

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Southwark College

January 1994

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are given in FEFC Circular 93/28. In the course of inspecting colleges, inspectors are expected to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out clearly in their reports. Inspectors also summarise their judgements on the balance between strengths and weaknesses using a five-point scale. Each grade on the scale has the following descriptor:

- 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.*

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 0203 863000
Fax 0203 863100*

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 06/94

SOUTHWARK COLLEGE

LONDON REGION

Inspected 8 November- 3 December 1993

Summary

Southwark College, offers a broad range of education and training to a wide variety of clients in Inner London. The college has a strong commitment to its local community and well-established procedures for promoting equality of opportunity. It has recently experienced a series of significant changes in the scope of its work and its accountability. Senior staff have demonstrated a constructive approach to managing these changing circumstances. Well-qualified and competent teaching and support staff have enabled students to achieve a good record of success in some vocational areas. Provision in modern languages, history, English for speakers of other languages, social care, art and design, and in the adult programme has strengths which clearly outweigh the weaknesses. A wide range of opportunities is provided for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including some provision which is outstanding. The staff have to improve markedly the availability and use of information to assist quality assurance and strategic planning. They should also address poor retention rates and the poor examination success rates of students studying on GCSE and GCE courses. There is sufficient space for teaching but the accommodation has more weaknesses than strengths and some is of poor quality. The college maintains 10 sites within the borough of Southwark and this adds a substantial burden to the college's finances.

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 | 3 |
| Students' recruitment, guidance and support | 3 |
| Quality assurance | 3 |
| Resources | 3 |

| Curriculum area | Grade | Curriculum area | Grade |
|---------------------------|-------|---|-------|
| English | 3 | Business studies and economics | 3 |
| Modern languages | 2 | English for speakers of other languages | 2 |
| Science | 3 | Social care | 2 |
| Mathematics and computing | 3 | Art and design | 2 |
| History | 2 | The adult programme | 2 |
| Sociology and psychology | 3 | Provision for students with learning difficulties | 2 |

CONTENTS

| | Paragraph |
|---|------------------|
| Introduction | 1 |
| The college and its aims | 4 |
| Responsiveness and range of provision | 10 |
| Governance and management | 16 |
| Students' recruitment, guidance and support | 23 |
| Teaching and the promotion of learning | 32 |
| Students' achievements | 40 |
| Quality assurance | 47 |
| Resources | 50 |
| Conclusions and issues | 59 |
| Figures | |

INTRODUCTION

1 Southwark College, Southwark was inspected between 8 November and 3 December 1993. The inspection focused on work funded by the Further Education Funding Council.

2 The inspection team of 13 inspectors was joined by a senior staff member of the college. The team inspected cross-college aspects of provision and ten curriculum areas selected in consultation with the college: English, modern languages, science, mathematics and computing, history, sociology and psychology, business studies and economics, English for speakers of other languages, social care, and art and design. The inspection also covered the adult programme, a group of modular courses which spans several curriculum areas, and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Inspectors observed 193 teaching and learning sessions, involving approximately 1,900 students, and attended a range of other college activities, including enrolment sessions and a meeting of the corporation. In addition, meetings were held with students, teaching and support staff, college managers, college governors, local employers and representatives from the South Thames Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

3 The inspection was carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in the Council Circular 93/28. The framework describes a four-year inspection cycle. When this cycle becomes fully established, colleges will have the opportunity to respond to the findings of earlier inspection visits before their quadrennial inspection and the subsequent report. As this inspection occurred early in the cycle, the opportunity for such a response has not been available.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

4 Southwark College is the only further education institution located in the borough of Southwark in south London. The college has ten sites which are dispersed within an area of approximately 15 square miles. The range of accommodation is diverse: a centre near Waterloo station which was purpose-built in the 1960s, a former health centre at Queen's Road, several late nineteenth or early twentieth century former schools, a post-war school building at Surrey Docks and a converted warehouse at Blackfriars. At two sites, buildings are shared with local authority services. As a result of recent amalgamations, the college has two substantial swimming pools.

5 The college employs 483 full-time equivalent staff of whom 253 are full-time teachers. About 500 part-time teachers are employed, mainly to support adult education: these comprise approximately 50 full-time equivalent teachers (figure 1). There are approximately 11,400 full-time and part-time students at the college (figure 2). The majority of these study on a part-time basis; about 2,460 students study full-time. When expressed as full-time equivalent students, the total enrolled population is about

3,650 (figure 3). In the academic year 1992-93, 43 per cent of students were resident in Southwark (see figure 4). In the current year, approximately 63 per cent of students are female and most students are over 25 years of age (figure 5). The age distribution of students is influenced significantly by part-time students enrolled in the adult education faculty. Most full-time students fall within the 16 to 19 age range. The college's estimated income for 1993-94, is about £14.6 million, 82 per cent of which is allocated by the Further Education Funding Council. In 1992-93, the college's unit of funding, as recorded in the FEFC report, Funding Allocations 1993-94, was £2,715 for each full-time equivalent student. This compares with a median of £2,436 for general further education and tertiary colleges. Figures 6 and 7 provide a broad summary of estimated income and expenditure for 1993-94. As a result of further enrolments expected during the course of the academic year, senior managers expect that the college will achieve its current year target of an 8 per cent growth in full-time equivalent students.

6 The five faculties in the college offer a range of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), General Certificate of Education (GCE), pre-vocational and vocational courses. There are also opportunities for students to enrol on higher education programmes in some curriculum areas and to attend courses leading to professional qualifications. The college has a tertiary role within the borough and at least 75 per cent of full-time students have progressed from schools in the London boroughs of Southwark, Lewisham and Lambeth. These boroughs have amongst the lowest levels of GCSE examination performance in the country. Through its adult education faculty, the college offers a variety of recreational classes to local residents.

7 The mission statement emphasises the role of the college in the community and, under the headings of quality, access, flexibility and progression, identifies significant operational aims. These include adding value to students' capabilities, ensuring equality of opportunity, catering for a variety of modes of study and patterns of attendance, and providing opportunities for study through links with other educational institutions and training organisations.

8 There are approximately 18,000 employers within the four riparian boroughs of Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham and Greenwich, which comprise the region covered by the South Thames TEC. Most employers run medium or small businesses; only about 85 companies have 200 or more employees. Over 80 per cent of local employment is in the public sector or in service sector industries which include distribution, hotels, catering, transport, communications and business services. Manufacturing industry accounts for only 11 per cent of local employment. Staff turnover in local firms is low, as is the incidence of employing casual staff.

9 According to the 1991 census, Southwark has a population of about 220,000 residents, just under 10 per cent of the total for Inner London. Twenty-four per cent of the borough's residents are from black and ethnic minority backgrounds which is similar to the overall figure for Inner London. The borough has a substantial refugee population which includes many people from countries where English is not commonly spoken. Composite information drawn from the 1991 census data indicates that Southwark is one of the most deprived boroughs in Inner London. At the time of the inspection, the proportion of eligible borough residents claiming unemployment benefit was approximately 21 per cent. This represents an increase over the previous year of more than 6 per cent and is approaching twice the unemployment rate for the United Kingdom.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

10 A good range of courses provides opportunities for education and training to a wide variety of clients including school leavers, those in employment, employers and adults returning to education. The prospectus includes about 30 courses at GCSE level and a similar number of GCE A levels as well as a broad range of pre-vocational and vocational courses. Access courses and franchised degree foundation programmes provide good opportunities for students wishing to enter higher education. Educational opportunities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are excellent. Some aspects of college provision for these students are unique within the further education sector. The college generates income from courses which include training for the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority and for staff employed in the royal parks. The language and literacy unit offers professional development, consultancy and in-service training for teachers and trainers in language learning and basic skills.

11 The college has responded positively to the needs of the community by providing an extensive English language programme for speakers of other languages. The commitment to the community is also shown by a substantial investment in crèche and nursery provision at six college sites. More than 120 students and staff took advantage of this service during the last academic year; nevertheless, there remains an unfulfilled demand for child care provision from those wishing to attend the college. During the current year more than 1,000 students have been assisted through partial or complete remission of fees. A broad programme of leisure and recreational studies, provided through the adult education faculty, supports and enriches the local community.

12 There is a well-planned programme of liaison with 14 local schools. A wide variety of activities includes regular attendance at parents' evenings held by the schools and a programme which enables prospective students to sample vocational courses offered by the college. College open days and

evenings are well attended by prospective students and their parents. Links with the parents and guardians of existing students are less well developed and the college should consider whether strengthening these links would improve the retention of enrolled students.

13 The staff maintain mutually-beneficial links with a number of external organisations. For instance, the college-sponsored Asian, Caribbean and African Institute helps to promote prosperity and equal opportunities in the local community. This is partly funded through the government's professional, industrial and commercial updating programme (PICKUP). Involvement with a local consortium concerned with post-16 education assists curriculum development in the college. Membership of the Southside Employer Network enables staff to develop links with businesses in south London. The college has developed a particularly productive relationship with the South Thames TEC. Apart from assistance in funding the mainstream of the college's educational programmes, this liaison has resulted in a good level of support for specific college initiatives, such as the remission of students' fees in cases of financial hardship. There are contacts with local members of Parliament, some of whom visit the college on a regular basis. There is a good range of informal links with employers formed through the provision of training courses and the arrangement of work placements for students. However, formal advisory committees attended by employers exist only in two of the five college faculties.

14 There is a small marketing team which promotes the college and provides marketing information. The team has clear objectives and makes a useful contribution to college management within the constraints of a modest budget. However, a lack of co-ordination in the operations of the marketing team, the enquiry service offered to potential students and the team promoting liaison with schools results in a loss of overall efficiency. This could be rectified by the development of a clear institutional marketing strategy which encompasses all these related activities and ensures effective management of information.

15 The college is justifiably proud of its record of developing and promoting equal opportunities. Policies relating to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and race and sex equality are comprehensive. They offer excellent guidance for staff and students on the achievement of good practice in all areas of the college's work. Instilling awareness of equality issues is a significant feature of the staff-development programme. It also forms an integral part of induction programmes for salaried staff and full-time students. Awareness of equal opportunities enriches the curriculum for students, for instance, through influencing the selection of texts used in the study of English.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

16 Members of the corporation have a clear perception of their roles and there is an appropriate division of responsibilities between governors

and senior managers within the college. The governing body comprises 20 members, including an elected student representative, two staff representatives, a barrister, an accountant, a trades union representative, an estates management expert, the head of a special school, representatives from the London Docklands Development Corporation and the local TEC, and several representatives from the local business community. Overall, the range of expertise and experience within the governing body is appropriate to meeting its management responsibilities. Governors' meetings are held on a regular basis and are well run, although the attendance of a few governors is intermittent. The quality of documentation supplied to the governing body by senior managers of the college is good. A few governors visit the college on a regular basis and the governors spoken to during the inspection revealed a sound knowledge of the college's organisation. There remains scope for increasing governors' awareness of the college's work.

17 During the last three years, the college has undergone a series of significant changes, including the transfer of corporate authority from the Inner London Education Authority to Southwark Education Authority and, subsequently, to the college corporation. These transfers of authority have coincided with an amalgamation with the local sixth form centre in April 1992 and the local adult education institute in April 1993. Senior managers have responded constructively to these changes by seeking to establish sound financial practices and minimising the risk of disruption to students. However, a consequence of this strategy has been the evolution of an unwieldy management structure. The college management team has 17 members and there are areas within the administration and academic structures where line management is confused.

18 The inspection took place during a period when a radical restructuring of the college was under consideration by college staff and the corporation. The proposed structure simplifies college management, reduces the number of faculties and is clearly intended to improve the quality of service offered to the college's clients. The consultative process associated with the change in structure has been sensibly managed over a period of nine months.

19 Heads of faculty have contributed to the corporate plan and have a clear understanding of their roles. Responsibilities for course management and subject leadership are effectively delegated within faculties and there are regular meetings of faculty boards of study and faculty management teams. Arrangements for delegating resource management to faculty heads are satisfactory.

20 Effective use is made of news letters, meetings and notice boards to inform staff about matters such as the government's Charter for Further Education and college policies. There are appropriate arrangements for the development and review of college policies and procedures although in

some cases, staff who co-ordinate cross-college policies do not control the resources to ensure that they are uniformly implemented. For example, the organisation of GCSE and GCE provision in the college depends on a manager being able to co-ordinate teachers across all faculties to maximise the choice of subjects available to students. The benefits of this system are outweighed by practical difficulties experienced in assembling course teams, managing resources, ensuring quality control and providing adequate support for students.

21 The overall use of management information throughout the college is poor and this adversely affects the efficiency of many aspects of the college's operation. Although matters such as the enrolment of students are routinely planned for and monitored, the use of data is generally unsophisticated. Computerised management information facilities are insufficiently developed and this is a cause of considerable frustration to those staff members with management responsibilities. Despite the substantial difficulties and costs which would be associated with establishing a college-wide information network, there is an urgent need to rectify shortcomings in this area in order to gain a more accurate understanding of the college's performance and to develop strategies which will improve effectiveness.

22 The poor availability of information has impeded the development and use of performance indicators and limited the practice of setting and achieving targets. In consequence, the extent to which data are analysed and evaluated varies across the college, to the detriment of quality assurance and support for students. For example, there are few instances of detailed analyses of the retention of students or examination performance leading to significant improvements in provision. College managers are aware of these problems and have recently initiated a project which aims to develop more effective ways of measuring students' achievements. The need to make rapid progress in this area is reinforced by an explicit reference in the college's mission statement to the aim of adding value to students' capabilities, skills and qualifications.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

23 The college uses appropriate methods for recruiting its students. There is good provision for pre-enrolment enquiries which are handled by a fully-staffed information centre at the Waterloo site. The centre took nearly 20,000 enquiries during the academic year 1992-93. College managers are responding positively to local need by establishing a similar facility at the Surrey Docks site. Advice and guidance sessions for prospective adult students are provided throughout the year. There are effective mechanisms for recruiting students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities from schools and other agencies.

24 The main enrolment event for full-time and part-time students is carefully planned, well managed and supported by good-quality

documentation for staff and students. However, the accommodation at the Waterloo site used to stage the event is not well-suited to the purpose. Although there is some phasing of enrolments and a good effort made to provide appropriate guidance and advice for all applicants, shortcomings in the accommodation can result in the build up of long queues. Enrolment on other college sites and for much of the adult provision is less intensive. The college enrolls up to 30 per cent of its students outside the main enrolment period in September. To date, there has been little collection or analysis of data which could be used to improve the quality of enrolment procedures. During the review which is currently under way, the college might consider the benefits to be gained from examining the relationships between enrolment advice, retention rates and examination performance.

25 Development of support for the assessment and accreditation of prior learning and achievement is listed as a priority in the corporate plan. The college has established an initial assessment service but, as yet, there is no formal mechanism for the subsequent accreditation of prior achievements.

26 There are satisfactory induction programmes for all full-time courses. Students are provided with a well-produced handbook outlining the college's main services and other essential information. The college permits students to transfer between courses in the first half-term of their course, if necessary. On language courses, students' skills are reviewed after three weeks of study.

27 All full-time students have a personal tutor. There is a recommended tutorial programme for A level and GCSE students and a good quality tutors' handbook. However, practice in tutorials is not consistent across the college. For example, although standards are generally good in art and design, tutorials occur informally and the tutors' handbook is not widely used. In contrast, students on Nursery Nursing Examinations Board (NNEB) courses benefit from a structured system of individual tutorials which has been effective in raising standards. Tutorial support on the access to nursing course is less effective, particularly with regard to monitoring students' progress. On some courses, for example those in science, a greater use of academic tutorials might lead to improved performance by students. A programme of personal and career development sessions is provided for full-time students. Schemes of work are well developed but the success of the programme is hampered by some poor levels of attendance, particularly of the students enrolled on GCSE courses. There is a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of the programme but this does not include a formal system for gathering students' comments.

28 Less support is provided for part-time students attending GCSE and GCE A level courses who do not have personal tutors or access to the personal and career development programme. Nevertheless, courses

which have been specifically designed for part-time students generally have effective tutorial support built into them. College staff are participating in a Further Education Unit project on the support needs of part-time adult learners. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding in its range and its responsiveness to individual needs.

29 The college provides effective information, advice and counselling services on most of its sites. Students also have good access to the Southwark borough careers service. In the academic year 1992-93, the careers service carried out over 1,300 individual interviews in the college. Students in the adult education faculty do not yet have the same level of support, although appropriate services are being developed.

30 There is a good range of provision to support students requiring additional teaching in English and mathematics. Arrangements for identifying the needs of students vary in quality across the college. For example, the arrangements in business, travel and tourism courses and the adult programme are sound and effective; they are less so in mathematics and computing courses. The effectiveness of learning support provision also varies. The quality of the teaching is generally good but there is insufficient monitoring of attendance, of students' achievements and progression.

31 The college has no formal policy on the use of records of achievement and there is little consistency in their use. Nevertheless, the creation of individual action plans is an integral part of the personal and career development programme for full-time students. There is a system which enables subject teachers to report students' absences to tutors. Letters are sent to persistent absentees according to a clearly-specified procedure. Delays in communication between teachers contribute to the limited effect this has on the retention of students. Students' lateness in arriving at classes is not monitored and there is little formal analysis of data relating to the reasons for students leaving the college.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

32 The strengths of the teaching and learning inspected outweighed the weaknesses. Of the 193 sessions observed, 105 were graded 1 or 2, and 68 were graded 3. There were 20 sessions in which the weaknesses clearly outweighed the strengths.

33 Most courses have clearly stated aims and objectives which students know and understand. They are reinforced through appropriate schemes of work and assessment schedules. In some areas, for example in mathematics and in art and design, comprehensive introductory course booklets are provided. The teaching sessions observed were supportive of course aims. Teachers used appropriate teaching materials, chosen with due regard for students' needs and the policies of the college.

34 In most of the curriculum areas inspected, students are regularly set written work which supports the aims and objectives of their course. The marking of this work is generally consistent and fair, and written feedback constructive, notably so in English, travel and tourism, humanities and modern languages. The degree to which poor English is corrected varies considerably. The recording of students' progress is generally satisfactory.

35 Teaching is well managed, and there is effective direction of students' activities. A wide variety of methods is employed and most staff are skilled in maintaining students' interest. In general, students participate fully in classroom and laboratory sessions but a few observed sessions included an excessive amount of presentation by the teacher. Teachers' recapitulation of key points and their use of prior learning help to develop students' understanding. Work is often set in a realistic context. For example, a strong cultural flavour underpins the best modern language classes. However, in some business courses, lecturers make limited use of students' personal knowledge and work experiences to reinforce learning.

36 The staff are knowledgeable and experienced, and relations between teachers and students are good. For example, students with disabilities speak warmly of efforts made on their behalf and there are numerous examples of good support for students with learning difficulties. Staff teaching English for speakers of other languages handle issues relating to race and gender with clarity and sensitivity. Students are often mutually supportive in their learning.

37 Most students are sufficiently challenged by the work they undertake and there are significant levels of personal achievement. On occasions, when students are able to dictate their own pace of work, sessions are not sufficiently demanding. In some instances, the momentum of classes is adversely affected by late arrivals. Some teachers are overly tolerant of this.

38 The problems associated with teaching groups of students who have dissimilar abilities are being addressed with varying degrees of success. For instance, teachers of art and design and some teachers of business studies and modern languages are adept at catering for the different learning needs of individual students. Teachers of science have yet to develop effective strategies or materials to ensure that all students are fully stretched.

39 Practical work in science is well organised to reinforce the study of theory. The extent to which students are able to make use of information technology to present data and analyse problems varies amongst subject areas. A good example of its use was observed in a business and finance session where the students constructed computerised spreadsheets to examine movements in foreign currency rates.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

40 Students' achievements on most GCE A level and AS courses are unsatisfactory. There are poor completion and pass rates in many subjects. For example, 1,098 subject enrolments in GCE A level subjects resulted in only 613 examinations being taken in 1993, a completion rate of 56 per cent. The 613 examinations taken by students subsequently gave rise to 368 examination passes, grades A-E. For GCSE courses the overall completion rate was 63 per cent and there were many instances of poor rates of examination success in particular subjects. For full-time GCSE courses, where students often retake subjects after poor performances at school, the completion rate was marginally better, at about 70 per cent. Nevertheless, a total of 365 full-time subject enrolments resulted in only 117 examination passes in the range of grade A to grade C in 1993. This represents a success rate of 32 per cent.

41 Completion rates on vocational courses are generally satisfactory. High rates are achieved on most courses aimed at awards of the City and Guilds of the London Institute (CGLI). For example, of the students enrolled on CGLI programmes in floristry, horticulture, and recreation and leisure industries, 90 per cent sat the examinations. Completion rates on courses leading to awards from the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) are lower but adequate overall. Pass rates on vocational programmes are generally good and usually exceed 80 per cent. For example, all the students who completed BTEC first and national diplomas in design and the national diploma in leisure studies gained an award.

42 These overall levels of achievement in academic and vocational programmes are reflected in the college's performance in national tables of examination results. Whilst a few GCE and GCSE subjects have high pass rates, many have rates which are well below national averages. Full-time 16 to 18 year old students at the college taking two or more GCE A levels in 1993 scored an average of 6.4 points (where A = 10 points, E = 2 points). This performance locates the college in the bottom quartile of results for the further education sector. In contrast, students on BTEC and CGLI programmes achieved a 90 per cent pass rate on average, which compares favourably with the pass rates of many other colleges in the sector.

43 In the teaching and learning sessions inspected, most students were well motivated and applied themselves satisfactorily to their work. They acquired relevant knowledge at an appropriate rate and were able to apply this to the analysis of information and problem solving. Students on vocational courses are given many opportunities to solve problems, and work on projects, in small groups. These opportunities have enabled them to develop good team-working skills. Such skills are significantly less developed in students on GCE and GCSE courses.

44 Although examples of good communication skills were observed in modern language classes, the overall level of students' communication

and presentational skills, particularly on GCE and GCSE programmes, could be improved substantially. Some students contribute well to discussions and practical exercises; others who participate little, or not at all, miss valuable opportunities to confirm their understanding of important concepts.

45 All full-time students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and an increasing number of those studying part-time, have access to relevant, nationally-recognised qualifications. This is a strength of the institutional provision and it enhances the experience of the students.

46 Responsibility for the collection and analysis of data on students' destinations lies mainly with the faculties. Some supplementary information is supplied through the local authority careers service. Information on students proceeding to higher education is fairly comprehensive. Data analysed by the local careers service indicates that 20 per cent of full-time students leaving the college progressed to higher education in 1992. The quality of information on students progressing from GCSE and some vocational courses is generally poor although records show a high rate of progression to higher education for students leaving vocational courses in art and design. Attempts to gain information through postal and telephone surveys have been largely unsuccessful. The college should reconsider its strategies for acquiring and making use of data related to students' destinations.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

47 Quality assurance in the college has not yet achieved a level of uniformity which would enable it to effect consistent improvement. Most course teams conduct annual reviews and some faculties draw on these to formulate measures of performance and to inform curriculum development. However, there is inconsistent practice in the format used for course reviews and the quality of the reporting. In general, reports are descriptive and there is little evidence of systematic collection and analysis of data.

48 The committee for curriculum standards and development produced a quality assurance policy and an associated framework which have been approved by the college's academic board. The framework is capable of effecting improvements in existing practice. It is currently being piloted by six course teams. Sensibly, the intention is to link quality assurance to the system for the approval and re-approval of courses. The framework being piloted relies heavily on the use of questionnaires. These are time-consuming to administer and have been prepared in a language and format which are unnecessarily complicated, especially for those with learning difficulties or for those unfamiliar with English. It is not clear how employers' perceptions of the college or the reports of external moderators and examiners will be used to inform quality assurance. Currently, the

marketing manager issues questionnaires to survey students' and employers' perceptions. These are not co-ordinated with the quality assurance surveys. A quality-policy manual for the assessment of national vocational qualifications and other competence-based programmes has been developed. This is thorough but not integrated with the existing quality assurance framework. To date, the emphasis of development work has been on the quality of curriculum delivery. The college has yet to develop a compatible quality assurance system for other aspects of its service to clients.

49 Staff-development activities are well established and there are clear policies and procedures governing implementation. Approximately one per cent of the annual budget is allocated to staff development. A well-structured programme for the induction of all full-time and some part-time staff includes a series of half-day sessions during the first half-term following their appointment. There is also a six-month mentoring scheme for all new and promoted staff. Appraisal is being piloted on a group of about twenty staff and there are plans for its wider application. The college has committed itself to gaining Investors in People status and is starting to implement an action plan in connection with this initiative.

RESOURCES

50 The academic staff are the main resource of the college and account for 78 per cent of expenditure. Staff are well qualified and suitably experienced for the teaching they undertake. The majority has teaching qualifications and a significant proportion has experience outside education. There is balance between genders in the staff: slightly more than 50 per cent of the senior staff are female. Approximately 16 per cent of staff are from black or ethnic minority groups. Good arrangements exist to ensure that such groups are adequately represented within the college. Over 500 part-time teachers deliver about 15 per cent of the teaching, mainly in the adult education faculty and in art and design. Generally, teachers are well supported by technical and administrative staff. The turnover of staff is low.

51 The accommodation has some strengths but many weaknesses. Providing education on ten separate sites adds a substantial burden to the college's finances through the need to provide multiple libraries, costly communication systems, extensive insurance cover, additional security guards, multiple nursery, crèche and catering facilities, travel costs for staff and additional administrative support.

52 On most sites the college is obliged to provide sophisticated security measures including perimeter security fencing and single entry points controlled by security guards. The inaccessibility of some of the college buildings for those with limited physical mobility is one of the weaknesses in the provision for students with disabilities.

53 The college has sufficient space for teaching. All the classes inspected were held in rooms of adequate size but many of the teaching rooms are drab and uninviting. In some, the acoustics or general teaching facilities are inadequate. The accommodation for science and mathematics at Blackfriars is generally poor, as is some of the accommodation used for modern languages at Camberwell. Accommodation for teaching floristry at Waterloo is badly arranged. Some of the staff offices are far too small for the number of staff who uses them. Generally, the quantity and quality of accommodation for staff are barely satisfactory.

54 After surveying students' opinions, managers have established site committees which are charged with monitoring the overall quality of the accommodation. Considerable efforts have been made to improve the suitability and the decorative state of teaching and communal areas on some sites. For instance, significant improvements have been made at Peckham by refurbishing and redecorating the accommodation. The provision for art and design at Surrey Docks is good and the upgraded computer rooms at Waterloo offer a pleasant learning environment. The college has recently engaged consultants to review its use of accommodation and to recommend an accommodation strategy.

55 Generally, the range of equipment and materials available to support teaching and learning is adequate but the location of courses on more than one site sometimes leads to duplication and inefficient use of resources. In some areas resources are poor. For example, the materials used for teaching health science on the access to higher education course in nursing and health-related studies, and the photographic equipment used at Waterloo, are either insufficient or in need of replacement.

56 There is an adequate amount of information technology (IT) equipment where the use of such equipment is a formal part of the course. Some resources are of a high standard. These include the IT and training office at Camberwell, the computer suites at Waterloo and the IT resources for art and design at Surrey Docks. However, the overall quality of IT resources is variable; much of it is outdated and cannot be used to run specialist software. In general, individuals and class groups who need access to IT on an occasional basis are not well served. Arrangements for booking facilities lead, in some cases, to unintended restrictions on access. The use of computer rooms is not monitored. More purposeful management would help to ensure that optimum use is made of IT resources.

57 The college library service has significant weaknesses, mainly associated with the maintenance of branches on six sites. Limited staffing permits weekday daytime opening only, which is a considerable disadvantage to students who attend evening courses. An annual budget of more than £40,000 supports a book stock of 46,000 titles, and 200 journals, newspapers and periodicals. The wide distribution of these resources leads to much duplication and makes access to books and other

library materials difficult for some students. The college has devised a good system for loaning basic text books but there remain weaknesses in support for modern languages, sociology and social care.

58 Other library resources, such as audio and video tapes, are limited and facilities for listening and viewing are inadequate. Small networks of IT equipment have been provided in some branches and there are high-quality facilities at the Camberwell and Tabard sites. The six branches of the library have a variety of accommodation problems. Many have too little space devoted to study and much of the furniture is dilapidated. Access for those with mobility problems is difficult, if not impossible, in several cases.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

59 Southwark College is making satisfactory progress towards achieving many of the aims contained in its mission statement. The maintenance of ten sites supports the community role of the college but places a substantial additional burden on the college's finances. Particular strengths of the college are:

- the constructive approach to managing changing circumstances
 - the strong and supportive commitment to the local community
 - the well-established practice of promoting equality of opportunity
 - the well-qualified and competent teaching and support staff
 - the record of success in some vocational courses
 - the range and quality of opportunities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including some provision which is outstanding.
- 60 Areas which require improvement are:
- the poor availability of information to assist quality assurance and strategic planning
 - the poor retention rates on many courses, especially GCSE and GCE courses
 - the poor examination results on GCSE and GCE courses
 - the poor quality of some accommodation, including libraries.

FIGURES

-
- 1 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)

 - 2 Students by area of study and mode of attendance (1993-94)

 - 3 Enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by mode of study (1993-94)

 - 4 Students by area of residence (1992-93)

 - 5 Students by age and gender (as of 1 November 1993)

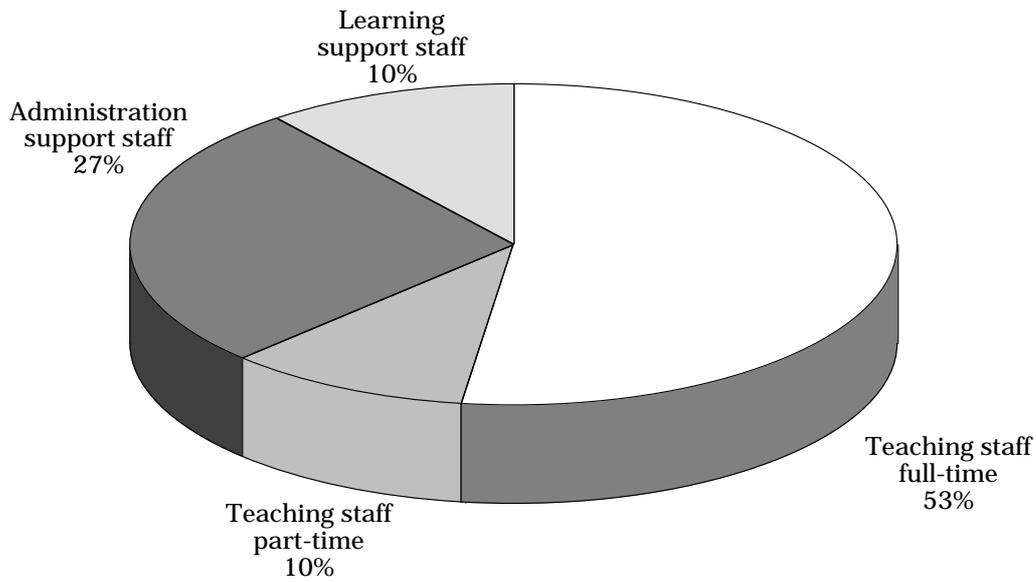
 - 6 Estimated income (1993-94)

 - 7 Estimated expenditure less depreciation (1993-94)

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

Figure 1

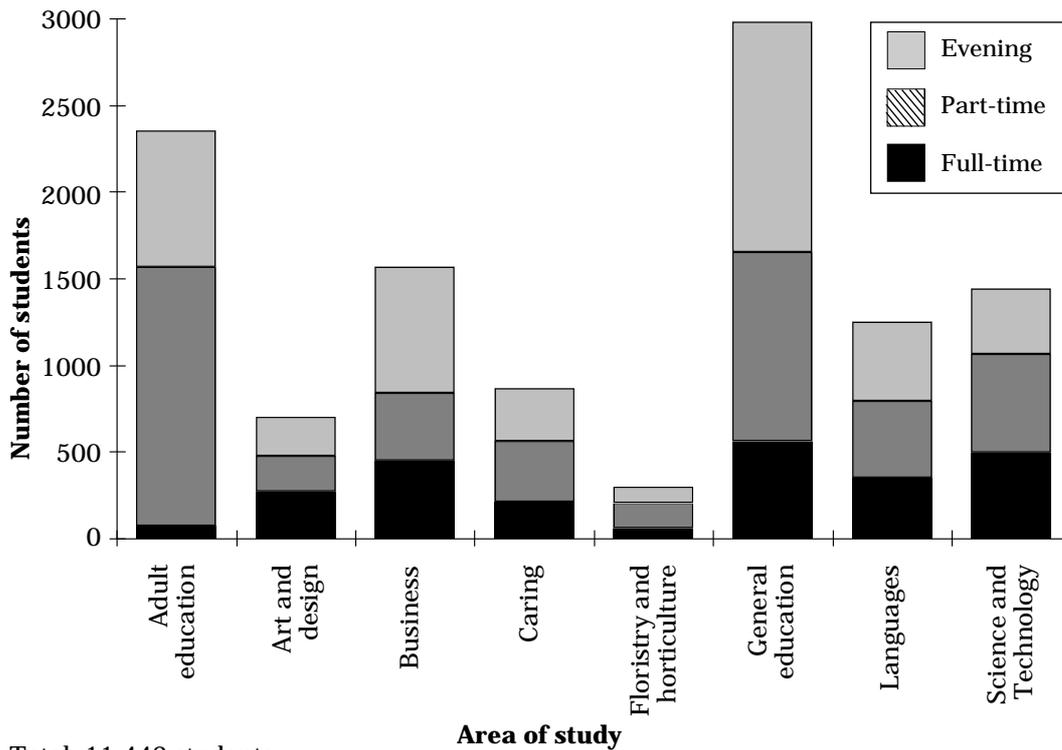
Southwark College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)



Total: 483 full-time equivalent staff

Figure 2

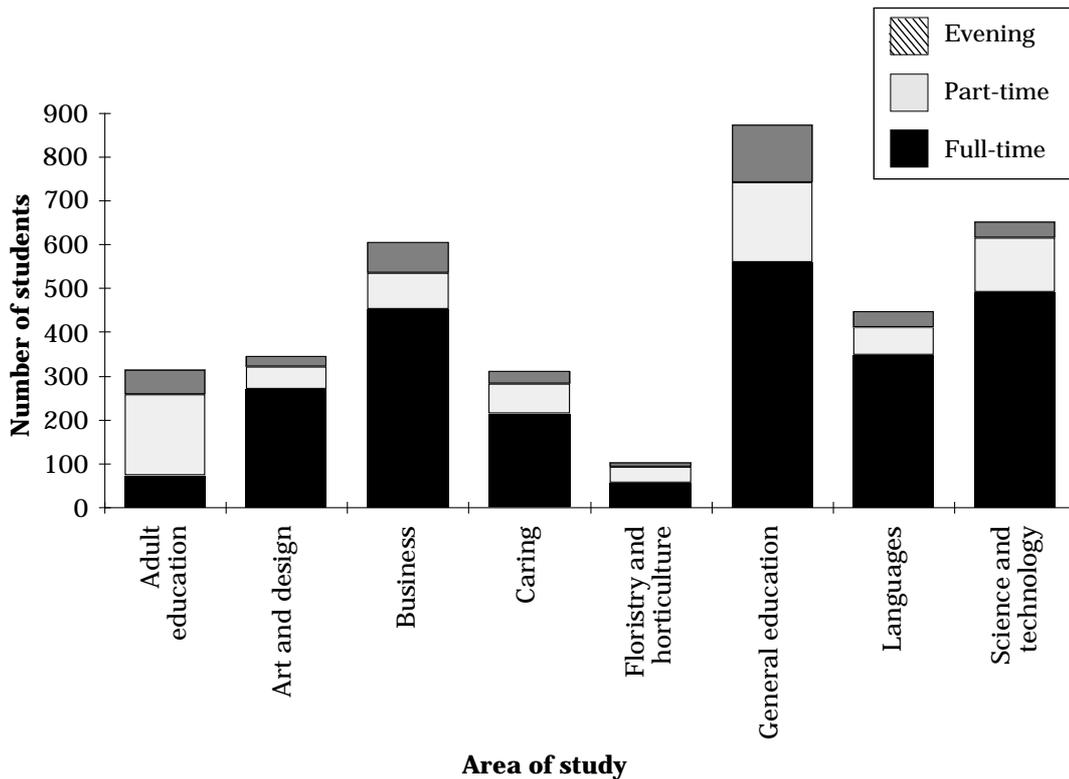
Southwark College: students by area of study and mode of attendance (1993-94)



Total: 11,442 students

Figure 3

Southwark College: students expressed as full-time equivalents by area of study and mode of attendance (1993-94)



Total: 3652 full-time equivalent students

Figure 4

Southwark College: students by area of residence (1992-93)

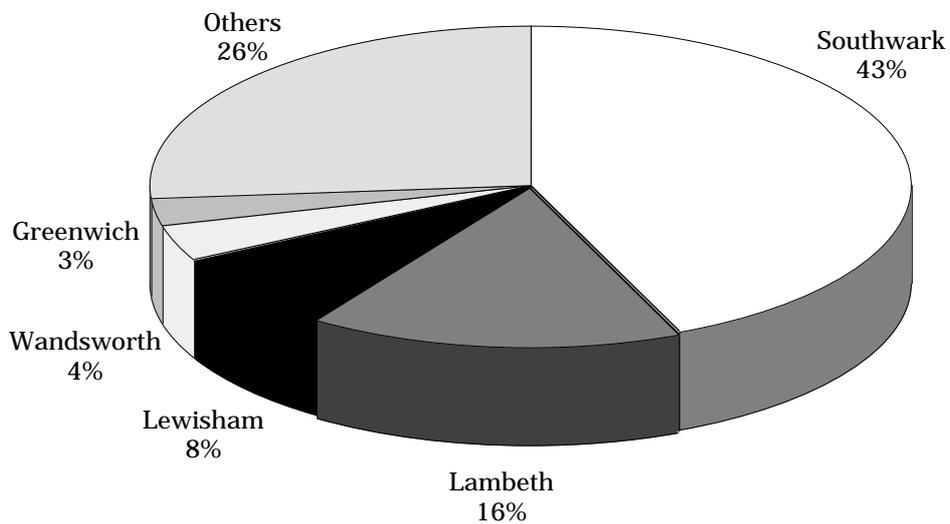


Figure 5

Southwark College: students by age and gender (as of 1 November 1993-94)

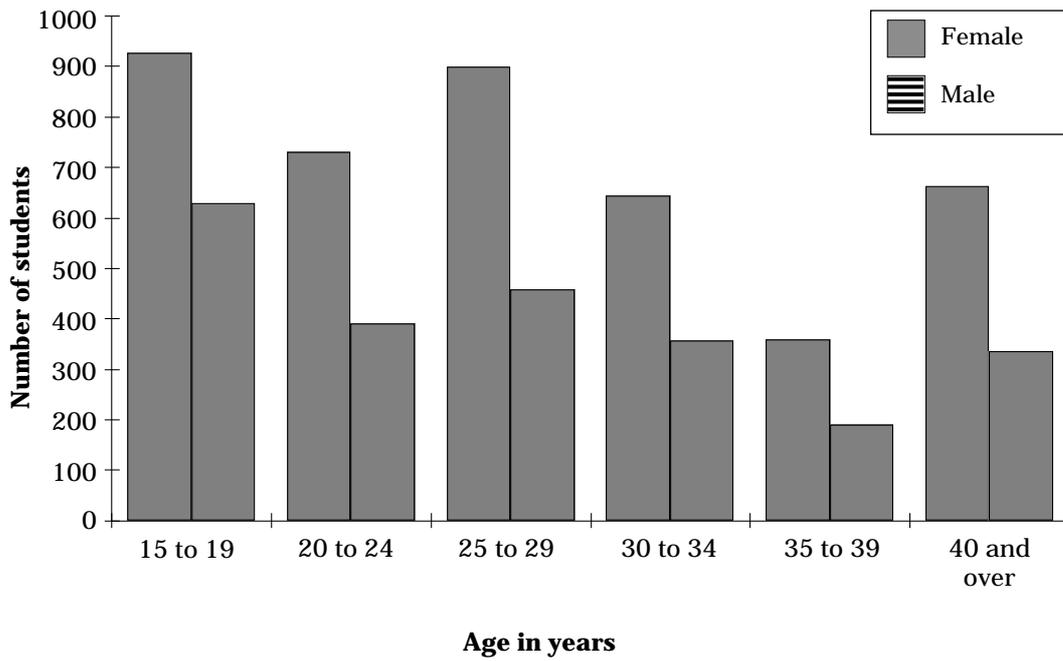
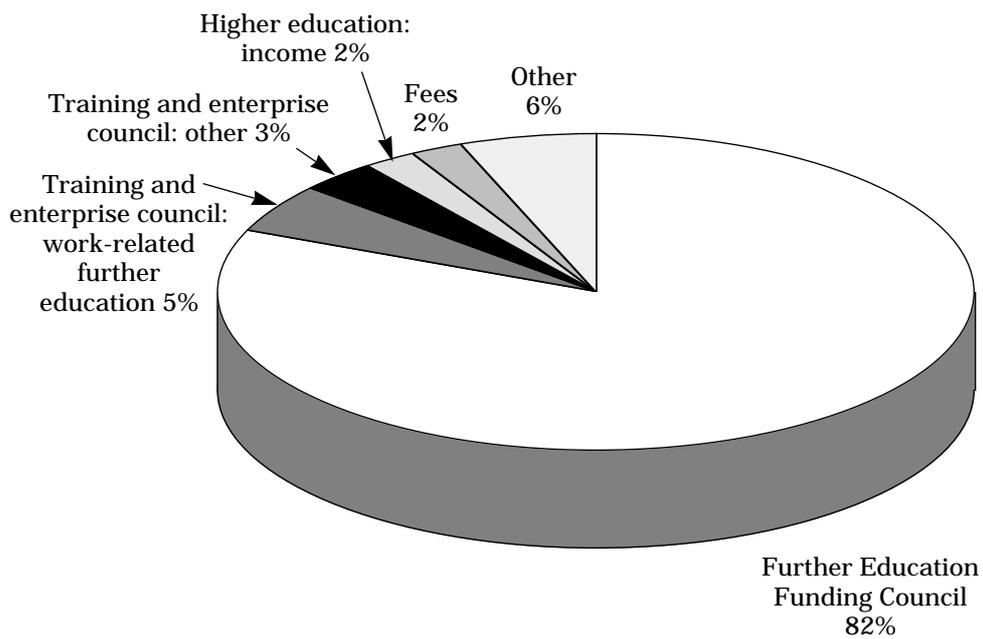


Figure 6

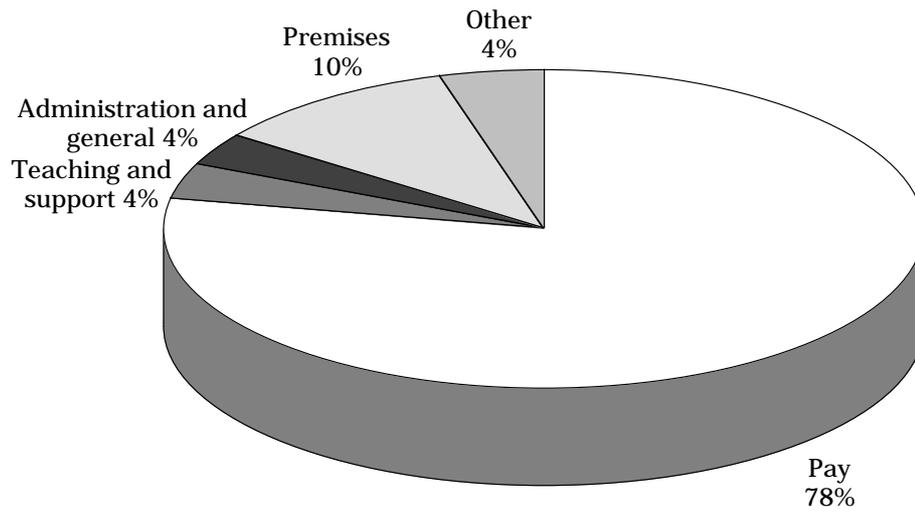
Southwark College: estimated income (1993-94)



Total income: £14,692,000

Figure 7

Southwark College: estimated expenditure less depreciation (1993-94)



Total expenditure: £14,725,000

Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
January 1994