

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

**South East Essex
College of Arts
and Technology**

May 1997

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

College grade profiles 1993-96

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 58/97

SOUTH EAST ESSEX COLLEGE OF ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY

EASTERN REGION

Inspected May 1996-February 1997

Summary

South East Essex College of Arts and Technology is a large general further education college which offers mainly an extensive range of full-time courses. There is a high level of collaboration between the college and other providers of education and training. The college markets its courses vigorously and it carries out extensive market research. Governors serve the college well. Managers provide highly-effective leadership. They have established clear objectives and performance measures for the college. The curriculum is well managed. Teaching is well planned and it is good. Staff have high expectations of their students and they set high standards for themselves. In most areas, students' achievements are good. A high proportion of students gain vocational qualifications. Many students progress to higher education. Support services are well managed and effective. Quality assessment is rigorous. There are excellent and well-equipped learning centres. Equipment is up to date and is generally of a high quality. Accommodation is well managed. Rooms are bright and attractive and conducive to learning. The college should improve: its links with employers; students' examination results in a few areas; and the guidance given to students applying for higher education. In addition, the college should: extend the range of provision and modes of study for adults, including those in employment; and address inconsistencies in tutorial practices.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and mathematics	2	Hospitality, catering, leisure and tourism	2
Construction	2	Health and community care, hairdressing and beauty	1
Engineering	3	Art and design	2
Business administration and information technology	1	Media and performing arts	1
Business studies, management and professional courses	1	Humanities	2

INTRODUCTION

1 South East Essex College of Arts and Technology was inspected between May 1996 and February 1997. Inspectors spent 100 days in the college. They observed 246 classes and examined students' work. They met members of the college corporation, managers, staff and students, parents, employers and representatives from the Essex Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), head teachers and staff from local schools and representatives from Essex Careers and Business Partnership Limited. Inspectors examined college policy statements, minutes of committee meetings, working papers and other documents relating to the organisation of the college.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 South East Essex College of Arts and Technology is a large general further education college. The college has its origins in commercial, technical, craft and art education institutions which were brought together in 1935 as Southend Municipal College. It is located on four modern sites close to the centre of Southend-on-Sea, the largest town in Essex. The main site on Carnarvon Road houses the administrative centre and about half of the college's provision. Most of the college's workshops are based on a second site, on London Road about half a mile away. The Queens Road building, adjacent to London Road, is used for hairdressing and beauty therapy courses. Near to the main site, the college occupies Kingswood House, a small modern office block, on a short-term lease.

3 Over 70 per cent of the college's students are drawn from Southend-on-Sea and the surrounding districts of Rochford and Castle Point. Between them, these districts have a population of over 320,000. Significant numbers of students also come from further afield. For example, they come from north bank of the Thames, and from mid and east Essex and they use the good rail and road links with Southend.

4 The college is in strong competition with other providers of post-16 education and training. There are five other further education colleges within South Essex. These are Basildon College and Seevic College, which are both less than 10 miles away, and Thurrock College, Palmer's College and Chelmsford College. Of the 23 secondary schools in the South East Essex area, 19 are grant maintained, four are selective grammar schools, and 10 are 11 to 18 schools. Five of these 11 to 18 schools have recently opened sixth forms. Three of the seven special schools in South East Essex cater for students up to the age of 19. In 1995, the proportion of 16 year olds in Southend who stayed on in full-time education was 68 per cent. In 1996, this proportion dropped to 64 per cent.

5 South East Essex has few medium or large employers. The college itself is one of the larger employers in Southend. There are some small manufacturing firms which provide employment in electronics, light engineering, printing, clothing and plastics. The majority of jobs in the

area are in the service industries, particularly financial services, retailing and the public sector. Employment opportunities in all these sectors of employment have declined in recent years. The unemployment rate in Southend, which has only recently dropped below 11 per cent, remains among the highest in south east England. The growing numbers of long-term unemployed include an increasing proportion of younger adults. Most of the working population is employed outside South East Essex, mainly in London.

6 The college has increased its enrolments substantially over recent years. The numbers of full-time students have risen from 1,300 in 1989, to over 4,200 in 1996. Current student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3. In 1995-96, the college growth rate increased by 6 per cent compared with that of the previous year. There are 384 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 197 have teaching roles and 187 provide guidance, learning and business support services. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

7 Through its mission, the college seeks to provide 'exciting and relevant learning experiences for students empowering them through flexible learning and the use of new technology to become independent learners'. The college aims to stimulate demand for education, increase people's awareness of the importance of qualifications, and meet the needs of the local community.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 The college sees its main areas of work as courses leading to qualifications which enable students to progress to further and higher education, or within their chosen careers. The college has recognised that, as one of its priorities, it must encourage more school-leavers to participate in further education and achieve qualifications at level 3. An extensive range of general and vocational courses includes some courses at foundation and some at first degree level. The curriculum has been extended by the introduction of new programmes and by updating existing courses. The college has a strong commitment to the development of full-time vocational courses. Enrolments on these courses rose by over 25 per cent between 1993 and 1996. A wide range of new vocational courses was launched in September 1996 to fill gaps in the college's provision. There has been a 12.5 per cent increase in the recruitment of 16-year-old students to full-time courses in 1995-96.

9 There are some courses in all of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) programme areas but the main provision is in business and leisure, information technology, art and design including media studies and health and care. Nearly 80 per cent of enrolments are on courses at intermediate and advanced levels. Three general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) foundation programmes were introduced in

September 1996. The range of intermediate courses covers most vocational areas. At advanced level the broad range of Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma courses is gradually being replaced by GNVQ advanced courses. There is an extensive programme of full-time adult access courses and a good range of subjects at general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level).

10 The range of part-time programmes for adults and those in employment is more limited. There has been significant growth in teacher training and education courses. The college has restricted the range and modes of study in some areas, for example, there is little part-time provision in travel and tourism, or art and design. The college is planning to introduce programmes to support modern apprenticeships. There is no demand for open or distance learning from those who cannot attend college regularly and who may wish to study on their own, and there are few updating courses for those in employment. The college does not actively market a short course programme but is undertaking a project, partly funded by Essex TEC, to identify the training needs of small and medium enterprises in the locality.

11 Increasingly, students on further education courses are provided with opportunities to qualify for progression to higher education courses within the college. Over 400 students are enrolled on degree, higher national diploma and certificate programmes, some of which are offered under franchise agreements. Part-time and full-time degree programmes in media technology provide a progression route to higher education for students from within the college and outside the local area. The range of courses in teacher education and training includes the postgraduate certificate in education and a recently-introduced bachelor of arts degree in education and training.

12 Through its collaborative arrangements, the college has significantly broadened the range of its courses and provision. Two adult community colleges offer part-time courses for adults, some of which are provided at the college. Three private training organisations offer programmes for unemployed adults. Strong and productive relationships with collaborative partners have extended the range of part-time training opportunities in construction, engineering, information technology and hairdressing. In 1995-96, 25 per cent of all enrolments and about 41 per cent of the enrolments on part-time courses were for provision offered through collaborative arrangements. The college plans further expansion of this type of provision.

13 The college is not a major provider of courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the area. There are full-time courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and 78 students are enrolled on these. There is no provision for students with severe learning difficulties. There are developing links with some special schools to support progression for students with learning difficulties. The college works closely with four special schools to provide a link programme

for 42 students who are in years 10 and 11. It runs for two hours each week. There are 32 adults on an access to further education course and 62 students on full-time GNVQ courses at foundation level.

14 Relationships with most external organisations are productive and cordial. Students' projects have helped to foster wider links between the college and the local community. For example, working in close co-operation with Essex police, media students have produced an educational video on drugs awareness, and performing arts students have acted out sketches designed to make elderly people more aware of crime prevention. Links with some local secondary schools are good. College staff attend careers evenings, open days and industry fairs in local schools and pupils from one school attend a three-day 'taster' event in the college. Relationships with some schools and with the Essex Careers and Business Partnership Limited are less well developed. The college works closely with the University of Greenwich and has good links with the University of North London.

15 The strength of links between teaching teams and employers is variable. The college is not consistent in its approach to liaison with local companies. The college charter refers to employers' advisory panels which meet each term. Currently, however, there are only two employment liaison committees, for construction and for early years education, respectively. Liaison with employers is effective in applied social studies. Employers are able to influence the content of social studies courses and work placements are effectively managed and well co-ordinated. In other areas, links with employers are underdeveloped and students have limited opportunities to learn first hand from the experience of those in commerce and industry. Employers in such areas considered that the college's organisation of work placements, and its communication with them generally, could be improved.

16 The college has a growing relationship with the Essex TEC. It has recently agreed a formal joint strategy statement with the TEC which sets out the key aims of the partnership between the TEC and the college. The college is represented on appropriate TEC committees and has helped to promote the national targets for education and training and Investors in People awards. A number of collaborative projects managed by the college are funded by Essex TEC.

17 The college's vigorous marketing strategy has a key function in helping the college to achieve its overall aims. Marketing is co-ordinated by a team responsible for the production of publicity materials, the implementation of advertising campaigns and liaison with schools and other training providers where appropriate. Joint marketing is undertaken with the college's collaborative partners. Research and development staff carry out extensive market research. They provide local market information and respond promptly to ideas and suggestions for potential new courses. Courses which are not recruiting successfully are subjected to detailed review. New courses are only launched after careful analysis of

the potential market for them. There is an attractive and informative range of award-winning course guides and publicity materials for different client groups. There is good coverage for the college in the media. The college's activities have a high profile in the local press and feature regularly on the two local radio networks.

18 Information for prospective students is set out clearly and accurately in attractively-presented brochures and guides. The college charter is given to prospective students when they are interviewed. It provides a clear description of the range of the college's services for students. It also explains the college's approach to teaching and learning and emphasises the importance the college places on helping students to study effectively on their own. Prospectuses specify the qualifications to which courses lead and identify the qualifications required for progression to further study or specific employment. Course guides clearly set out relevant course information including the qualifications prospective students need in order to join the course. Some publicity material directed at students with low attainments is not easy for them to understand.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

19 The college is well managed. It has a successful record of development of the curriculum, of substantial growth and of continuously improving examination results. The mission, vision and values of the college are strongly promoted within the college and externally. Staff are encouraged to understand the need for, and to contribute effectively to, the college's successful development. Through the efficient management of its budgets, the college has been able to achieve an annual operating surplus of funds, to invest in capital projects, and to accumulate a substantial reserve. The college is committed to the achievement of high standards. Targets set for enrolment, retention and achievement, at college and course level, serve as key performance indicators and they are well understood by staff.

20 The college benefits from strong leadership, good managers who delegate responsibilities appropriately, and effective staff teams. The executive management group provides clear direction. It carefully monitors and supports staff teams to ensure that their work helps the college to achieve its objectives. The group comprises the chief executive, the two deputy chief executives, and the respective directors of finance, human resources, resource development, academic planning and marketing. Other managers have specific responsibilities for student services, business development, and quality assurance. Responsibilities for the management of staff teams and for the development of the college's work are clearly assigned. Action following decisions at management meetings is effectively monitored. Professional standards, embodied in the staff code of conduct, are rigorously upheld at all times.

21 Business support and teaching staff teams are effectively managed and they work co-operatively together. All college staff are encouraged to use their own professional knowledge to the full in order to identify the

best ways for them to achieve their objectives and those of the college. Regular meetings between staff and their line managers are generally productive. The head of each teaching team reports to the director of academic planning and is supported by course leaders and, in the case of the larger teams, programme managers. Most courses are well managed. Teams plan their courses carefully during the last two weeks of August and meet regularly throughout the year. The management of courses leading to some types of award, such as GNVQ, access certificates and GCE A levels, are supported by cross-college curriculum management groups.

22 Communication within the college is effective. Value is placed on the sharing of all information, irrespective of whether it originates from senior managers or from staff working in sections or units. This sharing of information is achieved through regular team meetings and a weekly cycle of management meetings, which facilitate direct communication between staff teams and the executive management group. Each year, all staff attend five conferences in the college to develop an understanding of the college's corporate values and to discuss key issues for the college's development. A council of college employees, comprising representatives of all groups of staff, has recently been introduced and this meets termly with the chief executive. There are also students' councils at team and college levels, and at these meetings students can express their views to college managers. All staff recognise and value the commitment of college managers to openness.

23 The college is well served by members of its corporation. Governors are well informed. They have a strong sense of purpose, and they are clear about the distinction between their role and that of managers. Corporation business is handled efficiently and it follows clearly-defined procedures. It is comprehensively documented. The corporation carries out detailed monitoring of the college's work through its three statutory committees which cover policy and resources, audit, and remuneration, respectively. All governors attend the monthly meeting of the policy and resources committee and by so doing, they participate fully in corporation business. The corporation is provided with high-quality documentation about the college. Governors also receive presentations from college managers. These include a comprehensive and evaluative annual report on students' performance.

24 The corporation has 15 members. It comprises 10 who are independent members, three co-opted members, one nominated by Essex TEC, and the chief executive. The co-opted members include a deputy chief executive of the college and the principal of an adult community college. Four of the members are women. Governors have relevant business and professional experience and many hold senior positions in local organisations. They have expertise in personnel, marketing, architecture, information technology, and accountancy. Governors have helped to improve the corporation's effectiveness through their attendance at training events, known as 'annual development days'. A review of

governors' performance has identified a need for governors to have more contact with managers, staff and students, and for governors to increase their understanding of the college's strategic planning and performance indicators.

25 The allocation of financial resources is systematically and effectively controlled by senior management. Appropriate authority is delegated to budget holders. The financial management of teams is closely monitored. Heads of teams have discretion on how the allocations can be spent but full-time and part-time staff appointments must be authorised by a member of the executive management group. The college regularly compares its pattern of expenditure with that of other colleges. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The total allocation from the FEFC for 1995-96 was £11,364,000 and the average level of funding was £17.66 per unit. The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £17.56 per unit, which includes an element of capital payment. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges for 1996-97 is £17.97 per unit.

26 The college's computerised information systems provide a source of up-to-date, accurate management and other information for all staff. Comprehensive information on applications, enrolments, withdrawals, students' assessments, and external examination results is accessible to course teams and college managers. Enrolment procedures are well supported by computer systems. The recording of attendance is not yet computerised. The system for allocating rooms is, however, computerised. In some parts of the college, teaching teams use computerised timetabling. The college is considering how it can further exploit information technology to support college administration and facilitate communications within and outside the college.

27 College policies are subject to regular review which is thorough and systematic. The implementation of policies is effectively monitored. All policy statements are accessible on the college computer network and these can readily be updated. The well-established equal opportunities policy is appropriately monitored through the collection and analysis of relevant statistical data. Appropriate attention is given to disseminating good practice in relation to equal opportunities across the college. The policy has been modified to include specific mention of harassment and it has also been incorporated in the staff code of conduct. A high priority has been given to ensuring a safe working environment. The safety committee monitors the effectiveness of the health and safety policy. All staff are given basic safety training and they are required to contribute to the effective implementation of the health and safety policy.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

28 A comprehensive range of information and advice is provided by student services. Qualified and specialist staff are able to offer advice on benefits and other financial matters, specialist health counselling and

confidential personal counselling. The services are well managed and services staff have effective links with teaching teams. There is a clear and coherent policy framework covering admissions, tutorial support, learning support, assessment, students' performance, and the management of registers. The extent of students' awareness of the range of services is variable.

29 Students' recruitment is well organised. The college makes every effort to match prospective students to programmes and courses which suit their aptitude and abilities. Students said that they had found the college's 'open evenings' to be helpful and useful. Prospective students are initially interviewed by student services staff and by specialist teaching staff. Appropriate training in interviewing is given to staff. They also receive comprehensive and well-prepared guidelines on how to conduct interviews. Adult students were appreciative of their interviews, which they said had helped them to assess the financial implications of becoming a student and whether they were eligible for financial assistance. Young people with low achievements in the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) are encouraged to enrol on courses suitable for them. There are specific arrangements for identifying the support needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities during the recruitment process. The admissions procedures are carefully monitored to ensure that they meet defined standards. If the procedures fail to meet these standards in any way, follow-up action is efficiently carried out to redress faults.

30 Induction is systematically provided for all students. The induction process is well documented. All students, including part-time students, receive a guide to learning called the 'Student Organiser'. This provides clear statements about learning at the college, what students can expect from the college, and the college's expectations of students, including the standards of behaviour to which students should conform. During induction, students' learning and individual support needs are identified and these are recorded on a database. Diagnostic screening is used to identify students' requirements for help with literacy and numeracy. Induction does not include any other formal assessment of students' prior learning. Arrangements for students to transfer between subjects and courses work smoothly. These arrangements are also helped by the good links between the course leaders and student services staff.

31 The arrangements for tutorials are generally well managed and effective. Every student has a personal tutor. All full-time, and the majority of part-time courses include timetabled tutorials. A comprehensive handbook for tutors contains a programme for tutorials. This gives tutors helpful guidance on ways of supervising students' progress and on meeting their students' needs for support. Tutors monitor the progress of individual students carefully. They hold regular progress reviews with their students and help them to formulate action plans for improving their performance. National records of achievement are not maintained. Some students do

not make effective use of action planning. Although most students report that tutorials are useful and help them to make progress, tutorial practice is not consistent across all courses. In some areas, the time spent in group tutorials is not used effectively.

32 Arrangements to provide individual students with additional learning support are effective. This support is provided in a range of ways. About 60 students attend classes in literacy and numeracy in the learning centre. These classes take the form of workshops which are designed to help students develop their confidence and capability in literacy and numeracy and take qualifications in these subjects. Students' attendance at the workshops is closely monitored and their progress is regularly reviewed. About 400 students receive individual support for literacy or numeracy from academic support advisers during their normal lessons. Students interviewed from a range of courses, valued both the support they received and the manner in which it was given. Lecturers also regarded this provision of assistance for students as effective. The college is sharing good practice in, and documentation on, additional support with partners with whom it offers collaborative provision, in order that they may provide an appropriate range and level of support for their students.

33 Specialist support is provided for students with disabilities. This includes help for 12 students who have been assessed as dyslexic, communications support for students with hearing impairment and practical personal support for individuals with physical disabilities. Training is provided for those staff who indicated, in a recent survey, that they did not have sufficient information about the needs of deaf students.

34 Careers education, information, advice and guidance are provided in several ways. Students are encouraged to approach student services staff for information about careers and higher education. Tutors make a valuable contribution to careers education by drawing upon their own commercial experience and knowledge of higher education. Employers participate in careers education by making presentations to students. The college makes insufficient distinction between the provision of careers education and personal guidance for individuals. Student services has identified the need for college staff to be trained in careers guidance. The college has decided not to enter into a service agreement with Essex Careers and Business Partnership Limited. However, students make appointments to receive careers guidance interviews with the Essex Careers and Business Partnership Limited, either through the college or directly with the Partnership itself. Although 70 students have received such interviews since September 1996, the careers service has expressed concern about these arrangements and believes it could help more students at the college.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

35 Almost 64 per cent of the teaching sessions inspected had strengths which outweighed weaknesses. In 30 per cent there was a balance of

strengths and weaknesses. Less than 7 per cent of sessions had weaknesses which outweighed the strengths. The distribution of grades is similar to the average distribution of grades for all colleges, given in the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. The average number of students attending the lessons inspected was between 13 and 14. In most curriculum areas, the proportion of absent students was below 20 per cent. The college records show an average attendance of 79 per cent for all classes during 1995-96. These figures are better than the sector averages for attendance shown in the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. The following table gives the grades awarded to the teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	5	9	6	3	0	23
GCSE	0	2	4	0	0	6
GNVQ	9	27	23	6	0	65
NVQ	8	12	7	3	0	30
Other vocational*	17	43	30	4	0	94
Access	6	7	3	0	0	16
Other	5	7	0	0	0	12
Total	50	107	73	16	0	246

**includes higher education.*

36 Most courses are carefully planned to meet the requirements of the syllabus and students' learning needs. There is a comprehensive plan for each course which includes details of the admissions requirements, the course structure, the way the course is managed, schemes of work and assessment arrangements. Course plans and teaching methods are systematically reviewed to ensure continuous improvement in the students' learning. Schemes of work are well formulated. Students are informed about the content of their course and the sequence of topics. Some schemes included details of teaching strategies, resource requirements and assessment methods. For example, students taking GCE A level business studies receive course information which provides details of what will be covered in each lesson over two years, the assessment plan for both years of the course, and a description of assessment procedures. Schemes of work for some courses in engineering and catering were insufficiently detailed.

37 Most lessons were well prepared and appropriately structured. In the best lessons, lecturers demonstrated a thorough knowledge of their subject and used a variety of appropriate teaching methods, often integrating theory with practice. The pace of work was lively. Students were stimulated by the tasks set and a range of learning styles maintained

their interest. In a second-year BTEC national diploma performing arts class, an audio tape of extracts from radio plays was effectively used to illustrate a range of techniques for presenting material verbally. The lecturer managed the lesson carefully to encourage interpretation and analysis of the tapes, inspire a lively discussion, and arrange group exercises to explore alternative approaches to presenting the material. The students were enthusiastic and the exercise helped them to relate theory to practice. Classes in the learning centres in business studies and information technology were particularly well managed. Students worked in groups or on their own. They had access to a wide range of resources. The work set was carefully planned and students were able to make good progress.

38 In some of the better lessons, and particularly in those on business studies and administration, media and performing arts and care courses, the lecturer built on the experience and interests of students to develop new topics. For example in a lesson on the certificate in management studies course, students were required to investigate and prepare a presentation on the changes in management styles within their companies in the last five years. The lecturer helped them to identify key changes in company structures and leadership styles. In a lesson on the second year of a course in childcare and education, effective use was made of a video recording to prompt discussion about attitudes to people with physical disability. In the discussion, students drew upon their own experiences and these were sensitively used in order to help them to develop an awareness of the need to use language carefully.

39 About 7 per cent of lessons were ineffectively managed. In these lessons, the pace of work was too slow or, in some cases, inappropriate use was made of time for the extensive copying of notes. Other weaknesses in some of the lessons included: the lecturer's failure to share the aims and objectives of the lesson with students, to set the lesson in context or to relate theory to vocational practice; the use of inappropriate methods to present theory, which hindered students' progress; a failure to make effective use of the resources provided by the learning centres; and the disruption caused by the late arrival or early departure of students from some of these classes.

40 Appropriate attention is given by teaching staff to maintaining discipline and good conduct in lessons. For example, staff ensure that the college rules forbidding the consumption of food or drink in teaching areas are obeyed by students. There is a good relationship between students and teachers which is based on mutual respect. Students' attendance is carefully monitored and staff follow established procedures for following up students' absence from lessons. Most lecturers encourage students to work to high standards. Students who are late are appropriately disciplined. Students have positive attitudes towards their learning programmes and they organise and prepare their work well.

41 Students' progress and performance are carefully monitored in lessons. In some lessons, teachers successfully provided individual students with support and monitored their progress, while the rest of the group undertook purposeful activity. For example, on GNVQ courses in leisure and tourism, the teachers held interviews with individual students during lessons. At these interviews, each student's progress was carefully tracked and his or her action plan was monitored and updated, while the other students worked on assignments or compiled their portfolios. Lecturers in business administration share an effective system of recording students' progress when they are working together in the learning centre. As a result of this system, teachers are able to ensure that they do not duplicate each others' teaching, or that they do not produce learning materials which the students already have.

42 Most practical lessons were well planned and they provided students with opportunities to develop technical and interpersonal skills. In an advanced engineering GNVQ class, students working in pairs were able to use their knowledge of electrical and mechanical systems to design and build an electronic unit to control a mechanical device. They took account of important theoretical concepts including the conversion of energy and the effect of friction. The assignment was challenging and it was closely related to industrial practice. It encouraged teamwork and discussion, and helped the students to develop theoretical understanding as well as practical skills. In an access to sports studies lesson, a practical activity on human response times was used effectively to strengthen the students' understanding of data analysis techniques. All students were fully involved in the lesson and the teacher questioned the students carefully to check that they understood what was being taught. As a result the students' confidence in the lecturer and in themselves was increased.

43 The work experience provided on most full-time courses enhances the students' learning. Students on courses leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in administration are provided with a work placement with an employer, in addition to the realistic practical training they receive in the well-managed college office. Some of the assessment which contributes to their qualification is carried out in the workplace by their college tutor. Many students completed assessed projects which related to their work placements. For example, students designed a logo for the Southend Victim Support group, and others made a video on the dangers of drugs. Opportunities to gain such practical experience are, however, more limited for some students who are unable to find suitable work experience placements.

44 Teachers carry out appropriate testing of students' knowledge and understanding and they mark students' written work conscientiously. Students are usually made aware of the standards of work expected of them. On most courses, students receive an assignment programme which shows the dates by which work must be handed in. Teachers provide students with written and detailed feedback about their work which

enables the students to identify ways of improving their performance. A policy on assessment, and common practices for internal verification across courses, helps to ensure that there is consistency in the assessment methods used by staff throughout the college. Procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of these assessment methods include the auditing of assessment schedules and plans, the checking of assignment briefs to make sure they are clear and contain assessment criteria, and the marking of a sample of assignments by more than one member of staff. In general, external verifiers are satisfied with the implementation of these procedures. On a few courses, the assessment of students' work is not well managed. For example, mistakes in spelling are not always corrected and, on some courses in computer studies and catering, standards of marking are inconsistent and students receive insufficient feedback on the quality of their work.

45 Students develop key skills within vocational programmes and through their assignments. Their performance in key skills is carefully assessed. In their work, students make good use of a variety of resources. In most subjects, they use information technology extensively. For example, students on a GNVQ course in business mounted an exhibition on living and working in Europe and this contained imaginative displays of food and drink, coins, books, maps, brochures, photographs and objects from each country. With the aid of information technology, students had carried out skilful research before setting up the exhibition and they had extracted pictures and maps from the Internet. Facts and figures were presented graphically using computerised charts and drawings. The standard of work was very high and students became knowledgeable about the population, economies and cultures of the countries they had researched.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

46 In 1995-96, the college recorded more entries for vocational qualifications and significantly more successful students than any other college according to the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) performance tables, for 16 to 18 year olds. At advanced and intermediate levels the college entered 1,107 students, of whom 928 were successful in gaining their qualification. The pass rate on advanced vocational courses of 88 per cent placed the college in the top third of the table. The pass rate of 77 per cent on intermediate vocational courses also placed the college in the top third of the table. The following tables show the completion and pass rates for full-time and part-time students, respectively, by type of qualification in 1996.

Summary of full-time students' examination performance, by qualification, 1996

Qualification type	Completion rate (%)	Pass rate (%)
One-year courses		
C&G programmes	81	94
GNVQ intermediate	80	80
BTEC first diploma	89	80
Access	70	92
Higher education courses	92	94
Two-year courses		
NVQ levels 2 and 3	69	90
Other vocational qualifications	73	86
GCE A level subjects*	88	85
BTEC national diploma	72	92
Higher education courses	62	94

**for students taking three GCE A level subjects.*

Source: college data.

Summary of part-time students' examination performance, by qualification, 1996

Qualification type	Completion rate (%)	Pass rate (%)
One-year courses		
NVQ levels 2 and 3	84	74
C&G	91	71
Access	100	67
Higher education courses	90	91
Two-year courses		
BTEC national certificate	70	85
Other vocational qualifications	65	73
Higher education courses	92	91

Source: college data.

47 Retention rates are generally above the national averages for further education. Eighty-three per cent of those who enrol complete their courses. The retention rate for two-year courses in the period 1994-96, is somewhat lower at 73 per cent. Withdrawals from full-time courses are high in a few areas.

48 In 1995-96, the access to higher education and GNVQ intermediate course results in science were generally good. On the science access course, 86 per cent of students who enrolled in 1996 completed the course and, of these, over 90 per cent successfully gained the award. The GNVQ intermediate results were well above national averages in 1995-96, and 91 per cent of students successfully completed the course. Although pass rates are generally satisfactory for the two-year BTEC national diploma courses in science and sports science, only 59 per cent of students successfully completed these courses. Written work is of an appropriate standard. Many students used information technology well to enhance the presentation of their work, and they were able to communicate scientific or mathematical ideas articulately. Practical work is carried out competently and with appropriate regard to safety precautions in all courses. Many students progress successfully from vocational courses to employment or to higher education.

49 Students achieved good results on BTEC national diploma courses in construction and surveying. Ninety per cent of students on these courses gained their award. Results on most other construction and built environment courses are similar to the national averages. The results of students on a small number of courses were unsatisfactory. Although 86 per cent of students completed the GNVQ intermediate course, only 28 per cent gained the award within the year. Completion rates for the BTEC national certificate and higher national certificate in building studies (35 per cent) were particularly low in 1996, although examination pass rates were 100 per cent for both courses. Success rates were also low on the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) courses in electrical installation and on NVQ level 2 courses in mechanical services. Students on technician courses produce some good assignment work. In general, however, students' drawing skills are not well developed. Students on craft courses achieve good practical skills but their communication and information technology skills are underdeveloped.

50 Examination results in engineering fell in 1996 but engineering students' pass rates were still above national averages and they were high on some courses. Most students on part-time higher national diploma and national certificate courses achieve good results; their pass rates vary between 67 per cent and 82 per cent. Most students who complete the two-year, full-time national diploma courses are successful. However, a significant proportion of students do not complete the first year of these two-year courses; the overall completion rate for first-year students is 66 per cent. Results were unsatisfactory on the national certificate in mechanical and production engineering course and on the national diploma course in motor vehicle engineering. Engineering students worked diligently, both individually and in groups, on assignments. They handled equipment, including computers, competently and confidently in practical classes and usually completed the tasks set during the lesson. Students' notes were neat and carefully organised in their folders. In some

classes, students had difficulty in applying basic mathematical techniques and did not have a sufficient understanding of fundamental mechanical properties.

51 Examination results in business studies are generally well above national averages and a high proportion of students complete their courses. A significant improvement in completion rates has been achieved following the introduction of the GNVQ advanced course. Results on the GNVQ intermediate course in business are consistently good; 70 per cent of students who enrolled gained the award in 1996. Success rates on part-time business programmes are generally high. Completion and pass rates are usually over 90 per cent on courses leading to NVQs in business administration. Results on the full-time access to business management course and the C&G business and office technology diploma courses were less good and completion rates on these courses were under 50 per cent. The quality of students' work was generally good. Students' portfolios are well organised and presented and they show that students make appropriate use of information technology packages. Students' assignments are thoroughly researched. Students on NVQ courses attain a high level of skill in text processing. They also obtain good results on a range of courses leading to supplementary qualifications, including those in shorthand and audio typing.

52 Students' results on courses in computer studies, including computer programming, are similar to national averages. In 1996, however, results on the BTEC first diploma course in information technology applications were outstanding and well above the national average. Completion rates are low on some courses in computing. Students on the higher national certificate computer studies and the access to computing courses produce coursework of good quality. On other courses, however, students' work files were poorly organised and they contained insufficient material on theory and on the principles underlying their practical work.

53 Students on one-year courses in hospitality and catering and leisure and tourism, including those at GNVQ intermediate level, achieved good results in 1996. The overall achievement of students on the GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism course are enhanced by their high level of success in gaining additional awards. These awards relate to specific areas of tourism and leisure and include sports leaders awards. Completion and pass rates for two-year courses vary. They are high on the BTEC national diploma course in travel and tourism but they are low on the NVQ level 3 course in catering studies. The majority of students coped well with the demands of the realistic working environments in both the catering kitchens and restaurants. In the travel centre, students from intermediate and advanced courses worked together effectively. They developed a good understanding of the travel industry and they acquired good interpersonal skills. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities following the 'catering for employment' programme

benefit from learning in a supportive environment. They are enabled to practise their skills and successfully run the staff brasserie on one day each week.

54 There are high completion and pass rates on most part-time courses in health and community care. Eighty-six per cent of students completed the national certificate in childhood studies course and they gained their award. Pass rates on full-time courses are usually above the national average. However, students' pass rates on two courses with large enrolments, the BTEC national diploma in childhood studies and the certificate in childcare and education, were lower at 78 per cent and 52 per cent, respectively. Students had good success rates on access to higher education courses in health. In 1996, 69 per cent of students on hairdressing courses, which are managed as part of the college's collaborative provision, completed their studies. Their pass rate was 88 per cent and this is broadly similar to the average pass rate of all students at the college. Beauty therapy courses are in the first year of operation by the college and students have not yet taken their final examinations. Students' written work and practical skills are of an appropriate standard in these areas.

55 In art and design, results are generally good. In 1996, students' pass rates varied from 83 per cent to 100 per cent. Of the 198 students who enrolled on BTEC national diploma courses in art and design, 78 per cent completed their courses. Students demonstrated a high standard of research skills in their work. Their observational and drawing skills on the BTEC national diploma course in general art and design and on the BTEC foundation course were of high quality. Students obtained good results on courses in media studies and performing arts. In 1996, the students' pass rate on performing arts courses was 95 per cent. There were higher completion rates on the two BTEC national diploma courses in photography and media and students on both courses obtained outstanding pass rates of 100 per cent. Students develop a good range of professional skills and demonstrate effective communication and organisational skills. Students are less successful on the access to higher education course and under a third of them progress to higher education.

56 In humanities and social studies, students on the access to higher education course obtained good results which are close to the national average for access courses. A third of the students, however, did not complete their access course at the college. Similar results were obtained on the access to teaching course. Students achieved good results on the part-time courses in teacher training. Their average pass rate was 86 per cent and the completion rate on these courses was over 90 per cent. Students on the access courses and the teacher training courses were enthusiastic about their studies and they worked purposefully. Their coursework was of an appropriate standard.

57 The 52 students, aged 16 to 18, entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1995-96 scored, on average, 4.6 points per subject entry

(where grade A=10 points, E=2). This places the college in the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1996 performance tables published by the DfEE. The average college pass rate for all subjects has improved from 77 per cent in 1995 to 85 per cent in 1996 which is just below the national pass rate for that year (86 per cent). In 1996, all but one student sat examinations in three subjects. The average point score for candidates aged 16 to 18 was 13.7 and it was 14.4 for all candidates. Sixty-one per cent of these students who were successful in their GCE A level examinations gained passes in three subjects and 91 per cent gained passes in at least two subjects. In 10 of the 18 subjects taken in 1996, the pass rate was 100 per cent. In the two subjects with the largest entries, English literature and psychology, the pass rates were 93 per cent and 85 per cent, respectively. Pass rates were much lower than national averages in four subjects: sociology (60 per cent), French (40 per cent), human biology (33 per cent) and history (25 per cent). High grades were achieved in art, photography, film studies, communication studies and law. In those subjects where the pass rates were low, the grades awarded were usually low as well. For instance, no students obtained grade C or above in French, human biology or history.

58 Some students take GCSE in English or mathematics in addition to their main course of study. The proportion of students gaining grade C or above in GCSE mathematics has improved considerably from 33 per cent in 1995 to 56 per cent in 1996. However, there was a fall in the proportion of students who gained grade C or above in English, from 66 per cent in 1995 to 54 per cent in 1996.

59 The college collects and analyses the destinations of its students. The destinations of 90 per cent of full-time students and of 58 per cent of all part-time students are known. The high proportion of part-time students who have unknown destinations is due to poor responses from the college's collaborative partners. Destinations are tabulated according to course and for the college as a whole. Students from a wide range of vocational courses as well as those from GCE A level courses, are encouraged to apply for places in higher education. The college's policy of encouraging all its students, irrespective of their course, to aim for higher education has successfully raised the aspirations of many students. A large number of students now progress to places in higher education. As the number of students who apply for higher education has increased, so the proportion which is successful has also grown. In 1996, over 470 of the 750 students who applied to higher education were successful in gaining places. The following table summarises the destinations of students.

Destinations of students 1996

	Full-time students (%)	Part-time students (%)
Higher education	28	6
Further education	27	9
In employment	24	41
Seeking work	8	1
Other	3	2
Unknown	10	41

Source: college data.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

60 The college has a thorough and exacting approach to quality assurance. The quality of all college activities is continually assessed through a range of processes. Areas of concern are systematically investigated and problems are rapidly addressed. The collection and analysis of data and information are well organised. Information is rigorously reviewed by teams and managers. Course review reports, analysis of staff training needs, surveys of students' views and data on performance are all used effectively in the assessment of the quality of the college's work. Performance criteria and targets are clearly identified. Staff recognise that the improvement of the quality of students' learning and achievements is the main aim of quality assurance. Actions taken to improve the quality of provision are reviewed and the effectiveness of the quality assurance process is monitored.

61 An extensive and rigorous analysis of students' performance is summarised in an annual report covering students' examinations results, retention rates and destinations. The process of gathering information on students' performance is carefully managed. The report sets out information about students in the form of performance tables. These show how students have performed, course by course and level by level, and they include summaries of students' performance on different types of courses. Comparisons are made with students' performance in previous years and, where possible, with students' performance at other institutions. The report, which has been produced in each of the last six years, is disseminated to all teaching staff and college managers and it is considered by the academic board and corporation. A separate report covering continuing students' progress on two-year courses has been piloted.

62 Course team leaders and programme managers are responsible for the quality of their courses. Progress towards the achievement of targets for enrolment, students' success, retention and progression rates, is continually monitored. The college aims to achieve continuous improvement in the organisation and management of courses in order

that these targets may be met. There are regular meetings of course teams and course review reports are prepared each term. Course and teaching teams also take data on students' performance and the results of surveys of students' opinions into account during their planning at the start of the new academic year. In a few areas, course reviews lack quality and rigour and they are of limited use in the planning of strategies for improving provision.

63 Teaching and learning methods are evaluated by lecturers, team leaders and managers. The college's open-plan layout facilitates the collective teamworking and review of provision by staff. Team leaders observe the teaching of staff for whom they are responsible. The success of students in examinations and data from student survey reports are taken into account when assessing the effectiveness of teaching. Course and subject leaders identify various strategies for achieving quality and discuss these at teaching team review meetings. Action for improvement is also discussed at the cross-curriculum management groups. At least one member of the executive management group attends cross-curriculum management group meetings and teaching team review meetings.

64 Importance is placed on the individual and collective views of students. Students express their views by a variety of means including representation on course teams, through their responses to surveys, by using the complaints procedures and, more recently, by their involvement on team and college students' councils. Surveys of students' opinions are used to help identify areas where improvement is needed and also to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken to improve the quality of provision. Surveys of students' opinions are carried out three times a year. The surveys have a high response rate and they cover all courses. All students are asked the same questions. Comparisons can therefore be made between full-time and part-time provision, between courses, teaching teams, responses to previous surveys and with provision made by collaborative providers. The results of the surveys are distributed to students in a helpful summary leaflet and they are discussed at the students' council.

65 The college charter has recently been revised in consultation with staff. It is a well-presented, attractive document and it sets out clear commitments and standards. The college uses a variety of methods, including surveys of students' opinions, to check that it is meeting its charter commitments. The college complaints procedure ensures rapid response to complainants. A manager is specifically allocated to take responsibility for each complainant. Complaints often relate to commitments made in the charter, which complainants claim have not been met. The college encourages its students to use the complaints procedure when necessary. The resolution of some recent complaints has resulted in significant improvements to course provision.

66 The college has supported the development of quality assurance by its five off-site collaborative providers. Contractual arrangements require the off-site collaborative providers to comply with the college's charter and to implement the college's quality assurance procedures. These procedures include the production of course reviews and an annual self-assessment report. The collaborative provision is thoroughly and carefully monitored through meetings with students, observation of classes and the checking of course documentation and students' records. Regular visits to each off-site collaborative provider by college staff help to ensure that they are complying with college requirements and following college procedures.

67 The college has produced a detailed self-assessment report which covers all the main headings of the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The self-assessment report is based on a thorough and systematic review of the college's provision. It is also derived from separate self-assessment reports produced by teaching and business support teams and reports from off-site collaborative partners. Other sources of evidence, such as the survey of students' opinions, students' performance, course review, observation of teaching and external verifiers' reports are also used. The self-assessment report is generally clear and well written. Some sections include appropriate reference to supporting evidence. The judgements in the report are mainly borne out by those of the inspectors.

68 Staff training and development are effectively managed and well resourced. Priorities are clearly identified and they reflect the college's strategic and operational aims. They also relate to ways of improving course development and the students' learning experience. Opportunities for training are available for all college staff. These cover management training, induction and teacher education for new staff, and continuing professional development and industrial updating for existing staff. Training and development activity is effectively evaluated. Each year, training needs of individual and course teams are identified. Annual staff appraisal is conducted for all teaching and business support staff. In the last academic year, the college enabled 40 per cent of full-time staff to receive training leading to a qualification, and 70 per cent of full-time staff to participate in externally-run courses.

RESOURCES

Staffing

69 There is a well-managed human resource strategy and there are well-established personnel policies. Personnel staff are well qualified and they liaise closely with teaching teams to identify staffing and training needs. The college initially received recognition as an Investor in People in 1993 and following reassessment, it received this recognition again in 1996. The utilisation and deployment of staff are closely monitored and controlled. The management of staffing is efficient. Over the past six

years there has been a significant reduction in the proportion of expenditure on staffing. This proportion is now well below the sector average. The college has been able to use funds, saved through reductions in staffing costs, for staff development, the improvement of accommodation, and the purchase of equipment. Turnover of both teachers and support staff is high at over 23 per cent.

70 Most staff are well qualified. Seventy-eight per cent of full-time teachers are graduates. Twenty-two per cent have a higher degree. It is a college requirement that all teaching staff should have a teaching qualification. Currently, 75 per cent have a teaching qualification and 24 per cent are studying for one. Approximately 60 per cent of teaching staff have training and development lead body assessor qualifications. Support staff are generally well qualified and 30 per cent have a degree. There is a relatively even balance of male and female staff, including college managers. Sixty-one per cent of full-time teachers are under 40 years of age. Many new staff have recent industrial or commercial experience. Some teaching staff have not received sufficient support to help them carry out new roles and some staff lack experience in the subjects they are required to teach. There is a shortage of staff expertise in some areas such as computing and catering. In a few areas, such as travel and tourism and engineering, staff lack appropriate or recent industrial experience. There is a lack of appropriately-trained and qualified staff for careers guidance and counselling.

71 Staff throughout the college display a high level of commitment to ensuring the success of students. The college places considerable importance on helping students to work and learn effectively on their own. It has established a wide range of specific roles for staff who provide help and support for students. Centre co-ordinators manage the day-to-day use of the learning centres. They carry out demonstrations for students and some also teach a few hours each week. Learning advisers prepare equipment and materials and provide advice and technical support to teachers and students. By relieving teachers of some of the duties now carried out by the learning advisers, the college has been able to deploy its teaching staff more effectively. There is a successful partnership between teachers and the support staff who help students with their learning. Teachers are also well supported by staff working in service and business support functions.

Equipment/learning resources

72 Capital equipment expenditure has exceeded £700,000 in each of the last three years. The college has carried out improvements in equipment levels within the context of achieving its strategic objectives. A significant element of equipment expenditure has been linked to major projects associated with remodelling of buildings and the development of learning resource centres. There is centralised purchasing of major items and for bulk supplies of consumable items. There has been a substantial

expenditure on computer equipment and over 750 computer workstations are provided for students' use, giving a ratio of full-time equivalent students to computers of 5.5:1. Nearly 80 per cent of computers are of a current commercial specification. This level of resource means that usually students have no difficulty in finding a computer to use.

73 Classrooms, workshops and resource areas are, with few exceptions, equipped to a high standard. An appropriate range of teaching aids is available in general teaching rooms. Specialist equipment and facilities in most curriculum areas are of a standard at least comparable with that usually found in industry and commerce. The recently re-equipped media facilities include radio and television studios with modern production and editing facilities. Hair and beauty therapy students are trained in attractive high-quality salons that are equipped to good professional standards. Similarly the travel centre is well resourced with industrial-standard equipment such as view-data terminals with links to airlines for booking flights and holidays. There is also an extensive range of travel and tourism information in the form of books, journals and videos.

74 Well-equipped learning resource centres have been established in most curriculum areas. The most recent centre for business studies contains separate areas for group work and is appropriately equipped to help students, from a range of courses, with the presentation of their work and with their projects. There are large clusters of computer workstations in many of the learning centres. The majority of computers are networked to central file servers linking the Carnarvon Road, London Road and Kingswood sites. Students can work at any of the computer workstations and gain access to a wide range of modern commercial software. Sixteen compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database titles are available through the network and over 40 further titles are available on standalone machines. The college is carrying out a detailed study with a number of suppliers on how best to secure access to the Internet on a college-wide basis. Some students attending courses run by collaborative providers have more limited access to learning resources and computers.

75 The general learning centres at Carnarvon Road and London Road include the libraries. There is a good supply of library and learning materials and there are ample study facilities which are appreciated by students. A total of 510 study places in the two learning centres provides a ratio of one place to every eight students. Over 100 of these study places have computers which are linked to the college network. The well-used library has up-to-date and relevant stock. There are 48,000 books, 200 journals and newspapers, 90 annually produced books, and 2,050 videotapes. The Carnarvon Road learning centre also contains workshop areas for basic skills, English, mathematics, information technology and foreign languages. A substantial stock of well-written learning materials has been developed by individual teachers. There is no college-wide approach to the development, cataloguing and storage of these learning materials. In some instances, access to them is limited.

Accommodation

76 The college buildings have been transformed by substantial expenditure on imaginative refurbishment, into an open, welcoming and high-quality environment for learning. A high proportion of the accommodation on the four main sites is attractive and well cared for. Many interior walls have been removed. Others have been reconfigured to allow more light into the building and to create a feeling of space. Communal and utility areas and classrooms have been refurbished. The two main refectories, SEECAFE on the main site, and SEESNAX on the London Road site are popular with students. They are carefully managed to ensure they do not become untidy. Closed-circuit television cameras have been installed to improve security. The accessibility of the buildings to wheelchair users has been improved. The lifts on the main site, however, do not operate reliably. Students respect the college's environment. It is clean, tidy, and well maintained. They comment positively on the improvements to the buildings and premises and on the attractive environment in which they study.

77 The college's high-quality learning resource centres are central to its strategy of introducing new styles of learning. These centres are spacious and well appointed and they have a business-like ambience. The general learning centre at Carnarvon Road with its displays of students' artwork and its varying floor levels, low partitions and plants to break up spaces, is visually most attractive. Students appreciate the benefits of working in such an environment. It encourages the development of personal and social skills, creativity, and independence on the part of the student.

78 A modern purpose-built nursery provides spaces for 35 children up to five years of age throughout the year. The Jungle Cats Nursery provides play schemes for older children during school holidays. It also provides work placements for college students on childcare courses. The staff are appropriately qualified and experienced.

79 Rooms are allocated centrally. Room usage is carefully monitored and action is taken to ensure that rooms are used fully and appropriately. There is spare capacity to provide for further growth in some specialist areas. The college is attempting to alleviate poor heating and ventilation in some rooms, cost effectively. The college makes appropriate use of external, special purpose venues for sports and performing arts events. For example, the college has corporate membership for all full-time students and staff at the new Southend Leisure and Tennis Centre.

80 A detailed accommodation strategy has been prepared with the assistance of professional consultants and this includes proposals for a major new building project. The proposals are visionary and support the promotion of a high profile for further education in the locality. The project is the subject of a 'pathfinder' bid under the private finance initiative and it meets the FEFC's criteria for such projects.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

81 The strengths of the college are:

- its well-managed curriculum
- the successful collaborative provision
- its extensive range of full-time vocational courses
- comprehensive marketing supported by extensive market research
- effective management, strong leadership and appropriate delegation of responsibilities to staff teams
- the well-managed and effective arrangements for students' support
- much good teaching and learning
- the wide variety of resources and learning materials for students
- the high expectations staff have of themselves and their students
- the high proportion of students who complete their courses
- good examination results
- the rigorous analysis and comprehensive reporting of students' performance
- the continuous assessment of quality leading to improvements in students' success
- its excellent learning resource centres, extensive computing facilities and up-to-date equipment in most areas
- the high quality of the accommodation.

82 If the college is to strengthen its provision further, it should:

- improve the co-ordination and management of links with employers
- extend the range of provision and modes of study for adults, including those in employment
- ensure consistency of practice in tutorial sessions
- improve some teaching and learning
- improve students' completion and success rates on a few courses
- ensure consistent guidance is given to students applying to higher education.

FIGURES

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

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

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

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

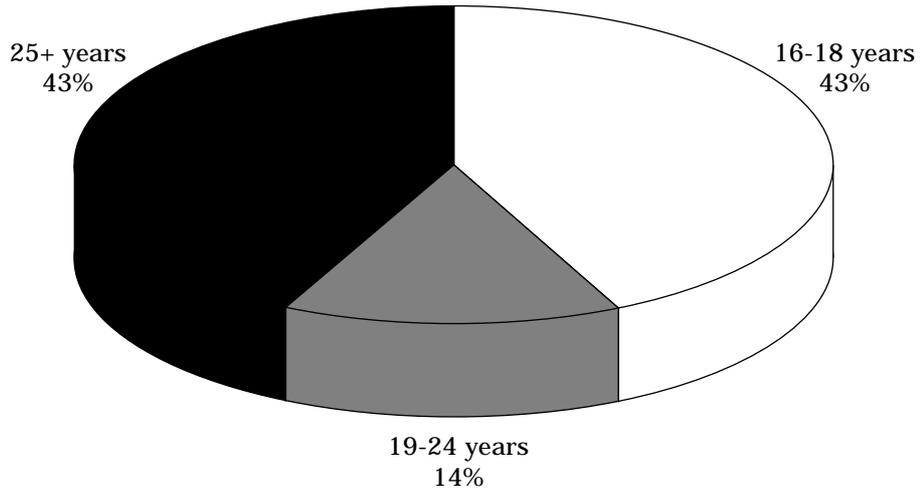
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

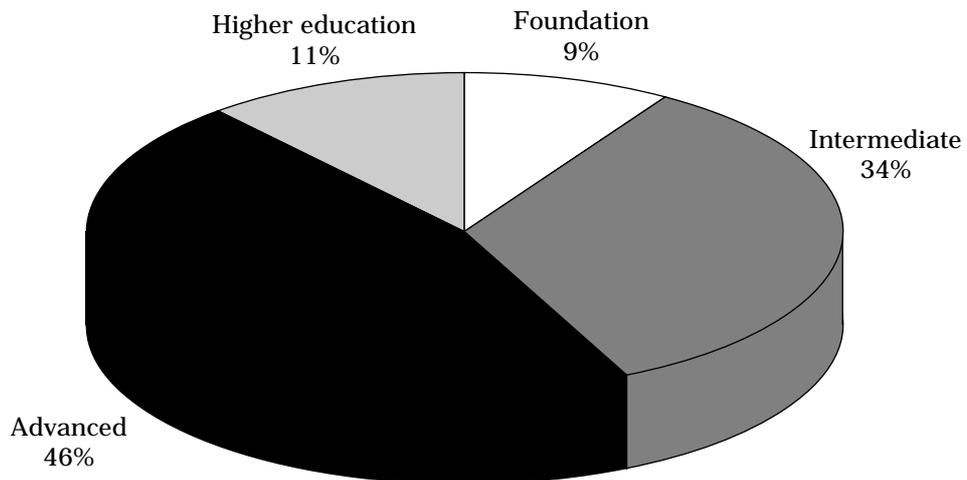
South East Essex College of Arts and Technology: percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 6,528

Figure 2

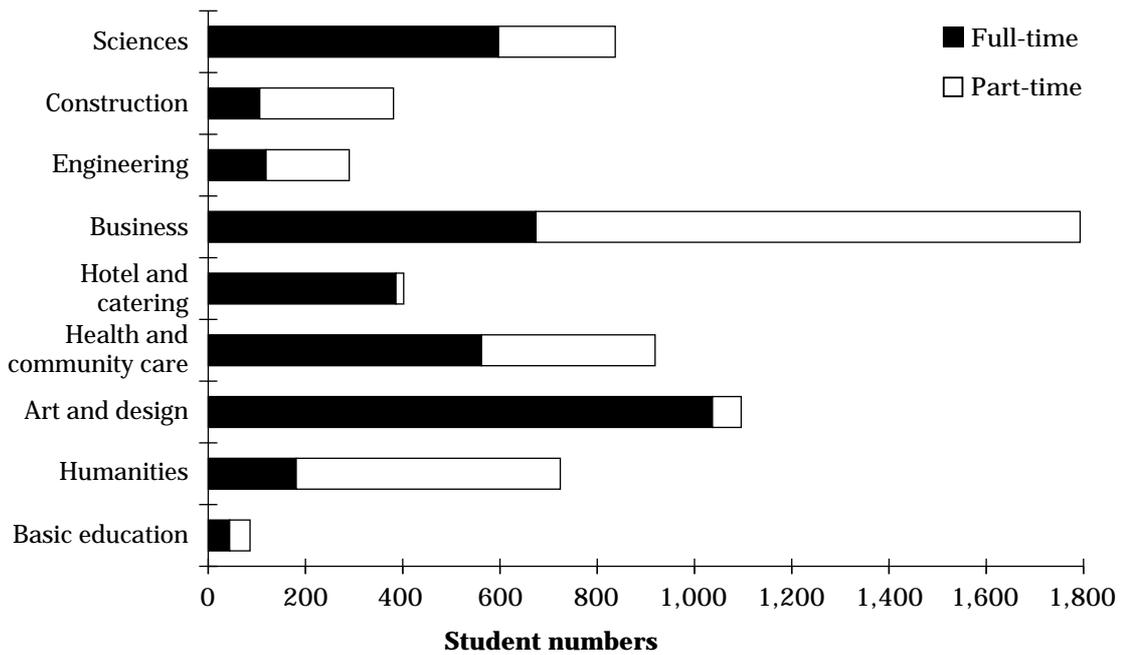
South East Essex College of Arts and Technology: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 6,528

Figure 3

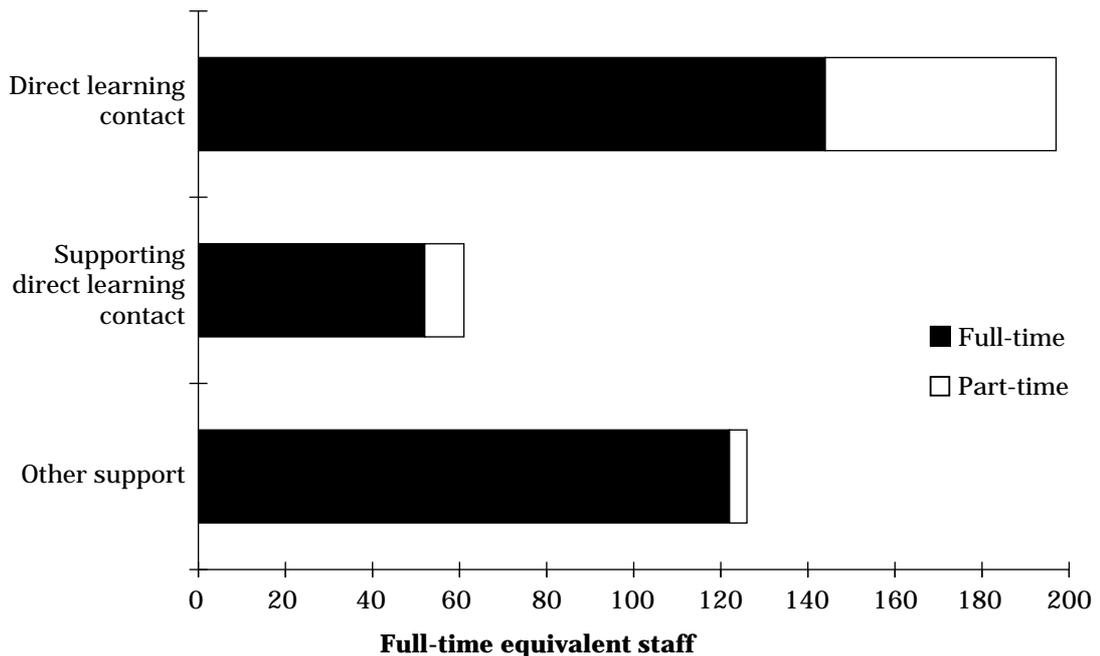
South East Essex College of Arts and Technology: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 6,528

Figure 4

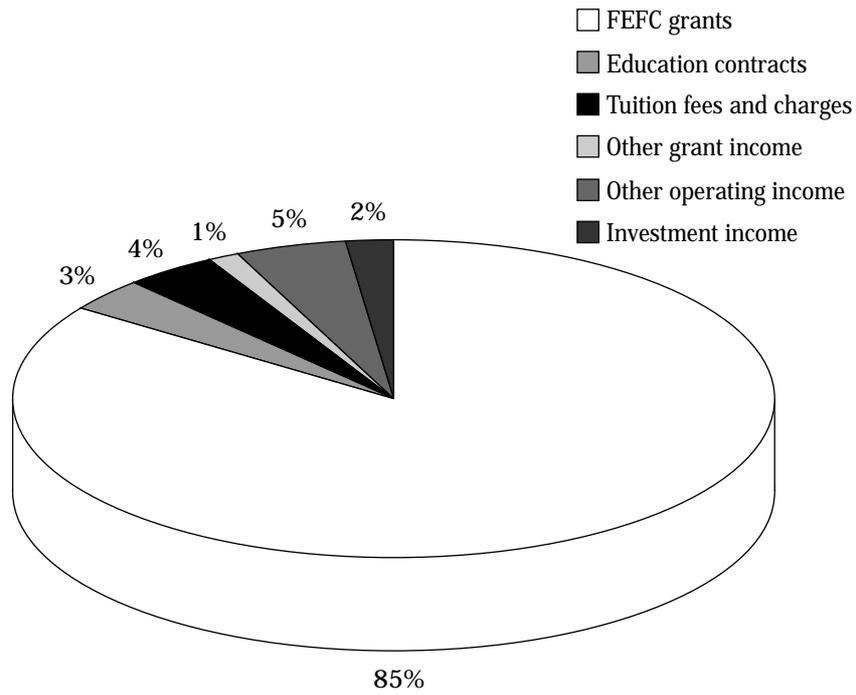
South East Essex College of Arts and Technology: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at January 1997)



Full-time equivalent staff: 384

Figure 5

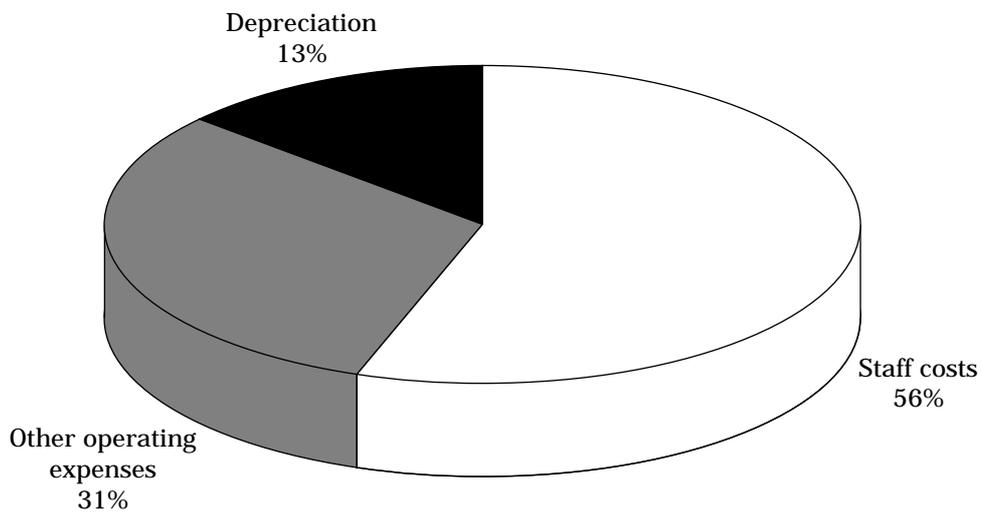
South East Essex College of Arts and Technology: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £13,423,000

Figure 6

South East Essex College of Arts and Technology: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Expenditure: £12,383,000

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