Stamford College

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are described in the Council Circular 93/28. In the course of inspecting colleges, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also summarise their judgements on the balance between strengths and weaknesses using a five-point scale. 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.*

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 52/94

STAMFORD COLLEGE
EAST MIDLANDS REGION
INSPECTED SEPTEMBER 1993 - 29 APRIL 1994

Summary

Stamford College in South Lincolnshire serves the market town of Stamford and a wide rural area. The corporate board plays a full and effective part in the governance of the college. Management responsibilities are clearly defined and understood by staff. The college offers a wide range of courses in response to local needs. Liaison with local schools is effective. Students are positive about their experiences at the college and their level of achievement is generally good. The teaching is well organised and an appropriate variety of strategies is used to promote learning. There should be greater consistency in the experience of students across the college in areas such as induction, information technology and the development of core skills. The college recognises the need to strengthen its provision for learner support. The developments proposed in the strategic plan for provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities should be implemented. The quality system matches the organisational framework of the college but further development of appropriate performance indicators and targets is necessary. The quantity and quality of accommodation, especially for support services, is inadequate.

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	2
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	3
Quality assurance	3
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	3
accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science	2	Care	2
Mathematics	3	Hair and beauty	2
Computing	2		
Engineering	3	Art and design	3
Business studies	2	Humanities	2
Secretarial	2	Social science	2
		English	2
Leisure and public services	1	Access	2
Hotel and catering	2		

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INTRODUCTION

1   Eighteen registered inspectors visited the college for 58 inspector days between 15 September 1993 and 29 April 1994. They inspected 15 subject areas as well as cross-college issues. They observed 143 learning sessions involving approximately 2,100 students. Discussions were held with staff at all levels, students, college governors, representatives from industry and the local community and a representative from the Greater Peterborough Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). The strategic plan and other policy documents were used in determining the extent to which the college was progressing towards the targets it had set itself.

2   The inspection was carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines set out 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 published report. As the inspection of Stamford College occurred early in the cycle, the opportunity for such a response was not available.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3   Stamford College is situated in the south of Lincolnshire adjacent to Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Leicestershire from where increasing numbers of students are attracted. Marketing is now being extended to encourage recruitment from the North Peterborough area. The college lies within the administrative area of South Kesteven District Council. Stamford is a small market town which has a population of 16,000. The college's predominantly rural catchment area extends well beyond Stamford to many other small towns and villages such as Oakham, Uppingham, Bourne, Market Deeping, Crowland and Spalding.

4   The town has good communications; it is close to the A1 and A47 and has an excellent rail link to London. Seventy per cent of students are dependent upon transport funded by the local authority.   Stamford is a town known for its architectural features. The British Broadcasting Corporation's recent production of *Middlemarch* was based in Stamford and the college contributed to its success in a number of ways.

5   Unemployment in the Stamford area is below 7 per cent.   The area has few large employers. The decline of local engineering companies in the last three years has resulted in a loss of jobs. The Royal Air Force (RAF) is a major employer. Over the next few years, reductions in service and related civilian jobs are likely to be substantial.

6   Secondary education is selective at the age of 11 years. Transport is provided for some pupils to attend a grammar school, 13 miles away, or one of the two independent schools in Stamford at which the local education authority (LEA) buys places. There is one maintained local education authority secondary school in the town and an 11-16 community school

three miles to the north. Elsewhere, in the area served by the college, there is a variety of secondary provision including three grammar schools, seven independent schools, 12 comprehensive schools with sixth forms and 13 schools for pupils aged 11 to 16. Six of the 11-16 schools are seeking to establish post-16 provision. Peterborough Regional College is 14 miles from Stamford and Rutland Sixth Form College is 11 miles away.

7   The college's mission is 'to be the area's first choice provider of quality post-16 education and training services.' At the time of the inspection there were 1,531 full-time equivalent students on roll including 1,210 full-time and 4,809 part-time students.   Ninety per cent of students aged 16-19 were full-time students with 80 per cent of them living in Lincolnshire. In the last five years, the full-time equivalent student total has doubled, most of the growth being in recruitment to vocational courses. Full-time equivalent enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2, respectively.

8   Stamford College was opened in 1968 and, except for an art annexe, is contained on one site.   A recent reorganisation has created a structure with eight divisions and a senior management team of principal, vice-principal and two assistant principals, supported by an accountant. The college has a full-time equivalent staff of 146. A profile of teaching and support staff is shown in figure 3.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION.

9   The college offers a wide range of provision which includes 32 General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects, 22 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects and 35 full-time vocational courses at intermediate and advanced levels. These provide for 43 per cent of 16 year olds and 15 per cent of adults in the population of the catchment area.   A 1993 survey of 1,341 residents conducted by the local TEC, showed that 66 per cent named the college as the first point of reference for information about training and further education. Enrolments of students, expressed as full-time equivalents, by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 4.

10   There is a substantial programme of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ). There are currently 36 candidates from industry for assessor awards and 50 college staff taking Training and Development Lead Body awards. Adult provision is increasing and the college has established flexible workshops in a range of subjects from beauty therapy to information technology skills. Individual NVQ units are not marketed as separate modules although this might help to increase access.

11   Staff are aware of the government's aims and policies for further education including the National Targets for Education and Training. Currently, 79 per cent of 16 year-olds in the area continue to participate in full-time education and more than half enrol at the college. The college

achieved its growth targets in 1993-94 and is aiming at a 10 per cent growth for 1994-95.

12   The college has effective liaison with 35 local schools although an increasing number of schools, all with sixth forms, deny access for careers advice from the college for pupils in their final year of compulsory schooling. A full analysis of access to schools has been undertaken by the college. The college is a partner with local schools in Technical Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) consortia. Most of the students from the 11-16 school, some 800 yards away, find relevant courses at the college. The main exception are the leavers who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Provision for these students is planned to start in the academic year 1994-95.   The vice-principal plays a major and personal role in recruitment from schools. The college works hard to maintain its links with the LEA.

13   There are effective informal links with Nene College, University, and Nottingham Trent University. The college hopes to develop a mutually beneficial relationship with the new University of Lincolnshire.   A total of 165 students progressed to higher education in 1993.

14   There are good relations with the local TEC. The chief executive meets the principal quarterly and is a member of the corporation. The local arm of the TEC is the Stamford and District Business Forum which reflects the nature of employment in the area. The principal is a member of the forum. The move by the college to provide courses in supervisory management is particularly welcomed by local business interests. There are two other TECs in the catchment area but there are few formal contacts despite the efforts of the college to make them. County and TEC boundaries have had significant effects on the ability of the college to respond to some training initiatives.

15   The college is seen as generally responsive by employers. Two college advisory committees, art and design, and hospitality and leisure, involve employers. Most contacts in other curriculum areas are through work experience placements and through education and industry committees of the TEC. An employer survey conducted by the college in April 1994 showed that 38 companies had used the college for training. A high proportion of these expressed satisfaction with the service provided. Parents of students under 18 are involved in the college and are invited to consultation evenings. There is general satisfaction with the college among parents.

16   There are many sources of market intelligence within the college, including the business development co-ordinator, the principal, vice-principal, the NVQ development co-ordinator, division heads and course teams. However, market research data is not systematically collected and stored. The college is undertaking a training needs analysis and computer training for two major companies.   The business development co-ordinator spends half his time on divisional

responsibilities and the remainder on his cross-college role of business development. He attends advisory committees when asked and is involved in setting prices for full-cost courses for industry. All other arrangements are made by the divisions who, after the deduction of costs, keep the income raised from such courses. There are mixed responses from sections of the college to full-cost work. While there is a general willingness to respond, operational constraints are perceived as a considerable hurdle.

17   Divisions and course teams develop their own publicity material and the vice-principal co-ordinates it. The current prospectus, approved by governors, was judged by employers to be of good quality. Some course leaflets, however, are too rigid in the attitudes they convey and in their presentation. The availability of the college prospectus and publication leaflets in feeder towns is poor. The college has run access to higher education courses for a number of years and is now extending this provision. Pre-access provision is being opened in Market Deeping, and Bourne. Opportunities are developing for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in association with a local school. Support for such students on mainstream courses is provided on an individual basis.

18   The college is committed to creating a culture which promotes equal opportunities 'through every aspect of our work and the services we offer.' Staff appointments and student enrolments are monitored.   However, there is no section on equal opportunities in the staff handbook. The present training relating to equal opportunities has been undertaken by only a minority of staff.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

19   There are currently 19 board members.   Ten are experienced business people who bring a blend of managerial experience and knowledge of vocational areas which are of direct relevance to the college. Other members are the principal, vice-principal, two assistant principals, the chief executive of the local TEC, a Lincolnshire county councillor, two staff members, representing academic and support staff, and an RAF education officer. The president of the students union is an observer. The corporation board members play a full and effective role in the development of the institution. They have a clear vision of the direction in which they wish the college to move. Members are supportive of the college and committed to the mission that they were involved in articulating. The role of board members is clearly documented and a clear distinction is made between governance and management. There is an expectation that all governors will familiarise themselves with aspects of the college and this is welcomed by staff. Governors chair advisory committees and some have spent a day shadowing work in the college.

20   Corporation meetings are held six times a year and there are additional meetings as necessary. There is an average attendance rate of 80 per cent. Meetings are planned in advance and are effectively supported

by timely production and distribution of papers. Agenda items are strategic in nature and relate to the college's achievement of its mission. Papers presented to the corporation board include the minutes of the board sub-committees and academic board and regular reports on aspects of college performance from the principal. The subcommittees of the board have appropriate terms of reference. The executive powers invested in the finance and general purpose sub-committee are clearly defined. The role of the audit committee is developing. The college's income and expenditure is shown in figures 5 and 6. Approximately 80 per cent of the college's income is derived from the Council and little income is generated from short courses and consultancy. Pay accounts for 75 per cent of the college's expenditure. The college's unit of funding for 1993-94 is £2,027 compared with a median figure of £2,444 for all general further education and tertiary colleges.

21 The strategic plan sets out clearly the medium-term aims and objectives of the institution. It shows priorities under the two headings of individual education and training, and support for business. The annual plan provides a set of statements against which progress towards achievement is monitored and identifies which members of the senior management team have responsibility for reviewing specific progress. Divisional development plans reflect the college mission and the priorities set in the annual plan. However, they do not always quantify targets or provide sufficient research evidence to support proposed new initiatives.

22 There is a comprehensive range of policy statements, including those covering equal opportunities, health and safety and student support. There is some duplication of policy statements where updating has taken place but old documents have not been weeded out. There is not always an indication of when and by whom policies have been formally approved although responsibilities for carrying out policies are clearly defined in job descriptions. Health and safety, for example, are the responsibility of the vice-principal who effectively manages the monitoring and auditing process and produces an annual report. The annual health and safety report for 1992-93 has yet to be presented to the board.

23 Management responsibilities are well documented and lines of communication are clearly defined and understood by staff. The senior management team, which meets weekly, consists of the principal, vice-principal and two assistant principals. Policies proposed by the senior management team, are discussed with the college management team. This team, consists of the eight divisional heads, student services officer, area tutor for adult education and the quality co-ordinator and the senior management team and meets each week. It is effective in reaching management decisions, in providing an update on current developments and in determining actions. Divisional heads, who now have extended roles which include the delegated budgets and development and resource planning, are carrying them out with varying levels of confidence. Some support for the heads in carrying out these tasks continues to be necessary.

24   Management objectives include encouraging staff to participate in the development of provision and keeping them informed of decisions. Communication with staff is good and is, in part, achieved through the distribution of senior and college management team minutes to all staff. Divisional meetings provide a further venue for formally communicating information to staff. The staff consultative committee, chaired by the chairman of the corporation, provides an opportunity for the board to talk directly with staff.

25   Staff participate in planning the college provision through their contributions to the divisional development plan. However, many require staff development and training in the assessment of needs and the costing aspects of development planning. Much of the work of reviewing and debating curriculum developments, previously undertaken by the academic board, is now duplicated by the divisional development planning processes. A review of the role and responsibilities of the academic board is planned but has yet to be conducted.

26   Staffing and resources are generally well deployed. Financial allocations to divisions are clearly understood. Current allocations are based on historical factors together with additions to account for developments. Unit costs and other indicators are being developed within the college and those currently available are being applied effectively by senior management to inform operational decisions. Attendance data are used effectively by heads of division to monitor retention rates. Poor student attendance patterns are reported to course teams and tutors as appropriate. Reasons for students leaving are vigorously pursued and analysed by course. To provide an indication of college performance, college data is compared internally with that of previous years and with that of other colleges where it is available.

27   The college management information system is new this year. Some of the initial difficulties have been successfully addressed. There is the potential to build a system that readily provides all the reports required during the year. Enrolment targets are part of total planning but better use could be made of them in developing divisional plans.   Student destinations are recorded, analysed and published annually with examination results.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

28   The pre-entry information and guidance offered to students is generally good. All enquiries are dealt with promptly and course-specific material is available. However, the content of course leaflets lacks appropriate detail and the quality of production is often poor. There is no system for logging enquiries and monitoring the rate of follow-up applications. Once applications have been received they are logged and tracked through to enrolment. All prospective full-time students have an opportunity to attend for interview. These interviews are centrally organised through student services but conducted by divisional tutors.

Students who make general enquiries and require non-subject specific guidance are initially offered an interview with a member of staff from student services. Referral is then made as appropriate. The guidance and information received at this stage is well received by students particularly in secretarial studies, catering, science and leisure. Some sections offer students opportunities to attend the college for taster sessions, but the availability of this facility varies. Some sections, for example engineering, offer two to three days. Others, such as GCSE/GCE A level have no such provision. In August 1994, the college term has been re-scheduled to commence the week following the publication of GCSE examination results. This will ensure that more staff are available to give guidance at that time.

29   The college has made arrangements to accredit prior learning in a number of areas, most notably in management and to a limited extent in care, secretarial studies and administration. There are no such arrangements in engineering. The service is in the process of being developed and two members of staff have responsibility for its marketing and co-ordination.

30   All full-time students receive induction to their courses, but the contents of the induction programmes vary. Student services define only the minimum expectations. The college should review the policy for induction to ensure that the wide variations in the quality of the students' experience are reduced. In the best examples, such as the intermediate level GNVQ catering, where there is an open access policy for admission, a two-week induction is provided within which there are opportunities for students to attend other parts of the college programme. A system which includes counselling by their course tutor allows full-time students to change courses within the first half-term.

31   The college undertook a comprehensive review of the tutorial system in 1993. It recommended that personal tutors should take responsibility for the monitoring and review of individual students' progress as well as the provision of pastoral care. In some areas there is evidence that the tutorial experience is having a positive effect. There is an effective system for monitoring student attendance and remedial action is taken where necessary. Tutorials provide support for students to engage in action planning and for the monitoring of performance against objectives. The intention is to extend this system to co-ordinate action planning with the records of achievement which students had brought from their schools. Staff development for tutors is required, to ensure that the revised tutorial system works effectively across the college and that the linkage of the existing system with the development of the records of achievement is implemented consistently. A programme for personal and social development is offered to students throughout the week and additional time can be negotiated for participation in team sports.

32   There are several instances of good practice in tutorial support. In the art and design division, students are increasingly being encouraged to contribute to the assessment of their own learning during tutorials. In

hairdressing and beauty therapy and in secretarial studies, students value their tutorial support. In leisure, the tutor system provides comprehensive monitoring of student progress. These examples of good practice should be disseminated as a means of encouraging better and more consistent practice across the college. Good communication systems are not yet in place in some courses. For example, on GCSE or GCE A level courses there is no effective mechanism for communicating information to some students.

33   The siting and layout of the centralised student services accommodation constrain activities and prevent easy access. The counselling room is located in an area which does not guarantee students confidentiality. The college has a qualified part-time counsellor, but availability is limited and some of her time is used in dealing with welfare issues rather than counselling. There is little time for the counsellor to raise the profile of the service. Students value the restricted service which is available.

34   The college has a comprehensive partnership agreement with the Lincolnshire Careers Service which provides regular careers advice interviews within the college. This service caters both for self referral and for positive action by the college to encourage students to think about their future.

35   There is a well-developed and effective advisory service to support those students who wish to make applications to higher education. On several vocational courses it was evident that students received expert careers advice as an integral part of the programme. There is no provision for careers education as opposed to careers advice. Careers education as opposed to careers advice is not provided as a central function and its availability is variable across the college.

36   The lack of provision for learner support or for the development of core skills is a major weakness. The mathematics workshop is only open for one session per week. There is a communications workshop designed to support students who are re-taking GCSE English, but it is poorly resourced and offers only limited drop-in facilities. The workshop is a timetabled element on the GCSE English course, but it is viewed as an option and not required as an integral part of the course. A working group has been set up to address the issue of systematic diagnostic testing of new students to identfy their learning support needs. There are plans to develop a programme of learning support for students enrolled from September 1994.

37   The college has no separate provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. While the college was the responsibility of the local education authority, it worked within a scheme which placed students with additional support needs at a neighbouring institution. The college has now developed a policy on special educational needs.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

38   Of the 143 classes inspected, 59 per cent had strengths that clearly outweighed weaknesses. The strengths and weaknesses were evenly balanced in a further 35 per cent of the sessions. The following table shows the grades awarded.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE A/AS level		6	18	9	1	0	34
GCSE		1	1	10	3	0	15
GNVQ		2	6	8	1	0	17
NVQ		4	4	4	0	0	12
Other		12	30	19	4	0	65
Total		25	59	50	9	0	143

39   Programmes of study were generally well planned. In the best practice, comprehensive course documentation included schemes of work and students' work records.   There were regular course team meetings for monitoring and review.

40   Generally, teaching was well prepared and teachers employed a variety of teaching and learning strategies. In the better lessons, there were clear objectives, and work was well paced; there were ample opportunities for students to be involved in differing learning activities and there was reinforcement of students' earlier work and cross-referencing to other parts of students' courses. In tutorials, questioning was often used effectively to increase understanding. There were several examples of effective team teaching. Some students were working on individual programmes of study which allowed them to progress at their own pace through the course material. Students would benefit if there were more formal collaboration over the scheduling of homework and assignments between tutors who share classes.

41   Learning resources were generally of a high standard. Appropriate handouts, videos and topical material were available for many lessons. On some courses, the textbooks used in class were not always sufficient or suitable for all students. Some subjects, for example mathematics, had effective wall displays in their specialist accommodation which provided additional learning support.

42   Classwork and coursework assignments were generally of an appropriate standard. The better assignments had specific subject assessment criteria, common skills assessment criteria and a student response sheet. Many assignments were well structured and have progressively more difficult sections that challenge all the students. There was some variability in the quality of marking. Teachers' written comments were sometimes brief and not very constructive. The ethos of the access

course was suitably adult and the course content was of an appropriate academic standard to prepare students for higher education.

43   Initial assessment of students' additional learning needs is poor. Although some students recognise their own needs for additional learning support, they are not always clear that learning support is available. Other students need persuading that they should attend learning support sessions. Lesson planning does not always pay sufficient attention to students' individual needs and abilities. Classroom organisation is sometimes not helpful to learning. In practical sessions, most teachers recognise and respond to the range of student abilities in a group and can be very supportive. In the weaker classes, there was little variety in methods of working and teachers were not as aware of individuals' levels of understanding and progress as was generally the case.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

44   Students on GCE A level and BTEC courses were developing knowledge and understanding appropriate to their level of study. On secretarial courses, for example, the skills displayed by students were clearly marketable. However, some GNVQ intermediate business students are not achieving results at appropriate levels.

45   Students enjoy their studies. They were enthusiastic and hard working. In the classes observed, the students carried out their practical work safely and competently.

46   The extent to which students develop basic core skills is variable. The programme for 16 year olds wishing to enter higher levels in the public and emergency services provides core skills support in numeracy, literacy, communication skills and group work and also includes an information technology certificate. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, work for competitions and shows helps to develop communication and presentation skills. In secretarial studies, there is little evidence of numeracy skills being developed. In computing courses, there are some instances of first year work being correctly downgraded for poor quality communication skills. The development of information technology is uneven between subjects: in engineering, its use is evident; in geography and history there is little evidence of information technology being used and in science it is underdeveloped. The mathematical skills of some pupils are too low for the courses they are following and in geography, graphical standards are generally low.

47   Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have opportunities to gain nationally-recognised and relevant qualifications. Two students from social education centres are successfully following a NVQ level 1 course in hairdressing alongside the level 2 course. A good system has been developed for monitoring progress in the communications workshop, although it is not always kept up to date.

48   Average sucess rates in GCSE A level examinations, grades A-E, have been consistently over 80 per cent. In 1993, the sucess rate was 86 per cent, compared with the national average for all students of 77 per cent and of 66 per cent for students in the further education sector other than those from sixth form colleges. In 1992-93, the average points score for the 125 students aged 16-18 who entered two or more GCE A levels was 13.2 (where A = 10, E = 2). This is a little below the national average for students in all schools and colleges, but places the college in the top 25 per cent of colleges within the further education sector. The 52 students aged 16-19 entered for fewer than two A levels obtained on average 1.9 points which is below the national average of 2.7.

49   GCE A level mathematics results were good: 79 per cent of the pure mathematics and 75 per cent of the applied mathematics students gained A or B grades, as compared with 43 per cent nationally. The achievements of students on GCE A level communications were also good: 48 per cent gained grades A and B grades, as compared with 30 per cent nationally. Other subjects which achieved results above national averages were English literature, geography, and art and design.   In history, few students achieved A or B grades but the overall pass rate was good. Examination results were below national averages in French but above the national average in German. Science results vary. Chemistry results were below the national average but there were good results in biology and physics. GCE A level results for students aged 19 and over were generally good for full-time students but more variable for part-time students.

50   GCSE results in mathematics were poor: less than 25 per cent achieved grade C or above and a significant number, about 20 per cent, did not achieve any grade (A-G). The percentage of grades A to C achieved in GCSE English was also poor at 41 per cent.

51   In 1992-93 there was an 86 per cent success rate on BTEC programmes for the 88 students aged 16-18 who completed their courses. This was slightly above the average of 81 per cent for England. In total there were 147 students, aged 16-18, studying on full-time level 3 programmes or their equivalent; the success rate for these students was 76 per cent overall.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

52   There is a policy on strategic quality management. The college chose this approach in 1992, but the main work on implementation has taken place in the last year. The policy is focused primarily on the curriculum. The quality procedures are now being extended to include Support Services Plans have been established to develop service standards for the support areas. The quality system matches the organisational framework of the college. At senior management level, the assistant principal for curriculum and staffing has responsibility for quality.   There is a direct line responsibility to divisional heads and, from them, to course leaders and subject tutors. All teaching staff interviewed had a clear understanding of

the college's quality system and their role in it.

53   The introduction of the quality system has been supported by the appointment of a quality co-ordinator, who works well with the heads of division and course teams. The quality co-ordinator reports directly to the responsible assistant principal and is playing a significant role in extending the quality assurance system to support staff. As part of the strategy to disseminate the policy and procedures to the staff, the quality co-ordinator attends divisional and course teams meetings. There is no separate quality committee or system for quality audits.   Consideration is being given to setting up a subcommittee of the academic board to carry out quality audits. Quality issues are reviewed termly by the senior management team and the quality co-ordinator attends for this item. It is planned to review the system at a two-day conference this summer.

54   Work is in hand on a college charter using the guidelines of the Association for Colleges. A college charter task group which has teaching and support staff representation has been set up.

55   Quality standards have been developed for most curriculum areas. They include standards for admissions and assessment procedures, adequacy of resources, staffing and accommodation. They are to be extended to include, for example, standards and targets for examination pass rates, absences, retention rates, progression, and enrolment targets. Quantitative data will be important if course teams are to carry out more analytical and evaluative reviews in support of planned college developments. At present, the information available is not used effectively and this is a major weakness in the quality assurance system.

56   The development of performance indicators and targets is now regarded as a priority.   The college's management information system has the potential to provide a range of performance indicators. The system is relatively new. At the time of the inspection, the college was awaiting a Council circular on performance indicators.

57   Quality assurance files have been developed in the last few months in all curriculum areas. A named file holder is responsible for each file. Staff are aware of the importance of these files and are already making use of them. In addition to course information the files contain minutes of course team meetings, copies of moderators' reports, results of the questionnaire issued to students, and reports on student absence.   There is little evaluative or analytical material in most of them. There is a danger that the use of the files as active quality assurance documents may be hampered by the sheer size and weight of course information that is placed in them. There is evidence to suggest that a few staff may already be keeping some data in other, more accessible, files.   The college may wish to review the content of quality assurance files.

58   Student surveys are carried out during the year on all full-time and part-time courses.   The results are analysed and considered by the course teams and evaluations and reviews are prepared. Teams are asked to

prepare an action plan if necessary. These documents are then passed to the head of division who also reports to the college management team. Copies are also filed in the quality assurance files. Summary reports by the heads of division are sent to the principal, the assistant principal for curriculum and staffing and the quality co-ordinator. This system is well established and consideration is now being given to improving and standardising the student questionnaire. The college publishes an annual report which includes the achievements of students giving examination results, progression rates and higher education destinations.

59   There are separate staff induction programmes for teaching and for support staff at the start of the college year. There is also an induction evening for part-time staff. After the initial induction the responsibility for the continuing support of new staff rests with the divisions. An appraisal system for teaching staff is being introduced. It was developed in Lincolnshire before incorporation and includes provision for classroom observation. The scheme has general acceptance by teaching staff, all of whom should complete their first appraisal by July 1994. It is planned that support staff will be brought into the appraisal system later in 1994-95.

60   Staff development needs are discussed in the context of college priorities and plans. The assistant principal for curriculum and staffing who controls the staff development budget also monitors the applications for training and development. For external courses both the member of staff and the divisional head/line manager are required to complete a simple evaluation form. The college has made a commitment to the Investors in People programme, planning to achieve the relevant designation at the end of 1994.

RESOURCES

Staffing

61   There are sufficient teachers for the programmes offered and they have appropriate qualifications. Of the full-time teaching staff, 59 hold first or higher degrees and 10 have a higher national diploma or certificate. The remainder hold relevant professional or other qualifications. All have, or are working towards, qualified teacher status. Five managers hold higher degrees in education management and a further three staff are working towards this qualification. About 83 per cent of teachers have had work experience outside education. A majority of teachers are in the 36-50 age group. Of the full-time staff, 37 per cent are female. The college is in the early stages of developing a human resources policy. There are approximately twice as many part-time as full-time teachers. In terms of full-time equivalents, part-time teachers account for 41 per cent of the total teaching staff. They are well integrated into the curriculum teams. Support staff provide good assistance but their numbers are relatively low. All staff, including part-time teachers, undertake an appropriate induction programme and there is a mentor scheme for new full-time teachers.

Equipment/learning resources

62   Overall, the range and quality of specialist equipment is adequate to support the programmes offered. There are generally good resources for hairdressing and beauty therapy, science and mathematics. The main weaknesses are the resources for graphics and textiles. There are also shortages of information technology equipment in art and design, beauty therapy and science. Reprographic facilities and audio-visual equipment are provided centrally and used effectively across the college.

63   Students have access to 134 computer workstations. The ratio of students to workstations is 11.4:1 which is near the norm for the sector. Approximately 50 per cent of the machines are capable of running windows software packages and over 85 per cent are located in the information technology suite. Little use is currently made of personal computers outside the information technology suite. As facilities develop, it is intended that all computers should be linked into a network in the information technology suite. There is a satisfactory range of modern general-purpose software in the suite and some specialist packages. Other specialist packages are available in the divisions, but there is no central software catalogue. The information technology co-ordinator has a brief to develop courses and training, recommend software packages, encourage the use of information technology and advise staff on the use of software. A users committee has been formed to advise senior managers. Approximately £250,000 was spent on new machines, software and servers in 1993 and a further £105,000 has been allocated for 1994. The college anticipates allocating £60,000 per annum from 1995 onwards for the rolling replacement of hardware and software. As the older machines in the information technology suite are replaced, they are sensibly being used in other areas of the college which currently lack computers. A draft policy aims to make the college the area's first choice provider of information technology facilities and to integrate information technology into the curriculum.

64   The college has had limited capital equipment funding in the past but was allocated £100,000 by the Council this year. Of this sum, £70,000 was used for the purchase of computers for the new information technology suite.   The remainder was allocated to mathematics, science and technology. There is no strategy for the replacement of capital equipment other than that for information technology.

65   The library was formerly the assembly hall.   It is attractive but the seating capacity of 64 seats is low for the student population. Sixty of the seats are located on the former stage area and are too cramped for students to study effectively. A mezzanine floor is expected to be installed by September 1994, this will increase the available space and provide a location for numeracy and communications workshops. The bookstock is 16,000 volumes and some 80 periodicals are taken. There are shortages of books for secretarial studies, computer software and social care. Engineering texts are limited in numbers and some are dated. In the library, there is a photocopier and five personal computers on open access

for word processing. Students also have access to a number of CD-ROMs which are shortly to be networked through the information technology suite. Audio visual materials are purchased and retained by the teaching divisions. The library has no record of what is purchased and this reduces the use that can be made of material by other staff and students. The current library budget, including a component for maintenance of audio-visual aids across the college, is £15,500 and a further £500 has been allocated to network the CD-ROMs. The librarian formally seeks the needs of staff through divisional heads each year and maintains good informal contacts with these and other staff to ensure the continued relevance of the bookstock. Divisions also purchase their own texts, but the library has no record of these.

Accommodation

66   Some 70 per cent of the college's general teaching space is provided by 20 huts that are up to 20 years old.   They form 35 per cent of all teaching space. The huts are maintained in a satisfactory condition both internally and externally but they restrict the college's scope for flexible use of accommodation. Security considerations prevent the permanent siting of expensive equipment and materials in these areas.   Teaching and circulation areas in the main buildings are clean, well maintained and treated with respect by students.   Classrooms are carpeted and, in the main, appropriately furnished.   There is a balance of general and specialist teaching accommodation.   Some classrooms are spacious and of good quality but other classrooms as well as some laboratories and other specialist areas are too small for the size of student groups that normally use them. The college also lacks a modern business suite.   Art and design accommodation is scattered.   There is a shortage of meeting and interview rooms and also of private study accommodation. The art annexe, 300 metres from the main site, is a former school meals kitchen and garage. It provides cramped accommodation for photography and ceramics courses. By contrast, the hairdressing salon is spacious and of good quality.   The information technology suite is an excellent facility that combines formal teaching, open-access and short course areas in a modern, high-quality environment.

67   Non-teaching accommodation for students and staff is limited in quantity and quality. Storage space, especially for students' work, is scarce. There is no creche and the refectory is small.   The students' social area in the basement of the main building is appropriate for students in the 16-19 age group but there is no accommodation suited to adult students.   Office accommodation for teaching staff is cramped and the staff common room is too small to be effective.

68   Teaching accommodation is allocated through divisional heads and the college timetable coordinator. A local authority survey in 1991 found that the space was used 80 per cent of its available time.   No other more recent space utilisation survey has been undertaken. Room utilisation is

not regularly monitored but reports are becoming available from the computerised management information system that will enable this to be done. The college has taken steps to increase the utilisation of the available accommodation, for example by converting the hall into a library and a comprehensive accommodation strategy exists.

69 Buildings are generally in a satisfactory state of repair but a preventive maintenance programme needs to be introduced now that a property manager has been appointed. A comprehensive series of safety audits are being carried out and there are sound procedures for reporting on and responding to safety matters.

70 Wheelchair access is potentially difficult because of the sloping nature of the site; there is ramp access to only one of the huts. Ramps have been installed to give access to all floors of the main building including the library but movement from within the building to the library is circuitous. There is easy access to the engineering block and the art annexe but not to the science and hairdressing areas. Rooms are changed to adapt to individual students' needs.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

71 Stamford College is making progress towards achieving its mission. The particular strengths of the college are:

- its responsiveness to the needs of the community through a wide range of provision and effective liaison with local schools

- a corporate board whose members play a full and effective role in the development of the institution

- a strategic plan which sets out the medium term aims and objectives for the institution and clearly identifies responsibilities for reviewing progress

- clearly-defined management responsibilities which staff understand

- well-organised and well-prepared teaching

- satisfactory or good standards of student achievement

- a quality system which matches the organisational framework of the college

- suitably-qualified and experienced staff.

72 If the college is to maintain and improve standards, the following issues need to be addressed:

- the strengthening of provision for learner support across the college

- the implementation of plans for specialist provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

- the establishment of quality standards and performance indicators

- the quantity and quality of accommodation, especially for supporting services

- greater consistency in students' experience of induction, information technology and core skills

- the extension of equal opportunities training to all staff

- the availability of a central information resource for software, audio and visual resources and books.

FIGURES

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

Figure 1

Stamford College: percentage enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by age (1993-94)
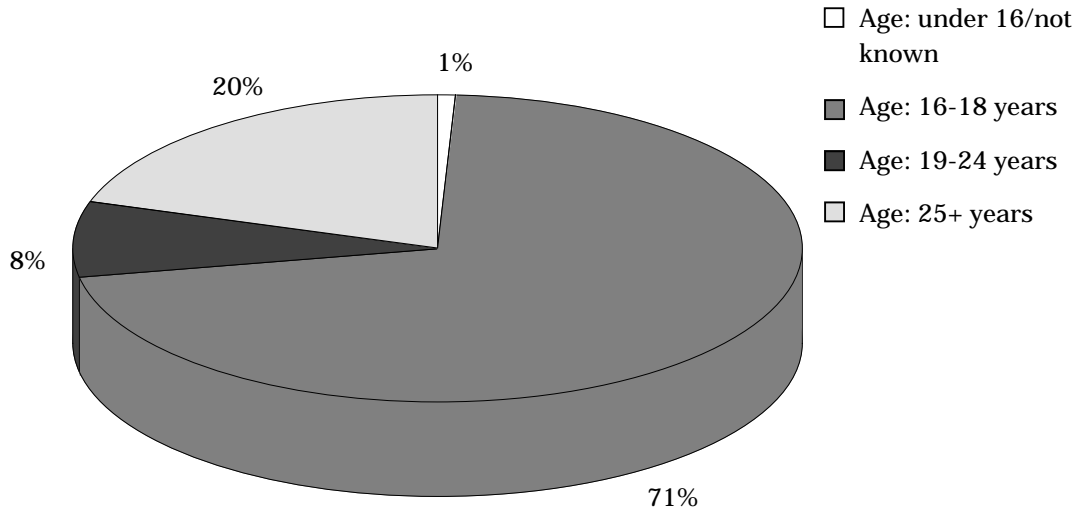
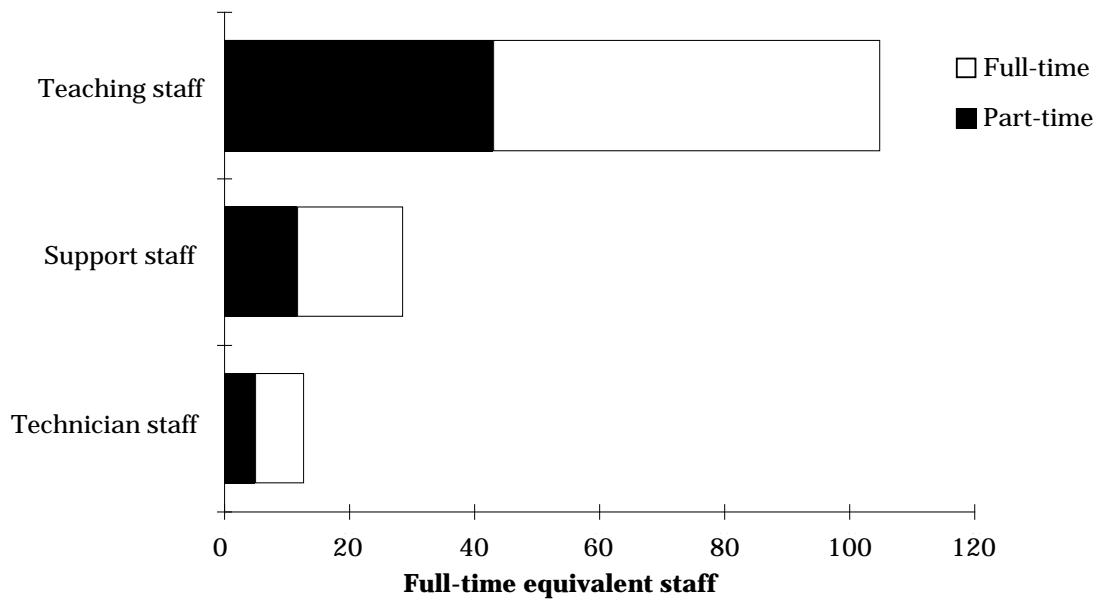Full-time equivalent enrolments: 1,531

Figure 2

Stamford College: percentage enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by level of study (1993-94)
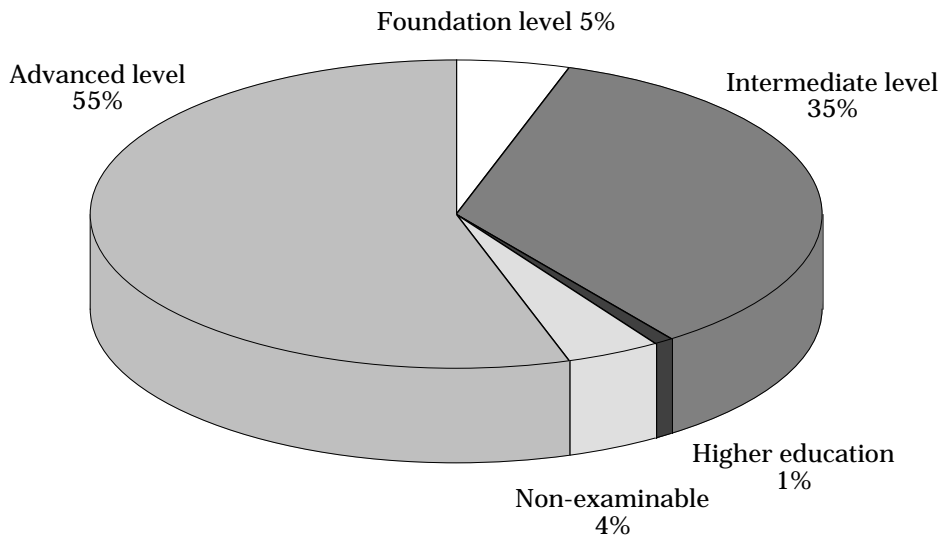
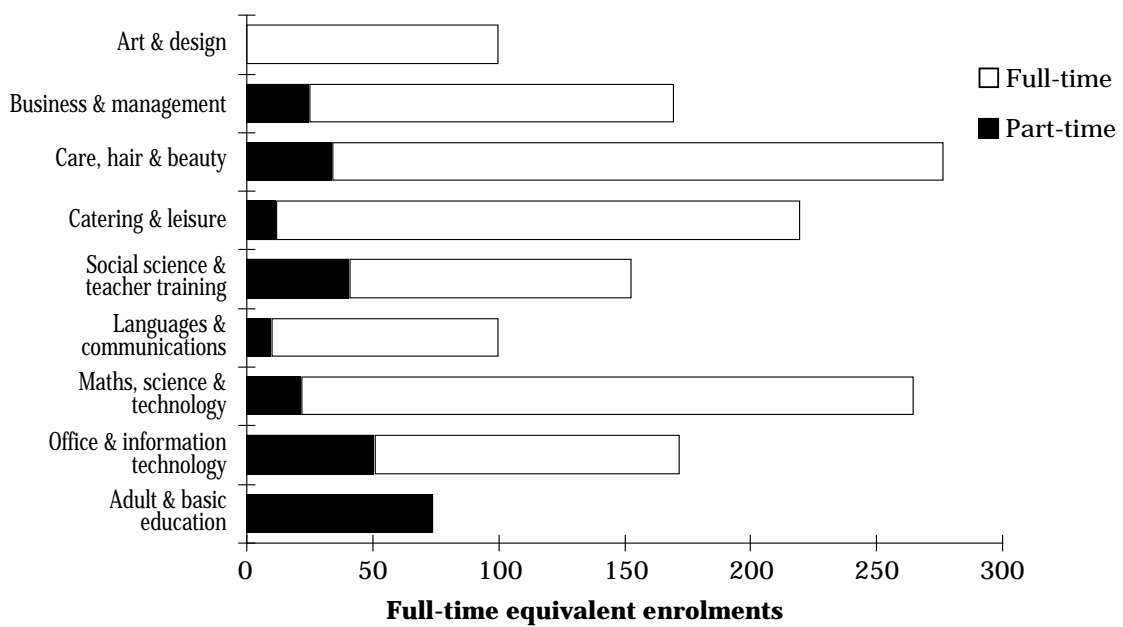Full-time equivalent enrolments: 1,531

Figure 3

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

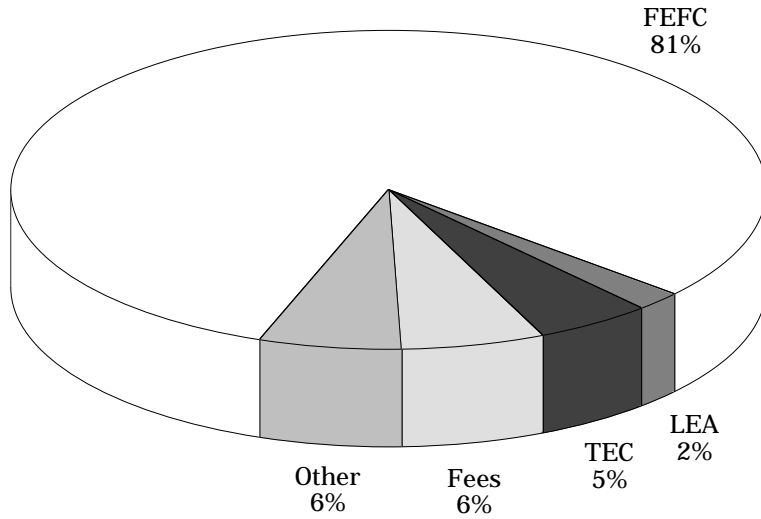Full-time equivalent staff: 146

Figure 4

Stamford College: enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)

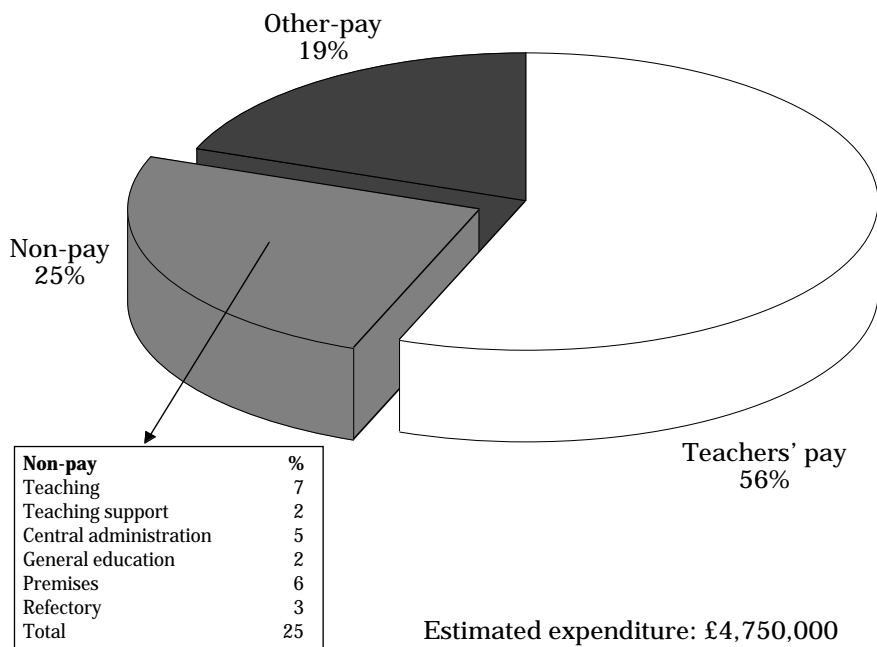Full-time equivalent enrolments: 1,531

Figure 5

Stamford College: estimated income (16 months to July 1994)

FEFC
81%

LEA
2%

TEC
5%

Fees
6%

Other
6%

Estimated income: £5,000,000

Figure 6

Stamford College: estimated expenditure (16 months to July 1994)

Other-pay
19%

Non-pay
25%

Teachers' pay
56%

Non-pay	%
Teaching	7
Teaching support	2
Central administration	5
General education	2
Premises	6
Refectory	3
Total	25

Estimated expenditure: £4,750,000