersfield University. In business studies 16 of the 28 GNVQ advanced students progressed to a degree or higher national diploma course.

#### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

68 The college has defined procedures for improving quality which are supported by a clear commitment from college managers. Some of these procedures are working effectively but others require further development. In 1993, the college produced guidelines on quality characteristics and standards. However, these do not appear to influence the work of most college staff and their implementation is not routinely monitored. Other aspects of the quality system would benefit from a rigorous audit. For example, there is standard documentation for course delivery and quality monitoring which provides a good basis for recording course information. However, the content of the portfolios is not checked and their usefulness varies. Other policies and procedures are not always implemented consistently across the college. A major weakness is the absence of procedures for assessing the quality of teaching and learning. These weaknesses have been recognised by the college and there are plans to establish a quality audit unit in 1996.

69 Course review and evaluation are central to the quality system and are based on standard documentation. The review is mainly an end of year exercise rather than a continuous process although course teams meet regularly to review progress and to plan future developments. The annual review leads to an action plan. Some course teams produce detailed

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action plans which identify clear targets for quality improvements; the plans of other teams are superficial and little action ensues. The review is concerned with programmes and courses and is less effective in addressing quality issues in individual subjects. School boards of study consider course team review reports useful and summaries are produced for senior managers and the academic board. The course review and evaluation system is being improved; more detailed guidelines are being provided in the current year. There is a well-documented process for the approval of new courses which includes requirements for market research and resource planning. Procedures for taking action on the reports of external moderators and verifiers are effective. A system for the co-ordination of internal verification is at an advanced stage of planning.

70 There is some use of performance indicators. For example, the review process includes the setting of performance targets for student retention and student achievement. However, these targets are uniform across the college and do not involve the setting of specific, realistic targets for each course which are related to previous performance. The college targets for retention of first-year and second-year students are 90 per cent and 95 per cent, respectively. The actual retention rates from November 1994 to April 1995 for first-year and second-year full-time students were 88 per cent and 93 per cent, respectively. The retention rate of first-year full-time students from enrolment 1994 to April 1995 was 69 per cent. The failure to meet these targets was addressed in course review action plans by some teams but not others.

71 The importance of feedback from students and other customers is clearly recognised by college managers. Surveys of student opinion, which in the past have been carried out inconsistently, are now being standardised. In addition to course surveys, there is a centrally-organised survey of a representative sample of students at three stages through the year. At the time of inspection, only the first part of this cycle had been completed. Course teams are also encouraged to involve students in course review meetings but this process has not yet achieved as much as it might. An innovative feature of feedback, which was piloted for the first time last year, is a videotaped interview with a representative group of students to discuss the quality of college services. This video was viewed by college managers as well as other students and led to significant improvements in the quality of student social areas. The college intends to extend the use of this technique to college quality systems. Arrangements for assessing the opinion of employers, parents and students who do not complete courses are underdeveloped.

72 There is a clear management commitment to the college charter which is seen as a catalyst for quality improvements. There are two documents; one aimed at students and the other for employers and the local community. All staff have been made aware of charter commitments. All students receive a summary of the charter and key statements are advertised on posters. The charter statements are comprehensive and



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refer to other useful sources of information but there is a lack of explicit quantitative standards. There is a published complaints procedure. Complaints are dealt with effectively. However, the formal system is not frequently used and there is no central collation and analysis of complaints received.

73 To support the inspection the college produced position papers on curriculum areas and cross-college aspects together with a self-assessment report. These provided useful sources of information but the self-assessment did not include a rigorous analysis of college weaknesses. Discussions during the inspection indicated that managers were aware of a number of issues not identified in the self-assessment report.

74 The college is making good progress towards achieving Investors in People recognition by the target date of 1997. A comprehensive questionnaire has been used to help identify training needs. Staff-development programmes are planned termly and relate directly to the strategic aims of the college. Examples of recent events include assessor and verifier training, counselling skills, time management, first aid, computer applications, team building and equal opportunities. Managers attend two two-day residential programmes each year which address key topics such as customer service. All requests for training and development are carefully considered and, where appropriate, adequate resources are allocated. Support staff as well as lecturers take advantage of the opportunities available. There is a structured induction process for new staff and a mentoring system is being developed. A refurbished suite of rooms is available to accommodate staff training and a library of resources is being developed to support self-study.

75 The staff-appraisal scheme has been reviewed and evaluated by an external consultant and a new scheme is planned to start in January 1996. The scheme focuses on staff development rather than measurement of performance. Part-time lecturers are not currently included in the appraisal process but they are encouraged to take part in staff training events and other meetings. Staff-development programmes are evaluated at college and school level, and individuals evaluate their own training. However, there is little evaluation of each individual's training by their line manager. Planning, organisation and administration of staff development is effective.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Staffing**

76 The college has a realistic human resource strategy which sets out both short and long-term intentions. Personnel policies apply equally to support staff and lecturers and there are written procedures for dealing with misconduct, poor performance, grievance, redundancy, absence, recruitment and selection. The proportion of college expenditure spent on staffing has been reduced from 67 per cent to 65 per cent in the last two

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years. Some functions such as catering, cleaning and grounds maintenance are contracted out. The process of restructuring the staff establishment is creating a greater reliance on part-time or temporary staff. In general, staffing levels are appropriate but in some areas, for example the health care resource room, staff levels are inadequate to allow students access throughout the day.

77 Across the college there is a balance of male and female staff, but there is significant variation between different functions. For example, 93 per cent of administrative staff, 42 per cent of lecturers and 30 per cent of technicians are female. Four out of eight senior managers and 40 per cent of other management staff are female. Four per cent of staff are from minority ethnic groups compared with 14.2 per cent of full-time students. The college is actively addressing this issue and recent staff appointments include 8 per cent from minority ethnic communities. Staff from minority ethnic backgrounds are used effectively in key areas such as community education, student services and childcare provision. Equal opportunities policies related to staffing are monitored and reported to the governors personnel committee. The use of bilingual staff in some English classes for speakers of other languages enhances the experience of students.

78 In general, teaching staff are well qualified and experienced and are deployed appropriately according to their skills. Almost all full-time lecturers hold degrees or higher professional qualifications and 88 per cent have teaching qualifications. In a few areas, for example engineering, there is a lower than average proportion of lecturers with teaching qualifications. About 90 lecturers currently hold Training and Development Lead Body qualifications. The use of part-time lecturers across the college varies, ranging from none in engineering to 37 per cent in building and engineering services. In some areas, including art and health and care, part-time lecturers are well chosen for their specialist experience and complement the skills of full-time lecturers. In humanities, business and art some part-time staff do not receive sufficient information and support to help them perform their duties as effectively as they might.

79 Support staff account for about one-third of staffing expenditure. There is good technician support in areas such as catering, science, art, engineering and construction where technicians work well alongside lecturers. The college employs and trains its own security staff who have a high profile and are effectively used in student social areas. Administrative staff work co-operatively and flexibly. Some administrative staff in the student services function hold counselling qualifications. The administrative computer network is supported by well-qualified staff.

### **Equipment/learning resources**

80 College policy is to maintain the central management and purchasing of resources and to create specialist facilities with learning resources such as specialist literature, worksheets, compact disk read-only memory

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(CD-ROM) databases and relevant information technology facilities. Support is provided for groups of related courses and this improves the availability of resources to students.

81 Most teaching rooms are provided with overhead projectors and screens and a range of audio-visual and video equipment. The learning resource unit can provide excellent reprographic and presentation services to staff and students. However, there are many examples throughout the college of poor-quality handouts with out-of-date content.

82 The college has some outstanding facilities to support specialist work. The Grange Arts centre houses technical equipment of a high professional specification and is a major asset for the teaching of performing arts. Excellent analogue and digital equipment in sound studios is being extended to provide on-line radio and television studios. Specialist computer facilities are used in art and design and an up-to-date photography darkroom is available. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are provided with specialist or adapted equipment. The standard of equipment in the hairdressing salons reflects modern work practice and the kitchens and restaurant used for catering courses are well furnished with up-to-date commercial equipment. The business centre is a useful resource base which offers students following business courses access to relevant subject materials and equipment. It is also used to provide students with work experience. There is a well-equipped computer and numerical control and robotics laboratory with off-machine programming facilities, a computer-aided design suite with a good range of appropriate software including sophisticated industrial standard, three-dimensional design and drafting. However, in some areas such as power engineering, high tension, and mechanical engineering, equipment is out of date. In others, such as science and mathematics, there are insufficient modern computers to support student learning. Courses at the Higginshaw building are poorly equipped for music and costume.

83 The college has made a substantial investment in information technology equipment in recent years. At the beginning of this academic year the college had 280 computers for student use; this represented a ratio of students to workstations of 11:1. The business centre, the JT Hilton centre, the P Chadwick information technology centre and the library/study centre are well provided with up-to-date hardware including CD-ROM and laser printers, and an appropriate range of commercially-used software. Student views are not taken into account when developing information technology provision. There is no system to check the extent of its use.

84 Library stock is being updated but some areas, such as science, mathematics, information technology and sociology have limited or out-of-date stock. Teaching staff in some areas fail to work with the library staff to keep library resources under review.

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## **Accommodation**

85 The college has a clear strategy to make further improvements in its accommodation. It has already made a significant investment to ensure that the buildings it inherited at incorporation are watertight and provided with essential services. There are plans to rationalise buildings on one site by 1997 and to keep up a maintenance programme to improve the quality of provision for students. The disposal of inferior buildings will help finance internal remodelling. The first stage of this plan is on schedule and a newly-built factory unit on the main campus will shortly become the specialist area for the painting and decorating courses displaced by the move from the annexe.

86 Most of the main campus is accessible to students with restricted mobility. The college recognises that some problems remain, particularly in first floor science laboratories, the art mezzanine floor, ground floor engineering workshops and in the provision of toilets.

87 A recent programme of refurbishment and redecoration has improved standards of accommodation in some areas of the college. There has been a rationalisation of accommodation for engineering which means that space can be used more flexibly. Teaching areas in many parts of the college have carpets and blinds. Few rooms have display materials; those which provide a visual stimulus for students are the exception. The Higginshaw building, one-and-a-half miles from the main campus, is a poor learning environment for performing arts. The student services facility, although well equipped and pleasant is poorly positioned. The college plans to address this as part of the planned refurbishment of the ground floor of the tower block.

88 Some specialist accommodation is of an excellent standard; for example the theatre and arts centre, the training restaurant and kitchens, and the practical and reception areas for hair and beauty. The business centre is an open-plan area for business information technology and office skills; the P Chadwick information technology centre provides for open-plan teaching, private-study areas and an information technology seminar room. The JT Hilton centre is a large open-plan area for developing the core skills of literacy and numeracy through the use of computer and paper-based resources. A children's centre provides day care for young children. All these facilities are spacious, well cared for and provide an attractive environment for their users. However, there is no common room for use by catering students when in kitchen whites. There are changing facilities for hairdressing students nearby.

89 There are clear priorities for room allocation. In most cases, rooms are appropriate for the size of the student group and the nature of the activity. However, there are still theory classes being taught in an unsuitable environment; for example in hairdressing salons, the restaurant and science laboratories. In a few cases, inappropriate rooms limit the range of teaching approaches which can be used. This is a particular

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problem for adult basic education classes, where the allocation of rooms is the responsibility of several heads of school. There is insufficient space allocated for assessing the needs of students with disabilities. Methods of monitoring and analysing the use of teaching rooms are inadequate and are being reviewed.

90 Many common areas such as thoroughfares, though well maintained, are drab and uninviting. Throughout the college, signs are out of date and some are misleading. The main entrance and reception area are of a poor standard. In the refectory, a single servery and vending machines serve several refurbished eating areas. There is a general purpose area, a room for parents and small children to eat together, a mature students room and a room for smoking. The recent redecoration and new furniture have deteriorated quickly.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES**

91 The college is making significant progress towards achieving its mission. Its strengths are:

- the strong links with agencies in the community and with higher education
- the measures taken to encourage adult students to participate in college courses
- a style of management which promotes co-operation and communication between staff
- arrangements to provide advice and guidance to students
- a sound profile of students' achievements in most vocational areas
- support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- facilities for students to use information technology outside their lessons
- some well-equipped specialist accommodation
- experienced and able teaching and support staff.

92 If the college is to extend its responsiveness to the community and to improve further the quality of its provision it should address:

- the further development of measures of performance to monitor quality improvements
- poor examination results in GCSE and in some GCE A levels
- unsatisfactory levels of attendance and retention on some courses
- consistency between schools in planning their development
- the appropriateness to adults of some teaching approaches
- arrangements for the identification and sharing of good practice, especially in teaching and learning
- the level of support provided to some part-time staff

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- the quality of reproduction of some learning materials used in classrooms
  - the quality of corridors and public areas.

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## FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1995-96)

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  - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1995-96)

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  - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1995-96)

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  - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)

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  - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1995)

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  - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

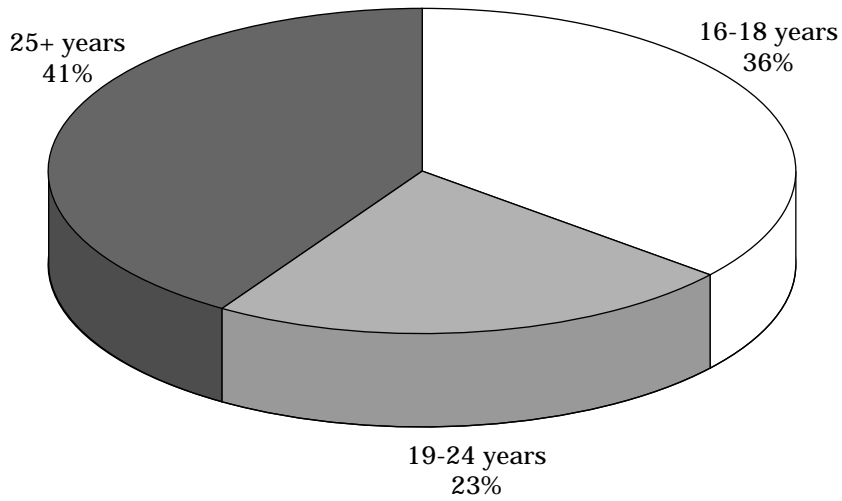
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**Figure 1**

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**Oldham College: percentage enrolments by age (1995-96)**



Enrolments: 5,716

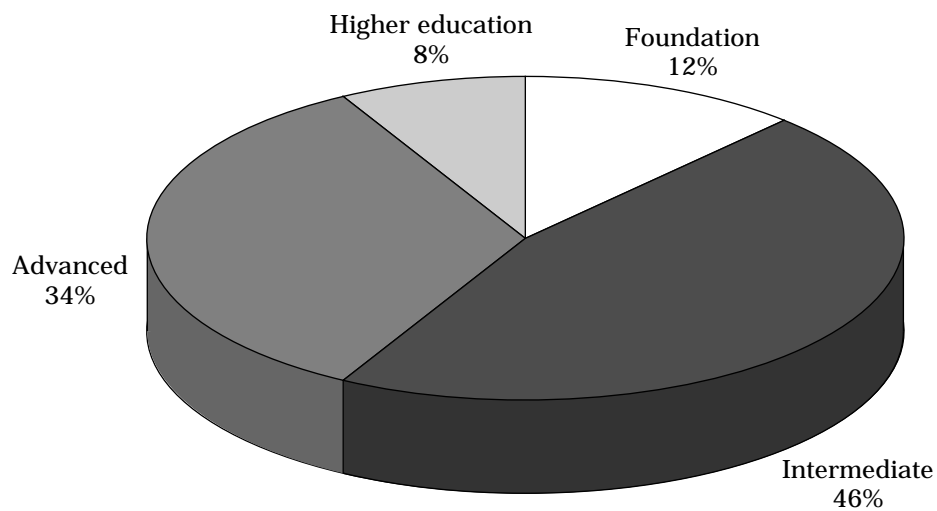
*Note: this chart excludes nine enrolments under the age of 16.*

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**Figure 2**

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**Oldham College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1995-96)**



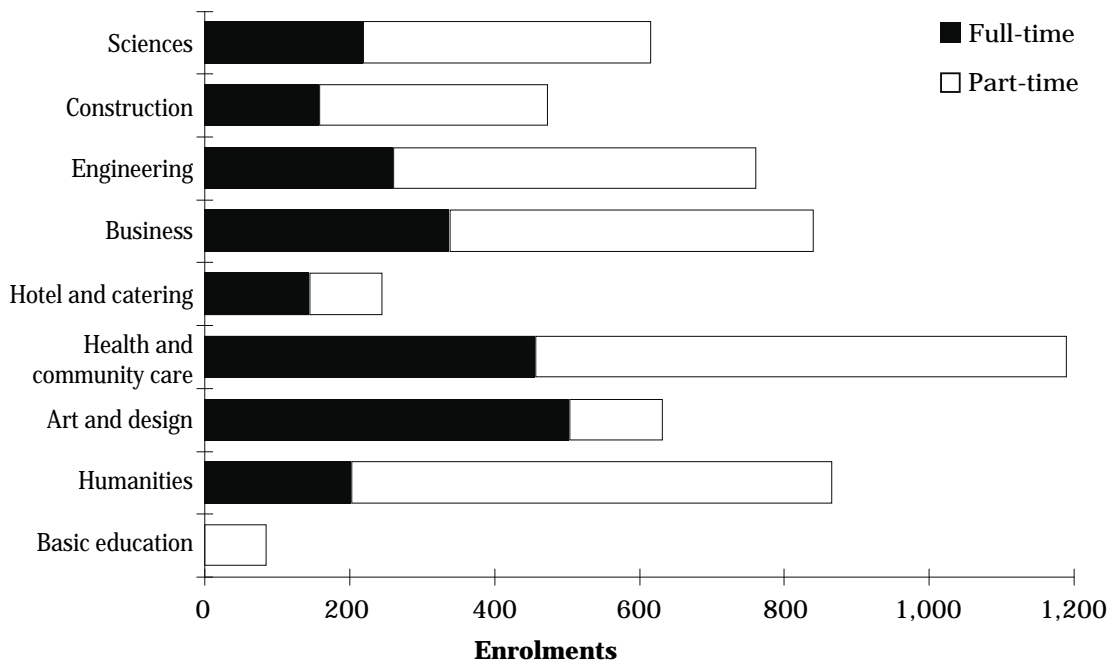
Enrolments: 5,716



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**Figure 3**

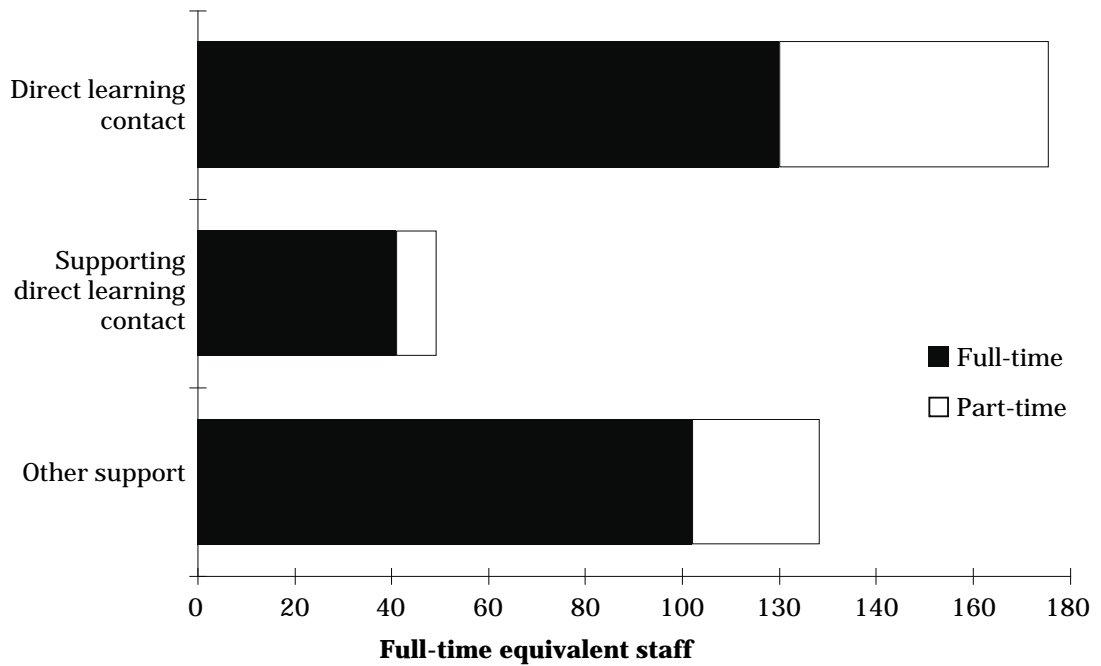
**Oldham College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1995-96)**



Enrolments: 5,716

**Figure 4**

**Oldham College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)**



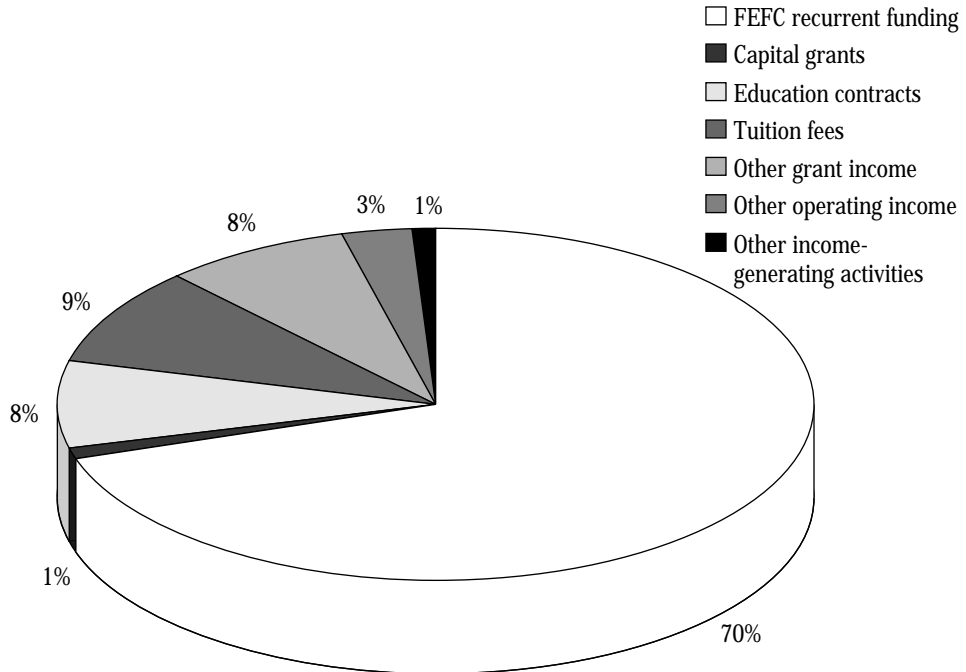
Full-time equivalent staff: 354

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**Figure 5**

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**Oldham College: income (for 12 months to July 1995)**



Income: £10,045,000

**Figure 6**

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**Oldham College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)**



Expenditure: £10,560,000

*Note: this chart excludes £3,000 interest payable.*

Published by the  
Further Education Funding Council  
March 1996