Tile Hill College of Further Education

THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL

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

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

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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

- *grade 1 – provision which has many strengths and very few weaknesses*

- *grade 2 – provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*

- *grade 3 – provision with a balance of strengths and weaknesses*

- *grade 4 – provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*

- *grade 5 – provision which has many weaknesses and very few strengths.*

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

College grade profiles 1993-95

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 18/96

TILE HILL COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION
WEST MIDLANDS REGION
Inspected January-November 1995

Summary

Tile Hill College of Further Education offers a broad range of courses and is responsive to the needs of employers and the local community. There are strong equal opportunities policies and practices. The corporation board and the senior management team operate effectively and there is a thorough approach to strategic planning. Progress has been made in the development and use of the college's management information system. Students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are well supported in their studies. Teaching is generally of high quality and tutors are suitably experienced and qualified. Learning is supported by a good range of equipment and resources. On some courses, students' examination results are good. However, there are poor levels of achievement in some vocational areas, some GCSE subjects and for some 16-18 year old students. The quality assurance system works well and has led to a number of improvements but it has not yet had sufficient impact on students' examination performance. The college has a thorough system for staff appraisal, which is linked to staff development. The accommodation is of a high standard and offers access for students with restricted mobility. The college should improve attendance levels and retention rates; ensure students further develop core skills; improve the level of students' achievements; ensure that suitable accommodation is available for confidential guidance; further develop tutorial systems and improve procedures for the recording of students' achievements.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Mathematics and computing	3	Health and social care	2
Engineering	2	Humanities	2
Professional and management studies	2	Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2
Business and secretarial studies	3	Adult basic education/English for speakers of other languages	2

INTRODUCTION

1   Tile Hill College of Further Education was inspected between January and November 1995. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the beginning of the autumn term 1995, specialist subject areas during January, May, June and October 1995 and aspects of cross-college provision from 20 to 23 November 1995. Thirteen inspectors spent a total of 66 days in the college. They visited 195 classes involving 1,803 students and examined samples of students' work. Discussions took place with governors, college staff, students, local employers, representatives from the Coventry and Warwickshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), parents, teachers from local schools and representatives of the local community.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2   Tile Hill College of Further Education was established in 1969 as a general further education college. The majority of its work is carried out in purpose-built accommodation on its main site in the south-west of Coventry. It has an enterprise unit which is based at Charterhouse. The college also runs programmes for adult students from minority ethnic backgrounds in several outreach bases in the north of Coventry.

3   The students come from all parts of Coventry and the college serves a wider region for automobile engineering and professional studies courses. It is a national centre for the training of maintenance engineers for the bus and coach industry. The city of Coventry has a population of 300,000. There has been a decline in manufacturing industry in the city; currently 26 per cent of jobs are in this area. Sixty-two per cent of jobs are in the service and distribution sectors. In May 1995, the city had an unemployment rate of 10.3 per cent compared with the West Midlands rate of 8.5 per cent.

4   There are two other further education colleges in Coventry. There is also a specialist college for people with disabilities on a site adjacent to the college. All 19 secondary schools in Coventry have sixth forms. In the last three years an increasing proportion of 16 year old school leavers have progressed to further education in the city; the proportion of this age group has increased from 22.5 per cent to 30 per cent. Other post-16 providers within 12 miles of the college include general further education and sixth form colleges at Solihull, Nuneaton and Leamington.

5   In 1994-95 there were 10,656 enrolments of which 1,930 were full time. This represents a 53 per cent increase in enrolments since incorporation. Some 7,316 enrolments were on courses funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Of these, 1,800 students were full time, 54 per cent were female and 58 per cent were 25 years of age or over. Of the remainder, over 2,000 were enrolled on customised courses for industry and commerce offered at the enterprise unit. Enrolments by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3.

6   The college has 192 full-time equivalent teachers of whom 159 are full time. There are almost 120 full-time equivalent support staff of whom 22 provide direct learning support. The college is committed to giving high priority to their professional development. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

7   The college is organised into nine schools based within three faculties: engineering, business, and social, health and community. There is also a centre for enterprise and development. The college offers a wide range of vocational and general education programmes. The college has offered access to higher education courses since 1981 and it has a wide portfolio of programmes for adults accredited by the local open college network, the Central Access Network. There is a range of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The college acts as sponsor for the city council's community education provision.

8   The college's mission is to provide high-quality cost-effective education and training that satisfies individual and corporate needs, ensuring equal access to all sections of the community regardless of age, gender, ethnic origin, disability or economic and social circumstances. The mission statement is displayed prominently in the college and in college literature.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9   Managers are committed to the national targets for education and training and they have ensured that staff are aware of them. The college has a diverse range of programmes, both full time and part time, from foundation to postgraduate higher education level. Almost 90 per cent of the college's programmes are vocational. There is an extensive range of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and their equivalents at levels from 1 to 4 in business, computing, engineering, health and social care, horticulture and floristry, media, management and supervisory work. A range of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) has been introduced including business, health and social care and leisure and tourism. Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) programmes are offered in various subjects, including computer studies, engineering, media, nursery nursing and popular music. There is a range of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) courses. Access to higher education programmes are provided and there is a preparatory foundation access course. The college's centre for enterprise and development provides customised courses for industry, programmes in staff development, teacher training and additional support, including provision of English for speakers of other languages. The college offers some flexible-learning provision which allows students to study at their own pace. There are some Saturday classes in computing and a summer school was run for the first time in 1995.

10   The college develops programmes to meet new needs and it has a reputation for innovation in some curriculum areas. The college has played a leading national role in developing and delivering NVQ courses for the bus and coach industry. The college actively encourages innovation by setting aside a substantial sum each year for curriculum development projects. This year the college has developed new vocational courses in popular music and in the restoration of classic cars. The college makes sound decisions about the provision of new courses and the removal of those no longer in demand. The planning of new provision is informed by the college's market research.

11   The college has effective links with other agencies, such as Coventry and Warwickshire TEC, the local careers service and the probation service. Links with the local authority are good. The college was selected by the authority to sponsor its community education provision. There are well-established working relationships with the University of Warwick and Coventry University and franchised higher education programmes have been set up through this collaboration. The college has a compact arrangement with Coventry University and with Sheffield Hallam University.

12   The highly-competitive context of the post-compulsory education sector in Coventry has led to some difficulties in relationships with secondary schools. However, there are informal links with some secondary schools, one of which sends large numbers of its female pupils to the college each summer term to sample engineering activities. Local schools and further education colleges have agreed an accord which covers marketing activities and publication of information. Recently the three general further education colleges have met to identify areas where collaboration could benefit further education in the city. Proposals are being developed for joint work in a number of areas.

13   The college seeks to ensure equal access to education and training for all sections of the community. It has developed provision specifically for groups who have not normally entered further education. For example, there are community outreach courses in English for speakers of other languages, community interpreting and information technology. It has set up a BTEC national diploma in nursery nursing course for Asian women in a Muslim resource centre. Community outreach work is supported by the college's effective liaison with minority ethnic groups, partly through a community consultation forum. Staff frequently visit community organisations to ascertain their needs. A recent social and cultural evening held for Asian women in the Indian community centre was attended by some 400 people and generated 120 requests for further information about the college.

14   The college is the major general further education provider in the city of courses for young people and adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It offers special courses, including a modular foundation programme accredited by the Central Access Network, and support for

students to participate in mainstream programmes. There is good liaison with local special schools and other agencies working with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Formal links with the adjacent specialist college enable some joint provision for individual students with disabilities.

15   Links with employers locally and nationally are highly effective. Each faculty has an advisory committee and there are some employer-liaison groups, for example, those associated with health and social care. The college has particularly strong links with bus and coach companies nationally. Local manufacturing companies support a college-based training programme which prepares students for modern apprenticeships. Employers praised the college for its responsiveness and the quality of its courses. Training is often delivered on company premises. One member of the college staff is permanently seconded to a large company to deliver training programmes. The college's enterprise unit is a major local and regional provider of high-quality training, mainly for employers. Its clients include large private and public sector organisations.

16   A small number of franchise arrangements has been agreed with four partner organisations to deliver NVQ and other awards in information technology, business administration, horticulture, animal care and basic education. The courses take place in a variety of local centres. One project, focusing on developing young people's literacy and numeracy skills through youth clubs, is run on a national basis in conjunction with the Community Education Development Centre. The college has a cautious approach to the development of franchising and is careful in its selection of partners. Arrangements are tightly controlled.

17   The college has taken steps to improve its liaison with parents. Some parents complained that they received little information on such matters as the content of courses, associated costs, work placements and students' progress. The college is addressing this, for example, by increasing the frequency with which it sends reports to parents and by holding more parents' evenings.

18   The college markets itself effectively, using a wide range of strategies. A central marketing unit and a detailed marketing action plan are supported by a substantial budget. Market research is thorough and draws on a number of internal and external sources of information, including labour market information. Marketing activities include open days, school visits, a college newspaper circulated to 140,000 homes in the local area, mailshots, advertisements on buses and on local radio, city centre exhibitions and an extensive programme of company visits. Each school and faculty produces a marketing plan but not all staff understand how they can contribute to the corporate marketing of the college. Promotional material is professionally produced and some is translated into community languages.

19   There are some opportunities for students to undertake sporting, cultural and other enrichment activities outside the curriculum. Ten different sporting activities are offered, including wall-climbing, horse-riding, aerobics and football. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme is offered for some students. The faculty of business participates in a Young Enterprise scheme in collaboration with staff of Lloyds Bank.

20   European and international dimensions are not strongly developed. There is no overall strategy to equip students with foreign language skills and cultural knowledge. There are some links with overseas partners in Germany, Holland and France. Visits and exchanges have taken place for students in business, engineering, leisure and tourism, and health and social care. A small amount of foreign language teaching has been provided for students undertaking exchanges.

21   The college has a strong commitment to equal opportunities. It has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy which is implemented through an annual action plan which has detailed and highly-practical targets. These targets are closely monitored by an equal opportunities team and reports are made annually to the corporation. The college literature and the induction programme give clear messages about the importance of equal opportunities. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups on FEFC-funded provision has risen steadily and now stands at 17 per cent, compared with a city-wide figure of 12 per cent. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities constitute approximately 4.6 per cent of the total college student population. Staff appointments are conducted according to strict equal opportunities guidelines. Currently, about 4 per cent of the full-time staff employed by the college have a disability. Staff development to support equal opportunities has been provided for senior managers and corporation members.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

22   The corporation board provides effective strategic direction for the college. Including the principal, there are 15 corporation members, of whom six are women. Two members of the corporation are from minority ethnic groups. Members include a TEC nominee, a member of staff and a student representative who is the president of the students' union. There is an appropriate committee structure with three committees: finance and strategic planning; audit; and remuneration. A search committee meets when new governors are required. There are two subcommittees, estates management and personnel, which report to the finance and strategic planning committee. Much of the corporation's detailed business is carried out in the finance and strategic planning committee which then reports to the corporation board. Committees operate effectively and corporation members' business, education and management expertise is well matched to their membership of committees. Committees have clear and appropriate terms of reference which are updated when needed. Meetings

are well attended. Agendas, minutes and supporting documentation are generally of high quality and the corporation board is well supported by the clerk, who is the head of administration in the college. Corporation members receive regular financial information. Occasionally, there is a lack of clarity in the minutes, and amongst corporation members, about decisions taken. The corporation has recently adopted a code of conduct and has established a register of members' business interests.

23 Governors have a good understanding of the work of the college and of trends in further education. They understand the distinction between the corporation's strategic management role and the role of the college senior management. There is a positive working relationship between the principal and the corporation board. Corporation members are seen as remote by some staff although some members visit the college and meet with staff and students.

24 The college management group comprises the principal, the deputy principal and the vice-principal. It operates effectively and provides the college with clear leadership. There are weekly meetings which are not formally minuted but action points are noted and followed up. The senior management team, which meets fortnightly, has nine members, all of whom are the senior managers for academic or support functions of the college. There is a suitable range of other management meetings. For example, the business management group meets fortnightly to address support functions such as administration; there are also faculty and centre management team meetings and heads of school and course team meetings. Care is taken to ensure that there is no unnecessary overlap of business across the range of meetings and that decisions are made at appropriate levels. Management teams have clear remits, their meetings are carefully minuted and action points noted. Useful short-life task groups are set up from time to time to steer new initiatives. For example, there is a systems task force which is focusing on the improvement of management information and communication systems across the college.

25 The college is organised into nine schools, based within three faculties, and a centre for enterprise and development. The vice-principal manages quality assurance, marketing and student services. Staff understand the college's management structures and there are effective channels of communication across the college. Curriculum leadership and co-ordination of teaching programmes and central services are good in most cases. The academic board meets regularly and considers a range of curriculum issues such as quality assurance, staff development and learning resources. Management has not yet given sufficient attention to improving students' achievements. The college is currently reviewing management structures to address some inconsistencies in staff responsibilities and workload, and some overlapping of management functions.

26   The strategic planning process is well co-ordinated and involves the corporation board and a wide range of staff. The corporation board agrees the mission and sets the framework for the strategic plan. Schools and the centre for enterprise and development prepare business plans for their programme areas and these are combined to form faculty plans. College-wide aspects of the plan, such as staff development and staffing, are added after discussion in appropriate meetings. The corporation approves the final draft strategic plan. An operating plan, derived from the strategic plan, with clear targets and timescales is used by senior management to monitor the implementation of the plan. Ten critical success factors have been identified and these are used effectively to measure progress. A member of the principalship attends each school and support staff meeting once a year to present a summary version of the strategic plan and discuss this with staff. Most staff appreciate this level of consultation. A few staff, however, feel these meetings do not give them sufficient opportunity to express their own views. Staff understand and generally support the college's mission and strategic plan.

27   The college has a number of policies which have been adopted by the corporation board, for example, on equal opportunities, harassment and quality. There are also several curriculum policies, for example, on student guidance and support, flexible learning and core skills which have been approved by senior management. Policies are drawn up by consulting appropriate staff groupings and they are usually accompanied by clear plans for implementation and arrangements for review. Staff are well informed about college policy commitments and who is responsible for them. They receive training on any related new college procedures. Regular reports are given to senior management or the corporation on the implementation of policies.

28   Arrangements for the delegation of budgets and the different unit costings are open and are understood by staff. The sums delegated to faculties and the centre for enterprise and development are based on historical allocations, the number of courses, the number of students and a weighting for different programme areas. Almost all part-time staffing budgets and funding for consumables are delegated to heads of school. A thorough and effective system has recently been set up to calculate costs and income generation at course level. The system is used to cost each existing and proposed new course to assess its viability. Decisions about new courses which require substantial investment in expensive equipment, for example, the popular music course, are made by the corporation. Attention is given to the efficient use of resources within the college. Low student numbers in some course areas are not cost effective.

29   Targets for student enrolments are set each year based on historic student numbers, planned course developments and estimated risks from factors such as competition from other providers. The number of enrolments is carefully monitored. Enrolment targets have been met since incorporation. However, although the funding units generated for

1994-95 had not been validated at the time of the inspection, the college's own calculations show that targets have not been met for that year. A more detailed monitoring system for tracking the number of funding units generated was being used for the first time at the time of inspection. It is too early to judge if this system is effective.

30   The college's recurrent funding allocation from the FEFC is 59 per cent of its total income. Recently, an amicable settlement has been reached with the city council over the financial deficit inherited at incorporation. This has removed a major element of uncertainty about the college's financial position. The college's average level of funding for 1995-96 is £18.05 per unit compared with the median of £17.84 for general further education and tertiary colleges in the sector. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

31   Regular management information reports, including detailed financial reports, are used appropriately by management for decision making. However, student-related data were not fully reliable until this year because of some inaccurate registers. In the last few months the college has set up an effective system to address this issue. The system for recording students' examination results has led to some incomplete data at course level. Progress has been made in the last year in the development and use of computerised management information systems. Management information is less well used at course level and many tutors are not yet aware of the information which can be supplied. Retention rates are monitored systematically and action is taken if rates are low. Student destinations are not yet monitored comprehensively or analysed systematically.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

32   There are detailed policies on different aspects of student guidance and support, such as personal counselling, induction and tutorials. These policies are complemented by guidelines for their implementation. Prospective students receive a friendly welcome at the college and reception staff offer appropriate help and information. The student services centre provides good guidance, personal counselling, and support on a drop-in basis and through appointments. The centre houses a comprehensive collection of careers and higher education resources, including a training access point. A telephone is available for free use by students making inquiries about employment. The centre is well used by students.

33   Clear information is given on college provision in a range of well-designed and attractive prospectuses. In addition, more detailed course leaflets are produced using a standard format. Students can apply to enrol on courses directly to the faculties or to the centre for enterprise and development. If they are not sure what they would like to study they are referred to student services for more guidance. Most students receive

appropriate guidance and are able to make an informed choice about their studies. However, some guidance offered to prospective students by faculty staff is insufficiently informative or impartial. Although enrolment procedures were well organised, some students received no guidance or further information about the course in which they were interested.

34   Application and enrolment forms for courses ask students if they might require any learning support. In addition, screening exercises to identify students' literacy or numeracy support needs are carried out during induction. In September 1995 some 962 students were screened and 150 students were identified as having literacy or numeracy skills below GNVQ foundation level. Course tutors also identify students who may need further support and encourage them to use the appropriate services. Some part-time students are not aware that learning support is available. Currently 122 students receive learning support, mostly on a one-to-one basis. This is an increase of 100 per cent in the level of uptake compared with the previous year. The quality of literacy and numeracy support is good. English support for speakers of other languages is not yet sufficiently linked with students' programmes of study and there is little recording of students' progress. English support offered within vocational classes by double staffing is effectively linked to the subject being studied. The learning support workshop is too small for the number of students who use it. The college plans to have more suitable accommodation by summer 1996. Good arrangements are made for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they can study subjects offered across the college.

35   All full-time students benefit from a well-planned induction programme which includes signing a student agreement and receiving a copy of the college charter. There is a comprehensive induction checklist which tutors use to ensure students, including those who start late on a course, receive all the necessary induction information. Students are given a helpful students' handbook and they are informed of their rights and responsibilities. Induction for part-time students, especially evening students, varies in content and effectiveness. Evaluation of enrolment and induction processes results in improvements each year.

36   The college has a clearly set out policy for the accreditation of students' prior learning and there are useful guidance documents for staff and students. Arrangements for the accreditation of prior learning are well developed and effective in some programme areas. There is a particularly good system for the NVQ programme for the bus and coach industry and there are effective arrangements for some courses in business, horticulture and teacher training. The use of accreditation of prior learning is underdeveloped in some other programme areas, for example, in health and social care.

37   Students' attendance is carefully monitored using a new computerised system. If students are absent for three consecutive classes without an explanation this is followed up and appropriate action is taken. Printouts

of individual students' attendance, lateness and absenteeism can be readily obtained from the management information system. Personal tutors and course organisers are starting to use this facility to discuss with students their patterns of attendance. Systems are not yet effective for informing employers about students' absenteeism. Suitable arrangements are made so that students can transfer to other courses.

38   Each student has a personal tutor and group tutorials are held for all full-time students. Until recently, the arrangements for tutorial support for students were not well defined and the quality of tutorials was variable. A programme for tutorials was introduced in September 1995 and it includes study skills, action planning, records of achievement, careers advice and how to apply for higher education. The role of personal tutors is comprehensively defined in a manual. Tutorial support is less well organised and less effective for part-time students. The college is committed to ensuring that all 16-19 year old students complete records of achievement and about 80 per cent of school leavers bring their national record of achievement with them. Practice is variable and not all students update or complete them. The college is considering using records of achievement for mature students.

39   Students have access to specialist careers guidance. The college has a contract for 152 days per year with Quality Careers Services Limited (formerly Coventry Careers Service). Students receive good support and advice to prepare them for applying to higher education. Over 440 individual careers interviews were given in 1994-95. Action plans are completed for all 16-19 year old full-time students. There is no formal system for following up individual careers interviews, although some personal tutors discuss the outcomes with students. The college regularly reviews the contract with Quality Careers Services Limited to ensure it is meeting the needs of students.

40   Students have access to financial support from different sources such as the access fund, the European Social Fund, the local education authority and from a college support fund. Subsidised bus passes are provided for many students aged 16-19 and this scheme is enhanced by a general travel subsidy scheme for other students experiencing financial hardship. The college has a creche with 15 places at the main site and further creche provision at two outreach centres. Students can apply for financial support to pay for childcare so that they can afford to use other facilities, such as childminders or nursery provision, if this is more suitable for them.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

41   Of the 195 sessions inspected, 66 per cent had strengths which outweighed the weaknesses. In 8 per cent of classes, the weaknesses outweighed the strengths. The average attendance in the sessions inspected was 71 per cent. The following table summarises the grades given to the teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	1	8	5	1	0	15
GCSE	1	3	5	4	0	13
GNVQ	0	9	8	2	0	19
NVQ	4	16	7	1	0	28
Access to further and higher education	2	6	1	0	0	9
Basic education	6	13	10	3	0	32
Higher education	2	2	1	0	0	5
Other vocational	8	18	8	3	1	38
Other	8	22	5	1	0	36
Total	**32**	**97**	**50**	**15**	**1**	**195**

42   Most teaching was well planned. There were some comprehensive schemes of work. Teachers were knowledgable and most were enthusiastic, achieving a good rapport with their students. They were sensitive to the needs of adult learners and effectively used a range of teaching aids to support students' learning. In the best sessions, students carried out a variety of challenging tasks and had good opportunities to link the theoretical and practical elements of their studies. Students' assignments were usually set and marked at an appropriate level and returned promptly. Most teachers marked assignments carefully, providing clear and constructive comments to help students improve their performance. In general, good records are kept of students' progress.

43   In some weaker sessions, schemes of work consisted of little more than lists of topics. Students spent too much time in some classes taking notes from dictation or copying from the board. In others, teachers gave over-lengthy expositions of the topic and there were few opportunities for students to be involved. Some teachers failed to check that students had understood the work. In a few sessions the poor attendance and punctuality of many students detracted significantly from the quality of the learning. There were weaknesses in the assessment and recording of students' progress on a few courses.

44   More than 1,200 students undertake work placements each year with a wide range of employers. The placements are well integrated with course programmes and assignments and often make a significant contribution to the assessment of students' achievements. However, there is no entitlement to work experience for students on general education courses.

45   The quality of teaching on computing courses was good and in a few sessions outstanding. In the better sessions, students responded well to a broad range of activities and high-quality learning materials. Students

following the RSA Examinations Board (RSA) course in computer literacy and information technology were able to join at a time of their own choosing and progress at their own pace. The teaching in mathematics was less good. In the weaker sessions, the range of activities was often restricted and some students were not sufficiently involved in group work. In several sessions students arrived late and disturbed the class. Many GCSE mathematics classes in particular had a very high number of absences and withdrawals. Assignments were not set in some mathematics groups.

46   Engineering programmes were well designed. In most sessions there was a balance of practical work and theory. Practical work was well organised and effectively supervised. Students worked effectively on their own and in groups. A group of part-time vehicle bodywork students worked on a design study for fitting a wheelchair lift to a side entrance of a bus. This design was to be put into practice on a bus owned by one of the college's customers. Sometimes, teachers did not check the extent to which learning had taken place. There was little assessed and marked written work in engineering. NVQ competencies were being assessed at too late a stage in the programme.

47   In professional and management studies most teaching was of a high standard. Students responded positively to the challenges offered by their teachers. Teaching material was up to date and well prepared. Teachers used an impressive range of techniques to stimulate learning and gave good support to adult learners. On an intensive course for middle managers the teacher expertly created a team ethos in the group within the first half hour of the course. In the few weaker sessions students spent too much time copying notes and teachers did not check that they had understood the work.

48   In business and secretarial studies teachers effectively managed their classes and succeeded in maintaining students' interest. Most teachers showed knowledge and enthusiasm for their subject. In a small number of sessions tutors made little effort to motivate the students. Some learning and assignment materials contained errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar and students' progress was not always recorded.

49   In health and social care, students' skills, knowledge and understanding were tested and challenged. Teachers frequently linked theory to students' own practical experiences. In a BTEC national certificate session on legal aspects of care, students' learning was sustained at a good pace by the use of a wide range of activities and a supportive and enthusiastic teaching style. Up-to-date government leaflets were used as a basis for group work and lively and well-regulated discussion followed. In some weaker sessions too much time was spent giving information to students. Work was set and marked at the right level. Core skills were not effectively integrated into the BTEC programme.

50   Most teaching in humanities was well planned and followed clear schemes of work. Teachers made good use of a variety of teaching

techniques and materials, including overhead projectors, video and film excerpts. The more successful sessions were characterised by lively and enthusiastic contributions from students, stimulating group work and learning which proceeded at a good pace. In some of the weaker GCE A level and GCSE sessions for younger students there was too much exposition by teachers and an emphasis on dictating notes. A few GCSE English classes were marred by poor attendance, lateness in arrival and weaknesses in students' responses. Students' assignments were often carefully marked with detailed and constructive comments, but some had little or no comment from tutors and some serious spelling errors had not been corrected.

51   The high quality of support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was a strong feature of the teaching and learning in several areas of the curriculum, including engineering, health and social care and horticulture and floristry. Teaching sessions for students with learning difficulties were carefully planned and the objectives were made clear to students. Teachers related well to individual students and checked whether learning had taken place. Students were encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. In a well-planned cookery class students with severe learning difficulties prepared simple but imaginative food under careful supervision. Students' previous learning was reinforced, the teacher prepared students for the following session and gave a good summary of work undertaken. Where teaching was less successful, planning was poor, there was a lack of challenge and variety in the work and the teacher's management of the group was weak. In a few sessions too little account was taken of the students' widely differing abilities.

52   The teaching in adult basic education and courses of English for speakers of other languages was well planned and effective. Most sessions were challenging and engaged students' interest. Some weaker sessions had a limited range of activity and the pace of learning was slow. In some English classes for speakers of other languages too little attention was given to developing students' oral skills. There was appropriate assessment of individual needs and recording of students' work. Teachers had good relationships with students and gave them individual attention and support. Assignments were marked promptly and clear and constructive feedback was given to students.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

53   In most curriculum areas students were well motivated and enjoyed their studies. They worked effectively in groups. Most students demonstrated levels of skills, knowledge and understanding which were appropriate to their stage of study and the level of the course. Students were able to apply their developing knowledge and understanding, for example, during work placements. Where appropriate, students carried out practical work competently and safely.

54   On some courses low numbers of students completed their course and there were unsatisfactory pass rates in examinations. Some students aged 16-18 had particularly poor levels of achievement. Students' achievement of core skills, including those in information technology, were generally poor. The college is developing strategies to address this.

55   Students on both mathematics and computing courses described the work they were undertaking clearly and with understanding. They responded well to appropriate internal assessments. Results in computing examinations were satisfactory and in some cases good. Examination results for RSA in computer literacy and information technology were good and those for City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) in information technology have been high for the last three years. Poor results were recorded by students on GCSE mathematics courses. Only 23 per cent of all students and 9 per cent of students aged 16-18 that were entered for GCSE mathematics in 1995 were successful. The pass rates for full-time students aged 19 or over in statistics and GCSE science were good and over 75 per cent passed the examinations. The pass rates for GCSE science and human biology for students aged 16-18 were poor.

56   Engineering students worked with interest and enthusiasm, and effectively in groups. Some students had too little opportunity to carry out experimental work. Safety was a major focal point in practical sessions and close attention was paid to correct dress and footwear. Some students did not develop a sufficiently high level of communication and numeracy skills for the level of their course. Pass rates in examinations were variable. NVQ results were generally good. Particularly good results were achieved by part-time students in the C&G computer-aided engineering courses at levels 2 and 3 and by full-time and part-time students in the C&G motor vehicle craft studies part three. The module pass rates on the C&G repair and servicing of road vehicle course were high. However, results in the BTEC first certificate have declined significantly in recent years. Last year's pass rate was 33 per cent.

57   In professional and management studies students participated effectively in discussions. Students' presentation, research and writing skills were of a high quality. A few students demonstrated poor note-taking and numeracy skills. Examination pass rates frequently exceeded national averages. In the certificate in supervision 100 per cent pass rates were achieved in 1995 and in 1993 and an 83 per cent pass rate in 1994. Good results were achieved in NVQ at levels 2, 3 and 4 in management studies and in other professional qualifications. The results for the Association of Accounting Technicians NVQ at levels 2 and 4 have exceeded the national average for the last three years.

58   On business and secretarial courses pass rates vary. In 1995 the pass rate in the BTEC national certificate in business and finance was good. The pass rate for the GNVQ intermediate course in business was 72 per cent. The pass rate for the GNVQ advanced course in business was 45 per cent, just above the national average of 42 per cent. Out of the six

students who completed the GCSE in business studies in 1995 none achieved a grade A-C. Secretarial skills pass rates for full-time and part-time courses in wordprocessing and audio typing were high. Adult students taking courses offering RSA NVQ levels 1 and 2 in business administration have achieved 100 per cent pass rates over the last three years.

59   In health and social care students were enthusiastic about their studies.   Their written work demonstrated appropriate levels of understanding and achievement. Students worked well in groups and gained skills in using computers. However, a minority of students did not have the opportunity to develop information technology skills. GNVQ students were developing core skills. Pass rates in most course areas were high. In 1995, those on the BTEC national diploma in nursery nursing and the diploma in counselling were 100 per cent. Pass rates for access to health and nursing were variable.

60   In humanities and media studies, students were developing good oral skills and, when given the opportunity, worked well in groups. Students' written work was of a high quality and demonstrated a developing ability to construct arguments and make proper use of reference sources. Students on the radio journalism course were able to develop radio skills through 'Radio Cream' a college run radio station. Students developed appropriate information technology skills. Most students who complete the English, communications and media courses achieve a pass. The pass rate on most of the access courses was 100 per cent. Good results were achieved by students in the C&G further and adult education teachers' certificate course.   In GCE A level and GCSE humanities subjects examination results were variable. English GCSE results for students aged 16-18 have declined over the last three years and only 18 per cent of students entered for the examination passed in 1995.

61   Students taking courses in literacy, numeracy or English for speakers of other languages spoke positively about their studies.   Students' achievements generally were good and, increasingly, achievements were being recognised through appropriate accreditation. In a few cases the progress of students attending English support was poor. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enjoyed their studies and gained appropriate skills. Some, however, did not develop sufficiently high levels of core skills.

62   Overall the college's GCSE results at grades A-C have declined in the last few years and they were consistently below the national average in 1995. Eighty-three students aged 16-18 years old entered for GCE advanced supplementary (AS) or GCE A level examinations in 1995 and achieved an average score of 2.7 points. This places the college in the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure based on the data in the 1995 performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment. Seventy-seven per cent

of students aged 16-18 in the final year of study on the vocational courses included in the then Department for Education's 1994 performance tables were successful. In 1995, the proportion had declined by 10 per cent to 67 per cent. These figures place the college in the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. However, only a small proportion of students are entered for the qualifications which feature in the Department's performance tables. In 1994-95, only 206 students featured in these tables out of a total of 1,930 full-time enrolments. Some 85 per cent of enrolments at the college were students aged 19 or over in 1994-95 and 84 per cent in 1993-94.

63   A high proportion of students progressed to higher education from some course areas. For example, in 1994 all 33 students who passed two or more GCE A levels, and 13 out of 20 students who passed one GCE A level, went on to study in higher education. In some other areas a good proportion of students progressed into employment or further education. In the remaining areas it was not possible to analyse students' progression, as data held by the college were incomplete.

64   The retention rate for the college was 86.5 per cent. The retention rate for two-year GCE A level and GCSE courses has declined over the last three years and remains unsatisfactory. Retention for vocational provision varies and ranges from very low at 38 per cent to very good at 100 per cent.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

65   The college is committed to continually improving its quality assurance systems. The college sets standards in a range of areas and then evaluates its performance. There is a comprehensive quality assurance framework. The framework includes 37 key service indicators based on the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement* and the six performance indicators required by the FEFC. The vice-principal, supported by a team of three quality assurance managers based in faculties and the head of the centre of enterprise and development, is responsible for implementing the quality assurance system. They make regular reports to the academic board, to the principal and to the corporation. The college is actively involved in a national further education performance indicators project which seeks to compare performance across a range of colleges in relation to service indicators and unit costs. The findings from this project are helping the college review the quality and efficiency of its provision.

66   The quality assurance system includes an annual review of college achievements against the strategic plan using 10 'critical success factors', evaluations of responses to surveys of students' views, and a regular review of the quality framework itself. A quality assurance review carried out recently by the college found that the 37 key service indicators did not yet present a total picture of the college's performance. Quality assurance systems are well developed for taught programmes but less well developed for support services. Quality assurance arrangements are planned and

reviewed on an annual basis and good practice in quality assurance is disseminated across the college. The college has complemented its own quality assurance systems by seeking and achieving external quality marks; for example, International Standards Organisation (ISO) 9001 for its enterprise unit, the Basic Skills Agency (formerly Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit) quality mark for its student support workshop and the 'Positive about Disabled People' kitemark award from the Department for Education and Employment. Coventry and Warwickshire TEC rated the quality of the college's provision highly and recently awarded the college a high score as a result of the TEC's quality audit. The college has used the FEFC's inspection to assist with quality improvements. It has responded positively to subject area inspections and a number of improvements have been made to address identified weaknesses. However, the college's quality assurance system has not yet had a sufficient focus and impact on improving students' achievements. Work on value-added analyses of students' achievements is in its early stages.

67   The college's course monitoring and evaluation system was established in 1991 and further developed in 1993. There is some variability in the quality of course monitoring and review. For example, on some courses students' destinations are not always recorded and a few course evaluations are limited in scope. Course evaluations have led to some improvements in provision. A system of course quality assurance files introduced recently is making the approach to course monitoring and review more systematic. A more structured format for course reviews has also been introduced. The college decided to establish systematic internal verification for provision in November 1994.

68   At faculty level, comprehensive annual quality reports have been produced for several years and are of a high standard. Faculty reports cover quality aspects of each course offered, indicate how well targets have been met and identify action points for making further improvements. Regular faculty review meetings also contribute to quality assurance processes, although, in some cases, action points identified in reviews are not followed up. The college has recently introduced a formal internal validation process for proposed new courses to ensure that new provision is of a consistently high quality. College-wide standards for work experience have been devised, but not yet implemented.

69   Student satisfaction surveys have been carried out for the last five years. The results are carefully analysed and reported to the academic board. Action has been taken in response to issues identified, for example, the streamlining of paperwork for enrolment and the improvement of student guidance and support. Student satisfaction rates have increased steadily and currently stand at 92 per cent. The college introduced its first systematic employer survey in 1995.

70   The college student charter was published in June 1994 and it provides standards of entitlement for students, employers and the local

community. Staff are aware of the charter commitments and of their own responsibility for ensuring that charter standards are met. The charter is made available to all students. However, a recent college survey showed that many students and parents were not aware of the charter. Performance against charter commitments is reviewed on an annual basis by the academic board and the corporation. The college charter was one of only 20 nationally to be commended in 1994 by the then minister for further and higher education.

71   The college has a thorough system for staff appraisal linked to staff development. In June 1995 it was awarded the Investors in People standard. Preparation for this award has provided a clear focus for improving staff-development procedures for all academic and support staff. The college has a fully documented appraisal system. Ninety-eight per cent of academic staff were appraised in the first cycle of this process and all managers are now appraised annually.

72   The college has a clearly set out staff-development policy incorporated in the strategic plan and agreed and reviewed annually. Staff-development needs are determined in a number of ways; through staff appraisal, individual training needs analyses and the identification of college staff-development priorities though strategic planning processes. The staff-development budget has been increased this year to £86,000. A wide variety of staff development is funded. Staff-development activities, both in-house and external, are evaluated and a report is presented to the academic board. The levels and type of qualifications held by staff are monitored and additional ones gained from staff training are added. When staff attend external courses there is usually some dissemination of the outcomes. A structured and comprehensive induction process is in place for all new full-time staff. Part-time staff receive detailed information on their entitlement to staff training and development. They can request a training needs interview which is followed by appropriate training. Part-time staff are paid to attend in-house 'essential training days' and appropriate curriculum meetings.

73   The college prepared a comprehensive self-assessment report using the headings of the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The report was prepared following analyses of college documentation, comprehensive consultation with staff and a special meeting of all managers. The assessments made by the college accorded well with the findings of the inspection.

RESOURCES

Staffing

74   The majority of full-time and part-time teachers have relevant qualifications and experience for the courses which they teach. Eighty-five per cent of full-time teachers hold teacher qualifications, 58 per cent hold Training and Development Lead Body assessor qualifications and a

further 28 per cent are qualified as internal verifiers. A few teachers do not have appropriate specialist qualifications. Many teaching staff have recent relevant practical, commercial or industrial experience, for example in horticulture, engineering and the mass media which enables them to bring relevance and variety to their teaching. In some areas, for example in humanities and health and social care, staff have beneficial links with awarding bodies, for example as examiners.

75   Overall there are sufficient numbers of teaching staff to support college programmes. There is a balance between full-time and part-time staff. The college is seeking to improve flexibility and efficiency by moving towards a higher ratio of part-time staff. Part-time teachers make an important contribution to course teams. The current professional or industrial experience of many part-time teachers is used effectively in a range of curriculum areas. The proportion of course hours taught by part-time staff varies across the college. Learning is well supported by technical and support staff who work effectively in teams with teaching staff. Computer technicians are managed centrally. Other technicians are managed by faculties or schools and this limits their flexible deployment across the college.

76   The support functions of finance, personnel, estates and general administration are staffed with sufficient numbers of appropriately-qualified staff. They work closely with teaching staff. There is too little clerical support for some middle managers and some teaching staff for them to efficiently carry out their administrative responsibilities.

77   Essential personnel policies are in place. The college has created some new teaching and support posts to carry out the curriculum and management development commitments made in the strategic plan. There has been some reduction in teaching and management posts in order to increase efficiency. Arrangements for the recruitment and selection of both teaching and support staff are appropriate. During selection, candidates are assessed to identify whether they have the required knowledge and practical skills. All staff have job descriptions. There are regular reviews of the college's staffing needs and of staff workloads.

78   The college analyses staff by age, gender, ethnic origin and disability. The senior management team comprises five men and four women and 50 per cent of all managers and section leaders are women. Overall, 47 per cent of full-time and 64 per cent of part-time staff are female. Sixty-two per cent of support staff are female. Since incorporation the percentage of staff from minority ethnic groups has increased from 3 per cent to 7 per cent.

Equipment/learning resources

79   The college is generally well equipped and resources are effectively deployed to support learning. Most teaching rooms have appropriate aids, including whiteboards and overhead projectors. Teachers have access to video equipment, desktop publishing and photocopying facilities. All

specialist areas are adequately equipped and some are well equipped. As a result of its close links with manufacturers such as Rover, Peugeot and a number of bus companies, the motor vehicle section has acquired a good stock of vehicles and the workshops are equipped to offer a comprehensive range of training and technical education. Equipment is impressive in the areas of computerised numerical control machining and computer-aided design. There is good equipment for media studies and popular music courses including an industrial standard recording studio, a radio broadcasting station and three video editing suites. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are provided with appropriate specialist equipment. The college has a comprehensive stock of equipment to support students with disabilities, for example dictaphones, portable computers and a talking calculator.

80   The college is well equipped with industrial standard computers. The ratio of full-time equivalent students to computers is 10:1 but there are insufficient open-access machines. In some rooms the number of printers is inadequate for the number of computer stations. There is a lack of appropriate demonstration facilities in computer rooms, with the result that students have to cluster round one monitor for demonstrations. There is a range of computer software, but there is a need for some additional specialist software. Information technology teaching materials are generally good, although they are not always related to students' main vocational programmes. Computers with free use of the Internet are available in the library and computer rooms. Access to computers with compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database drives is poor and there is a limited range of compact disks. The college has an information technology policy and a users' group which monitors needs and recommends purchases.

81   The college library, together with its two adjoining project rooms, meets the needs of the majority of students. The library has a range of periodicals, video cassettes, audio cassettes and information packs. In most areas the bookstock is sufficient. Identified deficiencies in some areas, for example, in health and social care, engineering and adult literacy are currently being addressed. In addition to the bookstock there are four open-access computers, a screen to assist students with visual impairments and two audio cassette players. There are too few computers in the library to meet students' needs. The library has 87 study spaces. Although this is a low number for the size of the student body, currently students' demands are being met. A recent survey showed that 84 per cent of users found the library a satisfactory study area. The library has low level bookshelves to make books more accessible to students who use wheelchairs. The college is seeking to improve access to books for students at outreach centres.

82   Procedures are in place to identify equipment needs and allocate the necessary resources. The college has planned programmes to replace information technology and other equipment.

Accommodation

83   The main campus is a six hectare site with pleasant grounds and horticultural areas, three and a half miles south-west of Coventry city centre. The main building provides good-quality accommodation. It was constructed in 1969 and was designed to give access for students with restricted mobility. Almost all the accommodation is easily accessible to people who use wheelchairs. The reception area is welcoming and the student services centre is well located in an adjacent room. The centre is too small for current needs and lacks private interview rooms. Sign-posting throughout the building is good. There is a range of student facilities, which are well used, including a refectory, a student common room with games tables and a student lounge. There is also a pleasant staff lounge. The social areas have snack bars.

84   The college is improving its main site so that the premises are adapted to meet commitments made in the strategic plan for new curriculum areas and growth in student numbers. Work is in progress to convert the existing sports hall into a two-storey teaching block and resource based learning centre. The construction of a large new sports hall and fitness centre is nearing completion. A music studio has been built and the caretaker's house has been converted to a radio station. The college has doubled the number of parking spaces to 600 places to meet the needs of students. Exterior lighting is satisfactory and a network of closed-circuit security cameras covers car parks and other key exterior and interior locations. The college has a purpose-built creche.

85   The majority of general and specialist teaching accommodation is of suitable size and layout. Accommodation for motor vehicle maintenance, commercial vehicle repairs, horticulture and popular music is particularly good. A few specialist rooms are too small. For example, computer-aided design and electronics and a few nursery nursing classes are taught in rooms which are too small for effective group work. Occasionally, classes take place in unsuitable rooms. For example, one access to physical education class was held in a language laboratory. Some general classrooms lack display materials.

86   The college uses several outreach community centres.   This accommodation is generally of good quality. Students appreciate the convenient locations, but eating and social facilities in these centres are limited. The college uses a large, specialist heavy goods vehicle repair centre which is an excellent practical facility but there is only one small classroom which is inadequate for the number of students. Charterhouse, a former fourteenth-century monastic grade-one listed building, is used by the enterprise unit for full-cost courses. The range of rooms is well suited to the courses taught but access for wheelchair users is currently limited. College horticultural students maintain the Charterhouse grounds, including the medieval knot garden, to a high standard.

87   A comprehensive accommodation strategy is being effectively implemented and the college is making considerable investments in building developments. College accommodation is well managed and there are clear repair and maintenance schedules and procedures. Close attention is paid to energy management and conservation. Room use surveys are undertaken on one day each term and results are cross-referenced to computerised student attendance records. Almost all estates functions are carried out by a team of estate wardens, maintenance staff and college managers. College grounds and buildings are maintained to a high standard. Many corridors and classrooms are carpeted. All accommodation, including specialist areas such as vehicle workshops and horticulture facilities, are clean, tidy and in good decorative order.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

88   The major strengths of Tile Hill College of Further Education are:

*   the broad range of courses offered and the college's responsiveness to employers and the local community

*   the well-developed equal opportunities policies and practices

*   recruitment of students from groups which have not normally entered further education

*   the effective corporation board and senior management team

*   the thorough approaches to strategic planning

*   the good support given to students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

*   well-planned, good-quality teaching on most courses

*   students' high levels of motivation and, on some courses, their good examination results

*   the college's systems for continually improving the quality of provision

*   well-qualified and suitably-experienced staff

*   the good quality of equipment and learning resources

*   accommodation which is of a high standard and is accessible for students with restricted mobility.

89   In order to build on its strengths and further improve its provision the college needs to address the following:

*   the poor levels of students' achievements on some courses

*   the poor attendance levels and retention rates on some courses

*   the variable quality of tutorial support and recording of students' achievements

*   students' lack of access to confidential advice and guidance in the present accommodation

- the lack of opportunity for some students to develop suitable core skills, including skills in information technology

- the limited impact of management and quality assurance systems in ensuring that the level of students' achievements is raised.

FIGURES

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

Figure 1

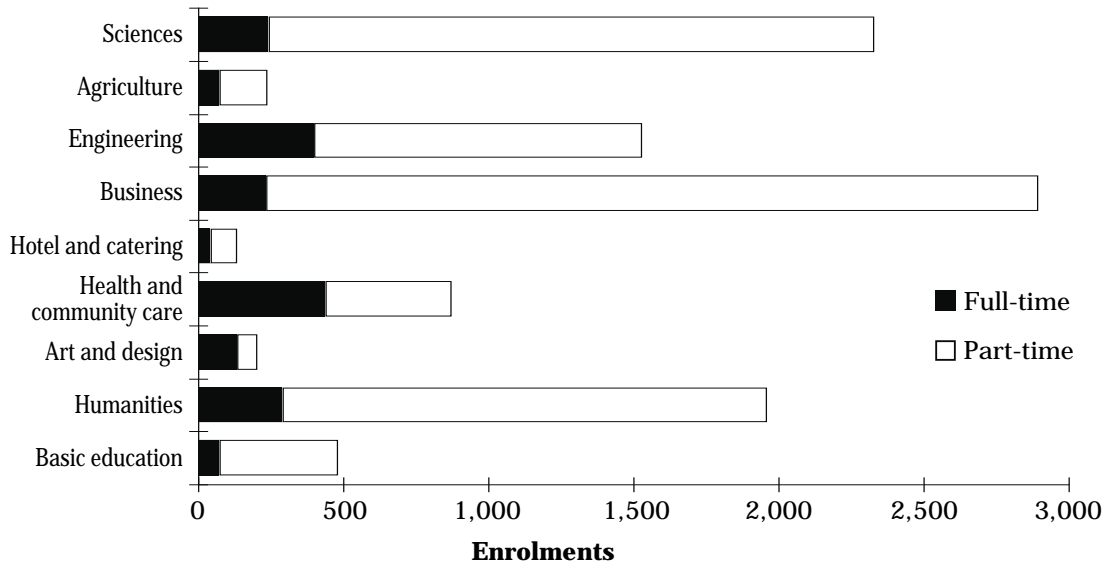**Tile Hill College of Further Education: percentage enrolments by age (1995-96)**

Legend:
- Under 16
- 16-18 years
- 19-24 years
- 25+ years
- Not known

1%
15%
15%
26%
43%
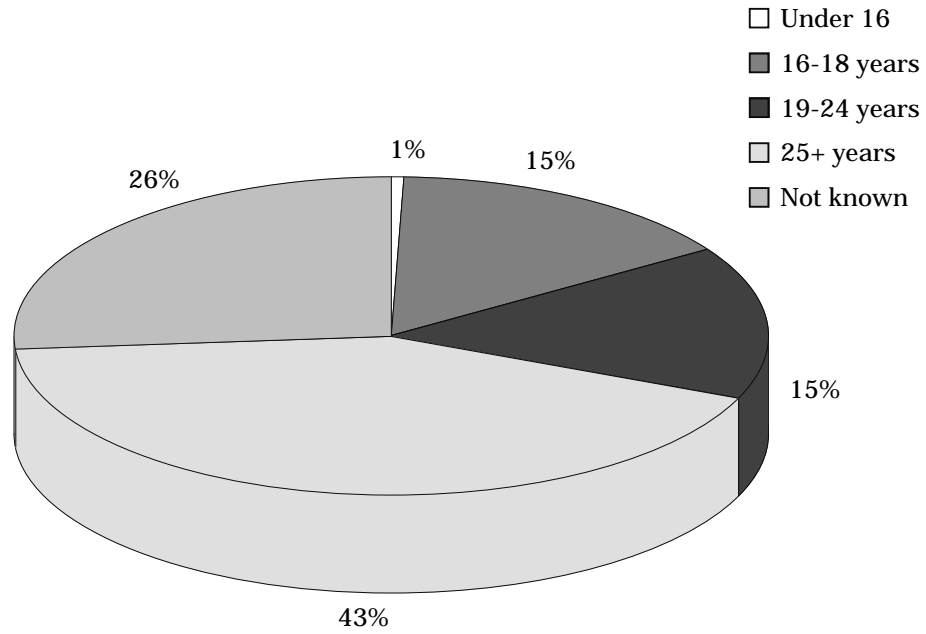
Enrolments: 10,656

Figure 2

Tile Hill College of Further Education: percentage enrolments by level of study (1995-96)

Higher education
5%

Foundation
52%

Advanced
25%

Intermediate
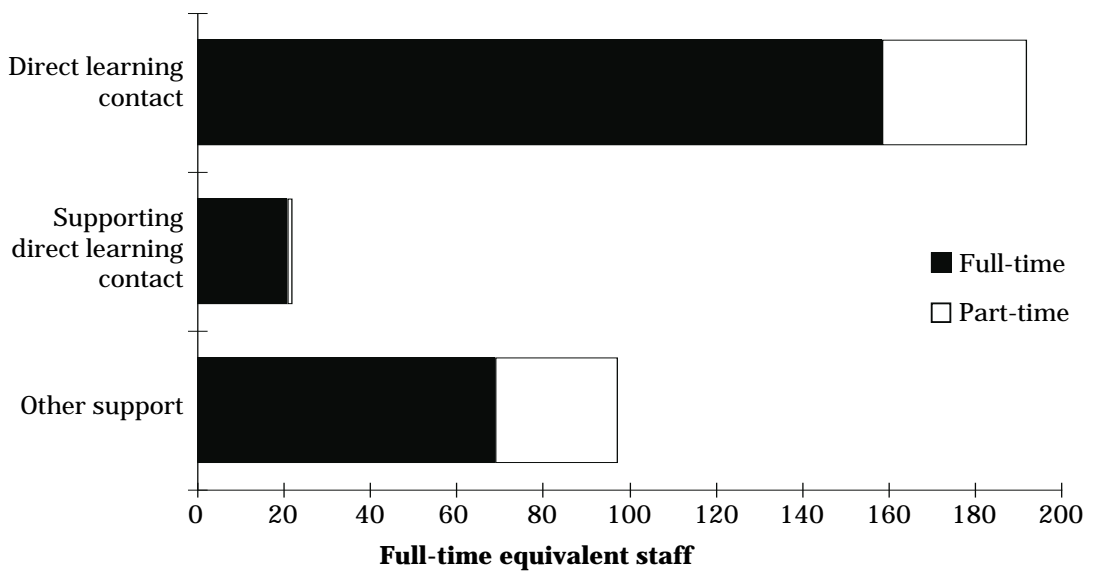18%
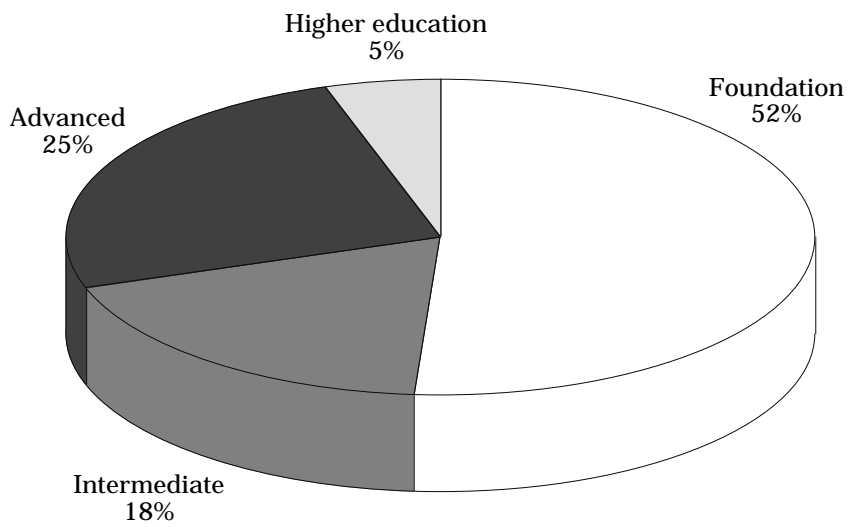
Enrolments: 10,656

26

Figure 3

Tile Hill College of Further Education: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1995-96)
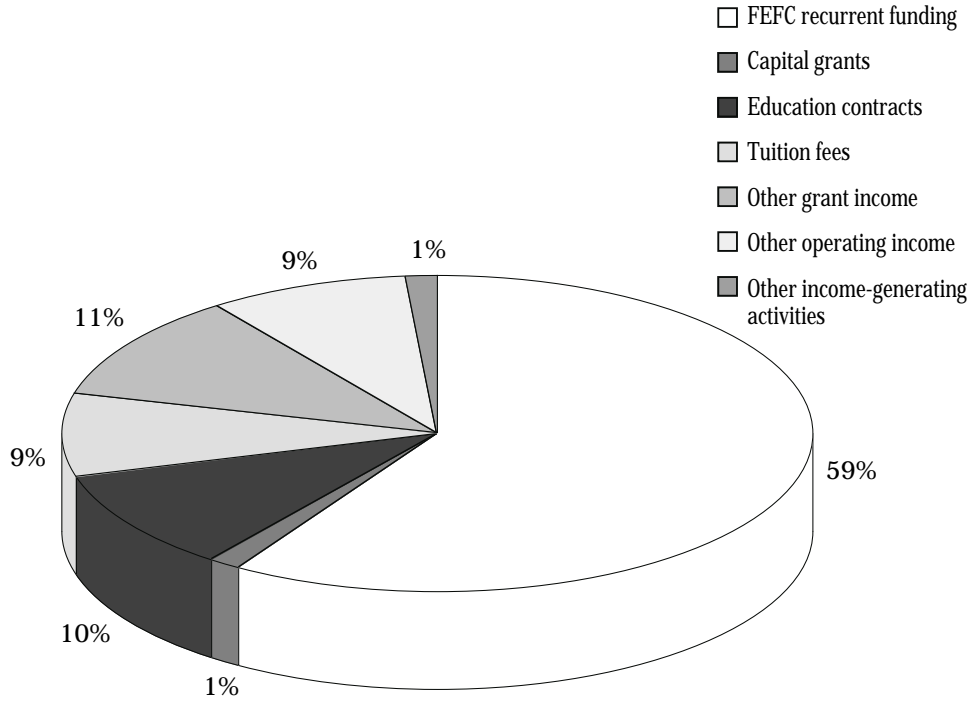

Enrolments: 10,656

Figure 4

Tile Hill College of Further Education: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)
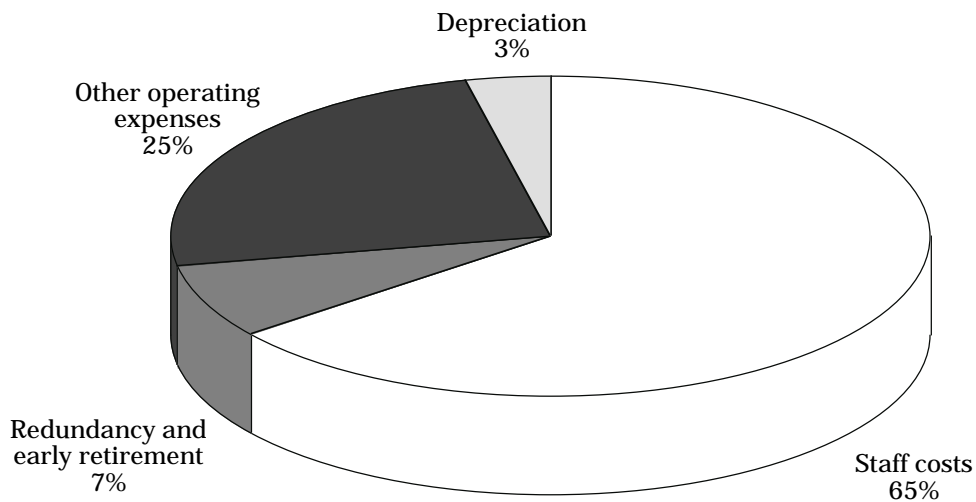

Full-time equivalent staff: 312

Figure 5

Tile Hill College of Further Education: income (for 12 months to July 1995)

☐ FEFC recurrent funding

■ Capital grants

■ Education contracts

☐ Tuition fees

☐ Other grant income

☐ Other operating income

☐ Other income-generating activities

9%   1%

11%

9%   59%

10%

1%

Income: £10,000,000

Figure 6

Tile Hill College of Further Education: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

Depreciation
3%

Other operating
expenses
25%

Staff costs
65%

Redundancy and
early retirement
7%

Expenditure: £9,623,000   *Note: this chart excludes £25,000 interest payable.*