

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Tynemouth College

August 1995

**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 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.

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.*

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 100/95

TYNEMOUTH COLLEGE

NORTHERN REGION

Inspected September 1994 - April 1995

Summary

Tynemouth College, located in Tyne and Wear, is offering an increasingly wide range of courses to meet the needs of learners of all ages and backgrounds. It provides an appropriate portfolio of courses for school leavers, adults and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number of vocational courses and part-time courses is being extended. Non-schedule 2 courses for adults are offered at the college and there is sponsored provision at other local centres. Governors work with managers to provide effective strategic direction for the college. A wide range of policies has been adopted although many of these lack a strategy for implementation. Market research has improved college planning and strengthened links with employers but marketing activities require more effective co-ordination. Productive links are developing with the local TEC. Liaison with local 11-16 schools is effective although there are few curricular links. Support for individual students is of a high standard although the delivery of the tutorial programme is variable. Students receive effective teaching in all the curriculum areas and examination results are good. Quality assurance is effective, although there is a need for greater consistency in its practice. Support staff and teachers are valued and treated equally throughout the college. The learning-resource centre, the student dining room and some teaching areas have been imaginatively designed and equipped.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science	2	Art and design	2
Mathematics and computing	2		
Business	2	English	2
		Languages	3
		Other humanities	2

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INTRODUCTION

1 Tynemouth College was inspected between September 1994 and April 1995. Aspects of cross-college provision were inspected during the week beginning 24 April 1995. Prior to this, specialist programme areas had been inspected by eight inspectors. In all, 50 inspector days were used. Seventy-seven teaching sessions involving over 1,000 students were visited. Students' written and practical work was also examined. Discussions were held with governors, managers, teaching and support staff, parents, local employers, local head teachers and representatives of the community, Tyneside Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), the careers service, North Tyneside College and the University of Northumbria at Newcastle.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Tynemouth College was established as a sixth form college in 1972 to be the sole provider of sixth form education in what was then the County Borough of Tynemouth. Since that time, changes in local government have significantly increased the size of sixth forms in local schools. The present borough of North Tyneside has three 11-16 schools and nine 11-18 schools, including an independent school and a Roman Catholic school. The nearest further education college is North Tyneside College which is less than three miles away. Three other further education colleges are located within easy travelling distance and at least six private training agencies exist in the immediate area.

3 North Tyneside stretches east from Newcastle-upon-Tyne along the north bank of the river Tyne towards the estuary and east coast. The catchment area for the college is wide and there are distinct variations in the socio-economic status of people living within it. There are areas of relative affluence in the east and north, towards Whitley Bay and the coastal area, whilst areas along the Tyne have pockets of high unemployment. The unemployment rate in North Tyneside was 11.6 per cent in January 1995. Just over 22.5 per cent of unemployed people have been out of work for more than a year, and 7.6 per cent for more than three years.

4 The population of North Tyneside is approximately 195,200 and falling, particularly the number of those of working age. Over the last 20 years the population has decreased by about 9 per cent although the numbers of those of retirement age and pre-school age have increased slightly. The population of 16-year olds in local authority schools reached its nadir in 1993 at just under 1,900, and is expected to rise again by 25 per cent between 1993 and 1996, levelling off at just under 2,300 at the turn of the century. Sixty-one per cent of 16-year olds continue in full-time education. This is below the national average but higher than in some neighbouring areas. Approximately 13 per cent of school leavers went into training schemes in 1994.

5 The college was built for some 350 full-time students on a single site of 13.5 acres in a suburban part of the borough of North Tyneside. There are now approximately 2,114 students enrolled of whom 1,048 attend full time. As it grew in size, the college expanded into part of the former Tynemouth High School, a four-storey Edwardian building on the same campus, which was included in the college at incorporation. Parts of this building were previously used by the local authority as an adult education centre providing mainly part-time non-schedule 2 courses. Ninety per cent of the college's full-time students are in the 16-18 age group. Of the students who attend part time, 73 per cent attend non-schedule 2 courses only. Forty-one per cent of students are men, 59 per cent are women. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2, and by mode of attendance and curriculum area in figure 3.

6 The college employs 56 full-time academic staff including the principal and other senior managers, and the equivalent of a further 16.5 full-time teachers on a part-time basis. There are 22 full-time support staff and a further 9.4 full-time equivalents working part time. A further 35 teachers, equivalent to two full-time staff, are employed to deliver the non-schedule 2 programme. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

7 The senior management group has seven members, four of whom are women. It comprises the principal, the director of studies, the director of corporate services, three assistant principals and a property manager. The curriculum is delivered through 10 sections, each of which has a section head. There is also a co-ordinator of vocational work and a co-ordinator of adult learners.

8 The college's stated mission is to provide opportunities for students to acquire knowledge and develop skills which give them a greater degree of control over important decisions in life. The college aims to achieve this by continuing to expand its range of courses and to attract students from a wider section of the community.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9 Tynemouth College originally offered mainly General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) provision. Although it still offers provision predominantly for 16-19 year old students, it has considerably extended the number of its courses and methods of study open to students. Courses now include General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. The proportion of adults attending full-time courses is small but there is an increasing number of adults on part-time courses. In accordance with its strategic aims, the college is making successful attempts to recruit more part-time adult students and those from minority ethnic groups in the area. The college has enrolled relatively few students with a disability or specific learning

difficulty. Intense competition in the education and training field in Tynemouth and the surrounding area has encouraged the college to recruit from further afield. In the past it drew students mainly from the four local 11-16 schools. Now it attracts students from 32 schools in Tyneside and parts of Northumberland.

10 Managers and teaching staff are aware of the importance of the national targets for education and training. The targets are acknowledged in the strategic and operational objectives. In 1993-94 the college exceeded its target of weighted full-time equivalent students by 14 per cent and it is likely to meet its targets for 1994-95. The college sets specific enrolment targets based on information from schools, careers offices, the TEC and heads of section.

11 In 1994, students at the college studied 34 GCE A level, 13 advanced supplementary (AS) and 26 GCSE subjects. The range of courses available to individual students is wide and it is increased by offering them a choice of syllabuses in some subjects. A small number of AS subjects are offered independently and the remainder over one or two years in conjunction with GCE A level courses. Recruitment to courses is generally healthy although some classes run with small numbers so that the college can maintain a wide range of subjects. Approximately 40 students combine GNVQ and GCE A level studies, and 65 combine GNVQ with GCSE subjects.

12 The college has successfully introduced full-time vocational courses. It began to offer GNVQ courses as soon as they became available and is continuing to develop the range it offers. This year there are courses in seven areas at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. The GNVQ advanced and intermediate science courses have been combined because of low recruitment. All three national awarding bodies are used to validate the various GNVQ courses. Contact with the three bodies gives the staff considerable experience. However, working with fewer awarding bodies would enable staff to share good practice and moderate standards more easily. The college is extending the range of vocational courses offered to students, including a course for nursery nursing, planned for September 1995.

13 Its strategic plan commits the college to increase the number of schedule 2 courses for adults and to develop a culture of lifelong learning. Currently, there are less than 10 adults on full-time courses. Some adults have found it difficult to work alongside 16-19 year old students and the college is reviewing how it organises some of its provision in order to take account of their learning needs. The limited length of the college day, the timetabling of subjects and the restricted range of methods of study are factors which deter some adults from joining these courses. Staff have been working on open and distance-learning materials for some time but, at present, only one student is using this facility.

14 There are 450 adults on part-time courses leading to recognised qualifications. A target of 600 has been set for 1997. The college is

continuing to convert much of its non-schedule 2 work to courses which lead to an appropriate qualification. For example, a number of students are now studying for a qualification in computer-aided design, 58 during the daytime and 29 in the evenings. Staff are committed to increasing adult participation. They are involved in a local adult learners fair, and intend to offer part-time GNVQ courses in business, and health and social care, from next September. This year, 104 non-schedule 2 leisure and recreation groups ran in the morning, afternoon and evening with a total of 1,274 enrolments. They included 250 full-time students who had chosen to take these courses to broaden their learning programme. Full-time and part-time general humanities courses, designed to provide access to higher education and validated by the Tees-Wear Federation, were introduced in 1994.

15 Links with employers are developing. Both the college's marketing unit and individual teachers are building up a substantial network of contacts with local businesses although these are not yet co-ordinated effectively. For example, work experience arrangements involve regular liaison with a number of local businesses but information is not always shared between the marketing unit and teachers. Tynemouth Training and Development Consultancy has been developed as a wholly-owned subsidiary of the college to work in partnership with local employers. It has brought together professional trainers and consultants to deliver tailor-made courses for industry. The college is negotiating the takeover of a private training agency, North Tyneside Brass Tacks Limited, to increase the range of training it provides. The income from full-cost work is modest. It is just over £2,300 at present. The college has set a target of £98,000 for 1995-96, increasing to £210,000 by 1997-98.

16 Links with the TEC education branch are productive. They have resulted in a number of projects such as the bid to set up a practice business administration office and work-related further education funding to help the college promote GNVQs. TEC personnel acknowledge the college's thoughtful approach to bids for support and its good project management. The link with the business branch of the TEC is less well established. Although the college was successful in bidding for courses under the local youth training programme, there were few applicants for these courses because of the lateness of the approval. The TEC has recently approved the bid for 1995-96 programmes, and the college hopes to recruit students to courses in computer-aided design, to a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in administration, and to a GNVQ foundation course.

17 The high number of schools in the area with their own sixth forms has increased competition for students and made it difficult for Tynemouth College staff to gain access to pupils before they leave school. The only contact with pupils in the nine 11-18 schools is through the careers service, although the school liaison team maintains good links with the three 11-16 partner schools. One of the members of this team is a teacher at a local school who is contracted on a part-time basis. The college has tried to

initiate a range of curriculum links with local 11-16 schools but these remain underdeveloped. There is little formal contact with North Tyneside College although the two colleges are running a joint marketing venture to promote the benefits of further education in the area. A number of informal links exist as teachers work together in meetings organised by the TEC education business partnership, the careers service consultative group, and the local education authority (LEA) record of achievement group.

18 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities may join a specially-designed GNVQ foundation course and there are a number of part-time link courses with local special schools. For example, students from one of these schools are studying for a multiskills vocational certificate which is nationally validated. Eight students from another school follow units in GNVQ health and social care. On two afternoons each week, 10 adults from a local training centre attend the college to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Because parts of the college provide poor access for students with restricted mobility, classes are timetabled where necessary in ground floor rooms.

19 The college's marketing and information unit was established in September 1994. It has five staff, one of whom is part time. The unit has successfully developed a corporate image for the college, improving much of the promotional material. The current prospectus and other information is clear and well produced. All press releases are written and managed by marketing personnel who also carry out market research, both inside and outside the college. Detailed reports are prepared for managers and the information unit logs and analyses enquiries for information about particular courses. These reports are used in planning the courses to be offered. The marketing unit also manages the non-schedule 2 courses. The college is seeking to raise awareness of its provision outside its traditional recruitment area and both the marketing unit and school liaison team promote the college to schools. The failure to develop more effective co-ordination of promotional activities leads to unnecessary duplication of effort.

20 The college is proud of its standing in the local community, a standing which has developed over a number of years. As part of its community education programme it sponsors a number of external institutions to deliver 77 separate courses at 10 centres in the borough. It also itself delivers a successful course in industrial sewing for the local Bangladeshi community. This provision will be extended next year to include GCSE Bengali for separate groups of male and female students. A project, which is run by the Young Men's Christian Association and the probation service, assists young women, some of whom are on probation, to regain their confidence and improve their qualifications. At present, the college provides GCSE sociology for this group and there are plans to expand the work to include young men who are in the same situation. Students on a number of courses, and voluntary groups in the college, put on an impressive range of plays, musicals, exhibitions and fashion shows which are well attended by members of the local community.

21 The college chaplain attends each week to meet and support students formally and informally. The college offers GCE A level Christian theology and there is an active Christian union. A small number of students regularly attend a weekly collective act of Christian worship. Consequently, the college satisfies the requirements of sections 44 and 45 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

22 The college promotes equality of opportunity for staff and students through a clear policy statement which is widely circulated. Ways of putting this into practice are still being developed. Awareness of equal opportunities issues is included in all staff contracts and all applicants for employment, who are registered disabled, are guaranteed an interview. Some courses thoroughly monitor equal opportunities in their area. For example, gender imbalances on some courses have resulted in a review of recruitment procedures. Other courses have yet to establish consistent methods of monitoring equal opportunities.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

23 The board of the corporation has 11 members including the principal. Independent members have experience in legal services, property, finance, human resource management and marketing. Other governors are drawn from parents, college staff and the TEC. Three governors are women. A student observer regularly attends meetings. The clerk to the corporation is a member of the senior management team. Governors are content with the current size of the board. However, as the range of courses expand, the college should ensure that the interests of local community groups are adequately represented. The chairman has wide experience of educational management and he encourages board members to be aware of their responsibilities and to take them seriously. A number of training days have been held in conjunction with senior managers of the college. Board members have been consulted about further training needs and ways of working more effectively. For example, in order to become more familiar with the work of the college, each board member has agreed to be associated with a particular curriculum area and a cross-college activity.

24 The board meets at least six times a year. All meetings are well attended and well managed. Strategic decisions are taken and work delegated appropriately to committees, working groups or the principal. The role and responsibilities of the principal are clearly defined by the board and his performance is monitored through regular meetings with the chairman. As yet, the board has not developed a mechanism for monitoring its own performance. The college's operating statement includes a number of specific targets for the governing body. Professional consultants are used extensively to advise the board and the college on areas such as accommodation and marketing. The number of changes in the governing body since incorporation has been low. Only two parent governors have left, and one other member has resigned because of business interests.

25 The board has established three committees: finance and employment; audit; and remuneration. All are appropriately constituted and meet regularly. In addition, a working party of board members considers accommodation issues. All groups have clear terms of reference, are active and report regularly to the full board. Links between the committees, the working party and college managers are good. The remuneration committee has acted with sensitivity and care in establishing new contracts for senior managers.

26 The management structure of the college has been in place for less than a year and modifications are continuing as the structure matures and the needs of the college change. The principal leads a well-knit working group of senior managers which includes those responsible for finance, property, administration and curriculum. It meets weekly to discuss strategic and operational issues and the principal makes effective use of the complementary skills and knowledge of the senior staff. Three senior managers form the curriculum management group which has responsibility for managing the 10 curriculum section heads. Sections are responsible for all courses and subjects leading to a qualification. They are generally well managed and teams meet regularly. Non-schedule 2 courses are not located within curriculum sections but are managed by the commercial manager. This limits the ability of sections to provide appropriate curriculum leadership or to support staff teaching on these courses.

27 A range of committees allows staff to be involved in college-wide initiatives. For example, committees meet to discuss GNVQ provision, pastoral care, health and safety, equal opportunities and development for support staff. However, many of these groups fail to address cross-college curriculum issues or share good practice. About 60 per cent of teachers and an increasing number of support staff and students regularly contribute to one or more committees. The minutes of committee meetings are circulated widely.

28 Key policies for health and safety, equal opportunities, environmental issues, personnel and finance have been approved by the board of the corporation and are in operation. Some have a clear strategy for implementation and there is a named member of staff with responsibility for monitoring progress. All policies have been reviewed in the last year. Reports on the operation of key policies are regularly received by the board. There is a comprehensive range of other policies which vary in quality. Few of them are monitored effectively.

29 The strategic plan has been developed in consultation with staff and governors. Staff input to the plan has been low. The strategic plan document, which is substantial, lacks a summary. Although college staff are aware of the contents of the final document, they are more familiar with the operating statement and corporate objectives. Staff feel that they are able to influence the work of their section and the strategic direction of

the college through their participation in section meetings and cross-college committees. Mechanisms are being developed to ensure more staff involvement in the next planning cycle.

30 Communications between the principal, senior managers and all staff and students are frequent and effective. Newsletters are produced, weekly for staff and students, and termly for parents. Formal meetings of all staff are usually held twice a term and these provide information about new developments. Clear arrangements for line management and regular meetings ensure that communication between senior and middle managers takes place.

31 The college uses a computer-based management information system originally developed for use in schools. During 1994-95, difficulties were experienced in maintaining some of the student databases. New modules, updated software packages and the recent appointment of a management information system officer have increased the number and quality of reports produced. Those on the budget and student applications are generated and used routinely. Demands for such reports have increased since managers received training.

32 In 1993-94, the average level of funding was £20.45 per unit of activity. The college expects that this year's unit of funding will be much closer to the median of £19.81 for sixth form colleges for 1994-95. Senior managers and the chairman of the corporation receive financial and cash flow reports each month. Performance indicators are used to monitor a range of costs relating to the operation of the college. Budgets are allocated to cost centres on the basis of student enrolments and allowances are made for new and high-cost courses. Summaries of the college's income and expenditure for the 16 months to July 1994 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

33 An extensive programme of liaison with the three partner 11-16 schools is effective in providing students with information about post-16 education opportunities at the college. Students who apply are given an initial guidance interview, invited to an introductory day and given a preview of their course.

34 The procedures for enrolling students at the start of the academic year are well organised. The college admissions policy and the criteria for entry to individual courses are clear, well publicised and applied fairly. Tutors interview prospective students with the help of subject staff. Senior tutors and careers advisors are available to deal with any problems. A policy for the accreditation of students' prior learning is being implemented with a small number of students before it is offered more widely. The approach used is cautious but thorough.

35 All students are allocated a personal tutor, some by career aim, some according to the course they are taking, some by GCE A level subject and

some on a more arbitrary basis. Each of four senior tutors leads a team of tutors, and holds weekly briefing meetings to inform and support their team. The detailed tutorial programme is organised around a termly theme and delivered through a series of mandatory and optional activities. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of these activities and students' appreciation of the value of tutorial sessions varies greatly.

36 The college has a successful induction programme. Tutors ensure that students join an appropriate course of study. All courses and subjects provide a bridging element to ease the transition to post-16 study which also makes it easy for students to change courses. Induction activities in GNVQ business involve team teaching, group work and a quiz. Students speak positively about their overall introduction to the college. During early tutorial sessions they are made aware of their rights and responsibilities, sign a learning agreement and receive a copy of the college charter.

37 The college has a straight-forward and supportive system for students who wish to change course. This involves advice from subject staff and careers staff. Parents are notified of all course changes approved by senior tutors. Students' attendance is recorded at every lesson and is monitored regularly. Procedures to follow up unacceptable patterns of attendance are effective and parents are contacted by tutors whenever there are persistent problems.

38 All students regularly review their progress with their tutor. Students are appreciative of the support they receive from their teachers and tutors. All full-time 16-19 year old students take the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit basic test in literacy and numeracy. Those identified as having problems have their programme of study checked to see that it includes an appropriate course in mathematics/numeracy or English. The small number who are not taking such a course are offered other forms of learning support although none availed themselves of the opportunity. Additional help is available in the learning support area of the resource centre to students who refer themselves for help. A growing number of students make use of this help and they speak highly of the support they receive from the staff. The college is considering how to improve its response to the results of literacy and numeracy tests in future. A qualified counsellor is increasingly consulted by students and staff.

39 The careers library has an approachable and friendly team of staff, including a former careers officer, who provides specialist advice. A well-developed and carefully-structured programme of careers advice is delivered by tutors, supported by the specialist careers team. Although advice on applications to higher education is given a high profile, this is not to the exclusion of students seeking advice on employment. There is a good working relationship with the local careers service. The careers officers support and extend the work of college staff.

40 Students have the opportunity to undertake work experience. Between September 1994 and April 1995, 50 per cent of first-year students gained a placement with a local employer. There is a range of activities to ensure that students have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Each programme of study is measured against a template of skills and themes. To fill any gaps identified, students are encouraged to undertake additional courses drawn from a list including sport, drama and dance. Courses leading to an additional qualification are readily taken up but there is much less enthusiasm for the other options. In practice, the availability of staff restricts the programmes on offer. The college does not systematically evaluate the benefits of this extra provision and students' perceptions of its merit are variable.

41 Students' interests are not formally represented at present. The student council has voluntarily chosen to dissolve itself whilst the college addresses the requirements of student union reform. In the past it has been responsible for organising social and charitable events, but in recent years there has been a general decline in student interest in such activities.

42 Students are encouraged to update their school record of achievement and to use information technology to produce the necessary documentation. The college is taking steps to raise the status of the record of achievement with tutors and students by making it a prescribed feature of the tutorial programme. Last year, only 55 per cent of students took their record with them when they left the college.

43 Support for adults studying at the college both full time and part time is effective and differs little from that provided for younger students. A tutorial system operates for the part-time students at set times of the week and the adult co-ordinator is available at other times. A college creche is available for those with young children and 16 families regularly make use of this facility.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

44 The strengths of the teaching sessions observed during the inspection outweighed the weaknesses. Of the 77 sessions inspected 69 per cent had strengths which outweighed the weaknesses. Eight per cent of sessions had more weaknesses than strengths. The following table shows the grades awarded.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	10	30	13	4	0	57
GCSE	0	2	4	1	0	7
GNVQ	3	6	0	0	0	9
Other	0	2	1	1	0	4
Total	13	40	18	6	0	77

45 Most courses were well planned and had clear structures, although the quality and usefulness of schemes of work varied across the college. The best schemes were linked closely to the syllabus and identified teaching methods and learning activities. In social sciences the schemes of work included divisions of the syllabus into smaller modules, each with specific goals for teaching, learning and assessment. In English and science, schemes of work comprised no more than a sequence of topics for each section of the syllabus. They were of limited use for planning and did not allow teachers or managers to check the balance of teaching methods which students were experiencing.

46 Over 80 per cent of the classes seen in business studies had lesson plans which provided a good structure for teaching. Plans for classes in politics and sociology had aims and objectives which were shared with the students and helped to ensure that lessons were well organised. In a few lessons teachers failed to plan effectively and made poor use of the time available.

47 In most subjects, teaching was effective. Students experienced a variety of methods of learning. Teachers displayed good knowledge of their subject, often communicating their enthusiasm to students. Innovative groupwork and team teaching in science and mathematics challenged students and made them aware of their own learning. For example, two teachers taught a group of 40 GCE A level mathematics students. They used an imaginative range of well-planned activities including individual work and work in pairs, with input by teachers successfully motivating students. As students worked, the teachers moved purposefully around the classroom checking their understanding and ensuring they had reached the required starting point for the next session. In science and computing the activities undertaken by students developed and sustained their interest. In an intermediate GNVQ business session students were involved in a wide range of practical activities which developed appropriate levels of skills and knowledge. Language teachers often made good use of the language being studied. Teachers of sociology used well-presented examples of current issues to illustrate their subject; informed, intelligent teaching helped to generate high levels of interest within the group.

48 Students often take part in visits and field trips. In 1993-94, 117 visits and trips involved 1,163 students. However, there is no systematic organisation of opportunities for students on European language courses to benefit from exchanges with students abroad.

49 In a small number of weaker teaching sessions, students experienced too narrow a range of learning activities. In some, the work was poorly planned and students' achievements were low. A number of sessions in art, languages, mathematics and English proceeded at too slow a pace and there was little opportunity for students to ask questions or discuss their own ideas. In some English sessions, the students showed little interest or

involvement. In some sessions, overhead transparencies were difficult to read or confusing and, in others, there was little use of audio-visual aids where they would have been helpful.

50 Support for the small number of adult students joining full-time classes was variable and their level of participation reflected the particular approach adopted by the teacher. In typewriting classes adult students were well supported and contributed fully. In some languages and mathematics sessions support was less effective and adult students were not sufficiently involved in activities. In computing sessions, support for students with specific disabilities was managed sensitively.

51 The college has a stated commitment to mark and return students' work within seven days and this standard is generally achieved. The majority of students' work was set and assessed at the correct level and there were examples of constructive and helpful written comments from teachers to enable students to improve their performance. In a GCE A level French class the teacher returned assessed work by introducing a discussion on the most common faults found in the assignment. Students then took it in turns to correct examples on the board and used the experience to correct their own work. In a GCE A level economics class the teacher typed out and distributed an analysis of the most common issues associated with students' work. On business and mathematics courses some of the work returned to students was poorly marked.

52 Safe working practices were observed in the vast majority of teaching sessions. During science practicals, teachers ensured that students used eye protection, but laboratory coats were not worn routinely as they should have been.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

53 Students developed good working relationships with teachers and this encouraged them to maximise their levels of achievement. They responded positively when provided with suitable challenges and their oral contributions were often of a high standard, particularly when they were responding to well-structured questions from teachers. Most students acquired a sound knowledge and understanding of their subject. In a business session, students were observed spontaneously helping each other prepare for an oral assessment later in the week. Learning packs prepared for students in sociology and politics encouraged the development of a conscientious attitude to study and enabled them to participate fully in class.

54 The majority of the work seen in classes was of an appropriate standard. In science classes the notes taken by students were well ordered and had been written with considerable care. Practical sessions in science and business encouraged students to work effectively in small groups or in pairs to solve problems and address issues, and students' knowledge and self-confidence developed quickly.

55 In most areas of work, numeracy and information technology skills were less well developed than basic study and communication skills. All students had the opportunity to join an RSA Examinations Board (RSA) computer literacy course. In 1994-95 all the GNVQ students and 50 GCE A level students enrolled on this. Business studies students made good use of the compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database to obtain information for their coursework. The development and assessment of the core skills of number, communication and information technology was thoroughly integrated with other aspects of work on GNVQ courses and progression in these skills was evident in students' coursework. Core skills were less well developed in GCE A level subjects. In some subjects there was scope for more groupwork and independent study to help students develop their interpersonal skills and to learn to work on their own.

56 The majority of students reached the required standard in their internal assessments. All students on two year GCE A level courses had to pass an examination set at the end of the first year in order to proceed to the second year. The rate of progression to the second year was low in a few subjects only. For example, in a GCE A level computing class which began with 28 students, nine failed the first-year examination and a further seven left before the final examination.

57 An average of 75 per cent successfully completed their courses although retention rates varied. In English the retention rate for 1993-94 was 90 per cent, whilst in a GCE A level European language it was 55 per cent. Data for 1993-94 show that dropout rates have been highest in GCSE mathematics and sciences. The college has responded by increasing the range of GNVQs available. Retention rates for these new courses are not yet available. During the first two terms of 1994-95 the overall retention rate was 93 per cent. The numbers of students changing courses in the first term was sometimes high. For example in a first-year GCE A level economics class over 30 per cent of the students left or joined the group in the first term. The majority of full-time students attend college regularly. Attendance is better on the GCE A level and GNVQ advanced courses than on GCSE and other intermediate courses.

58 GCE A level examination results have varied from one year to another but they are consistently at or above the national average for sixth form colleges. The college makes use of students' achievements on entry to predict their results at GCE A level. The majority of these predictions show that Tynemouth College students who complete their course achieve very similar or slightly better grades than predicted. In 1994, the results for some GCE A level subjects were very high. For example, all 13 students passed their economics examination and 92 per cent of media studies candidates achieved a grade A-C. In psychology the percentage of successful students has remained above 90 per cent for the last three years and a substantial proportion have achieved grades A-C. In English the

proportion of candidates passing has remained above the national average but the percentage achieving the higher grades has been less consistent. Results in art, linear chemistry and electronics were lower than the national average in terms of the percentage of passes and higher grades. The pass rates for the small number of adult students who take GCE A levels was good; for example, all students passed in law and there was an 80 per cent pass rate in English. In other subjects, the pass rates for adult entries were more variable. An adult student from the college has been judged the northern regional learner of the year as part of the national adult learners' week.

59 The 1994 tables published by the Department for Education show that the average point score per subject entry for all GCE AS/A level entrants at Tynemouth College was 4.8 (where A=10, E=2). This places the college among the top third of all colleges in the further education sector and second among colleges in the northern region. The tables also show that all 21 students entered for vocational qualifications successfully completed them.

60 Students who complete their GCSE courses generally do well in comparison with students at other colleges although non-completion rates are sometimes high. For the 533 entries in 26 GCSE subjects in 1994 the pass rate was 59 per cent which was above the national average of 49 per cent for all sixth form colleges. In mathematics 93 per cent of those who sat the examination passed although only 61 per cent of those students who started the course completed it successfully. Less than 30 per cent of students who started a course in chemistry, biology, human biology and physical education achieved a pass. Some very good results were obtained by students taking a range of courses examined by the RSA and by City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G). For example all students taking Spanish, photography or basic and intermediate typewriting passed. In comparison, students on basic literacy and numeracy courses did less well.

61 The college systematically collects and analyses data on the destinations of students who complete their course of study. Of the 232 students who passed two or more GCE A levels 61 per cent proceeded to a course of higher education. However, only 43 per cent of the 21 students completing an advanced vocational qualification followed this route. Over 70 per cent of the 94 students who successfully completed a full-time intermediate level course continued with another further education course at Tynemouth or another college.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

62 The college established a new quality assurance and review policy in September 1994 building on a range of existing quality processes. Annual course and subject reviews are at the heart of the policy which has been

accepted by senior managers, endorsed by the governors and included in the college's strategic plan. A member of the senior management team has responsibility for its implementation. Quality is regarded as a responsibility of every member of staff although senior staff manage the operation of the policy. The framework covers most areas of the college's work. A range of performance indicators has been identified for the five curriculum areas, student achievement, pastoral support, college support and support to the corporation board. Most staff have a positive attitude to the new policy, but a minority are either unaware of the details or unenthusiastic about implementing it. Elements of the quality assurance framework are being developed in a piecemeal manner. There is a need to ensure more effective co-ordination of the process.

63 A framework for monitoring quality is being applied to an increasing number of cross-college areas and staff have been encouraged to develop performance indicators relating to their area of work. For example, the site maintenance team have specified that 90 per cent of maintenance work will be implemented or scheduled within two weeks of a request being submitted. The college recognises that such standards will require consolidation and further improvement. Since the quality system was introduced, there have been measurable improvements in areas such as support service operations, staff consultation and involvement and the analyses of marketing needs. Over 30 performance indicators are outlined in the quality assurance and review policy including those defined by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The college is participating in a national pilot project to assess the relevance and value of a wide range of performance indicators.

64 For many years, GCE A level course teams have collected and analysed examination results and compared these with national averages. Teams and sections also use reports from examination boards, moderators and external verifiers to inform and improve course effectiveness; measure student performance against previous achievement; analyse student retention rates, levels of attendance and destinations; and sample student satisfaction through questionnaires. However, there are wide variations in the way in which different course and subject teams complete their reviews and evaluations. Not all teams adequately monitor the achievement of some of the college standards, such as returning marked work to students. Some course teams fail to maintain effective minutes of their meetings and some have no student representation at review meetings. The subject and course reviews inform an annual curriculum review completed by each section head. Some of these reviews are thorough but they vary in their coverage of issues and the extent to which they incorporate action plans. Some section reviews give insufficient attention to the teaching, learning and assessment. Procedures for disseminating good practice in reviewing are generally underdeveloped.

65 The college's staff-development policy is supported by effective procedures. The staff-development budget, which is approximately 1 per cent of the staffing budget, is appropriately delegated to curriculum and other teams. Staff-development needs are identified through course and section team meetings and the personal review process. The policy lays down that requests must link with college, team or personal targets. Although each staff-development activity is evaluated, the outcomes of staff development are not widely disseminated. A new induction procedure is being piloted with newly-appointed staff. Briefing days, prior to their taking up appointment, are followed by informal meetings with the principal and other staff. Each is allocated to a mentor and progress is regularly reviewed during the probationary period. New staff spoke appreciatively of the support they had received. The college has begun the process of working towards accreditation for Investors in People and governors have recently made a formal commitment to achieve the award by 1997.

66 A formal review system for teaching and support staff has been sensitively introduced in consultation with staff after a pilot in the autumn term. The new system is perceived as non-threatening and has clear links with the staff-development programme. It aims to improve performance. Each appraiser and appraisee agree a record of their discussion and an action plan. The system is the same for all staff, except that teaching staff have their classroom performance observed. All senior managers will have had their performance reviewed on three occasions by July 1995. Fifty per cent of all teaching staff and all support staff are also expected to have been reviewed within this period. The formal system is supplemented by a well-developed informal system of meetings between staff and their line managers. The principal reviews the performance of senior managers regularly using the targets outlined in the operational plan. Senior managers meet frequently with their section heads to review progress towards college targets.

67 A self-assessment report was provided by the college before the inspection. It followed the structure of the FEFC's quality assurance framework outlined in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The report was written by the senior managers and passed to sections for consideration and amendment. Inspectors found it helpful. Evidence to support college judgements was carefully collated and cross-referenced to the report. Strengths and weaknesses were identified and these generally accorded with inspection findings.

68 The college charter includes service standards which relate to students, employers and the community. The commitments in the charter are often too general to be easily measurable. Some standards have been achieved, but mechanisms for monitoring the achievement of other standards are not yet effective. The charter commitments and standards will be reviewed later this year following feedback from students and staff.

A few staff and students do not fully understand the context and content of the charter and do not find it as useful or as relevant as the student handbook. Students are knowledgeable about their rights and responsibilities and the range of college services available to them, but their awareness of the charter is not high.

RESOURCES

Staffing

69 The college sets out to value and treat all staff equally and all managers and governors take this commitment seriously. Up-to-date job descriptions are in place for all staff.

70 Teachers are well qualified and experienced in their subject areas. All but one has a first degree relevant to their area of teaching and 78 per cent have a recognised teaching qualification. A growing number of teachers are gaining experience outside education. Over 60 per cent of staff teaching vocational courses have recent experience of the appropriate vocational area. Individual staff are keen to take advantage of the short attachments to industry offered through the teacher placement service organised by the TEC, and an average of seven staff do so each year. However, the college does not have a co-ordinated approach to updating teachers' industrial experience.

71 The number of support staff has increased since incorporation. They welcome the new roles and responsibilities available to them. For example, staff in the resource centre are managing the transition from library to resource centre effectively. Technician staff work flexibly to support teachers and students across a number of curriculum areas. Most are appropriately qualified and experienced and they have access to continued professional development. In the current year, 29 support staff attended training sessions.

Equipment/learning resources

72 Classrooms, laboratories and workshops are generally well equipped. A technician supervises a range of general audio-visual equipment which is distributed throughout teaching areas. There is a good range of appropriate specialist equipment which has been carefully selected and is well used. Some teaching areas have been equipped to a high standard. For example, a high-technology language laboratory linked to a satellite facility for the reception and recording of foreign language transmissions has been installed recently. Electrical testing of portable appliances is well under way for existing equipment, although there are no mechanisms for easily identifying and testing newly-purchased equipment. Issues of health and safety at work and the control of hazardous substances are being addressed. A health and safety officer co-ordinates risk assessments and safety checks across the college, and has developed a system to ensure that risk assessments are regularly updated.

73 Considerable investment has been made to upgrade the range of information technology equipment in the college. Staff and students have access to an excellent range of up-to-date computers and the current ratio is one computer to every eight students. Many computers are on a well-managed network which includes a CD-ROM facility much used by students. A large proportion of the computer terminals have been leased; purchases of equipment are guided by a policy which incorporates a three-year replacement strategy. Staff are currently involved in evaluating the use of the international computer network, Internet, as a teaching aid.

74 The resource centre and student services have recently been relocated to a previously underused auditorium. The refurbishment of the auditorium has been imaginative and it makes an excellent facility for students and staff, providing access to computers, CD-ROM facilities and a range of books, videos, newspapers and periodicals. The centre has been in use since February 1995 and it is proving popular with all users. Since that time the bookstock has been doubled to 13,000 volumes. At present, many sections also hold their own stock of books. The level of library borrowing and book loss is not clear because of the recent disruption to the service during relocation. A sophisticated security system is being installed which will also serve to monitor the use made of the resource centre. Although library staff consulted with section heads on the recent purchase of stock, there is no agreed policy to identify future purchases.

Accommodation

75 The college occupies four buildings which are of mixed age, design and usefulness. The accommodation provides more space than is currently required. Most of the buildings have large circulation areas. Many of them are over 30 years old and have high energy and maintenance costs. The accommodation strategy proposes a number of ambitious options to redevelop the site to provide better integrated and more accessible space. Access between buildings and levels is difficult, especially for students with restricted mobility. Less than half the college is accessible to wheelchair users. The college has successfully extended some areas and updated others to a high standard. For example, the student dining area and classrooms for teaching English are visually attractive and designed for flexible use.

76 The college is clearly visible from two main roads. The grounds are attractive and well maintained and provide a variety of open spaces for relaxation. Site security is handled well, assisted by some updating of the external lighting. In general, the buildings are maintained in good order. However, the entrances are not well marked and signing is poor except in those areas which have been refurbished. Most public areas present a positive image to visitors and often have examples of student work and other appropriate displays.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

77 The college is making substantial progress towards achieving its aims. Its strengths are:

- the wide range of GCSE and GCE A level subjects and the effective progress in introducing vocational courses
- the new central information and marketing unit
- the effective strategic leadership provided by the board of governors
- a responsive and developing management structure
- courses and teams which are generally well managed
- well-organised enrolment procedures and good liaison with 11-16 schools
- the good level of support for individual students, including a carefully structured programme of careers advice and guidance
- good results in GCE A level examinations
- an effective quality assurance system
- well-organised staff development and appraisal
- refurbished teaching areas which are furnished and equipped to a high standard
- a qualified, committed and supportive staff.

78 The college should address the following issues:

- the limited participation of adult students in full-time study courses
- the need to improve promotional activities within feeder schools
- representation of local community interests on the board of governors
- insufficient sharing of good practice across the college
- lack of consistency in delivering the tutorial programme
- variation in the operation of quality procedures and processes
- the need for more explicit and demanding standards within the college charter
- improvements in access for those with a physical disability.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)

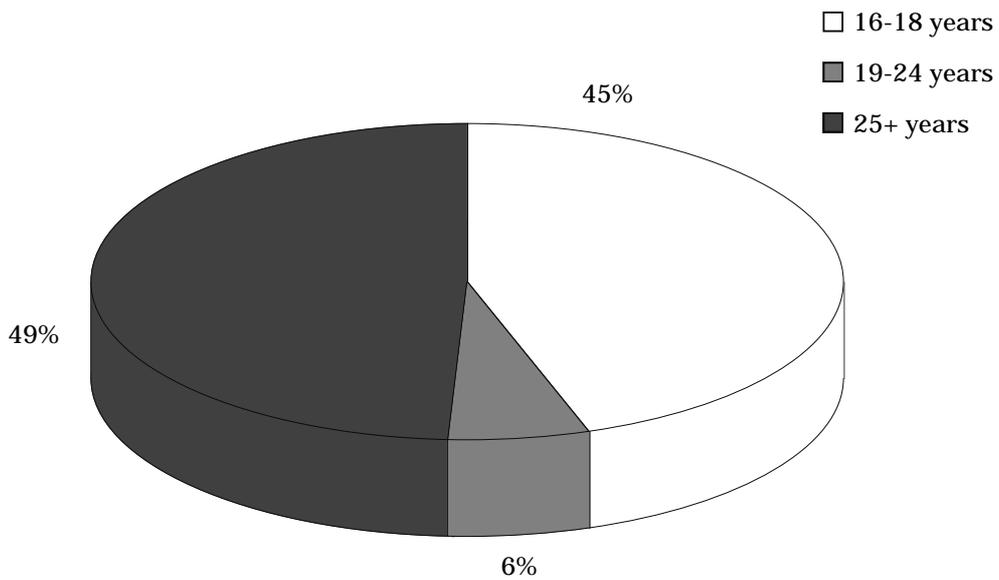
 - 5 Income (for 16 months to July 1994)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

Tynemouth College: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

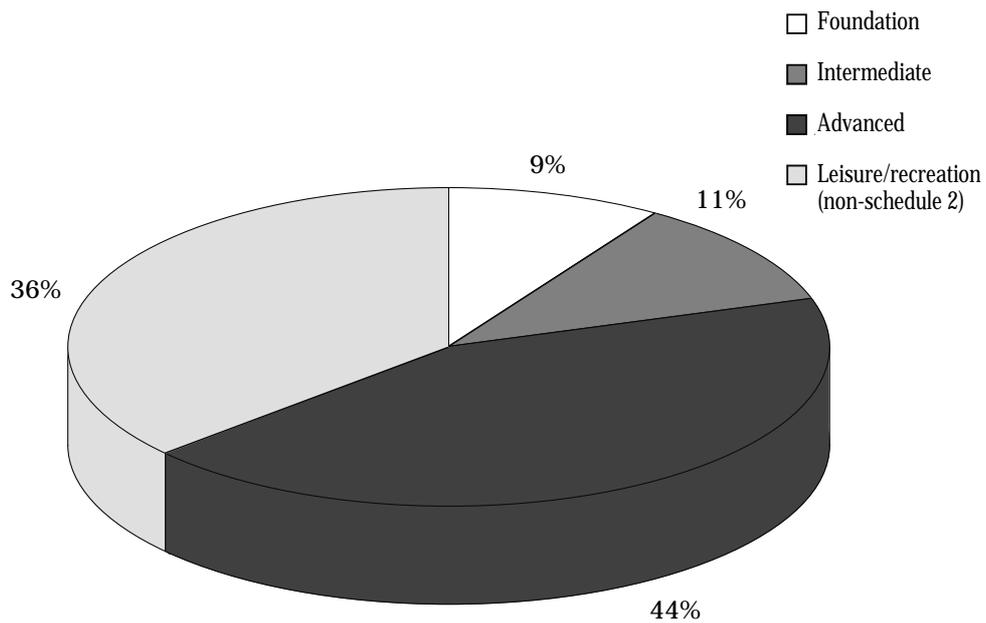


Enrolments: 2,114

Note: this excludes three enrolments under 16.

Figure 2

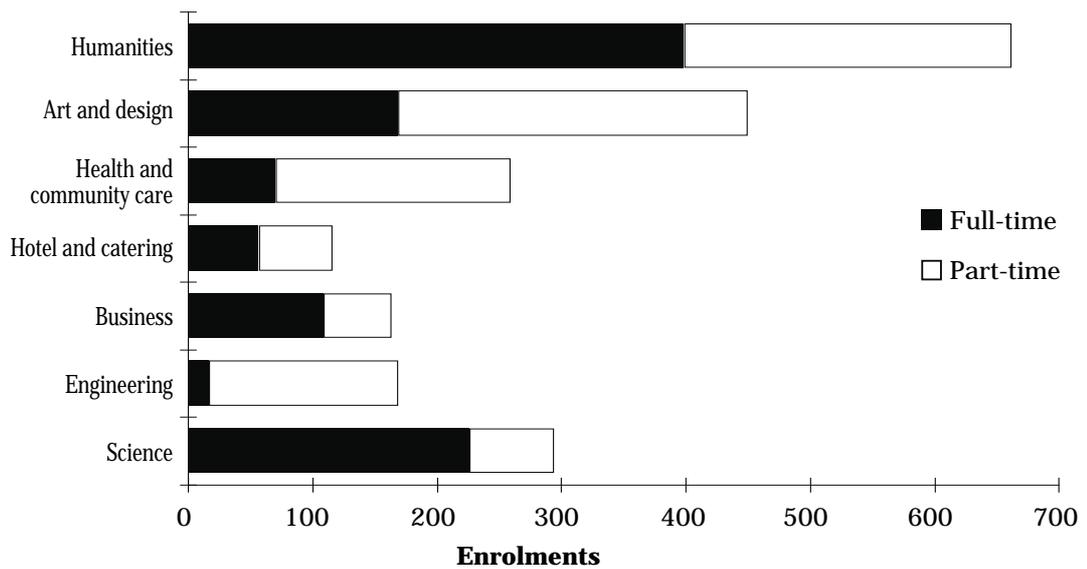
Tynemouth College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)



Enrolments: 2,114

Figure 3

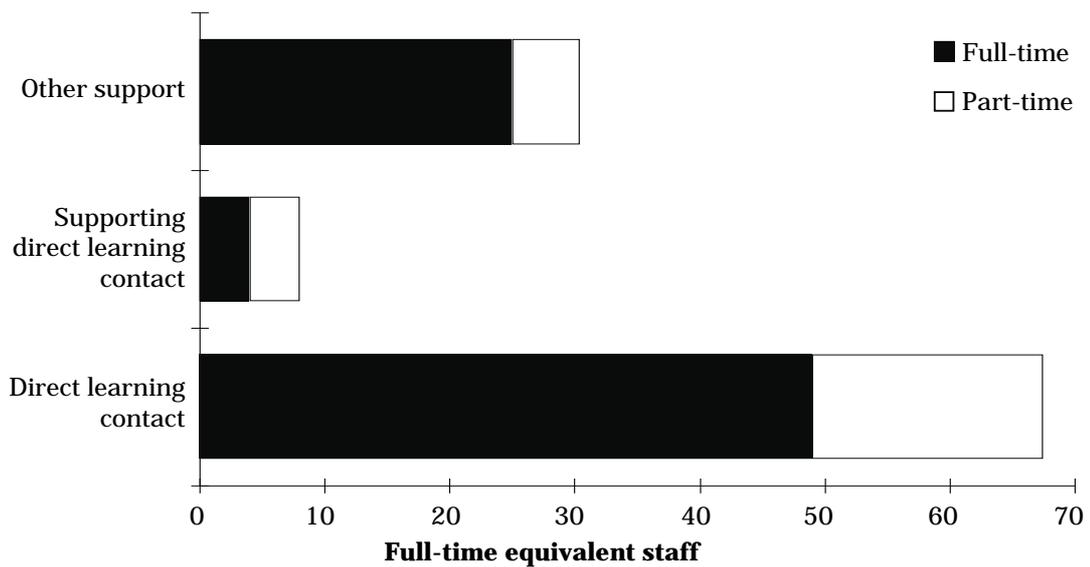
Tynemouth College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)



Enrolments: 2,114

Figure 4

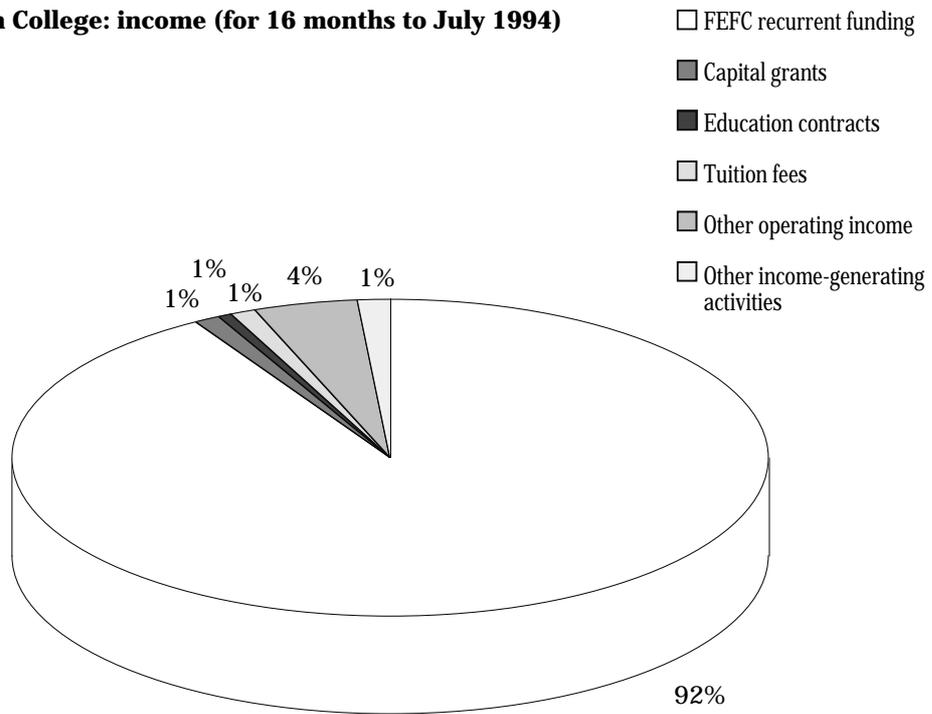
Tynemouth College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)



Full-time equivalent staff: 106

Figure 5

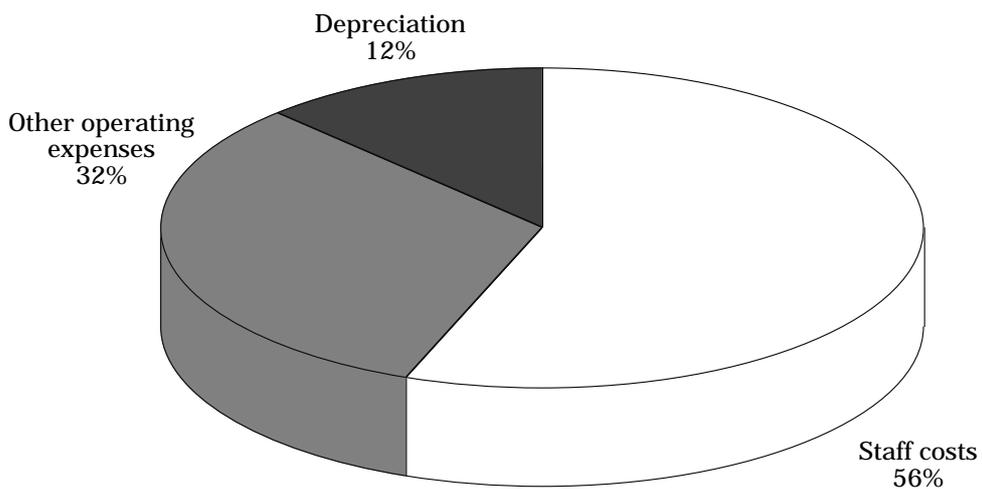
Tynemouth College: income (for 16 months to July 1994)



Income: £4,433,000

Figure 6

Tynemouth College: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)



Expenditure: £4,573,000

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