

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Tamworth and Lichfield Colleges

September 1996

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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

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

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CONTENTS

	Paragraph
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	3
Responsiveness and range of provision	9
Governance and management	19
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	28
Teaching and the promotion of learning	35
Students' achievements	45
Quality assurance	57
Resources	68
Conclusions and issues	78
Figures	

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

College grade profiles 1993-95

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 110/96

TAMWORTH AND LICHFIELD COLLEGES

WEST MIDLANDS REGION

Inspected March 1995-May 1996

Summary

Tamworth College and Staffordshire Education Authority's college at Lichfield became federated colleges on 1 April 1996 while the inspection was taking place. The report is focused mainly on the work of the former Tamworth College. Tamworth and Lichfield Colleges provide an appropriate range of courses. There is effective co-operation with local schools. The corporation board is committed to the colleges and their mission. The induction of students and tutorial support are well managed. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Students are motivated and enthusiastic. There is a strong commitment to improving quality. The monitoring and review of courses is well established but there is not enough attention to setting performance targets. Most programme areas have sufficient resources. Sites are generally well maintained. Corporation committees and the academic board have yet to establish clear terms of reference. The corporation and the academic board do not monitor students' achievements sufficiently closely. The management information system varies in its effectiveness. There is inadequate professional careers guidance for students. There are no policies for additional learning support and the development of core skills. Some examination results, particularly for GNVQs, are below the national average. Links between the various quality assurance procedures are unclear and there are few measurable targets in the student charter.

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: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and computing	2	Art and design	3
Engineering	2	English and law	2
Business studies	2	Return to learn, access to higher education and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	
Leisure and tourism	3		
Health care	2		
Hairdressing	2		2

INTRODUCTION

1 Tamworth and Lichfield Colleges were inspected during the period March 1995 to May 1996. The inspection focused mainly on the former Tamworth College which entered into a federation with Staffordshire Education Authority's college at Lichfield on 1 April 1996, while the inspection was taking place. Inspectors looked at aspects of the newly-federated colleges' organisation, including arrangements for governance and management, range of provision and accommodation. However, most of the references in this inspection report are to the provision and work of Tamworth College. All the lessons inspected were at Tamworth College and its centres.

2 Fifteen inspectors spent 58 days in the colleges. They visited 117 lessons, scrutinised students' work and held discussions with corporation members, students, college managers, teaching and support staff, local employers, parents, and representatives of local schools, a university and the Staffordshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Inspectors also attended college meetings and examined documentation on the colleges and their courses.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 The town of Tamworth and the city of Lichfield are eight miles apart. Tamworth has, until recently, had high levels of unemployment; Lichfield has generally enjoyed greater prosperity. Tamworth College was built in the early 1950s to provide training for the local engineering industry and courses in secretarial and office skills to meet the needs of local employers. Tamworth has grown from a population of under 20,000 in the 1960s to approximately 72,000 in 1996. Although the college has expanded in recent years, its growth had previously not kept pace with that of the local population. Tamworth has a greater proportion of under-14 year olds than any district in the county. It also has the fastest projected population growth into the next century. Lichfield College has its origins in the Lichfield School of Art founded in 1879. In 1987 it was re-sited at the historically important site of the Old Friary. It is the main provider of adult education to a population of around 100,000 in Lichfield and surrounding villages.

4 Recently there has been substantial economic development in Tamworth. Unemployment has dropped below the national average. However, average levels of educational attainment and income are low. In contrast, Lichfield has higher levels of educational achievement and a strong tradition of adult education.

5 Tamworth College has aimed to achieve growth through partnership with other local organisations. It has sought to extend its influence to Lichfield, which had no further education college, and to parts of North Warwickshire. Until recently, Tamworth College operated from a single site, except for the courses provided at Swinfen Hall Young Offenders Institution. Since 1990, it has provided courses in 15 different centres.

In 1993, the college purchased the most important of these centres, a grade II listed building, formerly the Swan Hotel, at Lichfield.

6 Both Tamworth College and Lichfield College are close to five substantially larger colleges with which they compete for students. In addition, there are nine high schools in the two towns, all with sixth forms. Tamworth College is a managing agent for the Staffordshire TEC's training courses and in this capacity it operates in partnership with a local private training organisation in the South Staffordshire Training Consortium. The colleges have close links with Staffordshire University.

7 Tamworth College has 7,626 enrolments of which about 15 per cent are full time. Seventy-six per cent of students are aged 19 or over and 62 per cent are over 25 years of age. The majority of students, approximately 77 per cent, are on courses at foundation or intermediate level including 12 per cent on non-schedule 2 recreational and leisure programmes. Just under 8 per cent of the 1994-95 cohort were on programmes of study lasting more than one year. Enrolments by age, by level of study, by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. The Tamworth College employs 139 full-time equivalent teaching staff and 74 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

8 Tamworth College's mission statement has been adopted by both colleges. It states that: 'The colleges exist to enable all members of the community to fulfil their potential through access to education and training opportunities of high quality'.

The general objectives outlined in its 1994-97 strategic plan are:

- to maximise growth and redress the historic funding position which gave Tamworth College the sixteenth lowest average level of funding at the time of incorporation
- to strive to raise quality of provision to the highest level
- to consolidate and strengthen a number of key partnerships vital to the future of the colleges
- to extend provision amongst under-represented groups through a community education programme
- to develop the colleges as a high-quality centre in meeting the needs of young people and adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- to extend significantly the range of vocational provision at all levels
- to foster an entrepreneurial and innovative culture.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9 Over the last five years, the number of full-time students at Tamworth College has doubled and the number of part-time students has increased by 50 per cent. Apart from extending its range of full-time mainstream courses, the college has sought to attract more students with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities, students from groups which had not previously been associated with courses at the college, and adults seeking basic education. Senior staff are familiar with the national targets for education and training but they are mentioned only briefly in the strategic plan and some teachers are not aware of them.

10 The federated colleges offer an appropriate range of programmes. There are 18 subjects at General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) and 17 for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). Courses leading to General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) are offered in eight areas at foundation, intermediate and advanced level. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are now a growing part of the provision. There are other courses awarded by the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) and the RSA Examinations Board (RSA). The colleges also provide courses leading to other professional qualifications such as those of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants and the Chartered Institute of Marketing. There are higher education courses in business and finance, computing and an access to higher education programme. There are also recreational and leisure courses at the colleges, the greater range of these available at Lichfield College. Courses are offered at full cost in a number of areas, including health and safety training, but Tamworth College's potential for increasing its income in this way has not been sufficiently exploited.

11 There is effective co-operation with local schools. The schools recognise Tamworth College's expertise in vocational courses and there are collaborative programmes for students aged 14 to 18 who are attending school but spend two or three days at college doing vocational work. For its part, the college has agreed not to offer full-time GCE A level or GCSE courses to students aged 16 to 18, as these are adequately covered in the schools.

12 There are valuable links with Staffordshire and Coventry Universities, including innovative plans for a new joint campus with Staffordshire University at Lichfield. There are a number of joint activities with some nearby further education colleges; for example a GNVQ engineering course developed jointly with Walsall College of Art and Technology and Cannock Chase Technical College.

13 The college has established effective relationships with the Staffordshire TEC which provides funds for training and for various projects. These include the TEC's 'high technology projects', a programme in business administration for women returners and a foreign language course for local employers. The college also liaises with other TECs in response to specific employers' needs; for example, it has a contract with Walsall TEC to deliver a course on commercial vehicle body work skills.

14 Parents of students aged 16 to 19 value the opportunity to attend the annual parents' evening at Tamworth College. However, few of the parents

spoken to had received a report on their children's progress, and some parents of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities expressed concern about the lack of information from the college.

15 A number of international links have been developed. These include work placement visits to Limoges in France, visits by business students to colleges in St Petersburg in Russia and links with colleges in Germany and the Czech Republic. The college has a commercial contract to provide training to a Tunisian University.

16 The college has established advisory groups of employers in nine curriculum areas. The employers value the opportunity to contribute to these groups, but the meetings are sporadic and the groups' recommendations are not always put into action. Links with the business community have been strengthened by the college's membership of the chamber of trade. There is a need to introduce more systematic monitoring of employers' training requirements and their level of satisfaction with the services provided.

17 The college provides a large and expanding community education programme delivered at 15 centres. The service includes a commercially run education service to 80 students at Swinfen Hall Young Offenders Institution. Recent additions to the community education programme include disability awareness courses for Staffordshire social services and classes at a local hospice. There is a good range of courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and an adult basic education programme. Links have been established with special schools. A notable initiative has been the re-opening of The Swan as a combined further education centre, hotel and conference centre.

18 The college has developed an appropriate range of publicity materials, including a well-designed prospectus and course leaflets. Information is mailed to selected addresses and delivered by hand, house to house. Courses are advertised in the press and there are regular press releases on students' achievements. Some courses, particularly new ones, are not marketed effectively enough and there is insufficient use of market research to identify potential demand. The college has been slow to recognise these weaknesses but has now increased its marketing budget and the number of staff involved in marketing activities.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

19 The membership of the corporation was increased from 14 to 19 as a result of the federation with Lichfield College. There are nine independent members. One of the independent members represents the local TEC. Members of the corporation come from a variety of backgrounds in the local community. They bring experience of business, industry, the trade unions, public service, education and the professions. Four members are women. Corporation members are strongly committed to, and supportive of, the colleges and their joint mission. They have a clear view of the

educational aims of the newly-formed institution and of their own strategic role as distinct from the operational responsibilities of the colleges' senior managers. The corporation has established a code of conduct and a register of members' interests. They have recently held their first annual public meeting.

20 Members of the corporation are each associated with an area of the curriculum or an aspect of administration, although some staff have yet to meet the member of the corporation attached to their area. Attendance at meetings of the corporation and its committees is good. The clerk to the corporation is also the assistant principal for resources. This arrangement has been reviewed by the audit committee to ensure that the dual role does not compromise the independence of the advice given to the corporation.

21 There are seven committees of the corporation. They are: audit; finance and general purposes; performance and review; personnel; remuneration; the Lichfield College committee; and the recently re-established search committee, which has yet to meet. A recent development has been the establishment of the performance and review committee to improve the monitoring by the corporation of the colleges' effectiveness. This committee will give earlier consideration to students' achievements. In 1995-96 this was delayed until nearly a year after examination results and other achievements were known. Committee members are selected on the basis of their experience and expertise. For example, the chairman of the audit committee is a qualified accountant. There are appropriate and clear terms of reference for the audit committee. The other committees' terms of reference are insufficiently precise. One committee does not yet have terms of reference.

22 In April 1996, the setting up of the federation led to the creation of a new management structure. There are seven senior managers: the principal of the Tamworth College who is the chief executive of the two colleges; the principal of Lichfield College; three assistant principals responsible for curriculum and staffing, resources, and planning and enterprise; and two directors for quality development and marketing. There are eight schools for the delivery of education programmes, each with a manager. Senior managers provide open, supportive and responsive leadership. Managers at all levels are committed to the colleges' mission and have a clear sense of purpose. There are weekly meetings of the senior management group and a wider management group comprising senior managers and managers of schools and cross-college services. A weekly bulletin is produced to keep staff informed about the colleges. In some areas the lines of communication between managers and staff are unclear.

23 The strategic plan and objectives reflect the mission statement. The plan is drafted by the senior managers after consultation with the colleges' managers and staff. It is then reviewed and approved by the corporation.

There are clear links to the operating statements of the schools and cross-college services, all of which have clear objectives. The operating statements are appropriately detailed. They indicate what is to be achieved, who is responsible, budget and resource implications and evaluation procedures. It is not always clear from the schools' operating statements whether the previous year's targets have been achieved. The targets set by the art and design section do not relate to the programmes offered and give no indication of target enrolments or resource requirements. Retention targets are not set. There has been an attempt to improve retention by strengthening tutorial support. Whether or not this has been a success is unclear as the retention figures for previous years are not reliable.

24 The academic board meets regularly. It does not have terms of reference and does not discuss students' achievements.

25 There are sound policies in the key areas of health and safety and equal opportunities. Responsibilities for implementing the policies, and methods of monitoring their effectiveness are clearly stated. The equal opportunities committee meets termly and reports to the academic board. There is currently no written policy for student support. One is being prepared, but its development has been slow.

26 There is an established, flexible and well-understood system of financial allocation. There is a clear awareness of the cost of provision and cross-college services. Unit costs are calculated. Budgets are devolved to schools and cross-college service cost centres. They are based on student numbers, the nature of the education programmes and the services being provided. The level of funding to the budget holders is adjusted if necessary to reflect actual student numbers. The system is regularly monitored by the financial management group and, where necessary, changes are made. Tamworth College's average level of funding for 1995-96 is £15.95 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.84 and the median for all sector colleges is £18.56 per unit. The college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

27 The management information system enables the production of financial reports and meets requests for data from external organisations. However, it has not always been effective in gathering and analysing student-related data. For example, senior managers have yet to receive a report on attendance across the colleges. The present arrangements for obtaining information on students' destinations are inadequate.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

28 Effective methods of recruitment are employed including visits to local schools, the distribution of prospectuses and course leaflets, regular open days and, particularly for adults, short 'taster' courses. Pre-enrolment events, organised separately by the information centre or

the different schools, lack co-ordination. Enrolment is efficiently organised. Procedures are clear and well documented but the checklist designed for use at enrolment interviews is rarely used. No qualified careers staff are available to give advice during enrolment. There are insufficient checks to ensure that all students embark on a course that matches their needs and previous experience. Some students started advanced GNVQ courses with less than the recommended minimum entry requirements.

29 Tamworth College has a comprehensive induction programme. Most students took part in a variety of activities, in pairs or groups, to help to get to know each other and to learn about the college and its courses. All students received an attractive and informative diary and handbook. Rights, responsibilities and disciplinary procedures were clearly described. Most students expressed satisfaction with the induction arrangements, although second-year students were concerned about the amount of time spent on induction. The library induction was particularly appreciated. The evaluation sheets completed by staff and students are not analysed in detail, and were therefore of limited value.

30 Course transfer procedures are thorough. Students wishing to change courses may contact the information centre directly, or be referred by a tutor. Guidance and counselling interviews enable students to discuss the options available, and the appropriateness of the proposed transfer. Documentation is simple but effective. The change is recorded on the registers of both courses, and on the management information system.

31 There is effective diagnostic screening of students' needs for support in literacy and numeracy. All full-time students are given the Basic Skills Agency assessment. There is strong learning support in classes, and through the college's learning support system. Literacy support is readily available through the communications centre on a referral basis or for students to use as and when they choose. There is a well-managed counselling service providing a broad range of support. Use is made of external agencies where appropriate. Students spoke well of the service. All three counsellors are professionally qualified and experienced. There is appropriate supervision. The counselling room should be soundproofed to ensure that confidential meetings cannot be overheard. The recent appointment of a chaplain makes available additional support for both staff and students.

32 A good range of information is provided on careers and higher education although some of the reference books on higher education are not up to date. All full-time students aged 16 to 19 receive at least two hours per year of structured careers guidance from the local careers adviser. There is no qualified careers adviser on site, and no arrangement to provide additional help. The restriction of formal careers guidance to those in the 16 to 19 age group is inappropriate in view of the large proportion of adult students. Course tutors give careers guidance but the

effectiveness of this is limited by the absence of appropriate resource materials. Despite these problems, some students, such as those in health care, receive good careers guidance.

33 Tutorials are well managed and effective. There are clear guidelines for compiling records of achievement. All full-time students have at least one weekly one-hour tutorial. Part-time students do not have formal tutorials although some receive good tutorial support. Tutors know their students and provide sensitive and caring support. Tutorials include learning support and guidance, the development of personal and social skills, group sessions, one-to-one discussions and the drawing up of action plans which involve students in setting their own learning objectives and evaluating their own progress. Students are asked to bring their records of achievement to their admission interviews and tutorial time is devoted to their maintenance. Records of achievement are not accredited by an external body or internally monitored. Few gave an up-to-date summary of students' achievements. Attendance is monitored at school level and action is taken in the case of persistent absence.

34 Students are well informed about sources of financial assistance. The college provides help with nursery costs, although the 16 places presently available in the nursery fail to meet the demand. It is proposing to increase the number of places to 66 for September 1996. The refectory provides a good service to students. Opportunities for students' participation in sports have been enhanced by the appointment of a sports and recreation officer.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

35 Inspectors observed 117 lessons, all at Tamworth College. Of these, 68 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses. In just over 4 per cent of lessons the weaknesses clearly outweighed the strengths. The average attendance in the lessons inspected was 76 per cent; an average of nine students was present in each class. The following table shows the grades awarded as a result of the inspection.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		1	9	6	0	0	16
GCSE		1	2	0	0	0	3
GNVQ		4	17	11	3	0	35
NVQ		1	10	5	1	0	17
Other vocational		4	13	8	1	0	26
Other		7	10	3	0	0	20
Total		18	61	33	5	0	117

36 Most of the teaching was of a good standard. Teachers have good technical skills and develop effective working relationships with their students. There are well-planned schemes of work and detailed lesson plans. In some subject areas, these vary in quality. Students are generally well informed about examination and assessment requirements. In most subjects, teachers use a suitable variety of teaching methods. The provision and use of learning materials and teaching aids is variable. Adult students and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support in all subject areas; the latter are well integrated within mainstream courses.

37 The teaching in science and computing is effective. Science classes are well planned, imaginative and challenging. Teachers provide helpful guidance before students embark on practical tasks although some theory lessons begin without an introduction to place the topic in context. Some errors of grammar and spelling remain uncorrected in marked written work. Demonstrations are not always effective and teachers fail to make best use of teaching aids. In computing, teachers emphasise the importance of students being able to work on their own. Different levels of ability are taken into account. Lessons are well prepared and are often based on high-quality printed learning materials. Assessment schedules are clear. The assignment briefs used for the national diploma course are of varying quality. There is no standard format for schemes of work.

38 Engineering lessons have clear objectives and teaching is sound. Appropriate methods of teaching and learning are in use throughout the wide range of specialist courses. Good links are made between theory and practice. Assessments are relevant and are set at an appropriate level. Most work is marked accurately and feedback to students is informative. There is a need to improve the briefs for, and marking of, some assignments in mechanical engineering.

39 In business studies, teachers draw on students' work experience and make good use of questions to ensure that they have understood the topic being studied. Core skills are well integrated with coursework. Tasks set for students are appropriate to their ability and reflect current business practice. Students should be provided with more opportunities to work on their own, for example in information technology units. Lessons to develop practical skills are well managed but are not supported by learning materials to allow students to work at their own pace. In a few classes, the more able students are not sufficiently challenged. Some workshop classes are dull and lack focus.

40 In leisure and tourism, the guidance and support provided in lessons is effective. The links between classroom activities and subsequent assignments are clear. Teachers make good use of whiteboards. Students' own experiences of the leisure and tourism industry are effectively incorporated with lessons. Schemes of work and lesson plans are not sufficiently detailed and in some cases there are no lesson plans. Classroom management techniques are not always appropriate. In some cases,

teachers fail to provide an appropriate conclusion to their presentation by emphasising the key points which have been covered.

41 Teaching in health care is effective and there are regular checks on students' learning. Teachers make good use of group work and conduct lessons at an appropriate pace. There is an appropriate balance between theory and practice. For example, in a nursery nursing class, students were given the task of devising a table-top game based on the development of an educational concept. Having made the game, they tried it out with children while on work placement. In hairdressing studies, most teaching is good. Lessons are well organised. Students' assignments and portfolios are marked to satisfactory standards. Teachers should continue to improve the quality of learning materials and provide more flexible patterns of working in salon workshops. Programmes include an appropriate range of subjects but information technology and design are under emphasised.

42 Art and design staff are supportive of students and use well-prepared teaching materials. Some of the work in performing arts is particularly effective at extending students' abilities. Assignments for performing arts are often related to activities, such as public performances. In performing arts and in art and design, different level courses are sometimes taught together because of low student numbers. Some of the assignments in art and design are beyond both the experience and scope of the students. Some lesson plans lack precise learning objectives.

43 Lessons in English and law are generally of a good standard. The English team has produced detailed course booklets but in law students are given only a broad outline of the syllabus. There are some relevant and well-produced handouts. Students sometimes work in groups or in pairs and this work is well managed. Most of their work is at an appropriate level but occasionally tasks are set which are too difficult. In both subjects, essays are carefully marked and teachers provide constructive comments to help students improve their performance.

44 Courses providing access to higher education, courses for students returning to learn, and courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effectively taught. Course guides for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are particularly good. Adults on basic education courses have good individual learning programmes but would benefit from more opportunities to take part in group work. Most lessons in these programmes are stimulating and take account of students' different levels of ability and experience. A minority of students on access courses complained that work was not set regularly and that they sometimes had difficulty in obtaining advice from teachers.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

45 Students are enthusiastic about their work and keen to progress. In many lessons, they work effectively in pairs or in groups. Practical work is carried out competently and safely. Students reach appropriate standards in internal assessments. Part-time adult students generally

have higher levels of achievement than full-time 16 to 18 year old students. In 1996, one of the college's adult students gained an individual adult learners' award from the National Organisation for Adult Learning. Tamworth College achieves good success rates in training credit courses. No calculations are made of the value added to students' achievements as a result of their time at the college.

46 All students completing the BTEC national diploma course in science in 1994 gained the award. In 1995 the success rate was 83 per cent. Many students gained distinctions and merits. Those who have gained awards have been successful in obtaining places on science-based higher education courses. Attendance at computing classes is high. Good results are obtained in the RSA diploma and the BTEC higher national certificate computing programmes. Students' written and oral work for the BTEC national diploma in computing course is good but the completion and pass rates for this award have been poor recently.

47 Most students on engineering courses have appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding. Retention rates are generally satisfactory. Pass rates on most courses are above the national averages. Particularly good results have been achieved on the C&G courses in digital and analogue electronics, motor vehicle repair and maintenance and mechanical production. Students gain appropriate practical competences. For example, part-time C&G students use computer-aided design programmes to produce a range of engineering drawings. Results from the GNVQ programmes are poor; on the intermediate programme no one gained the full award in 1995.

48 Students on business studies courses produce good work for their portfolios and in assessments. They reach appropriate levels of practical skill. Particularly good work is produced in secretarial studies. Examination results for the Association of Accounting Technicians' certificate are better than the national average. Students on the certificate in marketing course achieved the highest pass rate nationally in 1995. GCE A level results at grades A to C in law, accounting, and business studies are poor. Students' work on NVQ programmes is of variable quality. In some cases, work of a poor standard is accepted, giving an inaccurate impression of students' performance.

49 Students in leisure and tourism classes frequently make useful contributions and ask pertinent questions. Oral and assignment work is of a satisfactory standard. On some leisure and tourism courses, timekeeping and attendance are poor, and retention rates and examination pass rates are low. Following poor results on the national diploma in travel and tourism in 1994, students were not given the opportunity to retake assessments.

50 With a few exceptions, recent results in health care have been good. Some students produce work of a very high standard. Pass rates for National Nursery Examinations Board (NNEB) courses are good and

retention rates for the GNVQ and NNEB programmes are both satisfactory. Information technology skills are underdeveloped. The pass rate in hairdressing for full-time students on the NVQ level 2 programme is high, but at level 3 it is low. Those who did not achieve a satisfactory standard are attending for a fourth term and are being provided with additional learning support, including extra lessons. Practical work is carried out with careful attention to hygiene. Retention rates are good on the full-time courses but poor on the part-time courses.

51 Students in art and design are enthusiastic and have acquired an appropriate technical vocabulary but some work is stereotyped and lacking in experiment. Performing arts students work well in groups. The level of achievement in art and design is adversely affected by the broad nature of some of the assignments. There are some low retention rates.

52 Most of the oral and written work in English and law is of a high standard, although a minority of students have problems expressing themselves clearly. GCE A level students' written work was clear and precise and some GCSE students write imaginatively. Examination results for those who complete the course are generally above the national averages, but retention rates on all courses are poor.

53 Basic education and access course students are proud of their achievements. They have a positive attitude to their studies and to the acquisition of knowledge. A good-quality video about Tamworth has been produced by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It was developed with help from staff in the media centre, and includes a sign language commentary. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities spoke positively about improvements in their lives as a result of their studies.

54 The number of students achieving their primary learning goals and qualification aims is high. Seventy-one per cent of the students aged 16 to 18 in their final year of study on vocational courses included in the Department for Education and Employment's 1995 performance tables were successful. This places the Tamworth College in the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. GNVQ results are generally below average for the sector. However, the majority of the college's students are entered for certificated awards that do not appear in the performance tables published by the Department. Full-time students account for only 15 per cent of all enrolments and students aged 16 to 18 comprise only 22 per cent.

55 The number of students taking GCSE examinations at the Tamworth College is small. More adult students are entered than students aged 16 to 18. In many subjects, the proportion of part-time adult students achieving grades A to C is above the national average. The main exception is mathematics. At Lichfield College, the percentages of adult students achieving grades A to C at GCSE and achieving a pass grade at GCE A level were above average for general further education colleges in 1995.

56 In 1993-94, 78 students applied to enter higher education and almost 90 per cent were successful. In 1994-95, the success rate fell to 77 per cent of the 85 entries. Of the 120 students contracted for training credits in 1995-96, 25 were continuing with further training, 50 were in full-time employment, 14 were unemployed, and destinations for the remainder were unknown. Of 79 students on link courses in schools, 45 entered further education at the Tamworth College in 1995. The college monitors intended destinations but it does not have a system which can provide data on students' actual destinations.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

57 Tamworth College has identified the improvement of quality as a key strategic priority. It has produced a manual that sets out its approach to total quality management. A key element of the college's quality development has been the achievement of external quality awards. It gained the BVQI (Bureau Veritas Quality International) EN ISO 9001 kitemark in March 1995 for all of its education and training, and achieved Investor in People status in March 1996. It obtained the Basic Skills Agency quality mark in March 1996 and received a high rating from the TEC in September 1995 for the audit of its training systems.

58 Standardisation of procedures and documentation has helped to establish a clearer and more coherent method for monitoring the colleges' performance but the procedures and paperwork have proved burdensome. There is no straightforward and easily traceable link between the many procedures. Feedback to the students and staff who complete the various proformas and questionnaires has been limited. Some staff and students do not yet understand their relevance. These difficulties have been recognised and the colleges are currently working to reduce the paperwork and refine their systems to produce more usable feedback.

59 Tamworth College produced a revised version of its student charter in July 1995. There are two versions; an outline distributed to all students, which contains little detail and a fuller version available on request. The latter is a comprehensive document but has few quantifiable targets; some sections concentrate on providing information rather than specifying standards. The charter is addressed to students but includes charter standards for employers, parents and the local community. Copies were not distributed to parents and employers and many were not aware of the charter's existence. Few students had asked for a copy of the full charter. Many were not aware of the commitments made within it, or of the procedures for complaints and appeals. Nevertheless, when there have been complaints these have been carefully monitored and followed up by senior staff. The college has not previously reviewed its performance against the commitments in the charter. A recently-established charter review committee has now begun this process.

60 The monitoring, review and evaluation of courses is well established. Course reviews are conducted termly by course teams which include students. The summer term review results in an annual end-of-year report. Action plans are produced and there is evidence that these are followed through and lead to improvements. The course reviews are conducted using a comprehensive college-wide format and include consideration of a wide range of evidence. They take into account students' views on the quality of their experience, obtained by means of termly questionnaires, reports from external verifiers and moderators, and quantifiable measures of performance. These include student enrolments, retention rates and achievements. However, the use of performance indicators is still relatively underdeveloped and there is insufficient emphasis on monitoring trends and setting clear targets for improvement. Despite the standard format, there is variability in the application of quality procedures and controls between different courses. Some course reviews, for example, include employers' views but this is not systematic across the college.

61 In the past year, the system of programme quality reviews has been reviewed and a new arrangement established. Programme leaders discuss their course reviews on a three-year cycle with the programme quality review panel. Significant issues are noted for taking forward to senior management. The panel is chaired by the director of quality development, who is a member of the senior management team. Feedback from the reviews is taken to meetings of the academic board and the senior management team and will also be reported to the recently-established performance and review committee of the corporation. The new system has not been in operation for long enough for a judgement to be formed on its effectiveness.

62 The course reviews have not yet led to any summary overview of the college's performance. There has been no systematic consideration of trends through comparison of performance year-on-year. The amount and quality of the statistical information available for this purpose is limited. Action has been taken in response to some issues which have emerged through the review process, for example concerns about student retention.

63 Tamworth College has a system for the approval of new course submissions using standardised documentation which clearly sets out the procedures which have to be undertaken before course approval can be given. Once all the procedures including, where appropriate, approval from external validating bodies, have been completed, final approval is given by the senior management team. The college has recently introduced a standard procedure for internal verification.

64 A staff-appraisal scheme has been in place for full-time teaching staff since 1993 and was extended in September 1995 to include all staff. The scheme follows a two-year cycle, with an interim review after one year. Some staff have seen positive outcomes from appraisal but others reported

that there had been little follow-up action. It was originally envisaged that appraisal would include observation of teaching. However, this has proved difficult to implement and it does not always take place. The main purpose of the appraisal scheme is to help plan appropriate staff development. In practice, the links are not well established; some needs identified by staff during appraisal have not fed through to the staff-development plans. The appraisal scheme has proved unwieldy to manage, particularly for part-time staff who teach only a small number of hours, and it is currently being reviewed.

65 An annual staff-development plan is produced. There is a growing emphasis on providing training and an appropriate focus on such matters as GNVQ, the development of assessor's awards, appraisal training and the use of information technology. A pilot study has been launched aimed at developing NVQ qualifications for teaching and support staff; for example, management qualifications for section leaders and customer care qualifications for admissions staff. Staff development is the responsibility of the professional development manager who liaises closely with the assistant principal responsible for staffing and the co-ordinator of training for assessors and verifiers. Applications for staff development are approved if they match the priorities in the plan. If not, then further discussion takes place to see whether the application can be approved. Staff attending internal and external courses are required to provide an evaluation and, where appropriate, to share the outcomes with other colleagues. The budget identified for staff development, which covers external course fees and staff cover, is small as a proportion of total college income. When other costs are included, such as the cost of providing in-house staff development, the total expenditure on staff development amounts to about 0.9 per cent of total income. This is sufficient to meet staff-development needs identified in the staff-development plan.

66 All newly-appointed part-time staff receive an induction by attending a half-day programme and full-time staff are given a two-day induction. This is done on one of three occasions in the year and through meetings with their line managers, for which time is made available. The system has been improved in the past year and staff appointed during this period were positive about their induction.

67 The colleges have produced an assessment of their own quality based on the headings in the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Strengths are identified, together with areas for future development. Many of the strengths listed by the colleges were confirmed by the findings of the inspection. Some significant weaknesses had not been recorded but in most cases, managers said they were aware of them and had plans to remedy them.

RESOURCES

Staffing

68 There are sufficient suitably qualified and experienced teachers for the courses provided at the colleges. Many programme areas have staff with appropriate levels of recent and relevant industrial experience but some staff in science, business administration, and health care require opportunities for industrial updating. Most full-time teachers hold appropriate professional or trade qualifications and almost half have an initial degree. Seventeen per cent hold higher degrees and others are working towards them. Eighty-eight per cent have teaching qualifications. Thirty-eight fractional posts for part-time teachers have recently been introduced to strengthen the work of curriculum teams and most of the staff appointed have graduate or equivalent professional qualifications and teaching qualifications.

69 Rapid progress has been made in ensuring that staff hold the awards necessary for assessment of vocational qualifications. Of the 277 full and part-time teachers, 125 have internal assessor awards, 33 have qualified as internal verifiers and 12 as advisers for the accreditation of students' prior learning. Many other staff are working towards these awards.

70 Class sizes are below the average for the sector. Tamworth College currently spends 68 per cent of its income on staffing. Heavy reliance on part-time teachers in some areas places a disproportionate administrative load on full-time staff. In response to this and other issues relating to staff deployment, the colleges have set up a working group to explore models which would give greater flexibility in the management of staff time.

71 The proportion of non-teaching staff has been increased by new appointments since incorporation. These staff are well qualified, provide good support to teachers and students and, where appropriate, are fully integrated with curriculum teams. Classroom assistants give good learning support to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are shortages of support staff in some areas, for example, of technicians in science and engineering.

72 Appropriate personnel procedures have been developed and apply to all staff. Handbooks containing these procedures are held by managers but there is no general staff handbook.

Equipment/learning resources

73 Most programme areas have adequate equipment and resources to support learning. The technology centre is particularly well equipped. There is a lack of some major items of equipment in science and mechanical engineering and some basic items for adult basic education. The need for specific capital items is established through the strategic planning process and recorded in the operating statement. There is no rolling programme for updating and replacing equipment.

74 Tamworth College library provides a good service for students and staff. It is well stocked with books, videos, compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases and periodicals. A security tagging system has recently been introduced. There is an adequate number of individual study spaces and areas for group work. The library is staffed by five appropriately trained and qualified personnel. They liaise effectively with teachers, distributing book lists so that new titles can be identified for purchase. The library is open until 21.00 hours four days a week and to 16.45 hours on Fridays. The learning resource centre, adjacent to the Tamworth College library, is equipped with 17 computer workstations, four with CD-ROM, which are available for students to use as and when they need. For NVQ courses and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities there is a range of resources specifically designed for individual study. The learning resource centre is not able to meet all the demands placed on it and a booking system has been introduced. Additional learning resource facilities are available in science, engineering, health and social care, and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

75 Tamworth College has developed a policy of integrating information technology with other aspects of the curriculum. The provision of computers for students is satisfactory. In 1995-96, £100,000 was allocated for computer hardware purchases and £20,000 for software and licences. The colleges are adopting a high specification industry standard for information technology. There is open access to information technology equipment. Machines not in use by whole classes are made available to individual students. There is a lack of information technology equipment for students on health care courses and for stock control and client records in hairdressing.

Accommodation

76 Tamworth College's main buildings are situated close to the town centre. Lichfield College is mainly accommodated in a fifteenth-century building in the centre of the city. Teaching accommodation is generally of a good standard. There has been considerable internal remodelling to improve the accommodation. The learning resource centre is particularly well appointed. Excellent, purpose-built accommodation is provided in the technology block and The Swan has been refurbished to a high standard. Information on space utilisation is not available. Accommodation for students on access courses is poor and part of the Tamworth site is affected by noise from the nearby railway. The area for design work requires improvement and there are insufficient photographic darkrooms. Some areas require renovation, in particular the main library and the assembly hall. Public areas and corridors are clean and well decorated but there is little display of students' work.

77 In 1994, Tamworth College's accommodation survey identified only one area as unsatisfactory. All sites are generally well maintained externally. There are a number of facilities for students' recreational use including a floodlit all-weather pitch at Tamworth College. Student car parking facilities are good. Access for wheelchair users and others with impaired mobility is difficult on all sites, although all main site buildings have access at ground level. The Swan and the college office at Lichfield College present major difficulties for wheelchair users. Better signposting is required for most areas. The pedestrian and road entrance to Tamworth College require improvement. The narrow entrance is a single lane and has no pavement for pedestrians.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

78 The strengths of the Tamworth and Lichfield Colleges are:

- the range of courses offered to students
- the strong partnerships with local schools
- the commitment of the corporation to the colleges and their mission
- a comprehensive induction programme for students
- well-managed and effective tutorials
- teachers and support staff who are well qualified and experienced
- the colleges' commitment to assuring and improving quality
- the generally well-maintained accommodation.

79 The colleges should address:

- the lack of monitoring of students' achievements by the academic board and the full corporation
- the need for clear terms of reference for the majority of corporation committees
- weaknesses in the management information system
- the inadequate level of professional careers guidance
- the lack of policies for student support and core skills development
- some examination results, particularly for GNVQ courses, which are below the national average
- unco-ordinated and time-consuming quality assurance procedures
- the lack of performance targets in course reviews and in the student charter.

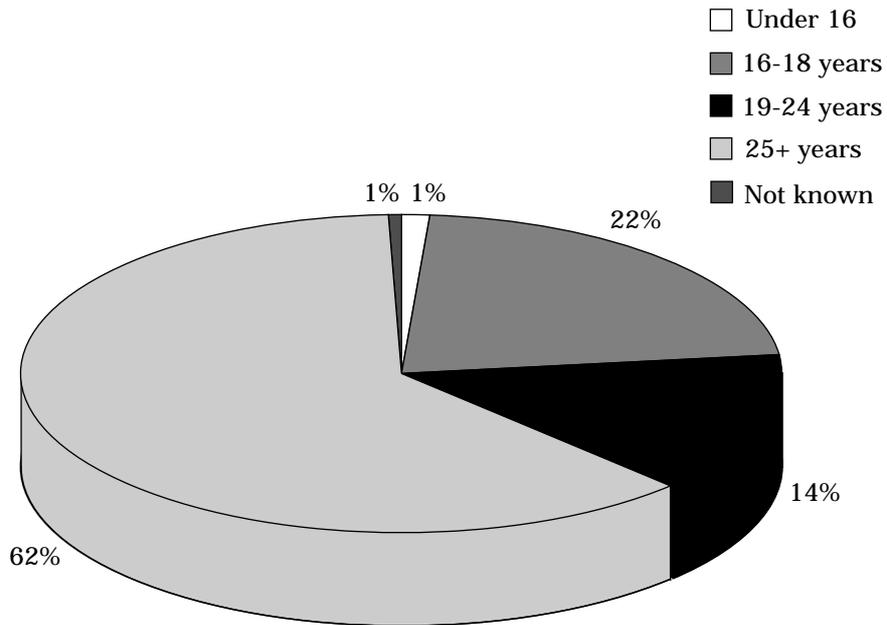
FIGURES

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| 1 | Percentage enrolments by age (1995-96) |
| 2 | Percentage enrolments by level of study (1995-96) |
| 3 | Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1995-96) |
| 4 | Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96) |
| 5 | Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1996) |
| 6 | Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996) |
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Note: the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.

Figure 1

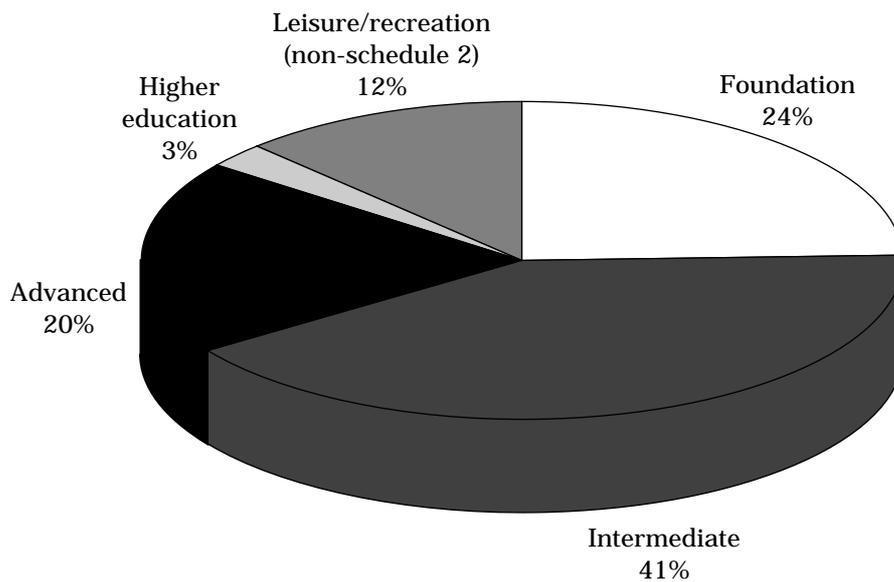
Tamworth College: percentage enrolments by age (1995-96)



Enrolments: 7,626

Figure 2

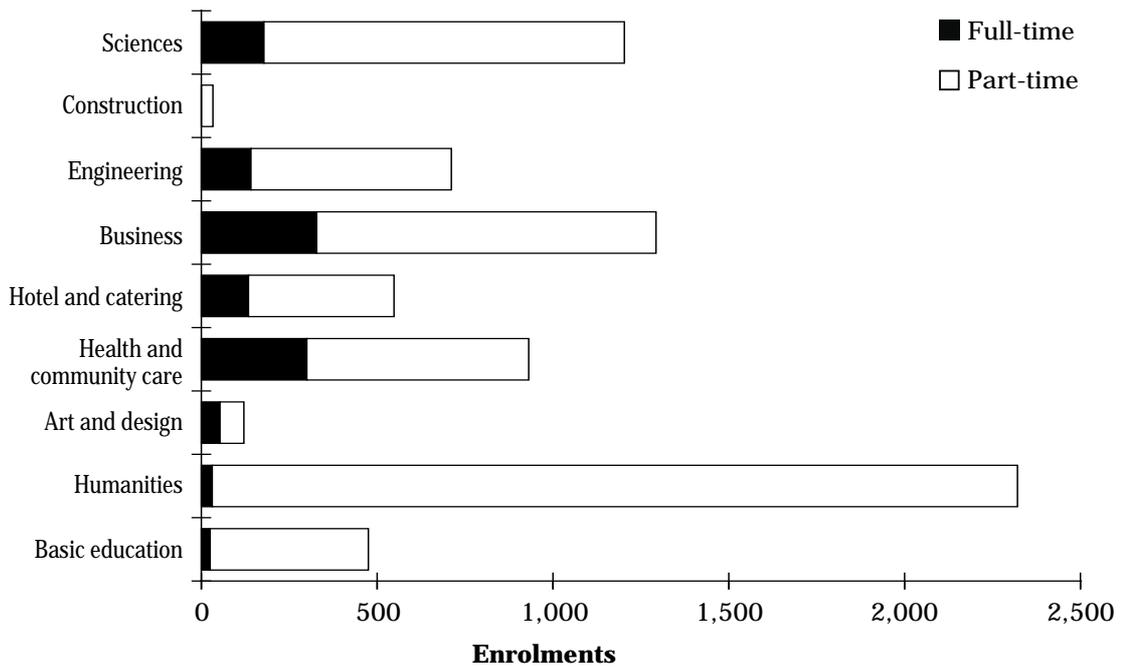
Tamworth College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1995-96)



Enrolments: 7,626

Figure 3

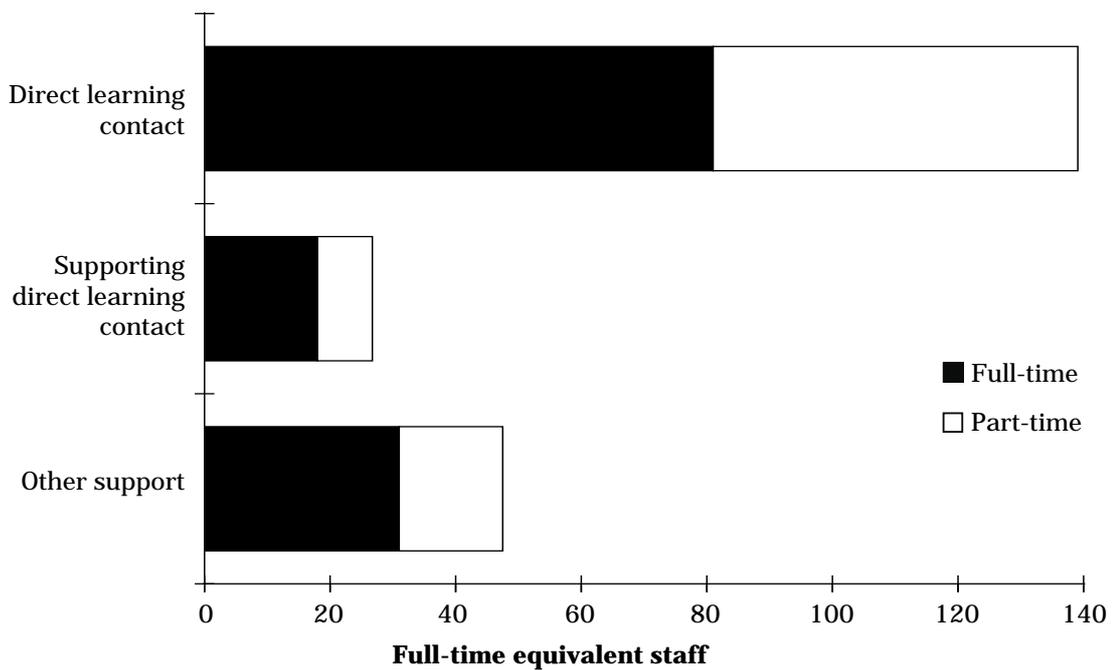
Tamworth College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1995-96)



Enrolments: 7,626

Figure 4

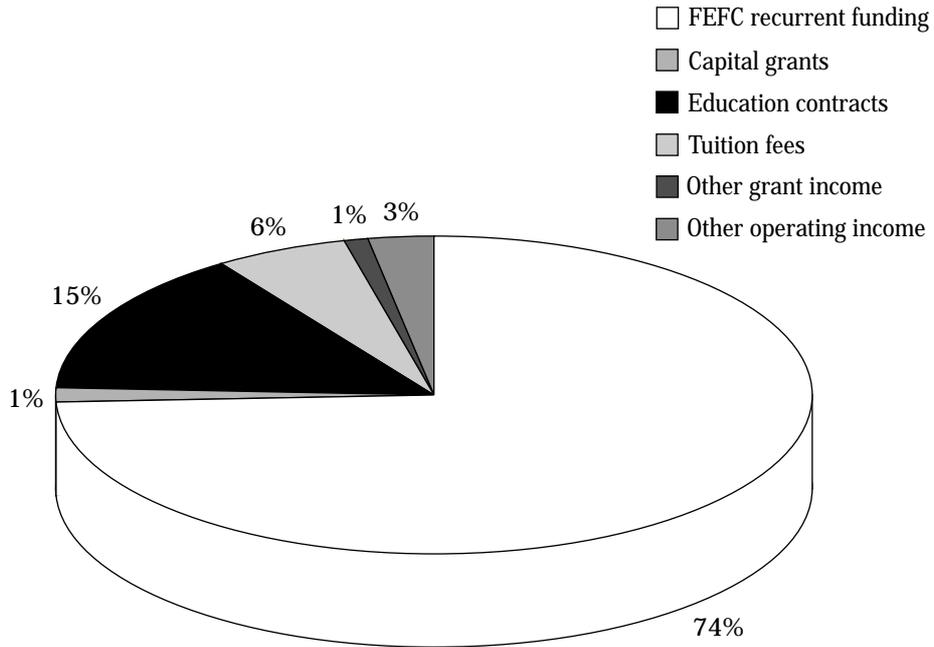
Tamworth College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)



Full-time equivalent staff: 213

Figure 5

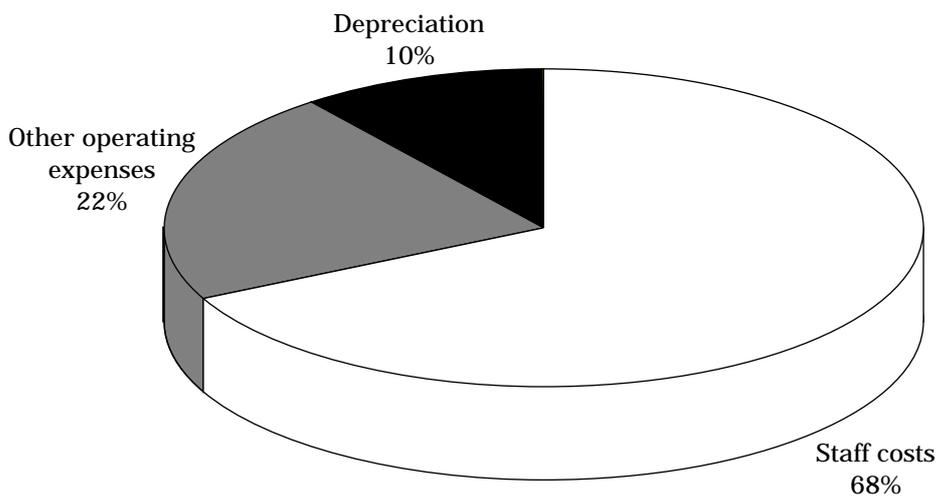
Tamworth College: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Estimated income: £5,256,000

Figure 6

Tamworth College: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Estimated expenditure: £5,532,000

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