

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

**Plymouth
College of Art
and Design**

July 1995

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

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

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

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.*

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 01203 863000
Fax 01203 863100*

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 95/95

PLYMOUTH COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

SOUTH WEST REGION

Inspected January – March 1995

Summary

Plymouth College of Art and Design is changing rapidly to meet new challenges in an increasingly competitive environment. It offers a wide range of full-time courses. Liaison with schools and the University of Plymouth is effective and student enquiries and admissions are well managed. Teachers are appropriately deployed, and provide good teaching and support for students. Students who complete their studies do well and a high proportion of them go on to higher education or employment. There is a well-established course review procedure supported by a generally effective management information system. Some of the accommodation and specialist equipment is of high quality. The college should: improve the strategic plan and produce operating plans; improve the retention rates on some courses; extend the range of opportunities for study and in particular, for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; establish an equal opportunities committee and produce an action plan; and improve the arrangements for student support services including the establishment of a systematic programme of learning support. The college should also ensure that all the management functions are covered by the senior management team; implement fully the quality assurance policy including the setting of quality targets; continue to upgrade the poor accommodation in the annexes and provide access for students with limited physical mobility.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision		Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision		3
Governance and management		3
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		3
Quality assurance		3
Resources:	staffing	2
	equipment/learning resources	2
	accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Foundation and general studies	2	Photography and media studies	2
Fashion and three-dimensional studies	3	Printing, graphic design and lettering	2

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INTRODUCTION

1 Plymouth College of Art and Design was inspected during January and March 1995. Enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the beginning of the autumn term 1994. During the week beginning 16 January four inspectors spent a total of 12 days on specialist subject inspections. They inspected foundation studies and general art and design, photography and media studies, graphic design, printing and lettering, and fashion and design crafts. They observed 46 sessions involving 645 students and examined samples of students' work. During the week beginning 20 March seven inspectors spent 26 days inspecting aspects of cross-college provision. Meetings were held with students, governors, parents and representatives from local industry, the community, Devon and Cornwall Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), the University of Plymouth and local schools. Inspectors had access to an extensive variety of documentation relating to the college and its courses.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 The Jubilee Memorial Science, Art and Technical School opened in the late 1890s and included a department of arts and craft. This department became a separate school of art in 1937 and moved into its own building in 1949. It expanded into scattered annexes around the city and, in 1973, as Plymouth College of Art and Design, was rehoused in purpose-built accommodation at Tavistock Place and at four other sites in the city. These are Sutton, a short walk from the main site, and three much smaller annexes at Wolsden Street, Coxside and Beech Avenue, all approximately one-and-a-half miles from Tavistock Place. Coxside is to be vacated during summer 1995 and replaced by a site opposite the Sutton annexe.

3 The majority of further education students are enrolled on full-time advanced level courses including a range of Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) specialist national diplomas, a General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) at advanced level in art and design and a foundation studies course in art and design. Other full-time provision includes craft courses in metal and glass and courses in photography, media studies, graphic design, fashion, painting and decorating, vehicle body finishing, lettering and design and printing. There are a number of part-time students on work-related courses.

4 Plymouth has a population of 243,000 and an unemployment rate of 10.9 per cent which has been worsened by defence cuts. The city is considered to be the manufacturing centre of Devon and has been successful in attracting overseas employers. The minority ethnic population of the city is less than 1 per cent. On 1 November 1994 there were 921 students enrolled on full-time and 492 on part-time courses. Higher education courses accounted for 26 per cent of enrolments. Enrolments by age, level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3.

5 The college employs 108 full-time equivalent staff. Of these, 56 full-time equivalents are teachers and 21 full-time equivalents are support staff, including technicians, employed in direct learning support. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

6 Plymouth College of Art and Design recruits most of its students from the Plymouth area, but a substantial minority come from further afield. In 1994, the percentage of students continuing in education at 16 years of age from the Plymouth schools was 77 per cent. Although the only other specialist art and design further education college in the south-west region is in Bournemouth, there are large art and design programmes at a number of further education colleges within the south-west peninsular. Cornwall College has recently taken over most of the further education provision of Falmouth College of Arts. Many colleges and schools are seeking to increase their general art and design provision through the addition of GNVQ programmes as well as expanding and diversifying their General Certificate of Education advanced levels (GCE A levels) in art and design.

7 The college has a mission statement which refers to the development of 'enhanced provision of both further and higher education, and resultant increase in student intake'. The college commits itself to providing equal opportunities for flexible education at all levels, close liaison with schools and ensuring that the quality and productivity of delivery meet the needs of industry, society and the individual within the European context.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 The college's main work is in full-time courses, most of which lead to BTEC awards at national and higher national diploma levels. The range of provision is broadened by courses in printing, in painting and decorating, and in motor vehicle finishing. These courses lead to City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) qualifications, or to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and professional qualifications. Courses at advanced level, representing 64 per cent of enrolments, now exist to enable students to go on to all of the college's higher education programmes. These routes are used by a small but growing number of mature students as well as by 16-18 year olds. Sixty-one per cent of full-time further education students who completed their courses in 1994 went on to higher education and 13 per cent to employment. The number of progression routes within the college has been increased by the introduction of some new courses such as the national diploma in media studies, and part-time GCE A level courses in graphic design and in jewellery.

9 The most recent addition, a BTEC national diploma in media studies, started in September 1994 in response to a need which had been identified as a result of links with schools. At the same time, the college replaced the BTEC general art and design national diploma by an advanced GNVQ course in art and design. In 1994, students were recruited from 79 schools and colleges in the south-west region. Competition, particularly for general art and design courses, is intensifying. State schools in the Plymouth area

are almost all 11-18 comprehensive schools. In Devon 15 schools and colleges are offering art and design at GNVQ intermediate level and 10 are offering GNVQ at advanced level. The college's liaison arrangements with schools are effective. For example, as part of its relationship with the Tamar Valley Consortium, an organisation which brings together schools and colleges in the area, the college provides a part-time intermediate level course in art and design for sixth form students who attend the college for two days a week. Seventy students enrolled in 1993-94 and 27 subsequently joined full-time courses at the college.

10 A part-time schools liaison officer is employed by the college. A member of the teaching staff organises school links and college staff visit schools to give advice. Links with 15 and 16 year old school pupils are enhanced by a Saturday morning programme funded by the technical and vocational education initiative. Staff participate in careers and advisory meetings and co-operate with the Plymouth College of Further Education in providing joint open days for prospective students. Art teachers, potential students and their parents are encouraged to attend college information and advisory events. Parents consulted by inspectors felt that they had received good information on career opportunities.

11 Higher education accounts for 26 per cent of total student enrolments. Most of the higher education programmes are operated on a franchise basis from the University of Plymouth through its faculty of art and education based in Exeter. The college is one of a consortium of partner colleges of the university. Recruitment is undertaken nationally through the art and design admissions registry. The range of provision includes a full-time course leading to an honours degree in photographic media and to the British Institute of Professional Photographers' qualifying examination.

12 The proportion of part-time students has fallen since 1991 from half to just over one-third of enrolments. The number of students aged 19 and over has remained at approximately half of the total enrolment for the last three years. The proportion of students aged 25 and over has declined slightly during the same period. The majority of part-time students attend vocational courses in printing, vehicle body finishing and painting and decorating. These programmes are more closely related to the local economy and its employers than the rest of the college's courses. There are also part-time students taking GCE A level courses and the first year of a BA honours degree in fine art. None of the full-time further education courses are offered part time. This limitation is recognised by the college and it is considering alternative forms of study in order to provide opportunities for flexible attendance.

13 There has been a small number of courses specifically for industry. The budget for full-cost work for 1994-95 represents 3.5 per cent of the college's income. Although a successful course in colour printing was recently provided for a local newspaper, the college has not developed a

customer-oriented approach. The college does not have a permanently constituted commercial and industrial advisory group and relies on calling meetings with local industrialists as need arises. The last meeting occurred nine months before the team inspection and there were no recorded outcomes. There are, however, a number of informal links established at course level. For example, fashion courses receive sponsorship in the form of fabrics from local and regional companies.

14 Relationships with the Devon and Cornwall TEC are good and the TEC sees the college as responsive to its initiatives. The college has participated in the training credits scheme since its inception and makes use of the TEC labour market databases and employer surveys. The TEC described as exemplary a bid for its competitiveness scheme jointly developed by the college and the British Printing Industries Federation.

15 The college has considered the potential of the adult market but no specific campaign has been mounted to attract adult students. In recent years the painting and decorating courses and the printing courses have been successful in recruiting more female students who now make up 33 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively, of the enrolment to these courses.

16 Community representatives spoken to during the inspection were particularly complimentary about the college's responsiveness to their specific needs. Examples of successful community activities include a promotional video made by students as a working brief for a charity for people who are unable to speak. Students' photographs now brighten the corridors of a new maternity hospital in Derriford. HND design metals students were involved in an urban renewal scheme funded by Plymouth City Council in the Pembroke Street area of Devonport.

17 The college has very little experience of providing for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and no one has responsibility for the development of an action plan for this area. There are some students who have identified their own needs at enrolment and there are some examples of specific and effective support being provided for them. For example, three students with hearing impairments have been provided with laptop computers which are linked to a supporter. Forty-nine students are identified as dyslexic and are supported by expert tuition bought in for the purpose.

18 The marketing committee operates as a working party of the academic board. However, there is no marketing plan and the strategic plan is not informed by systematic market research. A graphic designer produces publicity in-house and a corporate identity is emerging although there have been no formal plans for its development.

19 The college has an equal opportunities policy which has been updated. There is no committee or working group concerned with equal opportunities issues and no action plan for dealing with them. The college has no childcare facilities. Understanding of national targets for education and training is not widespread amongst staff.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

20 The corporation board has 11 members, including representatives of the Devon and Cornwall TEC and the chamber of trade. Membership includes the principal, a member of staff and a student, although at the time of inspection there was a vacancy for a student member. There is only one woman on the board. Board members have skills and expertise in an appropriate range of areas including law, personnel management, building and design. The board is chaired by a chartered accountant. At the time of the inspection there was only one member with a professional background in art and design. The clerk to the governors is the personal assistant to the principal. The board is considering the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) guidance that the post of clerk should be analogous to that of a company secretary.

21 Governors are enthusiastic supporters of the college and give a great deal of their time to it. The corporation board has subcommittees for finance, personnel and remuneration, estates, and audit. All members of the board are also members of the various subcommittees so they meet frequently. Governors are reviewing the schedule of full-board meetings and revising the subcommittees to achieve a more effective structure with a finance and general purposes committee, a personnel committee and an audit committee.

22 Under the stewardship of the governing body, the college has made many changes since incorporation. The establishment of formal arrangements for the delegation of responsibilities to the principal with clearly-set-out lines of accountability will help to separate the job of governance from that of management. The governors have not set any performance indicators for the college and they are therefore not able formally to monitor its achievement. They have yet to develop a system to measure their own performance.

23 The college has adapted its management structures to meet new circumstances. A new senior management team was established in September 1994 after the retirement of former members. The senior management team now has four members: the principal, the finance manager who is a chartered accountant, the further education co-ordinator and the higher education co-ordinator. The last two posts have been created recently. The senior management team meets fortnightly. The two co-ordinators meet the programme directors for whom they are responsible monthly. Most, but not all, programme directors meet their academic and support staff monthly. The meetings of the senior management team are minuted and responsibility for taking action is identified. Minuting is sometimes less meticulous at the course level. Most staff feel well informed and able to influence events where necessary.

24 The new management arrangements give senior managers a wide range of responsibilities. Despite this, some functions, such as the co-ordination of staff development and marketing, are not adequately

covered. Possible solutions to management issues are currently being evaluated.

25 The college's first strategic plan and its draft charter have more weaknesses than strengths. The strategic plan was drawn up by the former senior management team without consultation with staff. It is a slight document which has failed to provide adequate guidance for the college. It contains little analysis based on concrete data, few firm targets, and virtually no reference to students or the college's potential customers. It does not include a human-resources strategy or related objectives. Its review section lacks any analysis of the college's shortcomings. No annual operating plans have been prepared at the programme level. A strategic planning group comprising the principal, a member of the corporation, senior managers and staff representatives is now working on a new plan. A revised mission statement and general objectives have recently been presented to the corporation. It is now accepted in the college that a detailed strategic plan and operating plans are essential to co-ordinate the efforts of the corporation board, managers and staff.

26 The academic board is a formally constituted subcommittee of the corporation board. The statutory instrument (1992-93) which defined the duties of academic boards specified that they 'shall be responsible for advising the principal'. With its current constitution, the academic board is not fulfilling this responsibility. It is not felt to be working satisfactorily, either by members of the corporation board or by college staff. It often addresses issues which are not primarily academic and its meetings are said by some staff to be too infrequent. There is a widely-perceived need in the college for an effective forum for establishing academic policies.

27 Management information is generally accurate and freely available. In 1993, the college replaced its management information systems with software capable of integrating financial and student data. The college has purchased a system from a local supplier which is capable of providing individual student data with a view to extending it to provide financial data. Until it can do so reliably, the college is content to use separate systems. Good-quality student information for review purposes is readily available to programme managers on, for example, applications, enrolments and attendance. Full-time students complete a form denoting their marital status, sex, race, ethnic origin, and disabilities and these records are kept in a clear and simple format on the management information system.

28 Delegated budgets cover materials, travel and part-time staff. Unlimited movement of money between these headings is allowed at present, but restrictions will be imposed in future. Monthly statements of expenditure are provided for programme managers and for governors. Programme managers understand the allocation process and the relationship between the college's income and their course budgets. Staffing allocations are related to student numbers and full-time posts are agreed by the senior management team.

29 The college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college's average level of funding per unit of activity is £24.58 in 1994-95. The median for specialist institutions of art and design is also £24.58 per unit. The college aims to retain a considerable surplus each year for reinvestment in major projects.

30 Full-time applications for 1994-95 were 10 per cent lower than in 1992-93 despite increased marketing efforts. There has been only relatively modest growth since incorporation. The college fell just short of its recruitment target in 1993-94 and, this year, has succeeded in reaching its target. The ratio of students to staff has risen steadily from 10.6:1 in 1990-91 to 14.3:1 in 1993-94 and an estimated 17:1 this year. There are indications that the college is improving its efficiency.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

31 The strategic plan makes no mention of services to students other than to describe an intention to raise awareness amongst staff. There is no policy for, neither are there plans to analyse, existing or future student support needs.

32 Despite the lack of formal statements and plans, many students at the college are provided with care and support and some of the procedures in place are working effectively. The senior management team oversees the student support services, but day-to-day management is shared between admissions, the registry, finance, the student counsellor and teaching staff, without any one person taking responsibility. Although the staff involved work well together, fragmentation of the service is inevitable in its current form.

33 A wide range of supportive procedures provide impartial information and guidance for potential applicants. They are valued by students and parents who described staff as approachable, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic.

34 The college has an enquiries, applications and interview policy with guidelines for its implementation. Enquiries are efficiently handled, recorded and tracked by the admissions staff. Applications are carefully recorded and monitored using a new computer software package and monthly updates are printed to show acceptances, withdrawals and targets. Prior to formal application, an advisory interview is offered to anyone interested in art and design. All full-time applicants and applicants for substantial part-time courses are interviewed, usually within three weeks of application. Students confirmed that interviews were well managed and parents, students and representatives from schools described them as thorough, fair, and helpful. Staff provide impartial advice to potential students and give positive suggestions for improvement if a student's portfolio is not yet up to the standard required for acceptance on to a course.

35 Although some courses try to identify weaknesses in core skills by a written test there is no initial assessment or diagnostic testing to determine the literacy or numeracy skills of students on entry. Clearly identifiable difficulties such as dyslexia are dealt with through external agencies but more general difficulties with reading, writing and numeracy are receiving only informal, unco-ordinated support from tutors and teaching staff.

36 The college has a policy for giving students credit towards their qualification for any relevant learning and experience gained before entering the college. Such accreditation of prior learning has yet to be applied across the college and at present it is only found in the assessment of folios of students' work for exceptional entry under BTEC guidelines.

37 All full-time students and part-time students on long-term courses are inducted according to a common programme. Students were generally satisfied with the amount of information they were given about the college and about individual courses. Most students enjoyed and valued the induction activity, a boat trip which generated an exhibition entitled '350 views of Plymouth'. Induction to the library depends upon academic tutors making the necessary arrangements and is not co-ordinated or led by the library staff. The common induction is followed by a course-based induction. The quality of the students' experience on the course-based induction varied from course to course.

38 All full-time students and those on substantial part-time courses are allocated a personal tutor who is usually the year manager of their course and/or teaches on the course. Guidelines on personal tutoring specify a minimum of one tutorial per term. However, they do not clarify the role of the personal tutor in relation to the college's counsellor and consequently the depth of tutoring and level of counselling undertaken by personal tutors varies. Staff have received no training in tutorial practice and tutoring is not monitored. Logging of tutorial meetings varies from course to course, although the requisite termly tutorial meeting is part of the process of recording students' achievements. Students' comments indicated that although the majority were happy with the tutorial support provided, their tutorial experiences varied in quality.

39 The college has a counsellor who is available for 24 hours a week and offers some learning support. Students are informed about the counselling facility at induction. Interviews can be booked either directly with the counsellor or at reception. This practice sometimes results in double bookings. No monitoring of the counselling facility has been undertaken to analyse the effectiveness of the service or the level of demand.

40 Teaching staff provide students with detailed information about higher education and employment prospects based on their specialist knowledge of the art and design sector and the college has a careers guidance database on computer. However, there are no formal links with the Devon Careers Service to provide general careers guidance.

41 Student attendance and withdrawals are carefully monitored through a signing-in system administered by the registry unit. Most academic staff also keep their own attendance records. During the period 1991-94 the percentage of early leavers across the college has been fairly low at between 6.5 per cent and 8.75 per cent.

42 There is no learning agreement between the college and individual students. There are statements in a rule book, but the updated version of this was not ready for enrolment week. Students and parents were generally unaware of the existence of the college's draft charter.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

43 Overall the strengths of the teaching and learning outweighed the weaknesses. Of the 46 classes visited, 74 per cent had more strengths than weaknesses and 24 per cent had strengths balanced by weaknesses. In only one class did the weaknesses outweigh the strengths. The following table summarises the grades awarded for the sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Access to further education		0	1	0	0	0	1
GNVQ		0	4	0	0	0	4
Other vocational*		6	23	11	0	1	41
Total		6	28	11	0	1	46

**other vocational includes BTEC national diplomas and the BTEC foundation art and design diploma.*

44 Teaching programmes are well planned. The needs of industry are taken into account in the more vocationally-specialised courses and there are some well-planned work placements, for example, in printing and graphic design. In some programmes, however, a lack of visual studies to underpin specialised vocational work has reduced the opportunities for more innovative and exciting approaches. Most classes are effectively planned with clear objectives, although in printing and graphics, aims and objectives are not sufficiently clear or shared with students.

45 Assignments are set regularly and to an appropriate standard. A variety of assessment strategies is being used to encourage the development of critical awareness in general and foundation studies. However, some students do not fully understand the assessment criteria identified in the students' course handbook. Assessment criteria also need to be made clearer to GNVQ students. Assignment briefs in fashion, printing and graphics are effective and clear. Assignment briefs in design crafts are less well presented and students do not consistently keep to deadlines.

46 In foundation and general courses, practical sessions are supported by regular theory sessions which effectively place the production of

artefacts within a broader social and economic context. In printing and graphics, theoretical studies are taught separately and are less successfully related to the specialisms. In media studies there is an innovative mix of theory and practice. Across the college, art history is well taught with well-prepared lectures which are effectively resourced by a large collection of slides and videos.

47 Standards of drawing vary. In foundation and general courses drawing is well related to each student's specialist discipline, but in fashion and design crafts there is a lack of attention to the formal elements of visual study, especially colour. The quality of visual studies and drawing used to underpin graphic design is a particular strength. There is a tendency on foundation and general courses for sketchbooks to be used as scrapbooks rather than as visual diaries. Photography students would benefit from keeping log books or course diaries of their work to generate material which can be used in discussion.

48 A variety of teaching methods are used across the range of art and design activities on foundation and general courses. After the first broad-based stage of the courses, individual programmes of study are developed. In photography, students with different levels of ability are helped by regular subject tutorials and by being able to work at their own pace. In art and design, most of the teaching time is given over to practical work; for example, in printing and graphics approximately 75 per cent of the time is spent on practical teaching. Much of this practical teaching is effective but in some areas teachers place too much reliance on touring studios and acting merely as critics of individual students' work rather than actively teaching practical skills. Teaching time has been reduced by one-third in recent years, to an average of 21 hours a week and teaching group sizes have increased to 16 students. Some staff have yet to develop appropriate teaching methods for dealing with these changes.

49 The proportion of adult students is increasing in areas such as printing and design crafts. In the latter, adults now make up approximately 73 per cent of the numbers. Many of the adult students are preparing for self-employment and the curriculum needs reviewing to ensure that it meets their needs. The classes in these areas benefit from the experience of the adult members, some of whom hold degrees in other subjects. Adult students are successfully integrated with younger students.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

50 Students were well motivated and frequently enthusiastic about their studies. Relationships between staff and students are good and students were appreciative of the help they receive. The college has a high degree of support from its students. For example, of the 45 photography students interviewed about their higher education aspirations all but one wished to continue their studies at the college.

51 Competent student work at an appropriate standard was observed across the college. Written assignments, for example in foundation and

general coursework, included some original research. Although practical work in photography was consistent, sound and at a good standard, it lacked, along with other areas of the curriculum, special distinction. However, the electronic imaging option on the photography course was an example of specialised student work which displayed particular strengths. This option benefits from good contacts with industry which are being appropriately exploited by media studies staff. Good examples of students' work were seen in both fashion and design crafts. The college has encouraged the sale of students' work, particularly in design crafts. However, systematic records are not kept of the work sold and, as a result, the course lacks an archive of past work which would enable staff to monitor developing standards.

52 Although a relatively low proportion of all students leave before completing their studies, retention rates in a few areas are a matter for concern. For example, 29 per cent of students on design craft courses and 40 per cent of those on the creative lettering course left before completing their studies during 1994-95. Students who left their courses early did so for a variety of reasons, including financial, personal and course-related problems. Reasons for early leaving are recorded in detail as part of course review procedures. Attendance and punctuality in a few curriculum areas also give cause for concern.

53 For those students completing their courses, pass rates are generally high. Students aged between 16 and 18 taking vocational art and design qualifications in the college in summer 1994 achieved a 95 per cent pass rate. This places the college in the top third of further education colleges according to data published by the Department for Education.

54 This success is reflected in the progression rates to related higher education or employment. Approximately half of the fashion and design crafts students who completed courses in 1994 progressed to higher education with most of the rest going into employment or self-employment. Foundation and general art and design students fared well, with 80 per cent of the former and 75 per cent of the latter going on to higher education in 1994. In photography, 58 per cent of students went on to higher education or related employment. However, this percentage may not be accurate since 20 per cent of post-course destinations were recorded as unknown.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

55 There is a quality policy for the college which staff generally support as it is seen as pulling together established practice. However, the implementation of the full policy is at an early stage. The policy and procedures have yet to generate a culture amongst staff and governors of quality improvement.

56 Quality assurance is based on well-established course review procedures which have recently been improved by the introduction of

standardised paperwork. The course review process is supported by useful guidelines which define the membership of course committees. Review meetings take place at least once a term. Students' views on the quality of provision are sought through questionnaires and through their membership of the course committees. The meetings often deal effectively with quality issues raised by students. Some courses have such a small number of full-time staff that discussion is limited. The degree to which course committees discuss teaching and learning issues varies; some have been preoccupied with resource issues, others are more broadly concerned with quality improvement. A teaching and learning working party of the academic board has recently been established.

57 Course teams are required to produce a course review report to an agreed standard and format. Reviews summarise students' comments, incorporate action plans and identify accountability and timescales. They carry specific information about early leavers and the pass rates and destinations for full-time students. Action required, for example, better liaison with specialist higher education institutions and accommodation changes in the Sutton annexe, may be attended to directly by teachers or by senior managers. However, the quality reporting procedure does not result in significant issues being discussed by any appropriate cross-college forum. The reports go to an internal review group chaired by the further education co-ordinator, who produces a report for the academic board which is received but not debated. This report does not include detailed information on performance indicators.

58 There is no strategy at present for setting and monitoring the achievement of targets and standards. There are no formally agreed academic targets. A few service standards are beginning to emerge from the college's charter, for example, in relation to the time it takes to respond to enquiries. Service staff are currently setting up a group to establish service standards.

59 The qualifications needed by teaching staff for the internal assessment of NVQ and GNVQ programmes are being obtained by appropriate numbers of teaching staff, and internal verification is in place. Cross-college verification systems for the moderation of standards are not yet evident.

60 All support staff and nearly all teaching staff have been appraised. As part of this process, individual training needs were analysed and plans written to a standard format. Since the departure of the personnel manager, there has been no analysis of the training plans, although a list of training needs has been made and a record of training activities is being maintained. Institutional priorities linked to strategic planning have not been established and there is no training plan or staff-development policy. The identification of a staff-development manager and the formation of a staff-development and research committee are currently under consideration. The current training budget for all college staff is equivalent

to 1.1 per cent of the total staffing budget. Information technology training was the most frequently identified staff training need to emerge from appraisal.

61 Induction for teaching staff has recently been improved. There is no system of mentoring or observation of teaching. Services and support staff do not have a formal induction process.

62 The college is committed to achieving the Investors in People award. No target date has yet been established.

63 The college charter is still in draft form. It is limited in scope, presentation and content and procedures to monitor its effectiveness have not been established. The college plans to review and revise its charter for next academic year and to clarify management responsibility for its implementation.

64 The college's self-assessment report was cross-referenced with the documentation provided for the team inspection week. The statements in the report were clear but limited in their range. Throughout the report there was little attempt to identify weaknesses in the provision on which the college is taking action. Because of this, although inspectors were able to confirm many of the positive conclusions reached in the report, it was of limited use in the inspection process.

RESOURCES

Staffing

65 Job descriptions for academic staff and managers were brought up to date as part of the negotiations for new contracts of employment. The terms of employment of support staff are under review. Responsibility for personnel matters is shared at present between the principal and the senior management team. Because of the lack of professional personnel experience or qualifications in the senior management team, the college has a contract with Devon County Council to provide personnel expertise. The college is maintaining effective personnel records and has a comprehensive manual of personnel policies and procedures, including a health and safety policy. The manual is issued to all staff, but the implementation of the policy is not monitored.

66 Approximately half of all teachers are practising artists and designers who exhibit their work or undertake freelance design work. There are no formal arrangements for staff work placements in industry or design studios. Effective informal links exist between teachers and industry, particularly in photography, fashion, graphics, media and printing. Teachers' industrial experience, particularly in the application of new technology, needs updating.

67 Teachers are well deployed and provide a broad range of specialist skills. However, 44 per cent of full-time teaching staff do not have a degree

or degree equivalent qualification and 47 per cent do not have a teaching qualification; 16 per cent have neither. Allowing for the presence of craft-based studies in art and design, in which there is a tradition of alternatives to degree level study for professional qualifications and experience, the proportion of teaching staff without a degree or teaching qualification is unusually high. Twenty-four per cent of the teaching staff are part time. Although there are still considerable variations between courses, the ratio between full-time and part-time teachers has recently been adjusted by some permanent appointments.

68 The level and quality of administrative and technical support in the college is good. There is a dedicated central team of staff providing effective administrative, clerical, financial and secretarial expertise and management information services. The library and learning support centre has two full-time and three part-time staff. This level of staffing is insufficient to cope with an ever increasing workload and the changes in the way in which learning is managed. The development of information technology is directed through an academic information technology manager who is responsible for applications across the curriculum. This has resulted in all students having a minimum training period of 18 hours a year in addition to specialist information technology work in art and design assignments. There is a technical systems manager who is responsible for network management and two information technology technicians who maintain and repair equipment. A good level of service is provided.

69 Technicians have generic job descriptions and their roles are wide ranging. Duties include dealing with course enquiries and other administrative work unrelated to their professional skills. Technicians are line managed by programme managers and although this focuses their work effectively, they tend to operate in isolation from each other, reducing opportunities for professional development and co-ordination. The college has appointed consultants to review technician support.

Equipment/learning resources

70 The college has a good range of specialist equipment for the majority of courses housed in the Tavistock and Sutton buildings. Workshops throughout the college are well equipped. For example, the design crafts, photography and media workshops have equipment of an industrial standard and the printing areas have a small-scale but good simulated industrial environment. Printing staff have been enterprising in obtaining discounted or free equipment from manufacturers and distributors. Although each foundation and GNVQ student has a workplace and some storage facilities, access to metalwork equipment is inadequate. The fashion course has adequate equipment which is well maintained and cared for. However, the removal of the knitting equipment has reduced the breadth of the learning experience for students. The proposal to rectify

this through practical demonstrations is not sufficient. The screen cleaning facilities at Wolsdon Street are also inadequate. There is no equipment replacement programme.

71 There are approximately 20,000 books in the library. About 500 new volumes were purchased last year. There is an unusually large range of 117 periodicals, a collection of visual reference materials such as posters, postcards, cuttings and illustrations and compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database facilities which include art and design as well as general reference materials. It is college policy to include CD-ROM capacity in all computer purchases. There is a wide-ranging collection of videos and 26,000 slides maintained and developed by the art historian. The expansion of the library and the move towards a central learning-resource centre is viewed by staff and students as a positive and important development. The use of this facility is monitored and the area is formulating a set of service standards. Library expenditure is £18.00 per full-time equivalent student which is above the average figure given by the Libraries Association. The library is open until 19.30 two evenings a week during term time. There are no separate library facilities at the Wolsdon Street, Beech Avenue and Coxside sites. Some library materials are kept on permanent loan to these sites. Course teams have also built up small collections of materials.

72 There are 136 information technology workstations supported by 20 laser printers, three plotters and eight scanners. This gives an overall student to workstation ratio of 7.9:1, although this includes some low specification computers. There are two rooms which students can use on demand but, since these rooms are also used for timetabled sessions, ready access to computing facilities for individual work is inadequate.

Accommodation

73 About 75 per cent of the accommodation is of a quality which ranges from satisfactory to good. The college occupies five separate sites. Just over half of its accommodation is in the main city centre Tavistock Place building. A further quarter is a three-minute walk away in the Sutton Annexe, a four-storey former school. The remainder is on the three much smaller sites: Coxside, Beech Avenue and Wolsdon Street. Having some courses on outlying sites reduces flexibility, isolates staff and students from the rest of the college and hinders their use of central facilities. There is evidence that the quality of accommodation and facilities at the three outlying sites has adversely affected retention on some courses. Contrasts in the quality of accommodation between the two main and the three outlying sites are stark.

74 The college has thoroughly analysed its accommodation and considered strategies for rationalisation. Its mission statement espouses the aim of a 'village campus' in the immediate vicinity of Tavistock Place. Arrangements are well advanced for the disposal of the Coxside site and the purchase of an alternative property directly opposite the Sutton

Annexe. Refurbishment both there and at the college's single-storey 1940s' warehouse structure in Beech Avenue are planned for September 1995. The college has expressed a desire to replace the Wolsdon Street annexe, a late nineteenth century primary school which is in a dilapidated condition, but no plans have yet been formulated. This building is a poor facility which should be vacated at the earliest opportunity. The utilisation of space across the college is uneven and its monitoring is inadequate. While some areas are generously housed, there is overcrowding in others. Increased student numbers, introduction of new courses and additions to technical resources have reduced the communal facilities for both students and staff. There are considerable variations in standards of maintenance and cleanliness.

75 Tavistock Place houses the administrative centre, the main lecture theatre, the library and the learning-resources centre. The library and learning-resources centre have been expanded recently and are of a good standard. There are also an open-access computer room, well-appointed rooms for information technology equipment, a pleasant canteen and a publicly-accessible exhibition space. Studios for printing, media studies and photography are large and well lit. On the lowest floor there is a comprehensive range of spaces for ceramics with a new hot-glass workshop.

76 On its ground and upper floors the Sutton annexe has good-quality large, light, high-ceiling studios. The basement is fitted out as dedicated workshops for jewellery and fine and heavy metalwork. There is insufficient natural light in the jewellery areas. There are additional heavy metalworking facilities in poor accommodation to the rear of the main building.

77 Technical facilities are in the main clustered to form coherent, logical groupings, although there are exceptions such as printing. At Wolsdon Street the juxtaposition of the BTEC national diplomas in creative lettering and in fashion is inappropriate and detrimental to both courses. Dust and fume extraction systems are inadequate in painting and decorating areas at Coxside and in the Wolsdon Street annexe. The college accepts the health and safety implications of these shortcomings and is seeking to rectify them.

78 The college owns very little outdoor space and car parking is severely restricted at all sites. There are pleasant terraces at Tavistock Place and there is an area for raku firings outside the ceramics workshops. The small former playgrounds at Wolsdon Street and Sutton Annexes, though bleak and lacking any planting or landscape treatment, afford some scope for practical activities. The college has no sports or general recreational facilities.

79 Less than half the college's facilities are accessible to people who do not have full physical mobility. There is little evidence of commitment to ameliorate the problem.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

80 The college is making progress towards achieving its objectives. Its strengths include:

- a wide range of full-time courses
- effective liaison with schools and with the University of Plymouth
- committed governors with valuable professional skills
- generally effective management information systems
- effective enquiries, admissions and interviewing procedures
- a supportive environment for students, who are well motivated, enjoy their studies and are supportive of the college
- high success rates for those students who complete their studies and, in some areas, high rates of progression to higher education and into employment
- a well-established course review procedure including detailed statistics on student performance
- effective deployment of teaching staff
- some high-quality specialist equipment and accommodation.

81 In order to improve further the quality of its provision the college should:

- open up its full-time courses to part-time students
- make more provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- improve the strategic plan and produce operational plans
- ensure that marketing and staff development are properly managed
- establish an equal opportunities committee and produce an action plan to implement the equal opportunities policy
- improve the arrangements for student support
- establish systematic learning support including initial assessment of core skills
- improve retention rates in some areas
- implement fully the quality assurance policy including quality targets
- continue to upgrade the poor accommodation in the annexes
- improve access for students with limited physical mobility.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1994)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1994)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1994)

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

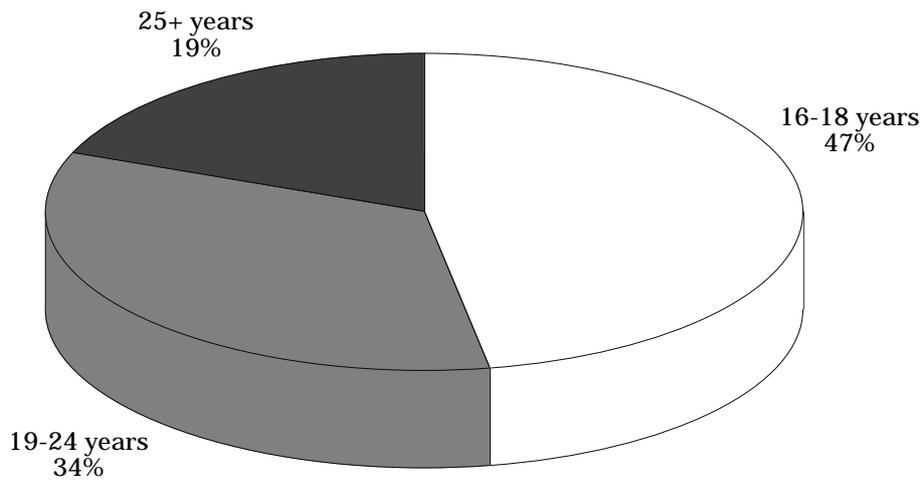
 - 5 Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995)

 - 6 Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

Figure 1

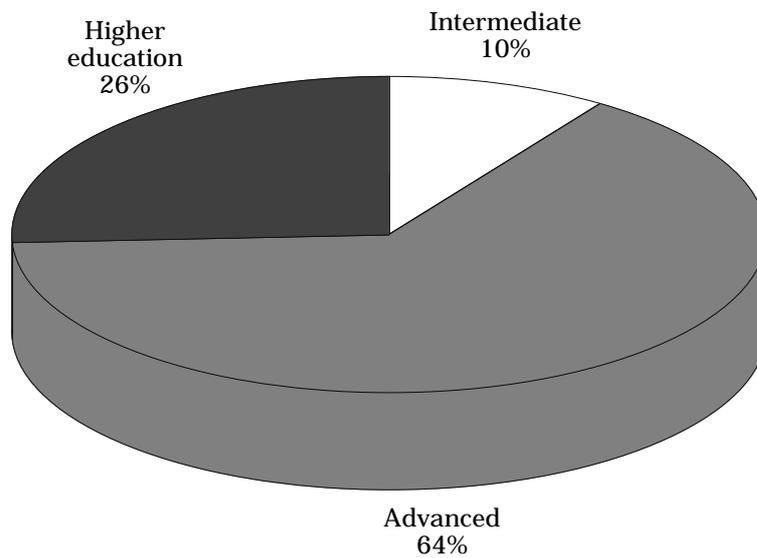
Plymouth College of Art and Design: percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1994)



Enrolments: 1,413

Figure 2

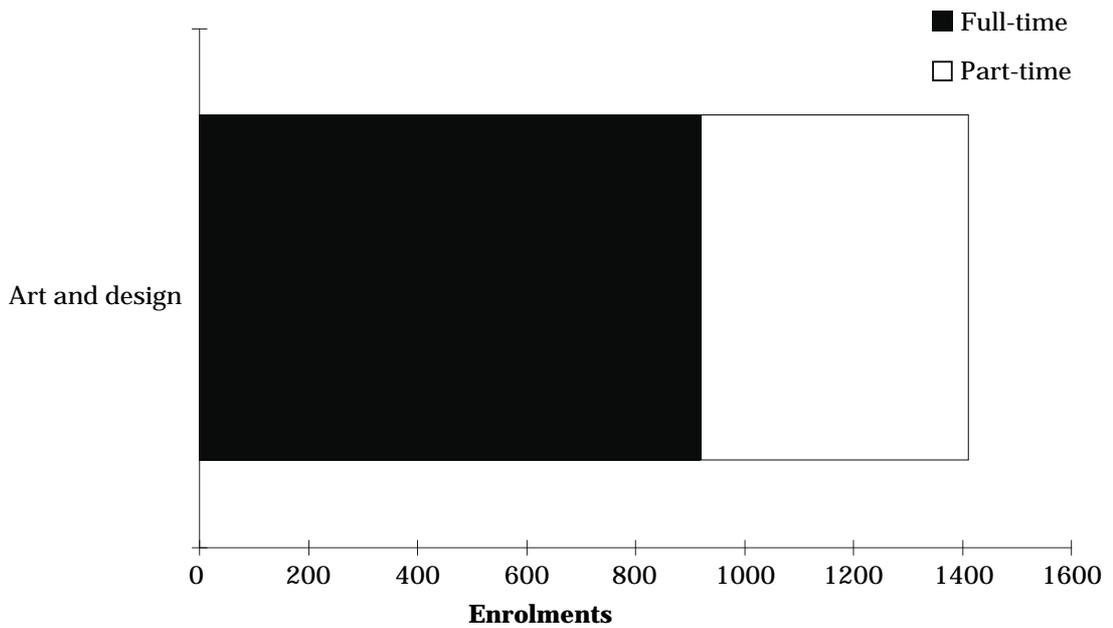
Plymouth College of Art and Design: percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1994)



Enrolments: 1,413

Figure 3

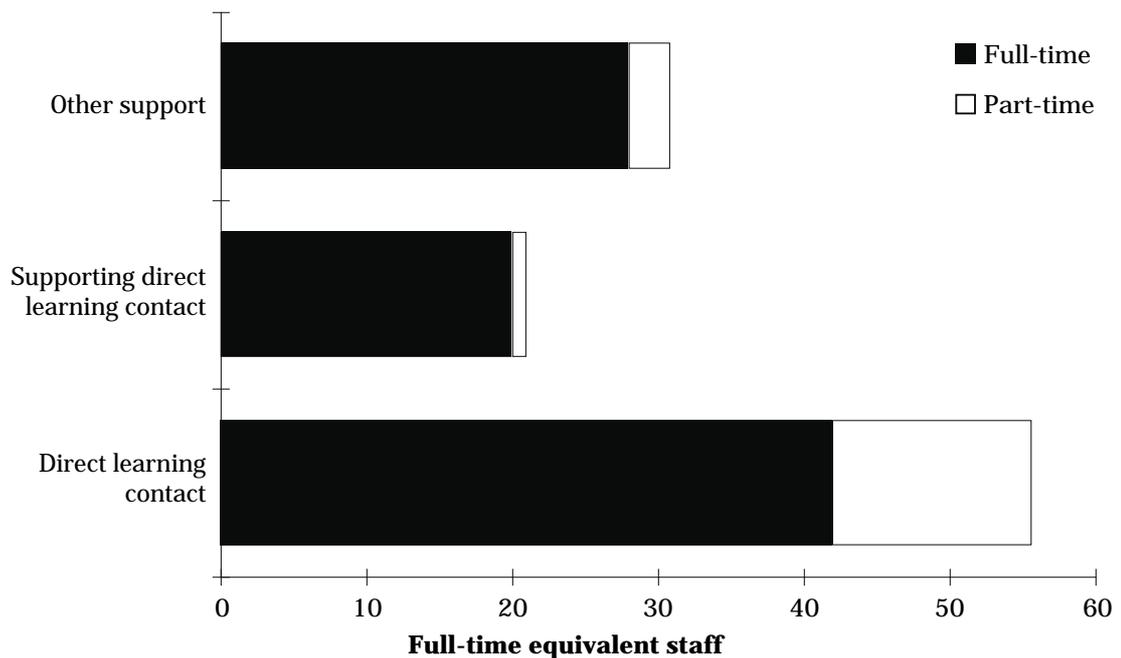
Plymouth College of Art and Design: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1994)



Enrolments: 1,413

Figure 4

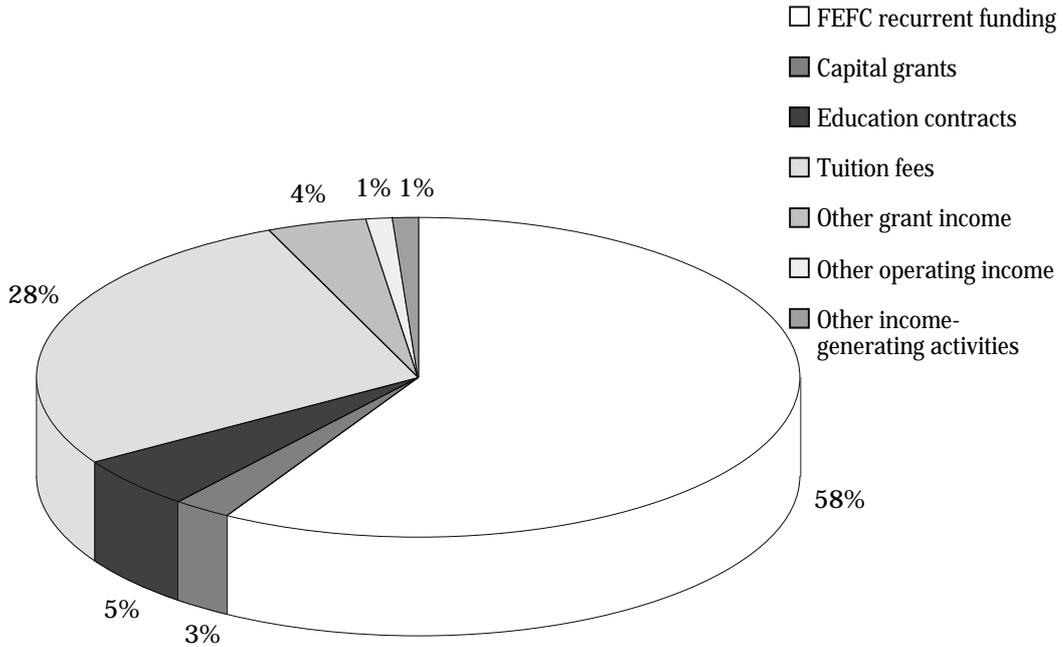
Plymouth College of Art and Design: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)



Full-time equivalent staff: 108

Figure 5

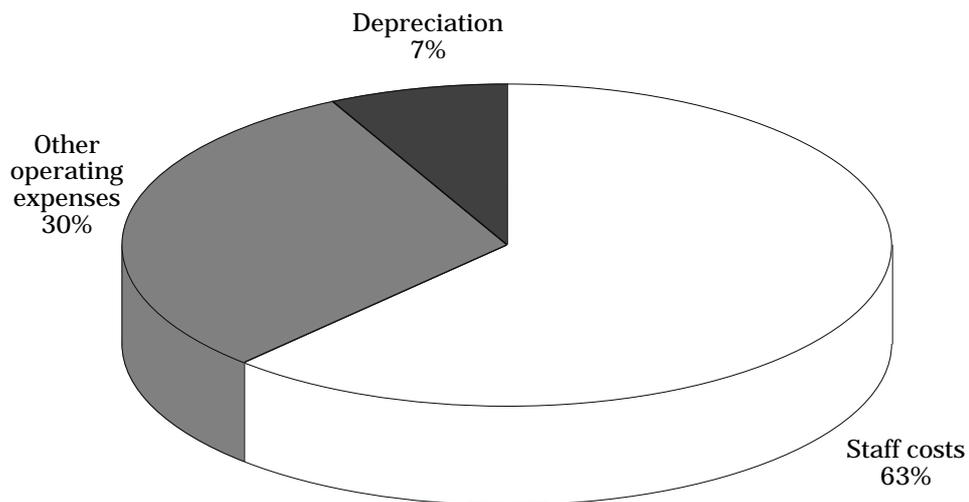
Plymouth College of Art and Design: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Estimated income: £4,629,000

Figure 6

Plymouth College of Art and Design: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Estimated expenditure: £4,725,000

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