

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

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# **Coventry Technical College**

**September 1996**

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**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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**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 the FEFC's quality assessment committee.*

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

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## **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**

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

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# FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 112/96

**COVENTRY TECHNICAL COLLEGE**  
**WEST MIDLANDS REGION**  
**Inspected March 1995-May 1996**

## Summary

Coventry Technical College offers an extensive range of courses to meet the needs of students and employers in Coventry and beyond. The training needs of employed people are well met through flexible training programmes. A notable feature of the college's provision is the support given to students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The college has strong links with employers, the local community, the TEC and other educational providers. Corporation members are committed to the college and have supported it strongly during critical periods. The college is effectively managed and there is a strong team spirit among senior managers. The strategic plan is based on wide consultation and includes measurable objectives and targets. Accreditation of students' prior learning is firmly established and supported. The quality of teaching is good in some curriculum areas. The college has good quality assurance systems and undertakes rigorous quality surveys. Staff are well qualified and experienced. Weaknesses include: poor examination results and unsatisfactory retention rates on some courses; the low take-up of numeracy and literacy support; the limited use of screening to diagnose learning needs; the incomplete review of students' achievements; the poor library bookstock; and the inadequate number of computers available for students to use as and when it suits them.

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

<b>Aspects of cross-college provision</b>		<b>Grade</b>
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	3
	accommodation	2

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Science, computing and mathematics	3	Art and design	3
Construction	2	Modern languages and teacher training	2
Engineering	2	Other humanities	2
Business studies	2	Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2
Health and community care	2		
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	3		

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1 Coventry Technical College was inspected during the period March 1995 to May 1996. Enrolment and induction were inspected in August and September 1995. Twenty-two inspectors spent a total of 70 days in the college. They visited 182 lessons, scrutinised students' work and held discussions with corporation members, college managers, teaching and support staff, local employers, parents, Coventry Quality Careers staff, and representatives of local schools and colleges, the city council, the employment service and the Coventry and Warwickshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Inspectors also examined documentation and statistics on the college and its courses.

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

2 The college was opened in 1935 in an imposing building close to the centre of Coventry. The Maxwell building, a purpose-built centre for training in construction, opened nearby in 1986. In 1994-95 there were 12,737 student enrolments; 1,776 were full time, 6,451 part-time day, and 4,510 evening or open learning. Enrolments by age, by level of study, and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. The college's subsidiary company has developed flexible learning programmes, currently offered to over 1,100 students in partnership with public and private sector organisations. The college employs 480 staff, amounting to 337 full-time equivalents. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

3 Coventry has maintained its reputation for high-quality manufacturing despite two major recessions in the last 15 years. Although employment in manufacturing has declined it is still the dominant employment sector. The college has a long history of collaboration with industry for the provision of training and is now a major centre for modern apprenticeships. Employment in the service sector has increased substantially. In recent years, there has been a substantial rise in the number of small and medium size companies, which the college aims to support through its business development unit. The unemployment rate in Coventry is 9.9 per cent and more than double this in inner city areas. A serious mismatch has developed between the skills of those made redundant and the skills required by new industries. At the 1991 census, 41 per cent of workers resident in Coventry had earnings below the low pay threshold. The college aims to support local economic and social development through various partnerships. Many courses are offered at outreach centres, on employers' premises and in a mobile training unit.

4 Twenty-two per cent of the college's students are from minority ethnic groups compared with 11.8 per cent of the total population of Coventry. Approximately 70 per cent of students are aged over 19. Many courses attract students from overseas and from other parts of the United Kingdom, although most 16 to 19 year old students come from Coventry. The college has links with local schools, particularly in technology and construction.

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There are 19 state sector secondary schools and two independent schools in the city; all have sixth forms. Coventry has two other general further education colleges and a specialist college for students with physical and/or sensory disabilities. The college has many links with the two universities in Coventry. College representatives participate in a number of committees and working groups which bring together the Coventry and Warwickshire colleges, universities, local authorities and the TEC. The college provides a comprehensive support service for deaf and hearing impaired students at these colleges and universities.

5 The college is organised into eight schools of study, a college company, and a business development unit. The schools are: art and design; business, management and continuing studies; construction and the built environment; engineering; hairdressing and beauty therapy; languages and teacher training; science and health studies; student access and support unit. Vocational courses cover the spectrum from basic craft skills to higher education and professional courses, and include customised courses for United Kingdom and overseas companies and other organisations.

6 Key strategic objectives include: flexibility and responsiveness of provision; comprehensive student support; working through partnerships; and increasing access to, and participation in, further and higher education. The college seeks to achieve growth accompanied by continuous quality improvement in order to stimulate and provide for life-long learning, and thus to play a vital role in the local economy.

#### **RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION**

7 The college aims to attract both school leavers and those wishing to return to education. Its strategic and marketing plans are also informed by a sound appreciation of the training needs of local employers. Emphasis is placed on meeting the needs of small and medium size enterprises through customised training, supporting the development of partnerships with other organisations, and supporting students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a widespread awareness within the college of the need to contribute to the national targets for education and training. The strategic plan sets specific targets for increasing students' achievements in line with the national targets.

8 Colleges and schools in the city have agreed a formal accord to ensure that pupils and their parents receive clear information to make informed choices at 16. School liaison has been undertaken by staff in individual curriculum areas. Co-ordination of this has become the responsibility of the central marketing unit. The college runs a technology bus, which provides schools with support for technology from key stage 1 of the national curriculum to General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level). Visits have been made to 20 schools. This initiative has been of particular value to local primary schools. Pupils are able to use specialist equipment under the supervision of a college member of staff.

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Local head teachers appreciate the value of this link both in widening opportunities for their pupils and in supporting their technology teachers.

9 The college offers a broad curriculum and is the only college in Coventry to offer courses in construction. The largest curriculum area is engineering. There are General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) at advanced level in six areas and at intermediate level in nine, but only one foundation course. Twenty-seven National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are offered mainly at levels 1 to 4; in management they extend to level 5. There is also a wide range of other Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) and RSA Examinations Board (RSA) courses. Some of the less common vocational areas covered by the college include welding and foundry work, model making, and animal nursing. The college offers 21 subjects at GCE A level for both full-time and part-time study. General Certification of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects are available in English, mathematics and some languages. There are courses in basic English and mathematics.

10 The college has six access to higher education courses and a pre-access course. Degree courses in technology and European studies are offered in conjunction with the University of Warwick. The college also contributes to a part-time degree in social sciences and offers a higher national diploma in business studies in association with Coventry University. A certificate in education course is franchised from Wolverhampton University. A wide range of teacher training and assessor training courses are offered both within the college and at other centres. In addition to the support service for deaf students in neighbouring colleges and universities the college offers a number of other courses in education and training to support deaf students, for example British Sign Language, communicating with deaf people and deaf awareness courses. Coventry and Warwickshire Sign Language Interpreting is based at the college.

11 The college provides a good range of short courses for industry. These are offered both in the college and on company premises. They have now been brought together in the business development unit, which investigates training needs and alerts employers to what the college can offer. Eighty local employers have joined the business development training partnership which gives member companies a discount on courses booked through the unit. Employers praised the college for raising their awareness of what the college could offer.

12 Employers interviewed by inspectors were supportive of the college's links with them. Generally they receive good feedback on their employees' progress. Responses to queries were rapidly handled. There are industrial liaison committees for construction, engineering and design and one is planned for hairdressing and beauty therapy. Some employers have been involved in course team meetings, for example in painting and decorating. Employers generally felt that the college was meeting their training needs



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and they appreciated the college's frankness in making it clear what it could and could not offer. One employer was particularly appreciative of the support the college gave to a student with hearing impairment on a work placement.

13 The college has a strong marketing unit which is appropriately funded. A sophisticated marketing plan has been produced, which is based on clear labour market information and an analysis of the college's own recruitment trends, and which contains targets and reviews of past performance. The plan is supported by a marketing programme indicating the timing and nature of major marketing activities. The effectiveness of advertising campaigns is evaluated by monitoring enquiries. Opportunities to celebrate students' achievements are effectively exploited in the local press. All schools have appointed marketing liaison officers and produced their own marketing plans linked to the strategic and college-wide marketing plans. There has been little market research aimed at specific targets, but a group has recently been established to strengthen this area of work. A library of labour market information is being developed and a survey of local GNVQ provision has been carried out. There is a series of attractive course brochures in a common style. These give clear general information about courses and are addressed to particular groups such as school leavers, adults and overseas students.

14 The college works in association with some other colleges to survey overseas opportunities. It markets strongly overseas and recruits about 200 students annually from the European Union and 250 from elsewhere, particularly the Far East. An alumni association has been established in Hong Kong. The college is joined in a technology training consortium with a Dutch college, two other colleges in the United Kingdom and Salford Education Authority. There are strong links with industry and government in Malaysia. The school of languages has run courses in spoken English in Beijing. It has also run courses on teaching English for speakers of other languages in the Czech republic and has been involved in initiatives, founded by the European Union, with partners in several European countries.

15 There are good relations with the TEC. The college has made a major contribution to the development of the modern apprenticeship programme. It works closely with the TEC, the city council, and the employment centre to support a construction employment unit which identifies the skills required by employers and provides short courses for unemployed people to develop such skills. There has been close collaboration between the college and the TEC on tracking students' progress, analysis of single regeneration budget bids and accreditation of students' prior learning. The college has been one of the few to take up the TEC's special funding for disability support. The principal is a member of several TEC committees. The TEC has a high opinion of the college's responsiveness and flexibility in meeting local education and training needs.

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16 The college has worked hard to develop good relations with the local community. Six outreach centres have been established. A pre-access course, specifically aimed at the Afro-Caribbean community, is offered at one outreach centre. The corporation has recently set up a community advisory panel to strengthen links with minority ethnic communities and disadvantaged areas. The college theatre is used by a number of local organisations for theatrical productions.

17 The college has an equal opportunities policy, and more detailed policies on specific issues such as gender, race and disability. A working group is now carrying out a rigorous audit of college policies on equal opportunities. To encourage recruitment of students from minority ethnic groups radio interviews have been held with Asian students, exhibitions mounted at Muslim resource centres and advertisements placed in community languages. The college has not so far analysed students' achievements by ethnicity. Enrolments by gender and ethnicity, and levels of support for students with disabilities are analysed by the academic board. In October 1995, a disability strategic group was established.

#### **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

18 The governors have supported the college through a period of severe difficulty following the discovery of a large financial deficit in 1991. A large number of staff were made redundant and a new senior management team was appointed from September 1991. Much of the governors' and the senior managers' time and energy in the last few years has been absorbed in the ensuing dispute with the local authority over responsibility for the deficit. Recently, the dispute has been resolved by mutual agreement.

19 The corporation has 19 members. There are 11 business members, three co-opted members, two members nominated by college staff, a member elected and nominated by students, a member nominated by the TEC and the principal. Three members are women, and two are from minority ethnic groups. Governors have substantial experience at senior levels in company management, the public sector and voluntary organisations.

20 The corporation has committees for audit, finance, academic planning and marketing, personnel, and remuneration. A search committee is convened annually or as necessary. Each committee has appropriate terms of reference. A private limited company has been established for commercial work. All major decisions concerning the scope and powers of the board of this company are controlled by the corporation. The corporation agendas, minutes, and administrative systems are particularly well organised and developed. To ensure that the corporation continues to be appropriately supported in its work, the role of the clerk is to be reviewed using the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) A Guide for Clerks.

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21 Governors and senior managers meet regularly and provide material assistance in fulfilling respective roles and responsibilities. Meetings of the corporation and its committees are attended by members of the senior management team, who consider that they benefit greatly from this arrangement. Most corporation members participate in quality surveys which they find a valuable means of building up their knowledge of the college. Governors attend corporation meetings regularly. They are fully involved in strategic planning. In November 1994, the governors met for a day to discuss the strategic plan. Recently, a smaller group composed of committee chairmen met for an in-depth discussion of the revised plan.

22 Committee meetings are well prepared and well managed. Governors receive comprehensive reports prior to their meetings. Committee recommendations are a standing agenda item at corporation meetings. Governors are given full information on enrolments and bids for funding. The college's financial position is monitored closely on a monthly basis by the finance committee. Careful consideration has been given to the content of financial reports to the full corporation. The board is kept well informed on issues of good governance and has adopted a code of practice, a code of ethics and a register of interests. It has not yet fully reviewed its own effectiveness though it is planning to do this in the near future.

23 The college benefits from effective management. The senior management team comprises the principal, the deputy principal, the director of human and learning resources, the director of enterprise, the director of curriculum and quality, and the director of finance. They work closely together. Each member of the team has responsibility for designated operational areas and leads a small number of curriculum areas. Heads of school are appreciative of the support they are given by directors. The team meets twice weekly and is supported by the clerk to the corporation. Members discuss a wide variety of matters and a clear record is kept of progress on action points.

24 The management structure has been regularly reorganised to reduce the number of layers of management, improve communications and cut back management costs. At middle management level there are now eight heads of school and eight heads of unit. The schools and units are well led and organised. Responsibilities for courses and resources are clearly allocated. In most schools there are regular meetings for school staff. The academic board brings together management, staff and students to advise the principal on the academic progress of the college. It discusses the strategic plan and plays a significant role in the development of college policies. It prefers to work through short-term task groups rather than standing committees.

25 The strategic plan provides a firm foundation for the development of the college. Its significance is well understood and its content is carefully considered by staff. School business plans are generally closely related to the college's overall strategic objectives. The strategic plan is focused on a

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few broad and relevant objectives which are backed up by numerous measurable targets. Review meetings are held to assess the performance of the schools and other units in relation to targets set in previous years. Progress towards targets is highlighted in the college's revised strategic plan.

26 A working party of the academic board has recently reviewed communications within the college and action has been taken to improve arrangements in line with its recommendations. A survey of staff views, which was carried out as part of the review, revealed some difficulties including a lack of clarity about the functions of some of the newer units which the college has created. Nevertheless, communications are generally effective. A regular college newsletter is circulated to all staff.

27 College policies make explicit the college's aims on a range of issues. Further information is usually contained in subsidiary documents. Information on the bodies that are responsible for policies and on the frameworks for implementing and reviewing them often has to be sought in supplementary papers. The college's environmental policy is particularly general and loosely defined and there are no supporting sources to consult. The college information systems policy was agreed just before the cross-college inspection. There are properly specified terms of reference to guide the operation of committees for quality, curriculum management, staff development, student progress, equal opportunities, student guidance, health and safety, and learner support. With few exceptions, responsibilities for the implementation of policies are clearly allocated within schools and units.

28 The allocation of resources is carefully considered and budgets are effectively monitored. The senior management team closely monitors spending. All college managers receive monthly reports showing their unit's or school's financial position. Valuable efficiency indicators have been developed to assist in allocating resources. They include the net cost of each school, academic salary cost per taught hour, cost per student hour, and average class size. College and school performance against agreed targets is reported to the academic board and to the academic planning and marketing committee of the corporation. The college has identified a need to increase the size of teaching groups and to improve the deployment of staff. No specific indicators exist yet for students' achievement including the value added to their qualifications on entry. The routine information available on students' achievements provides insufficient analysis of pass rates and trends.

29 The college receives 62 per cent of its funding from the FEFC. In 1994-95, its average level of FEFC funding was £21.82 per unit. The median for general further education colleges that year was £17.97. The FEFC's publication, Funding Allocations 1995-96, shows that the total allocation of recurrent funding is £7,021,374 to fund 330,662 units of activity. The college's average level of funding per unit for 1995-96 is

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£21.23. The median for general further education colleges is £17.84. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6, respectively.

30 The college's computerised information systems help to ensure effective management. Enrolments are closely monitored. Enrolment targets are set by the deputy principal in conjunction with heads of schools. The college exceeded its growth targets in 1993-94 and 1994-95. Improvements in arrangements for monitoring attendance have helped the college to obtain better data on student retention. Levels of retention have been low on a number of courses and the degree of attention given to this has been variable.

31 The intended destinations of students are monitored in June each year and a survey is carried out to produce information on actual destinations after students have left the college. In some schools, little use has been made of data on destinations; for example, in one course, information on poor rates of progression to higher education had not resulted in appropriate action to try and redress this.

#### **STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

32 The college's advice and information centre deals with a broad range of enquiries from students. It provides advice on student services, childcare, careers guidance, student finance and welfare, counselling, accreditation of prior learning and GNVQs. In one area, there was an example of insufficient pre-entry information on costs and on the amount of work involved in the course. However, students generally find the service helpful. The advice and information centre runs advice days throughout the summer period and operates college roadshows in the city centre. Individual schools run open days, and prospective art and design students are invited to course exhibitions and a fashion show. The centre staff, collaborating with school administrators, usually respond to initial enquiries within 24 hours. A standard information pack which includes a letter from the principal, a comprehensive student handbook, and appropriate course publicity is sent to all enquirers.

33 The college has developed helpful documents on all aspects of enrolment and the process of enrolment is well supported by the college's information system. Admissions procedures lay down minimum levels of contact following all applications. Individual schools are responsible for conducting interviews and offering places. This encourages school staff to contribute to recruitment but it leads to some lack of co-ordination between the advice and information centre and the schools. All enquiries and applications are recorded on a database. Information on enquiry and enrolment trends is available on the college information system.

34 Most full-time students receive a thorough induction. College-wide induction is organised by the learning support and information service which ensures an introduction to all college services. Key points are

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emphasised in a college video, 'More Than a Course'. There is a signed version for students with hearing difficulties, produced by the college with funds from the local careers service. Tutors follow a thorough induction checklist to ensure that all full-time students, including students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, have received the information and advice they need. In many schools central induction is supported by additional activities such as meetings with past students and initial assignments designed to introduce students to their courses. Students and staff complete a questionnaire on induction. The experience for part-time students is more varied; students are usually inducted by the course tutor. Some part-time students receive a tour of facilities but others have little induction. All students have the opportunity to change course, should this prove necessary. An amendment to the enrolment form is used to monitor this process, ensuring that the necessary advice and support has been given to the student concerned.

35 The developing tutorial policy is playing an increasing part in improving the quality of students' experience. A new policy was introduced two years ago and was updated in May 1995. It lays down minimum requirements for tutoring. All full-time students must receive a timetabled tutorial period each week and all part-time students must have a named tutor. Tutoring practice varies between the schools; some tutorial groups are large and students are tutored by a team of staff. The experience of part-time students depends on the nature of their courses. Some part-time students do not receive any timetabled tutorials. Tutors have a useful handbook and resource file which together provide guidance on what is expected of the tutor. On GNVQ courses, for example, tutors make students' progress reports available to parents. Parents are invited to an open evening to discuss their sons' and daughters' progress.

36 Accreditation of students' prior learning is well established and is regularly used in many schools. Accreditation is carried out by a qualified assessor in each school and co-ordinated by the curriculum support co-ordinator. The college is working to maintain and develop students' records of achievement through its tutor system. These are thoroughly maintained by younger students, particularly in curriculum areas such as hair and beauty and business studies, where they are linked to action plans for learning. The college is using a useful software package, the student portfolio pack, which helps students to produce their own typed national record of achievement.

37 The college has a strong commitment to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The student access and support unit was set up to provide an integrated service, to identify individual needs and to implement appropriate action. It brings together the units which provided basic English and literacy support, specialist help for the deaf, and support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, not all full-time students are tested to determine whether they have additional learning needs and only a small number of students are receiving specialist

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assistance. Of the 208 who were identified as needing help with numeracy or literacy, only 50 were attending the unit at the time of the inspection. In some classes for numeracy support, no students attended for many weeks. The college's additional support is more successful when it is integral to the students' main course and followed up by tutors. The student access and support unit provides additional help to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on mainstream courses. There is an effective dyslexia group that regularly supports about 20 students. A limited range of provision exists specifically for students with visual impairment, learning difficulties and mental health needs.

38 Support for students who are deaf or hard of hearing is of a high quality. There are well-developed procedures to guide the delivery of the service. Six deaf students at the college receive full-time support with signing and language. The service is currently contracted to provide similar support to 40 students at seven other colleges and universities. It provides a good model of service for deaf students. There are many examples of good practice, such as the employment of deaf adults who provide role models for students, the production of a weekly newsletter, and the development of good individual learning programmes.

39 There is a well-qualified team of student advisers which provides effective careers advice increasingly integrated with the tutorial programme. The college careers adviser is jointly funded by the local careers service and the college. There is a well-stocked careers library with appropriate printed and electronic resources. At present, GCE A level and access students are not receiving sufficient guidance on employment opportunities. The college has two professional counsellors and a trained financial adviser. The counsellors receive appropriate professional supervision from an external supervisor. There is a confidential interview room although its position within the library and advice centre is not ideal. All students are aware of the service and those who use it value the support it provides.

40 There are a number of funds to assist students in financial difficulty. The hardship fund and the access fund of £14,525 are used to provide travel and materials grants. The college also provides grants for child minding and nursery facilities and sees this as a more effective use of resources than owning its own childcare facilities.

41 Attendance is carefully monitored using a system of computerised registers. The college information system provides regular and prompt printouts of students' attendance records. The responsibility for monitoring attendance lies with tutors and many tutors follow up non-attendance with telephone calls and letters to students. Despite these measures attendance levels were poor in some of the teaching sessions inspected.

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## TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

42 Inspectors observed 182 teaching sessions. Of these, 54 per cent had strengths which outweighed weaknesses. In 11 per cent of sessions the weaknesses outweighed the strengths. The average attendance at the sessions inspected was 75 per cent. On average, 10 students were present in each class. 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		4	10	6	1	1	22
GCSE		0	0	2	1	0	3
GNVQ		9	8	17	6	0	40
NVQ		4	13	15	3	0	35
Access to higher education/higher education		0	5	7	0	0	12
Other vocational		8	26	15	5	0	54
Other		2	9	2	3	0	16
<b>Total</b>		<b>27</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>182</b>

43 There was mutual respect between staff and students. In practical sessions careful attention was paid to safety. Information technology was well integrated within many curriculum areas. Effective and unobtrusive support was given to students with restricted mobility to ensure their integration within classes.

44 The quality of teaching and learning in science varied considerably. In biology experienced teachers used a variety of teaching methods to good effect. The range and balance of assessments reflected the GCE A level curriculum. There were comprehensive schemes of work. Worksheets provided clear guidance for students. There was meticulous attention to safety. Imaginative practical work included a session in which students were carrying out an experiment to estimate the number of living micro-organisms in a culture; all students were actively engaged in the work and the teacher provided excellent supervision and responded effectively to students' questions. In other areas of science, the work given to students was not always sufficiently demanding and there was not enough assessment of their progress. The content and level of work did not always take account of students' prior experience and ability. There was some poor teaching of veterinary and dental nursing. Little use was made of teaching aids and lesson plans, and assignments were insufficiently challenging. A number of classes started late.



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45 Mathematics teachers worked to good lesson plans and students' progress was regularly recorded. Those in need of additional support were directed to the mathematics workshop. Teachers made little use of audio-visual aids and students asked few questions during lessons. In GNVQ lessons, the teaching of mathematics was not set in a vocational context. The quality of teaching on computing courses was highly variable. Some course plans offered clear learning objectives and teachers provided helpful individual tuition. In some sessions, however, students did not understand what was expected of them. Occasionally students used computers for tasks unconnected with the lesson. Some practical sessions were purposeful; in others, students appeared to have little interest in what they were doing.

46 Most teaching in engineering was good. Question and answer techniques were used effectively to relate theory to practice. Tasks were set at levels appropriate for individual students. Teachers used varied methods of teaching and made good use of audio-visual aids. Handouts were commonly used to good effect. Support for students with disabilities included the use of a signer for deaf students. There were thorough records for checking NVQ students' achievements. Some course work assignments were not doing enough to develop students' problem-solving skills. In some sessions, students spent too much time taking notes from poor-quality chalkboards and little was done to check what learning had been achieved.

47 In construction, the aims and objectives of some programmes were clearly stated and shared with students. Relationships between staff and students were good. Teaching was closely related to the things students did at work. Assignment briefs were clear and concise and informative records were kept of students' progress. Some teaching was dull, lacked variety and made too few demands on students. Some of the written assignments returned to students contained inadequate comments from teachers.

48 Most business studies and business administration courses had clear schemes of work. Lessons were generally well prepared and well managed. A wide variety of teaching methods was used and in most cases tutors made regular checks on students' levels of understanding. Links were made between the content of lessons and students' commercial and personal experience. Assignments were carefully marked. Differing abilities within classes were not always adequately catered for. The more able students were sometimes allowed to dominate class discussions. Attendance at lessons was sometimes low.

49 In health care there was much good teaching. Lessons in the learning workshop and the computing rooms were of particularly high quality. The pace and the level of the work were generally appropriate. Good use was made of students' personal experience at work. The quality of teaching and learning in hairdressing and beauty therapy was mixed. There was

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some good teaching in practical sessions but a shortage of clients sometimes hindered effective practical work. Some long practical sessions were not well managed. Course documentation was clear and the introduction of client consultation sheets has encouraged thorough and systematic tracking of students' progress in achieving NVQs.

50 The quality of teaching in art and design varied. Students worked well on their own and in teams and took responsibility for leading discussions. Teachers provided good support in practical sessions. All courses had schemes of work, many of which gave appropriate emphasis to the acquisition of good practical and technical skills. Teachers used a wide range of teaching and learning methods based around a core of practical projects. Visual aids were used effectively. There was a coherent and successful school-wide strategy for teaching computer-aided design and information technology. Good use was made of exhibitions and industrial placements. The effectiveness of teaching was weakened by timetabling arrangements which limited the availability of longer sessions. Insufficient emphasis was given to learning objectives and the extent to which they were being achieved. The general pace of learning was too leisurely. Students were not being challenged enough in group discussions and critical reviews and were not developing an appropriately critical approach to their work. Teachers talked with students about the quality of their work and how it might be improved, but they failed to provide enough formal written feedback on students' assignments.

51 Humanities teaching was careful and thorough; key points were well summarised. There were good-quality handouts, particularly in English lessons. Staff were responsive to individual students' learning needs. Marking was generally thorough and students received good guidance from teachers' written comments. Teachers were careful to run regular checks on students' understanding. Lesson plans were widely used. However, schemes of work made few references to teaching methods. In about half the lessons observed, teachers gave students insufficient opportunity to develop their own ideas.

52 Most modern foreign language teaching was of high quality. There were appropriate schemes of work for each course although not all contained sufficient detail. Relationships between staff and students were excellent. Most courses enabled students to develop a full range of language skills. A few teachers made too much use of English in the classroom, but in general, teachers and students spoke in the language being studied. In some cases students' attendance and punctuality were poor, lessons were poorly planned, and the range of activities prepared for students was too narrow. Students were encouraged to improve their language skills by using the language centre in their own time.

53 Most teacher training and assessor training was good. Lesson plans were of high quality. All sessions had aims and objectives which were clearly explained to students. There was some effective group work which

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helped to develop students' ability to work in teams. Teachers did not always pay sufficient attention to students' previous experience, or emphasise the value of using learning aids. Intrusive noise from a corridor outside one of the teaching rooms meant that it was sometimes difficult for students to hear all the teacher was saying.

54 In English for speakers of other languages, learning support, work with those who were deaf or blind and basic education the quality of teaching was generally high. In the best lessons, there was a sense of partnership between teachers and students. Students were encouraged to explain themselves, and teachers' responses indicated the importance they placed on students' contributions. Clear explanations and instructions were given, particularly for work in numeracy. Initial assessment procedures for the deaf and hard of hearing were well managed. Schemes of work varied in quality. There was scope for a greater variety of activities in many classes and for better management of time. Individual students did not always receive the help that they required. Group work was not always well organised and there was insufficient opportunity for students to work on their own.

#### **STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

55 Most students developed a sound understanding of their subject although some information technology students were having trouble grasping basic principles. Many students were able to apply the knowledge they had gained effectively. Hair and beauty students' assignment work was well presented. Engineering and mathematics students' written work was not of a consistent standard. Art and design students' work tended to lack imagination and ambition. In chemistry and physics, students carried out practical work competently and safely. Engineering students were developing effective practical skills; for example, a group of modern apprenticeship trainees completed individual pieces of work to a high standard following a careful specification based on NVQ level 2 units.

56 Most students worked well in groups. Teacher training students co-operated effectively in realistic simulated lessons but these sessions would have been more effective if students had been more willing to evaluate each other's presentations. Languages students performed well individually, in pairs, in groups and as a whole class. This was also the case in some humanities and veterinary nursing sessions. Students' core skills were poor in a number of areas; for example the information technology skills of students on hairdressing and language courses, the mathematical skills of science students, the writing skills of mathematics students, and the verbal and general communication skills of students on some computing, art and design and humanities courses.

57 There were 5,562 students on vocational and NVQ programmes in 1994-95. Sixty-seven per cent of those completing and 49 per cent of those enrolled achieved full certification. Some students achieved partial

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qualification but needed to finish various units to achieve the full award. In construction site supervisory studies at NVQ level 3 and 4, all students starting the programme obtained the full award. In contrast, only 18 per cent of full-time hairdressing students who completed the NVQ level 2 course attained full certification. In painting and decorating at NVQ level 1 none of the students passed. There were a number of vocational courses on which all students beginning the course attained full certification. These included C&G teacher training stage 2, health and safety, the diploma in management studies, pattern making stage 2, RSA computing, literacy and information technology, gas installation and safety, and the BTEC higher national diploma in electronics. On the RSA Spanish course at level 2, and the animal nursing course, less than 20 per cent of those enrolled, but 80 per cent of those who completed the course, achieved the full award. Five of the nine students completing the two-year national certificate for dental surgery assistants achieved full certification.

58 Only a small proportion of the college's students are entered for the vocational qualifications which are included in the Department for Education and Employment's performance tables. In 1995, 145 students featured in these tables out of a total enrolment of 12,737. Seventy-eight per cent of students aged 16 to 18 in their final year of study on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education and Employment's 1995 performance tables were successful. This places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. The proportion of students who were successful fell by 7 per cent from the previous year's figure.

59 BTEC national diploma results were generally satisfactory. High pass rates were obtained in nursery nursing; 88 per cent of those enrolled, and 100 per cent of those completing, passed in 1994. In 1995, 81 per cent of those enrolled passed. The results in communications and computer engineering were poor; only 31 per cent of those enrolled, and 50 per cent of those completing, attained certification. Results on the GNVQ programmes have been varied, several have been poor. At intermediate level the art and design results were above the national average of 49 per cent. In manufacturing only 5 per cent of students who enrolled, and 9 per cent of students completing, passed all units. In business studies 21 per cent of those enrolled, and 36 per cent of those completing, passed all units. At advanced level there were particularly good results in science; 82 per cent of students enrolled and 100 per cent of those completing achieved the award. In advanced health and social care only 13 per cent of those enrolled, and 33 per cent of those completing, passed all units.

60 One hundred and thirty-one students, aged 16 to 18, entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1994-95. They scored an average of 3.0 points per entry (where A=10 points, E=2 points). This places the college in the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance

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measure based on the data in the 1995 performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment. Of the 20 students entered for the one-year programme in chemistry in 1995 no one achieved grade C or above and only 30 per cent achieved a pass. Similarly poor results on the one-year programme were obtained by 16 to 18 year olds studying government and politics and by adults studying economics. In English literature, only 21 per cent of students achieved a grade A to C pass, significantly below the average for general further education colleges; the results at grades A to E were 9 per cent below the average. There were some good results in art and design, mathematics, Urdu, Spanish and biology though the number of students taking these subjects were small.

61 GCSE examination results for 1994-95 were generally satisfactory. Overall pass rates at grades A to C were just above the average for general further education colleges. Eighty-two per cent of adult students studying French achieved grades A to C. In the Asian languages, results have been generally good with the exception of Bengali. In mathematics 25 per cent of those entered achieved an A to C grade, which was just below the national average.

62 In 1994, students on access programmes performed less well than those in other centres in the West Midlands. In 1995, pass rates on the access to art and design programme were low, but there were improvements on other programmes. The college has a successful record in British Sign Language teaching. Since 1992 the pass rate at stage 1 has been consistently higher than the national average. Only small numbers of students seek accreditation on wordpower, numberpower, and English for speakers of other languages courses. Success rates for those taking the examinations are good.

63 The average retention rate on courses at the college is 79 per cent. Some individual courses in engineering and electronics, teacher training, management, wordprocessing, and languages have retention rates of 100 per cent. However, apart from languages, all curriculum areas have overall retention rates below the national average for general further education colleges. Retention in construction crafts is particularly poor. College information on student destinations in 1995 shows that 50 per cent of full-time students progressed to higher education, 22 per cent to employment, 16 per cent continued in further education and 2 per cent went to other destinations. No information was available for 10 per cent of students.

64 The college's students have a successful record in national competitions over a number of years. In the last three years, 28 students received national awards. These include the Institute of Sheet Metal Chairman's Cup, the Institute of Plumbing student plumber of the year and the winner of the national pattern-making competition. These students went on to represent the United Kingdom in the 33rd International Skills Olympics. Two students won silver medals from awarding bodies in 1995;

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one from the Institute of Legal Executives for the second highest examination mark nationally, the other from C&G for the excellence of his work in pattern making, part 3. Former students of the college achieved the young woman engineer of the year award in 1994 and 1995.

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

65 The college's mission statement and strategic objectives stress the college's commitment to continuous quality improvement. Responsibility for quality assurance resides with the director of curriculum and quality, supported by a quality systems administrator and quality co-ordinator in each of the schools. Progress has been affirmed by recognition of the college as an Investor in People and the award of a charter mark.

66 There are two internal mechanisms for monitoring quality; quality surveys and course team reviews. Every school, support unit and administrative unit, together with the senior management team has a quality survey once every four terms. The surveys are conducted by a team which always includes at least two members of the senior management team and a head of another school or unit. They draw on evidence from other internal and external quality systems, such as college team reviews, audits, and verifier reports. During each survey, clear links to the strategic plans of the college have to be demonstrated. A particularly valuable feature is the inclusion of graded classroom observations. Performance indicators are starting to be used as a basis for setting performance targets for schools. These are less well developed for support and administrative units. The surveys, now in their third cycle, are rigorous and effective, and are now becoming more focused on key issues.

67 Course reviews vary in their effectiveness. Some teams produce much better reviews than others and best practice is not always shared. Strengths of the course review process include the students' involvement and the actions taken in response to moderators' and external verifiers' recommendations. Two important weaknesses are the failure to bring forward issues raised in the previous review cycle and the failure to give sufficient attention to poor achievements by students. More attention is now being given to the latter. A wide-ranging investigation provoked by poor results across the college has been carried out in relation to GCE A levels and GNVQs. Changes have been made but it is too early to judge their effectiveness.

68 The college charter, which is a comprehensive document, was introduced in September 1994 supported by staff-development sessions. It was highly commended by the Department for Education and Employment. The charter is issued to students during induction. Part-time students are less aware of it than full-time students. The college's annual survey of students' views monitors key aspects of the charter. Mechanisms are in place to modify the charter in the light of the views expressed. The college acknowledges that the charter lacks measurable standards.

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69 Students' complaints are monitored by the central information unit and the senior management team are made aware of any issues which are the subject of a substantial number of complaints. Surveys of students perceptions are taken seriously. Changes to course timetabling, relocation of the mathematics workshop, balancing of workloads and the development of the new courtyard refectory are all examples of the college's responsiveness to students' criticisms. Except in the case of short courses, there are no formal surveys for testing employers' perceptions of the college's programmes.

70 The staff-development policy has clear aims and sets out the staff's entitlement to development activities. Members of staff are increasingly taking advantage of staff-development opportunities. They report that the Investors in People programme has given impetus to in-service training particularly in customer care. All staff are issued with a useful personal development file. This contains individual records and up-to-date policy documents and procedures. The amount spent on staff development excluding staffing costs is 1.2 per cent of FEFC funding. There is an effective induction process for all new staff.

71 All full-time and part-time staff are appraised. The principal has been appraised by the chairman of the corporation. The staff-development and appraisal policies and systems are kept under review and changes are made as required. There are good links between corporate objectives, staff-development needs identified during appraisal and the staff-development priorities and plans. A careful balance is struck between the needs of the individual and the needs of the organisation in the allocation of funds. Staff report that the system is fair and that they feel well supported by the college. Systematic attempts are made to analyse needs and evaluate effectiveness. A comprehensive annual report on staff development and training is produced for the personnel committee of the corporation.

72 The college intends that its self-assessment report should become an annual working document. It is comprehensive and follows the headings in Council Circular 93/28, Assessing Achievement. All staff and governors were given the opportunity to contribute to the identification of strengths and weaknesses and many did so. The report uses assessment grades and the identified strengths and weaknesses are supported by a clear evidence base. The college has underestimated some of its weaknesses and this has resulted in over-generous grades.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Staffing**

73 Just under a quarter of the full-time equivalent teaching staff are part time. The majority of teachers are well qualified and experienced. Just over 66 per cent hold a first degree, 60 per cent a relevant professional qualification, and 20 per cent a higher degree. However, few teachers of students with behavioural and emotional difficulties hold appropriate

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qualifications. About 70 per cent of teachers possess a teaching qualification. Over 60 per cent have the assessor awards of the training and development lead body; 13 per cent hold the internal verifier award. Twenty teachers are qualified in the accreditation of students' prior learning. Many staff have appropriate industrial or commercial experience. Business studies teachers lack recent commercial experience.

74 Since incorporation, student numbers have increased by 25 per cent. Overall staff numbers have risen by 3 per cent, mainly because of an increase in support staff. Despite the higher student-staff ratio, many classes are still small. During the inspection, the average number of students present in the classes visited was 10, and 16 per cent of classes had fewer than six students present.

75 There are sufficient suitably-qualified technical and administrative staff. They provide effective support for teaching. In science for example, the technicians form a particularly competent and experienced team and have a wide range of expertise across all the sciences. Language teaching benefits from good centralised audio-visual support.

76 All staff have a job description and a clear statement of their responsibilities. Essential personnel procedures and policies are in place but their review and updating is not yet complete. The college analyses its staff by age, gender, disability and ethnic origin. The senior management team comprises two women and five men, and 43 per cent of college managers are female. Approximately half the total staff are female. Five per cent of teaching staff are from minority ethnic groups.

### **Equipment/learning resources**

77 The college has clear annual bidding procedures for the replacement and purchase of new capital equipment which require that any proposed purchases should be related to the objectives in the strategic plan. A longer-term equipment strategy has yet to be fully developed. The college has recognised for example, that it will be necessary to plan for the replacement of expensive machinery in workshops.

78 Programme areas are generally adequately equipped with the specialised and general purpose equipment needed to deliver the curriculum. Science has appropriate equipment and learning aids, and childcare equipment is new and of a high standard. Strengths include the well-equipped language centre, the good range of recently-purchased engineering equipment and the specialist teaching and learning resources available for adult basic education. Weaknesses include the lack of video and media production facilities for graphic design and photography, shortages of storage space in some areas, and poor chalkboard and limited whiteboard facilities in mathematics.

79 The college has an integrated learning support and information services unit, which has steadily evolved over the past few years. The main library has an automated catalogue and management system.



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Its opening hours on week days are reasonable and it is also open during holiday periods. Its key staff are professionally qualified and the staffing numbers and structure permit flexibility of cover. The library has a modest total of 23 compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases on a variety of subjects. The bookstocks are inadequate in science, hairdressing, languages and mechanical engineering. Outdated books for humanities and teacher training are still on the shelves. The library budget is insufficient to meet needs.

80 The college does not have an overall information technology policy. Plans for expanding information technology provision are included in the accommodation strategy, but the college's strategic plan makes few specific references to this issue. Equipment is adequately maintained. The ratio of full-time equivalent students to computer workstations is about 10:1. An average of only 58 computers are available to students on an open access basis, although sometimes students can use machines in teaching areas. Students say that the computer centre is often overbooked.

### **Accommodation**

81 The college is situated on two well-maintained freehold sites, almost forming a single campus, near the centre of the city. The main building, which dates from the 1930s, has an imposing neo-classical facade; an extension was added in the 1970s. The Maxwell site, nearby, contains workshops purpose built in the 1980s. The college's buildings have been well maintained; for example the single-storey engineering block on the main site has been re-roofed. College managers have recently adopted a planned maintenance strategy incorporating a rolling programme of internal decoration and refurbishment. The main entrance and reception area is scheduled for improvement in the summer of 1996. The college is kept clean and tidy. Access for wheelchair users is adequate, although the differing floor levels between the original and new buildings on the main site are awkward for such students. The college has comprehensive refectory facilities.

82 The rooms used for language teaching are of a good standard and are located together. Those used for teacher training help to provide an adult environment. The accommodation used for deaf students is particularly good. Some rooms have colourful and interesting displays of students' work; others, for example those used for humanities teaching, are bare and uninspiring. The rooms used for hairdressing are not well suited to their purpose. Rooms used for art and design are inconveniently dispersed across the college. Some areas used for mathematics teaching are noisy. There is an adequate number of staff rooms.

83 The college has improved the way in which it uses its rooms considerably. It has a continuing programme of alterations to make more efficient use of space. This has resulted, for example, in the creation of a well-designed centralised computer room. Close attention has been paid to energy and other utility costs. Social and recreational facilities for

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students are limited. At the main site, an attractive new refreshment and social area has been opened in a courtyard. The college has few sports facilities of its own, but funds the use of some external facilities.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES**

84 The main strengths of the college are:

- the good relationships with external organisations, employers and the TEC
- corporation members' commitment to the college and the support they have given in critical periods
- the effective management of the college
- the widely-discussed strategic plan which includes measurable objectives and targets
- the effective accreditation of students' prior learning
- the support for deaf students
- good teaching in some curriculum areas
- effective quality assurance systems and rigorous quality surveys
- up-to-date equipment in engineering and construction.

85 If it is to build on these strengths, the college should:

- improve its course retention rates
- extend its diagnosis of students' learning needs and improve the take up of learning support
- improve examination results
- review students' achievements more thoroughly
- improve the library bookstock
- increase the number of computers available on open access.

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## FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

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

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

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  - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)

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  - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1995)

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  - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

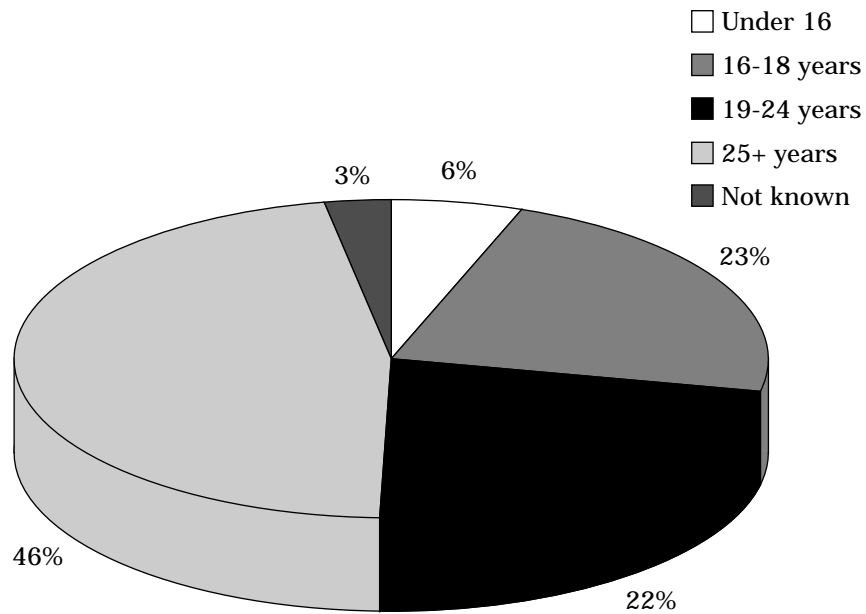
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**Figure 1**

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**Coventry Technical College: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)**



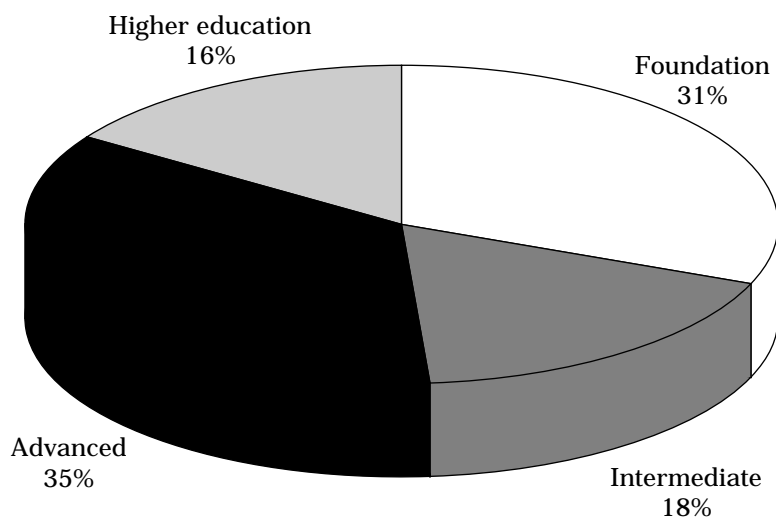
Enrolments: 12,737

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**Figure 2**

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**Coventry Technical College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)**

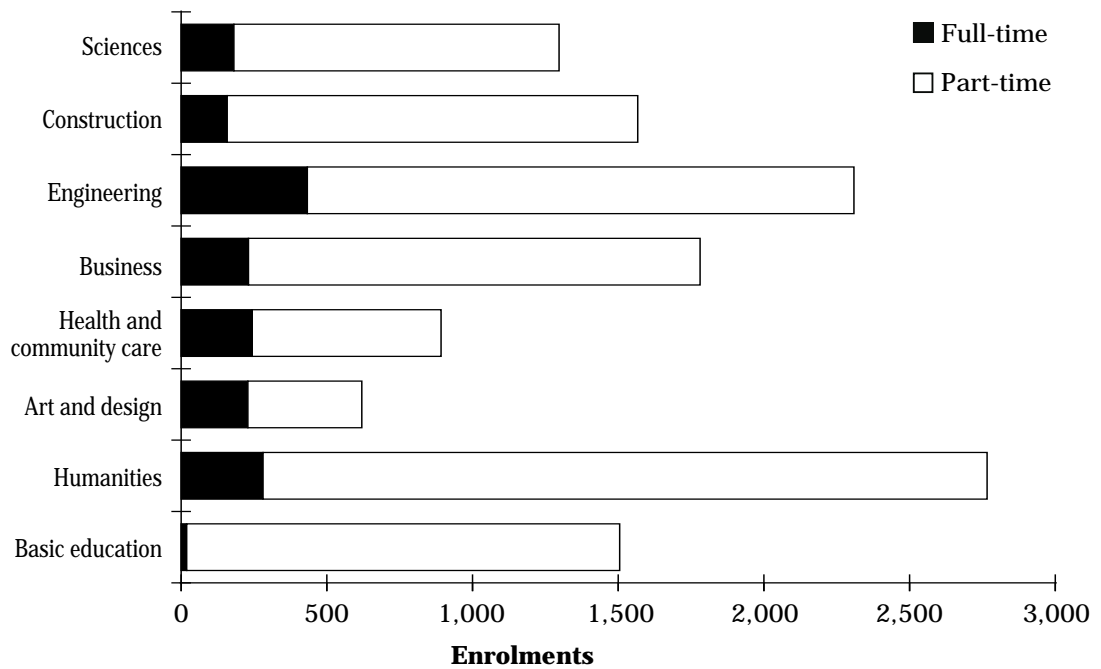


Enrolments: 12,737

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**Figure 3**

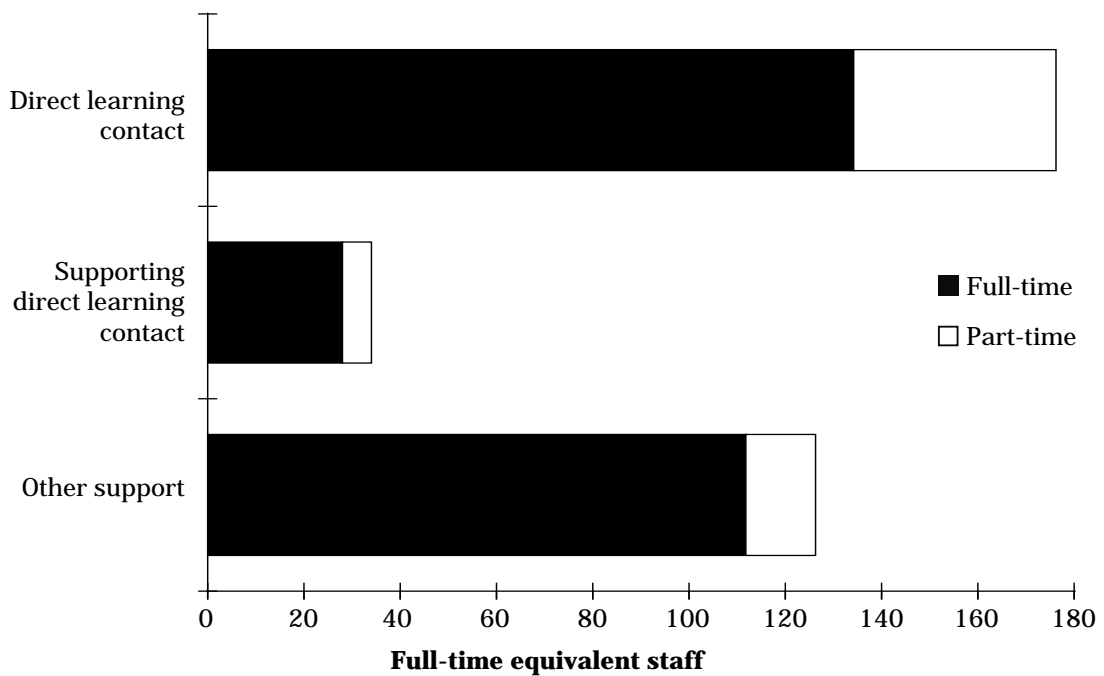
**Coventry Technical College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)**



Enrolments: 12,737

**Figure 4**

**Coventry Technical College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)**



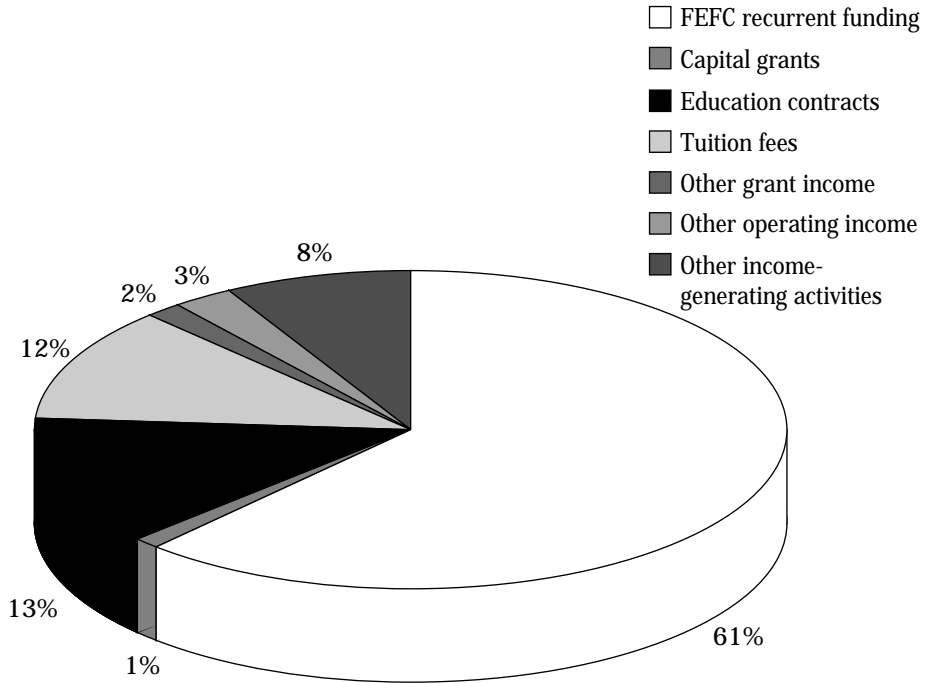
Full-time equivalent staff: 337

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**Figure 5**

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**Coventry Technical College: income (for 12 months to July 1995)**



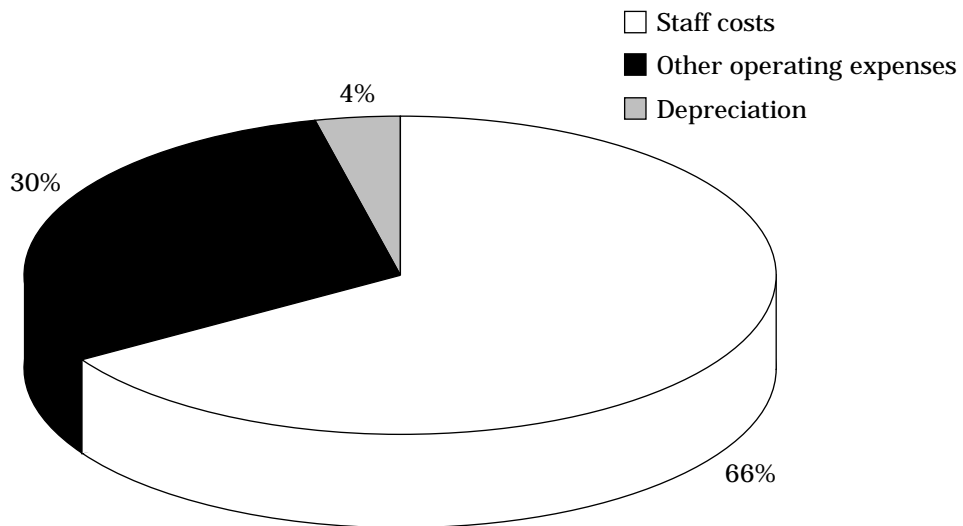
Income: £11,446,000

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**Figure 6**

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**Coventry Technical College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)**



Expenditure: £11,425,000

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