

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Runshaw College

June 1996

**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.

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 01203 863000
Fax 01203 863100*

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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

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 78/96

RUNSHAW COLLEGE

NORTH WEST REGION

Inspected November 1994-March 1996

Summary

Runshaw College is a tertiary college. Most of its students come from the Lancashire boroughs of South Ribble and Chorley. It has strong links with its various customers and regularly consults them. The college offers a wide and increasing range of courses, which may be taken through various modes of attendance. The college is exceptionally well managed. Members of the corporation work hard to support the college. They contribute towards its strategic planning. The management information system is excellent. The process of strategic planning includes the setting and monitoring of key goals for all staff. Quality assurance arrangements are particularly effective and have led to many improvements. Guidance and support for students are excellent. The quality of teaching is good. Students work well and enjoy their studies. Examination results are generally good. The college operates efficiently with a low level of funding. The college should: review the quality and scope of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; ensure, notwithstanding its good examination results, that all students do as well as they can; improve the quality and deployment of some accommodation; replace some books and materials in the learning centre; and ensure that all students have access to information technology equipment.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and mathematics	2	Health and care	2
Computing and information technology	2	English and modern languages	2
Engineering	2	Geography, history, psychology and sociology	2
Business and management	2	Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3
Catering and leisure	2		

INTRODUCTION

1 Runshaw College was inspected between November 1994 and March 1996. Engineering was inspected in November 1994 and health and social care, adult basic education and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in January 1996. Other specialist areas were inspected in February 1996 during heavy snow; on some days, some staff and students could not get to the college and on one day it was closed. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the start of the autumn term, and aspects of cross-college provision in the week beginning 4 March 1996.

2 A total of 23 inspectors spent 92 days in the college. They visited 188 classes, scrutinised students' written work and examined their practical work. An extensive range of documentation was examined including the college's self-assessment report, the strategic plan and the college's quality manual. Inspectors held meetings with the college's governors, managers, teachers, students, staff responsible for support services, local headteachers and employers, and a representative from Lancashire West Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). They also observed a meeting of the full governing board and a series of meetings between governors and stakeholders were observed.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 Runshaw College primarily serves the boroughs of Chorley and South Ribble in Lancashire. It was established in 1974 as a sixth form college with 350 students studying subjects at General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level). In 1983, when its numbers had increased to 950 students, the college joined with Leyland Motors Technical College and two local adult education services to become a tertiary college. It also assumed responsibility for education at a nearby prison. Since 1983, the college has grown rapidly. Now it has 8,463 students, almost two-thirds of whom are aged over 19. The college has three main sites, two in Leyland and one in Chorley, five smaller sites and 30 outreach centres. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

4 South Ribble and Chorley have an expanding population of nearly 200,000. The unemployment rate for the two boroughs averages just over 5 per cent. Some parts of the boroughs, however, have much higher levels of unemployment. The number of school leavers remains relatively stable at 2,600. Participation rates in post-16 education for school leavers have increased from 28 per cent in 1983 to approximately 77 per cent in 1995. Sixty-five per cent of school leavers staying on in education from South Ribble and 62 per cent from Chorley choose to go to the college. Students from local schools achieve General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results which are above the national averages.

5 There are many other providers of post-16 education within an approximate 15-mile radius of the college. They include: a school sixth form; six training establishments; a residential college for adults; an agricultural college, and thirteen other further education colleges.

6 The college has stated that it 'aims to be the United Kingdom's leading college with outstanding results, excellent facilities, and a friendly, caring environment where the student always comes first'. This aim is supported by a detailed mission statement which sets out clearly the college's objectives.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 The college has close and active links with the community it serves. Each year, governors and senior managers hold a meeting with a wide range of people from the local community, including employers, parents and members of special groups, to consult them on their needs. This is followed up by regular meetings between a member of staff from the college and representatives from the local community to ensure their needs are taken into account in the college's strategic planning.

8 The college now offers a wide range of courses including:

- GCE A level in 32 subjects
- GCSE in 14 subjects
- open college courses with 32 A units and 27 B units
- General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses: five advanced, four intermediate and two at foundation level
- National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) courses: six level 1, six level 2, five level 3, one level 4 and one level 5
- Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) courses: four national diplomas and one national certificate; two BTEC first diplomas
- Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education courses for nursery nurses
- Association of Accounting Technicians, National Examination Board for Supervisory and Management Studies, and Association of Medical Secretaries, Practice Administrators and Receptionists courses
- City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) hairdressing courses
- a variety of basic education provision
- opportunities to follow years 0 and 1 of degree courses that are completed at the University of Central Lancashire
- RSA Examinations Board (RSA) courses in administration and secretarial procedures.

Many of these courses can be followed full time, part time and through modes of study and attendance which allow students to come to college at times that suit them and work on their own rather than in a class.

9 All full-time students are strongly encouraged to supplement their studies with an option chosen from a broad programme of cultural and recreational activities, including sport. Almost 1,500 students took a total of 2,427 options in 1994-95. The college also provides a substantial programme of education for adults. It is responsible for education provision in two of HM prisons.

10 The college aims to offer students as wide a choice as possible of how, where and when they study. Part-time study is possible in most programme areas. Through what the college calls 'flexi-study', students who cannot attend college regularly come into college at times which suit them and work on materials designed to match their needs, receiving guidance, when necessary, from a teacher. There are about 200 students who are currently using this mode of 'flexi-study' to work for their GCSE, GCE A level or open college qualifications. The college is open on Saturday on two sites. Students can enrol in September and January for full-time and part-time courses and at any time for 'flexi-study'. Enrolment arrangements are not sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of unemployed adults who want a course at short notice.

11 The college encourages groups often under represented in further education to enrol on courses. Ambitious targets have been set to increase the numbers of older students on courses. The college has no creche where adult students may leave their children. It has, however, secured subsidised places in local nurseries for the children of students. Travel difficulties for some adults have been imaginatively overcome through an arrangement with a supermarket chain whereby the college makes use of their shuttle buses. Importance is given to the provision of training for the unemployed. Strong and productive links with the employment service, the benefits agency and job centres have been developed. Their staff provide the college with detailed information on skills shortages and labour market needs, and help in designing courses. The college operates a job club in Leyland.

12 Long-standing and varied links with partner schools, and more recently-established ones with schools further afield, are effective. The college has 19 partner high schools, and works with a further 15. It has successfully extended its catchment area through providing bus services to outlying communities. It promotes its courses vigorously. Headteachers are appreciative of the information, advice and curriculum links which college staff visiting schools provide. They also value the principal's annual visit to each school, during which the progress of former pupils and the college's activities with each individual school are discussed honestly and in great detail. An action plan arises out of his visit and is always followed up. Links with schools and the local authority are also sustained through

the college's membership of the local education business partnership and of the education forum which succeeded the technical and vocational education initiative consortium.

13 Links with higher education are less well developed than those with schools. They centre largely on activities intended to give information to students applying for higher education places. Students are encouraged to attend the higher education fair at the University of Central Lancashire and visits are arranged to other local universities.

14 Relationships with the local authority have been maintained following incorporation. The college is in active partnership with surrounding boroughs in drawing up and seeing through proposals for securing funding from the European Social Fund for regeneration projects. It is involved in a project with the local authority to provide further chances for year 11 students who are failing to succeed at school.

15 Relationships with Lancashire West TEC have been close from the outset. The college is represented on the TEC's business link board, and is an active partner in a number of development groups. It plays a strategic role in the regeneration of the local economy through its membership of the Chorley Partnership and a number of business clubs. The college is a significant provider of vocational training places; it has 28 modern apprentices, and 105 youth trainees with employed status. The college recently acquired a substantial training agency from South Ribble Borough Council. One hundred adult trainees are catered for under a six-month training-for-work contract.

16 Many local employers have both formal and informal links with the college, and speak highly of the service they receive. A well-managed college business centre runs the college's work experience programme. Work experience this year is being taken up by 1,200 students; it is built in to full-time vocational courses and GCE A level students and adults are also encouraged to go on work placements. Faculty employer liaison groups advise on the relevance of the curriculum to industry needs and help with work placements.

17 Marketing is well managed. The college's business centre has a skilled and experienced liaison team which markets the college's provision and services to industry and commerce. The marketing plan details different approaches for various client groups. The college's prospectus for 16 to 19 year olds is attractive and contains case studies from all partner schools about pupils who went on to be successful at the college. Courses for adults are publicised in various ways including: leaflets, fliers, and a newspaper called 'Runshaw News'. Labour market intelligence is gathered in collaboration with the TEC to inform course planning. Specific market research projects have also been undertaken with South Ribble and Chorley borough councils which have led to the establishment of more outreach provision.

18 Staff at all levels are very well briefed on national developments in further education. They are fully aware of the context within which their college is working and of the way in which it has to operate in order to be successful. The national targets for education and training inform their work, and the college is able to calculate accurately its contribution to meeting them.

19 There is an equal opportunities policy, supported by an implementation statement. The promotion of equality of opportunity has been more reactive than proactive. In response to the increasing numbers of Asian heritage students at the college, ethnicity has become the focus of the work of the equal opportunities committee this year. The college is striving to make all areas accessible to people with restricted mobility, but on some sites this is not possible.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

20 The college's senior management team comprises the principal, four vice-principals and four heads of faculty. The curriculum is managed through the four faculties each of which has four schools covering specific subject or vocational areas. The college has established teams for curriculum improvement and continuous improvement, respectively, and all staff belong to at least one of these. The teams cover all aspects of the college's work. Pastoral support and quality assurance are managed by six programme managers responsible for levels of courses; for example one manager has responsibility for advanced vocational courses. Programme managers have responsibility for ensuring the courses they administer are properly staffed and supported through the college's central services. They are also responsible for setting the standards of quality to be attained throughout their programme areas.

21 The college is among the 10 per cent of colleges which have the lowest average levels of funding in the sector. The college's average level of funding at the time of incorporation was £14.24 per unit. As a result of growth in enrolments and the expansion of provision since that date, the average level of funding has increased by 6 per cent and now stands at £15.08. The median for all general further education and tertiary colleges in 1995-96 is £17.84. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

22 The college has successfully introduced strategies to reduce costs, particularly staffing costs. The college's average class size is now 20. A number of posts are filled by instructors and the new contracts have increased teachers' time in the classroom. All managers, including senior managers, teach. Some middle managers have a large teaching commitment.

23 The 10 members of the governing body fulfil their duties effectively and energetically. The board has been successful in recruiting governors with a wide experience at senior management level in industry, commerce

and the community. Membership of the board includes two qualified accountants, two TEC board members, two members from the University of Central Lancashire and the principal. There is an intention to increase membership of the board to 11 in the near future. Governors operate as a small decision-making body which maintains formal liaison with a wide range of people who are involved with the college including staff, students and members of the community. Meetings take place monthly and are well managed. There are standard agenda items on the college's progress against its key strategic goals. Governors are well informed about the progress of the college and contribute fully to the strategic planning process. They review their own performance. The vice-principal with responsibility for human resources has recently taken over the role of clerk to the governors. There is no job description for this role.

24 The work of the academic board has been more effective since a recent review of its function. The membership of the board has changed to give a better balance between managers and other staff. This change has been welcomed by all concerned. It now comprises 30 members including six students, the principal and a vice-principal. The representatives of schools gather the views of colleagues through their own boards of study and report on them both to the whole board and its subcommittees. The subcommittees debate issues in depth and report back to the board, often with recommendations. Governors receive the minutes of the academic board.

25 Staff understand the college's management structure and the roles and responsibilities of managers. There are clear lines of accountability. The senior management team operates well. There are many instances of good management practice; for example, in the day-to-day management of courses, including the recording of enrolments and the students' attendance and retention rates. Programme managers work well as a team, are knowledgeable about their area of work and manage students and courses effectively.

26 A survey of the views of staff in 1994 identified concerns about poor communications, heavy workloads, job security, and management style. In a relatively short time, staff perceptions have become more positive and favourable. Morale is now generally high. Staff feel the senior management team is open, flexible and accessible. Internal communications are much improved. Each month senior managers agree a corporate briefing which is shared with staff through their team meetings. There is a weekly newsletter for staff which deals with both college issues and those of the sector. Occasional seminars give staff and managers an opportunity to discuss particular initiatives. There is a comprehensive cycle of meetings throughout the college for all staff. Currently, some meetings are not taking place because they clash with the timetabled commitments of staff. The college employs a large number of part-time staff in some curriculum areas and although there is a budget to support their attendance at

meetings, not all part-time staff are able to attend these. As a result, communications with part-time staff are not always effective.

27 Strategic planning involves staff at all levels. Targets are set for enrolment, retention of students and students' achievements. Staff are kept informed of progress towards the achievement of targets through a college publication called 'Staff Update'. The allocation of financial and human resources is carefully planned. Delegated budgets are carefully monitored.

28 The college has an excellent computerised management information system. With the exception of finance all software is developed in-house. The system provides the college with an accurate and comprehensive range of reports. Staff are able to gain access to information about the progress, attendance and achievements of students through personal computers. Students' attendance is recorded on class registers. Through the registers, the college can monitor room usage, staff deployment, and the retention of students on courses.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

29 A major role of programme managers is to ensure that students receive support and guidance to help them succeed. There are comprehensive staff guidelines and review procedures on the provision of support for students.

30 Prospective students are provided with clear information about the college and its courses. They have opportunities to visit the college. All prospective full-time students are interviewed. The college regularly reviews its recruitment procedures.

31 Enrolment is efficiently organised, but does not always come up to the standards set for it by the college. For some students, the process of enrolment is too long and complex. The quality of advice and guidance from staff is variable. Some applicants are not referred to careers officers when they should be. Enrolment takes place in a sports hall where it is difficult to arrange individual counselling. Although private counselling rooms are available, they are rarely used. Part-time students may enrol by telephone.

32 On the first day of term students received an excellent address of welcome from the principal. A help desk was available to them in the social areas. All students then took part in an effective induction programme. This included the opportunity for students to sample different subjects and courses before deciding on their final choice of study programme. During induction, students have days away from the college when they work together on team-building activities in their tutorial groups.

33 During induction, all students are given an assignment which tests their communication and numeracy skills. If their performance in this

assignment indicates they need help with communications or numeracy, this can be provided in a variety of ways.

34 The tutorial system is effective. All students have a personal tutor. Group tutorials are well managed and purposeful. Tutorials provide an opportunity for students to discuss their progress with their tutor and draw up action plans for further improvement. Some of these action plans, however, focus on the students' past achievements rather than targets for the future. Personal tutors also deal with disciplinary matters such as unexplained absence and complaints from teachers about the failure of students to complete work.

35 There is a comprehensive procedure for accrediting skills and knowledge which students have acquired before coming to college. This procedure is particularly well used by NVQ courses for older students, but it is also available for all students following GNVQ or NVQ courses. One hundred and fifty students on NVQ courses gained some accreditation in this way in 1994-95. Many GNVQ students gain accreditation for core skills and vocational competencies previously acquired.

36 A confidential counselling service for students is provided by two part-time counsellors. Advice and guidance are available on a range of matters including personal problems and issues connected with finance or accommodation. In addition, the college chaplaincy offers students help and support.

37 Careers education and guidance of good quality are provided in partnership with the local careers service, Career Link, and students have access to a wide range of careers and higher education information. Students not based at the main site have fewer opportunities to take advantage of these services.

38 The college has set a high target for the retention of students on courses; the number of students who leave a course or a subject because they are dissatisfied with the college's provision shall not exceed 5 per cent.

39 Students receive good support, through the tutorial system and student services, in making choices about their destinations after leaving college. They are helped to make applications for higher education places and employment.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

40 Seventy-four per cent of the lessons inspected had strengths which outweighed the weaknesses; 18 per cent of these were graded 1. Twenty-two per cent of lessons had a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Weaknesses clearly outweighed the strengths in only 4 per cent of lessons. The following table summarises the grades given to the lessons inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		14	38	10	2	0	64
GCSE		0	8	1	0	0	9
GVNQ		5	25	9	3	0	42
NVQ		2	5	0	0	0	7
Other vocational		9	19	5	0	0	33
Basic education		0	11	10	3	0	24
Other		3	0	6	0	0	9
Total		33	106	41	8	0	188

41 During the main week of specialist inspection, attendance at college was disrupted by heavy snow, which made travel impossible for many students. College records indicate that average attendance at class is approximately 90 per cent. There are some examples of classes where attendance is lower than the college norm; for example, in GCSE and C&G mathematics courses and some health and care courses.

42 The standard of science teaching is good. Lessons are well planned. In one lesson, students worked in small groups and shared ideas to crack a genetic code. The activity was a game in which they paid 'money' to the teacher in order to check if codes were correct. The more the group worked together the greater their chances were of achieving a successful outcome. Course documentation in chemistry is excellent. Some teachers fail to give the students sufficiently detailed feedback on their achievements in practical work. In some chemistry lessons, opportunities to develop the students' skills in information technology were missed.

43 Lessons in mathematics excited the students' interest, were challenging and had momentum. Students were given an appropriate range of learning activities. In a second-year GCE A level lesson, the teacher introduced an exercise about correlation and asked the students to work together in pairs to obtain data. Towards the end of the lesson the students came together as a group to analyse the data and agree conclusions on them. The lesson was successful because it motivated the students, challenged them and enabled them to make progress. In some instances, teachers failed, when making a presentation to the whole class, to ensure that all students were paying attention and that they understood the points being made.

44 The quality of teaching and learning in computing and information technology is good, and in a few instances outstanding. Students are encouraged to improve their skills of making a presentation or working in groups. During one GCE AS information technology lesson, small groups of students prepared to report back to the whole group on the advantages and disadvantages of what are called media input devices. Groups were

required to explain how the devices worked and to evaluate their main strengths and weaknesses. The students' presentations were good; students used overhead transparencies to illustrate points and other students were able to make notes from them. The presentations generated interesting discussions. In some instances, when teachers addressed the whole class, they failed to check, through effective use of questions, that all students were paying attention or understanding the lesson. The level of students' participation in whole-class work is sometimes poor. A few practical sessions lose momentum while students wait for help.

45 Most engineering teaching is good. Standards of safety in soldering and machinery groups are particularly high. Learning activities are suitably varied. In a class for foundation level engineering the students were studying cooling in car engines. They examined a cross-sectioned water-cooled engine, removed thermostats from engines and tested thermostats in hot water. After each activity in the workshop they returned to the classroom to record their findings. All students were involved in every aspect of the practical work. They responded well to the recording of information through answering questions on a handout and they showed both understanding and enthusiasm. By contrast, some lessons lacked excitement and momentum and both teachers and students appeared weary of the tasks undertaken.

46 Most teaching in business and management is effective. A suitable variety of activities is used in lessons but the different tasks are properly co-ordinated and related. A GNVQ advanced unit on human resources provided students with the opportunity to practise recruitment procedures. They drew up specifications, wrote curricula vitae and letters of application, prepared an interview schedule and conducted interviews which were evaluated by two of their peers and the teacher. The process was a good learning experience in which the students developed a range of skills. Students responded to it well and with enjoyment. Some teachers asked searching questions to check the understanding of students. Others did not monitor the understanding of students thoroughly. Occasionally, students spent too much time taking notes from either dictation or a board on information they could have discovered for themselves. NVQ business administration students benefit from high-quality work experience in the college's own training office. Some of the work experience provided for GNVQ business students and those studying GCE A level business subjects was inappropriate for them.

47 Lessons for catering and for leisure studies are carefully prepared but they do not always challenge the students sufficiently. Some teaching is imaginative. For example, when poor weather conditions forced the public training restaurant to close, teachers helped the students to present a lively version of 'Ready, Steady, Cook'. From this the students gained valuable practical experience and much fun. Teachers of catering had devised relevant, realistic and demanding assignments for their students. Catering courses, in general, place too much emphasis on haute cuisine at

the expense of other important forms of catering. Students on GNVQ leisure courses do not always have work experience which is appropriate to their interests.

48 In most health and care lessons, teachers used a suitable variety of learning activities. Students show both interest and commitment. For example, adult students on a nursery nursing course were engrossed in group work on the impact of poverty. Lessons begin with a statement of objectives and the teacher and students review these at the end to see whether they have been achieved. On GNVQ courses, there is a proper emphasis on core skills; the students are required to log their progress and attainment in these. Most courses involve the use of information technology. The teachers encourage the students to draw on their work or work-placement experience in discussion in class. In some lessons, teachers have difficulty in securing the full attention of less able students.

49 In English lessons, teachers explain clearly what they expect of their students and tasks are properly defined. Students often have opportunities to make a significant contribution through discussion, group work or presentation. Some lessons lack variety. Teachers talk at the students too much or fail to check that all students are engaged in, or understand, the lesson. Occasionally, inappropriate tasks are set. For example, second-year GCE A level students preparing for mock examinations spent almost a whole lesson mechanically listing the main events and characters of *'In Cold Blood'*.

50 Modern languages teachers constantly use the language being studied, but students often speak to each other in English. In one successful lesson, the topic of the weather was well used to develop skills in understanding, speaking, reading and writing. Students are generally keen and able to sustain high levels of concentration. In most lessons, they joined in activities with enthusiasm. In the few lessons in which teachers expected too little of them, the students did not respond well and they lacked a will to succeed.

51 In sociology, psychology, history and geography, teachers used a suitable variety of different activities. Lessons were well structured. In a GCE A level geography lesson students had a brainstorming session on the causes and effects of flooding. They recorded these in a table, examined a case study and made an annotated enlarged map of the river and its tributaries which they were studying. The teacher worked well with students who had not produced an enlarged map before and gave help for those who required assistance with the annotations. Many class discussions were lively and well managed and students made effective notes. In a few instances, however, discussion was not well controlled by the teacher and it degenerated into conversation. Occasionally, activities take place in the classroom which could be more productively undertaken by students as homework. A few lessons lacked momentum or excitement and failed to hold the students' concentration.

52 Most lessons on basic or foundation level courses were planned and organised well. Teachers usually explained the aims of the lesson to the students. Occasionally, these aims were unrealistic in the light of the students' abilities and aptitudes. In some instances, teachers failed to find out what the students had already learnt and gave them work they had already covered.

53 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are following mainstream courses receive good support in the form of specialist equipment and through help from specialist staff. The level of this support is particularly high for those following courses in business administration, engineering, history and English. In a few areas, most notably in health and care courses, this support is underdeveloped largely because the best use is not made of the staff available. Occasionally those teaching students with learning difficulties give them reading materials which they find too hard.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

54 Many students complete their courses with high levels of success. Their overall achievements compare favourably with those of other colleges in the further education sector. However, the students admitted to GCE A level courses generally have a high level of achievement at GCSE.

55 In vocational courses, students often make impressive progress. Assignments, portfolios and student files in business studies are of a high standard. Work is well organised and students apply their knowledge and skills well. Much work is well structured and well presented, although there are some weaknesses in the standard of writing and spelling.

56 Common and core skills are not always consistently developed in those courses of which they are a part. Students are confident and competent in practical work, which is carried out systematically and safely. Generally, students work well in groups. Most make effective contributions to class discussions. There is scope for closer integration of core skills with the main elements of some vocational courses at foundation level.

57 Pass rates at GCE AS and GCE A level are consistently high for those who complete their studies. In 1994-95, the 497 students aged 16 to 18 taking GCE AS/A level examinations scored, on average, 4.9 points per entry (where A=10, E=2) according to the tables published by the Department for Education and Employment in 1995. This places the college in the top third of colleges in the sector. There are exceptional results in mathematics with only one candidate failing out of 300 over the last three years.

Features of the GCE A level results in 1995 include:

- an average pass rate of 87 per cent, which exceeds the national average for general further education and tertiary colleges by 15 per cent

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- pass rates above the national average for the subject, in 26 out of 30 subjects
 - 100 per cent pass rates for full-time students in theatre studies, physical education, government and politics, and religious studies
 - pass rates above 90 per cent on full-time courses in English language and literature, psychology, sociology, physics, law and business studies
 - poorer pass rates by students on 'flexi-study' courses.

58 Adult students, both full time and part time, achieve well on the open college north west courses. Full-time students achieved an 88 per cent overall pass rate on open college B units and 77 per cent on open college A units. Part-time students achieved a 91 per cent pass rate on open college A units. Fifty-seven per cent of students following open college B unit courses progressed to higher education and 19 per cent entered employment.

59 Of the 745 entries for GCSE in 1995, 55 per cent achieved grades A to C. Over half of the entries were by students aged 16 to 18; 48 per cent of these achieved grades A to C which is above the national average for students in general further education and tertiary colleges. Sixty-nine per cent of older students achieved grades A to C. GCSE results for both English and mathematics are above the national averages. There are disappointing results in the sciences, law, psychology and child development. Half of the students on 'flexi-study' GCSE courses obtained grades A to C.

60 The Department for Education and Employment performance tables for 1995 record that 88 per cent of the 315 students aged 16 to 18, in their final year of study on vocational courses were successful. This places the college in the top third of colleges in the further education sector and represents an improvement of 4 per cent on the previous year's performance.

61 Students on advanced level vocational courses who complete their studies do well. Features of examination performance at advanced level include:

- an average pass rate of 91 per cent
- a 100 per cent pass rate on the national diploma in health studies
- 93 per cent of students gaining the GNVQ advanced qualification in leisure and tourism
- results near and above 90 per cent for BTEC national diplomas in science, social care, leisure studies, travel and tourism and computing
- poor results for the BTEC national diploma in hospitality and catering.

62 Full-time intermediate level vocational provision is represented by a mix of BTEC first diplomas and GNVQ intermediate courses. Pass rates on

these courses are generally good for students who finish their studies, but non-completion rates on GNVQ intermediate courses are sometimes high. Features of intermediate level provision include:

- excellent results in GNVQ intermediate business studies with 96 per cent of students achieving their qualifications and 75 per cent progressing to GNVQ advanced courses
- results well above national averages for intermediate GNVQs in leisure and tourism and health care
- an above average pass rate in BTEC first diploma in information technology
- a poor pass rate of 45 per cent in BTEC first diploma in engineering.

63 Of the 59 students undertaking the GNVQ foundation courses in leisure and health and social care, 45 completed their studies and 22 gained the full award. Results were good in leisure and tourism; successes in health care were broadly in line with national averages.

64 Full-time students taking RSA higher diplomas in administration and secretarial procedures or NVQ courses in business administration, levels 2 and 3, achieve results significantly above the national averages. Part-time vocational provision is offered in a range of subjects leading to NVQs and other certificated awards. Outcomes of part-time vocational courses include:

- 100 per cent pass rates in the C&G 7261 course in information technology, the Centra business administration courses, the National Examination Board for Supervisory and Management Studies supervisory awards and the Association of Medical Secretaries, Practice Administrators and Receptionists courses health service award
- above average pass rates for foundation level of Association of Accounting Technicians and for business administration level 2
- variable results for the RSA diplomas in administrative subjects and Institute of Marketing courses
- weaker pass rates, frequently below 50 per cent, for technician and intermediate level Association of Accounting Technicians, NVQ level 3 supervisory units and BTEC national certificate in business studies
- the low proportion of certificates awarded to students registered on NVQs in hairdressing and care.

65 The college has made considerable improvements in retention rates but they still vary significantly across courses and some are poor. Seventy-eight per cent of students on two-year vocational courses and 75 per cent on one-year vocational courses complete their courses. The average retention rate for GCE A level subjects is 86 per cent which is just below the national average. The poorest retention rates are in humanities subjects. Seventy-five per cent of the students taking GCSE subjects complete their studies. A low proportion of the students who originally enrol on GCE A level and GCSE subjects by 'flexi-study' subsequently enter for examinations.

66 The college's published information on the achievements of students shows that for the 878 full-time students aged 16 to 18 gaining general and vocational awards in 1994-95, 47 per cent progressed to higher education, 24 per cent continued in further education, 17 per cent went into employment and the remainder to other destinations. The destinations of 7 per cent were unknown. Eighty per cent of students taking GCE A level subjects and 48 per cent of those on GNVQ or national diploma courses entered higher education. The proportion of students on vocational courses who progress to higher education has dropped substantially from 62 per cent in 1994. Many successful GNVQ advanced students entered relevant employment at appropriate levels. Of the 292 full-time adult students completing their studies in 1995, approximately half had undertaken BTEC national diploma courses and 42 per cent of these progressed to relevant courses in higher education. Of the 58 older full-time students taking GCE A level subjects, 88 per cent continued to higher education courses.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

67 The college's quality assurance procedures are of an exceptionally high standard. The governors and staff are committed to the continuous improvement of the college. All staff understand the college's policies and procedures on quality assurance. There is, however, some disquiet among a minority of staff about what they regard as an unnecessary amount of bureaucracy and paperwork.

68 The college has initiated a series of activities and measures to further the process of continuous improvement. These include:

- the setting of standards for all aspects of the college's provision
- the monitoring and reviewing of provision by the curriculum improvement and continuous improvement teams
- regular planning meetings across the college at which quality improvement is a main theme
- systematic procedures, involving questionnaires and student representatives, for obtaining students' views on provision and including these in the reports of the continuous improvement team

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- the gathering on a regular basis, the views of those, such as parents and employers, who have a close interest in the college; these views are put to good use in review and planning procedures
 - curriculum audits, including classroom observation, carried out in all areas, except teacher education, leading to internal reports to which curriculum areas respond; the audits have been well received by staff and have led to numerous improvements in provision
 - careful monitoring of enrolment, retention and attendance rates, and course changes across most of the college.

69 Each member of staff has key goals which are clearly related to the strategic aims of the school, faculty and college strategic aims. Staff welcome having individual goals and value the support they receive during their twice-yearly meetings with their respective managers, at which their achievements and key goals are reviewed and, if necessary, changed. Staff identify their needs in terms of their professional development and these are generally met.

70 For 1995-96, the staff-development budget is a modest 0.53 per cent of the college's payroll costs. Staff are kept well informed of training activities and opportunities through a staff-development prospectus. Many staff take part in staff-development activities but not all of them effectively disseminate what they have learnt to their colleagues afterwards. There is scope for staff to gain more expertise in teaching students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a good staff-induction programme which newly-appointed staff said they found useful. In July 1995 the college received the Investors in People award.

71 The National Charter for Further Education forms the basis for the college's own charter which has sections for students, parents and staff. The college's charter states the college's aims, the range of services the college provides and the procedure for those who wish to complain about any aspect of provision. Students are aware of the college's charter and its implications for them. There are procedures for measuring the college's performance against its commitments in the charter and for reviewing these when necessary.

72 The college's self-assessment report follows the framework of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Strengths and weaknesses are expressed in bullet point format, but are not cross-referenced to other college documents. The report is concisely written. It does not, however, draw sufficiently upon evidence obtained through the college's own quality assurance procedures. The report offers little evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning by course or subject. It does not provide a full evaluation of the college's provision. Where judgements are made, they are, however, generally in line with those of the inspection team.

RESOURCES

Staffing

73 Staff are dedicated, hardworking and committed to furthering the success of their students. They are appropriately qualified. More than 90 per cent of the 173 teachers hold a degree or equivalent professional qualification and a similar proportion are qualified teachers. Over 70 per cent of staff teaching on vocational courses have achieved the vocational assessor awards and a further 15 per cent are working towards them. Many of the 135 support staff have first degrees or an equivalent qualification. They provide effective and efficient support for the process of learning.

74 The timetabling of staff is rigorously monitored to ensure it is equitable and efficient. Teaching duties are recorded from registers submitted each week to the management information system unit. Heads of school are provided with reports on the deployment and timetabling of staff. They are required to achieve a 96 per cent level of staffing efficiency. This is generally achieved by careful and efficient deployment of staff and, when necessary, the retimetabling of their duties.

75 Many of the strategies the college has introduced to manage its low level of income have had staffing implications. It has reduced the proportion of its budget spent on staffing from 71.5 per cent in 1993-94 to a projected 68 per cent in 1995-96. It has introduced three levels of staff: instructor, lecturer one and lecturer two. A number of posts have been converted to instructor posts in line with the staffing strategy. In other areas additional posts have been created to support students, such as support tutors and education support workers. New contracts have increased the number of hours teachers work. Larger class sizes entail more marking and assessment for them. Of the 38 full-time teaching staff recruited since September 1994, 24 are relatively new to teaching. The college is reviewing the effects of these three factors upon the standard of teaching and learning.

Equipment/learning resources

76 Equipment and learning resources are generally sufficient and some are of high quality. The college aims to ensure that all teaching rooms have a basic level of essential equipment. They all have a large whiteboard or blackboard, an overhead projector and a screen. The college is in the process of providing a standard box of consumables such as marker pens and paper in each room. Full-time students under the age of 18 are given access to up-to-date textbooks; some are sets used in classes and some are loaned to students. The quality of materials produced by the teachers themselves such as handouts or overhead projector transparencies varies considerably. The training office is well equipped. The equipment provided to support catering courses in the training restaurant and kitchen is of an appropriate standard. The electronics equipment is of a good standard, but general engineering machinery is old and of poor quality.

77 There is sufficient computer hardware and software, but access to computers for some students is difficult. There is an 8:1 ratio of students to workstations, an extensive network with 380 stations and a microwave link between the two sites in Leyland. Only 12 per cent of these facilities are available to students to use at any time during the working day. There is scope for improving the computer facilities at the Chorley site.

78 The learning centre at the largest site in Leyland has a wide range of resources in addition to books. These include newspapers, periodicals, compact disks, compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases and an editing suite. Students at other sites have access to resources at the centre through an internal ordering and delivery system. The budget for this centre in 1995-96 is low at £11.20 a student. Curriculum areas bid for the materials they need to support their courses. Resources to support sociology, psychology and geography are particularly good. There is no systematic culling of books that are dated. Many of the books for business, management, engineering, science and history courses are out of date or of poor quality.

Accommodation

79 The standard of accommodation is variable. The largest site at Langdale Road in Leyland is set in landscaped grounds which include wooded areas. This site is pleasant and well maintained. There are extensive student social areas as well as a student refectory. Students do not treat these areas well and by the afternoon they are untidy and contain a lot of litter. The chemistry and biology laboratories are of a good standard. Some general classrooms provide good accommodation for learning; others are poorly cared for and are dirty, untidy and lack display materials. Many staff have taken trouble to try and make the 21 mobile classrooms attractive through the good use of display materials. Most of these classrooms, however, are too small and have poor soundproofing and decoration. Despite the system for allocating and monitoring the use of rooms, some classes are put in rooms too small for them. Access to computers for students on this site is limited because the rooms with computers in them are locked when not being used for classes. Signposting on the site is poor.

80 The other site in Leyland is the Runshaw Adult and Business centre in Wigan Road. It has good accommodation which is spacious, carpeted and well furnished. It provides an appropriate business environment. The reception area is welcoming. The campus is a pleasant one on which to work.

81 The third main site is in Chorley. It is in the centre of the town and has inadequate car parking facilities. The accommodation, which is nearly 100 years old, is poor. Rooms are small and unattractive. The site is on split levels, has narrow corridors and steep stairways; access for anyone with restricted mobility is virtually impossible.

82 The college training office is situated in Leyland town centre. It is a purpose-built office which runs as a business providing photocopying and publishing services for local businesses and the community. It provides an excellent venue for work placements for students.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

83 Among the many strengths of Runshaw College are:

- strong and productive links with the community it serves
- an increasing range of courses available through a variety of modes of attendance
- an experienced, hardworking and supportive governing body
- strategic planning processes which involve all members of the college and representatives of its community
- exceptionally efficient and effective management supported by an excellent management information system
- an effective and successful pastoral care system
- effective additional support for students who need help with their learning
- good standards of teaching and learning throughout the college
- good examination results
- an effective system of testing the communication and numeracy skills of new full-time students
- the high standard of quality assurance and the careful monitoring of performance indicators
- a dedicated and hardworking staff who work well in teams.

84 To continue to make progress the college should:

- develop its links with higher education
- review courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- investigate why some students achieve below expectations
- review the increased workload of many staff
- ease access for students to information technology equipment
- improve and update the provision of books and materials in the learning centre
- improve the standard and deployment of accommodation.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1995)

 - 2 Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1995)

 - 3 Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)

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

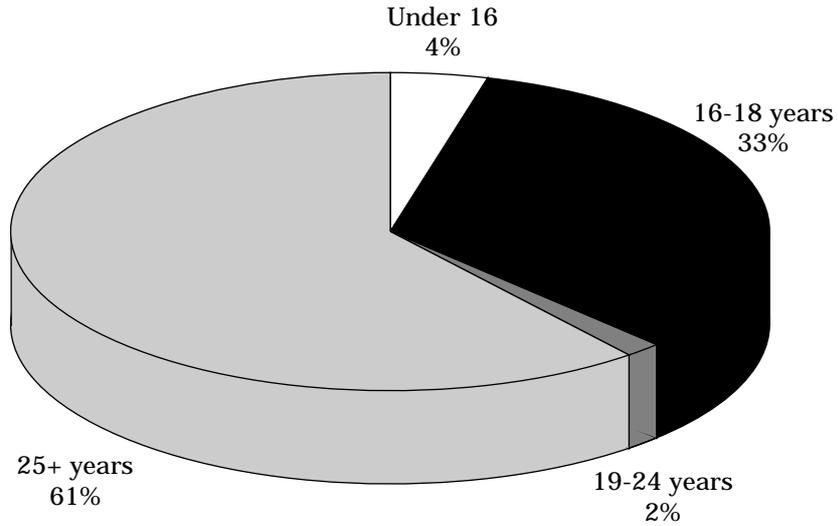
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1995)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

Figure 1

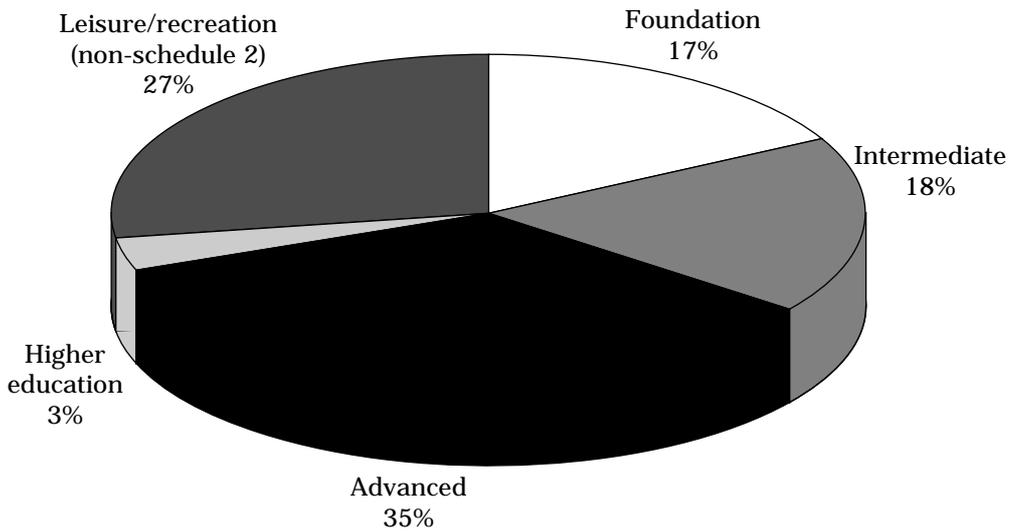
Runshaw College: percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1995)



Student numbers: 8,463

Figure 2

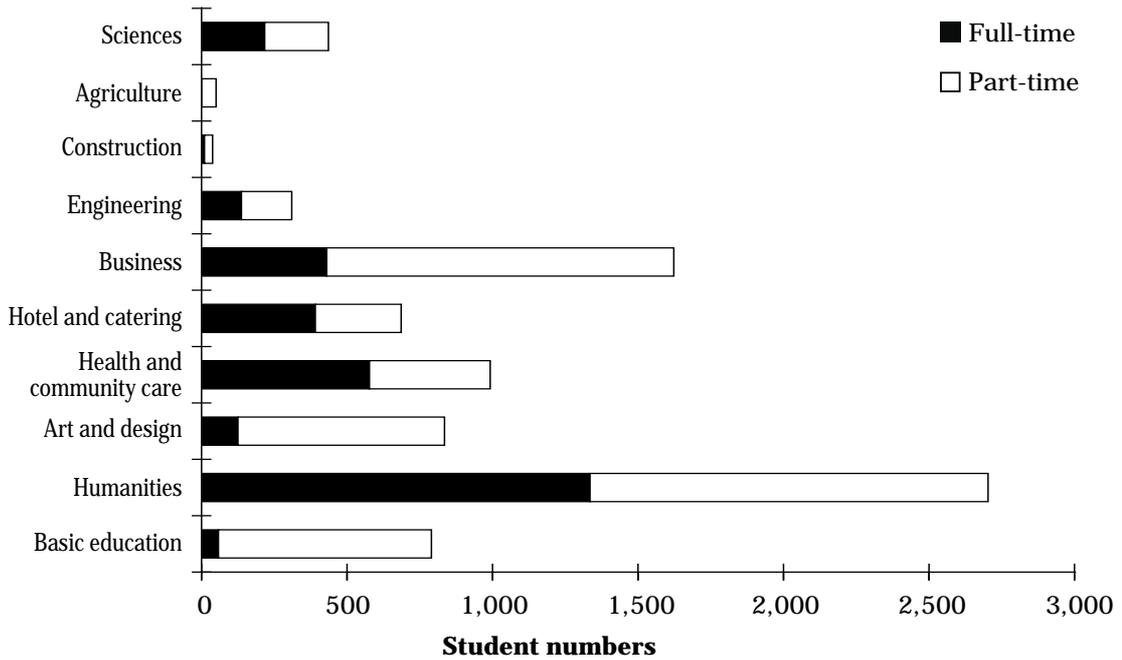
Runshaw College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1995)



Student numbers: 8,463

Figure 3

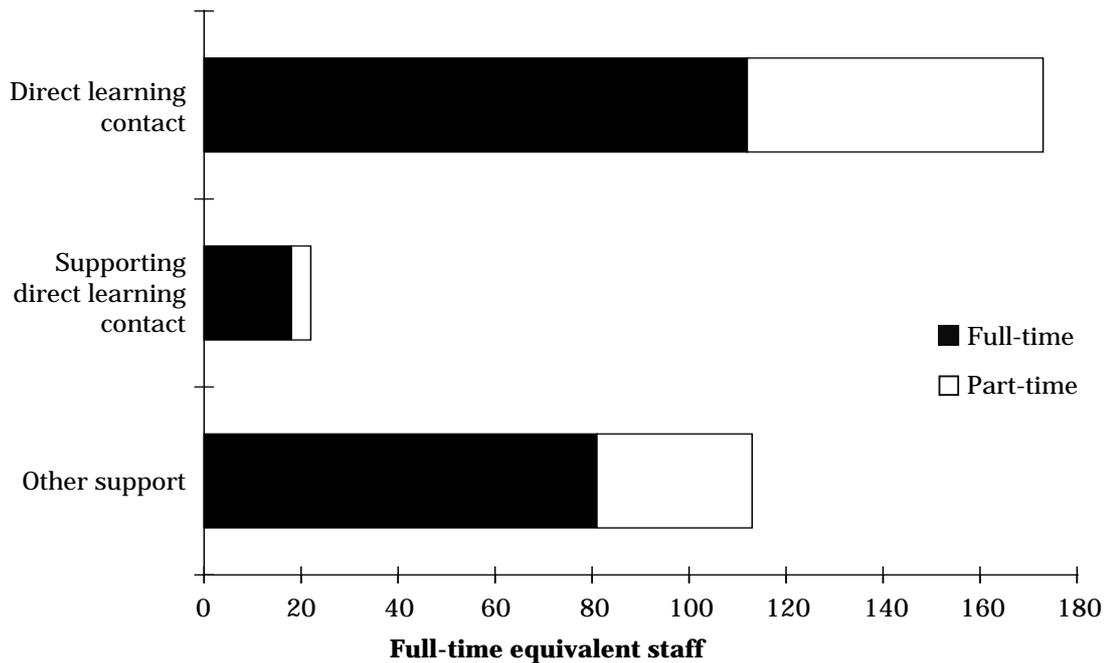
Runshaw College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)



Student numbers: 8,463

Figure 4

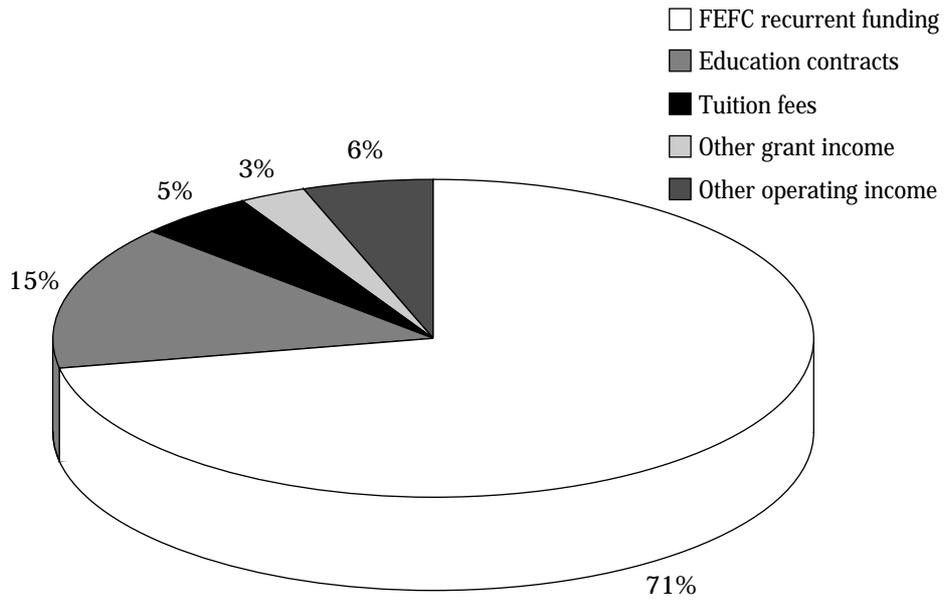
Runshaw College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)



Full-time equivalent staff: 308

Figure 5

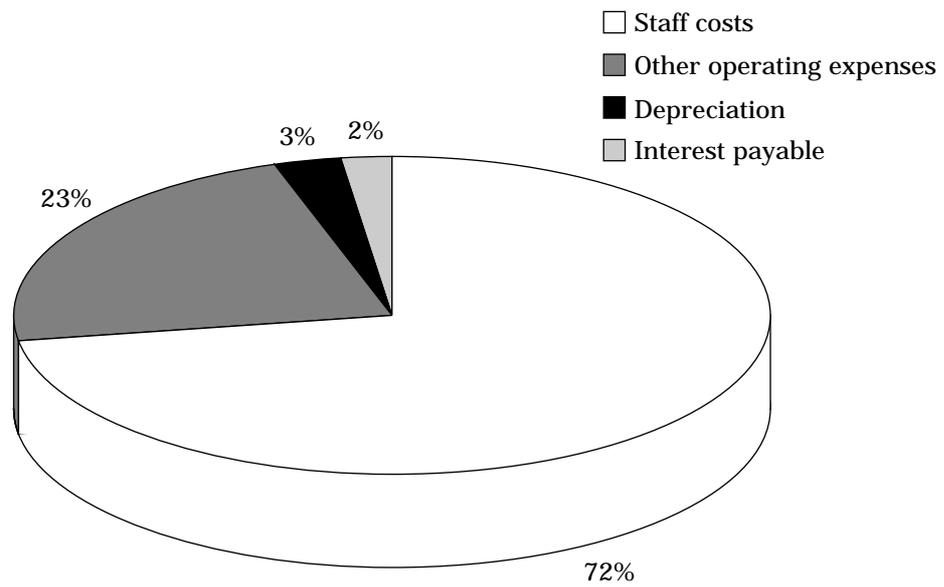
Runshaw College: income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Income: £9,393,000

Figure 6

Runshaw College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Expenditure: £9,539,000

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