

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Southampton City College

September 1996

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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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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CONTENTS

	Paragraph
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	2
Responsiveness and range of provision	6
Governance and management	15
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	22
Teaching and the promotion of learning	28
Students' achievements	38
Quality assurance	47
Resources	53
Conclusions and issues	66
Figures	

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

College grade profiles 1993-95

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 118/96

SOUTHAMPTON CITY COLLEGE

SOUTH EAST REGION

Inspected September 1995-May 1996

Summary

Southampton City College is a general further education college which offers a wide range of courses. It is responsive to the needs of the local community, and especially to those groups under represented in further education. It has some excellent links with employers and schools. The college enjoys a good reputation for caring about its students as individuals. There is some good teaching, particularly in the food and creative services and technology departments. Relationships between staff and students are positive and friendly. Staff development is well managed. The college has achieved the Investor in People Award. Since incorporation, the college has suffered from a lack of sound strategic management and direction. The college needs consistent leadership by a settled governing body in order to address its difficulties successfully. There have, however, been recent improvements in planning, management and staff morale. The college's self-assessment report is comprehensive, accurate and self-critical and it contains an outline plan for tackling shortcomings. The college should improve: its library stock; students' access to information technology equipment; students' attendance and retention rates on many courses; and much of its accommodation. It should also ensure that its management information system is capable of producing data on students which are adequate for internal and external use.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision		Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision		2
Governance and management		4
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		2
Quality assurance		3
Resources:	staffing	2
	equipment/learning resources	3
	accommodation	4

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Construction	2	Health and care	2
Engineering	2	Hair and beauty	2
Business studies	3	Art and design	3
Hospitality and catering, and leisure and tourism	2	Adult basic education and SLDD	3

INTRODUCTION

1 The inspection of Southampton City College took place in three stages. Enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the beginning of the autumn term in 1995. Between March and May 1996, 14 inspectors spent 42 days assessing the quality of teaching and learning in the college's main curriculum areas. They visited 194 classes and examined students' work. In April and May 1996, six inspectors spent 18 days assessing aspects of cross-college provision. Meetings were held with members of the corporation, the senior management team, directors and managers of academic and service departments, teachers, staff with cross-college responsibilities, support and administrative staff, and students. Inspectors consulted employers, a representative of Hampshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), members of community groups, head teachers and parents of students at the college. They also attended college meetings and examined policy statements, minutes of committees and working papers.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Southampton City College is a general further education college. Originally, as Southampton Technical College, it provided mainly education and training for the engineering and construction industries, but it now has a broad curriculum which reflects the growth of service industries. In 1991, the college assumed responsibility for co-ordinating adult and basic education for a large part of the city. It operates from five sites close to the city centre.

3 The city of Southampton has a population of 210,000, of whom 5 per cent are from minority ethnic communities. Most students come from the city itself, from areas as far west as the New Forest, from the districts to the north of the city as far as Eastleigh, and from the east as far as Fareham. Some specialist courses recruit from a wider area. The proportion of 16 year olds who stay on in full-time education is 66 per cent in Southampton and 72 per cent for the rest of Hampshire. Southampton is a large industrial and commercial city and it is an important centre for financial services. Its major enterprises are in shipping, oil refining and vehicle manufacture, and these are complemented by a broad range of light industry, retailing, leisure and media companies. Unemployment has fallen from a high point of 14.7 per cent at the beginning of 1993, to 7 per cent in June 1995. The city has a university and two other higher education establishments.

4 The college competes with other providers of post-16 education. There are six other further education sector colleges within easy travelling distance, of which five are sixth form colleges. All offer both General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) and General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) programmes. Apart from one Catholic grant-maintained school, no other state school in Southampton has a sixth form. In 1994-95, there were 17,520 enrolments at the college, of whom

1,872 students attended full time. 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 majority of students are 19 years or over, and 10 per cent are from minority ethnic communities. The college employs nearly 490 full-time equivalent staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4. The college is organised into five academic departments: business and information technology, arts and sciences, technology, food and creative services, and adult education.

5 The college states that its mission is to be the premier provider of further education for Southampton; to be a leading college in the region with a strong European dimension in its curriculum; and to demonstrate its commitment to quality in vocational and adult education. It intends to achieve these aims by encouraging greater participation among adults and under-represented groups; by increasing teaching in the community and the workplace; by creating more opportunities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; by continuously monitoring and improving the quality of its services; and by providing high levels of support for students.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

6 The college offers a wide range of courses for school leavers, for those traditionally under represented in education and for the older learner. Vocational programmes form nearly 70 per cent of the college's provision and include courses leading to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1 to 4 in hairdressing, beauty therapy, business, catering, childcare, information technology and management. The business and information technology department has been particularly successful in securing contracts from major employers to teach NVQs in customer care and business administration to their employees in the workplace. There are four GNVQ courses at intermediate level, and seven at advanced level for full-time students. In addition, students can gain single units of advanced level GNVQ qualifications, an option taken mainly by full-time students on GCE A level or General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) programmes. GCE A level, GCE advanced supplementary (AS) and GCSE courses make up about 11 per cent of the college's work. The college offers 27 GCE A level, 11 GCE AS and 22 GCSE subjects. There are few separate courses specially for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but there are plans to offer more. A particular feature of the college is its maritime and marine technology courses. These are very popular with students and they range from courses for people already employed in boat building, to those of a purely recreational nature.

7 The college has a small but growing programme of access to higher education courses. There are separate access courses in art and design and science, and an interdisciplinary modular programme. Over half of the college's access students are successful in securing places in higher education. The college has franchise agreements with Southampton

University and Southampton Institute of Higher Education to run the first years of degree programmes in art and design and in engineering, and a higher national certificate in engineering. The college has a contract with Solihull College to run a higher national diploma in leisure and tourism.

8 The college works closely with community groups to encourage greater participation among those often under represented in the further education sector. It provides an extensive community programme for the whole city, ranging from family literacy courses for parents and their young children, to courses for older people in residential care. A significant number of people progress from these courses to higher level courses. In this European year of lifelong learning, it was appropriate that many mature students, of whom the oldest was 90, were among those receiving awards at the annual college ceremony. The college strives to organise courses as flexibly as possible, to suit students' particular circumstances. For example, classes in English for speakers of other languages are run on Sunday afternoons for Chinese people, many of whom are unable to attend during the week. Hairdressing and beauty therapy courses are available on Saturdays, and other courses are arranged so that students study partly in college and partly at work. There are few opportunities for distance learning to meet the needs of students who cannot attend college and who have to study at home or at their place of work.

9 The college has strong links with local schools. Five college tutors are responsible for working with clusters of schools, which receive regular information about college activities and open days. 'Taster days' are arranged for school leavers in the summer term. Of particular note is the school partnership programme. This involves college staff in school activities and they also give practical lessons in a range of vocational subjects at the school. Schools find the college welcoming and helpful and they value their relationships with it. The college has been particularly successful in helping young people who are disenchanted with their experience at school to settle down well on college courses.

10 Staff have built up extensive contacts with employers. These mainly relate to NVQ programmes and work placement. Employers would welcome more details about what the college expects of them in their supervision of students on work placements. A number of departments have employers' consultative groups, some of which are more useful than others. Students work on projects set by companies and by charities. For example, art and design students have produced promotional and display material for the Southampton and New Forest deaf children's society. Students from care and art and design courses have worked with the police to refurbish a children's play area. Companies sponsor awards and equipment for the college. A major food supplier helps students with the cost of their first chef's uniform. The fine dining club for senior managers of companies is an example of a productive initiative run by the college. The club meets monthly in the college's training restaurant and provides students on catering courses with an excellent opportunity to provide a

gourmet meal for employers. The meetings give employers the chance to talk about business informally. The club is popular and there is a waiting list for membership.

11 Staff are aware of government aims for further education and of the national targets for education and training. The college's relationship with the Hampshire TEC is generally good. The TEC has recently approved funding for an NVQ care skills programme to be run by the college in small companies which want to improve their service. The college had a contract with Hampshire TEC to manage 'New Horizons' training. This was not renewed in April 1996.

12 A marketing policy with clear aims has just been approved. The recently-appointed press and publicity officer is responsible for developing promotional plans. The college advertises in the press, on the local radio, at the cinema, at careers conventions, college open evenings and in libraries. Market research has been attempted spasmodically but has yet to become a reliable source of information influencing the planning of course provision.

13 The college has a European policy which it hopes will permeate the whole curriculum. Departments such as technology have embraced this policy enthusiastically, but others have been less active. Student exchange visits take place with colleges in France, Germany and Spain. Plans are well advanced for students following the GCE A level in European law to visit a college in Denmark to make a comparative study of the English and Danish court systems.

14 The college has a commitment to equal opportunities. There is a policy, an action plan with clear targets, and designated staff responsible for meeting them. The equal opportunities group meets termly to monitor practice across the college. A students' advisory group is to be established to assess how the college's activities might better reflect the many cultures of the city.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

15 At the time of the inspection, the principal was absent from the college and has subsequently retired prematurely. A voluntary redundancy programme for staff was under way. The college had predicted under recruitment of students against its target; it had announced it was in negotiation with Eastleigh College over the possibility of merger, or closer collaboration, with that institution. The director of resources was the acting principal during the inspection and was working jointly in this capacity with the director of student services and personnel. A number of initiatives were resulting in better planning and management, and higher staff morale. The college has benefited fully from the wide consultation between management and staff which was part of the process of its objective and accurate self-assessment. New curriculum initiatives have been planned, enrolment targets for 1996-97 have been revised, and

decisive action has been taken to increase the involvement of the governors in the management of the college.

16 The corporation board of governors has 16 members. Of these, eight are independent members from business and the professions; one is co-opted from higher education and one is from the local authority; there are representatives from the community and the local TEC, an elected student, two elected members of college staff, and the principal. Three members are women, but there are no representatives of the large local minority ethnic communities. The clerk to the corporation has drawn up a checklist of which skills the governors should possess collectively and this is to be used when filling vacancies on the board. Gender and ethnic imbalances will be addressed as opportunities arise. The corporation has five committees: audit; employment policy; estates; finance and resources; and remuneration. After consideration, the governors have rejected making a register of their interests in favour of requiring a signed statement from each member declaring his or her willingness to reveal any conflicts of interest as these may arise. The board may wish to reconsider this decision, in the light of the latest recommendations of the Nolan committee. There have been a number of training events for members since incorporation, on matters such as financial control and inspection procedures. Attendance at corporation meetings is low at 65 per cent. Some members attend irregularly and one member of the board had been absent for eight of the last nine meetings. There are four vacancies on the board at present and turnover of governors has been high since incorporation. The college has lacked consistent leadership by a settled governing body.

17 Members have given due attention to matters of finance but their consideration of academic issues and students' achievements has been cursory. Governors played a small part in producing the college's original strategic plan, but have formally agreed revisions to it. The corporation has been involved recently in redefining the college's mission. The final version resulted from debate and negotiation between members through which they discussed their individual and differing views. During the last few months, governors have been more critical in evaluating the papers and proposals they have received. The acting principal is clerk to the governors. The board has not reviewed this appointment in order to ascertain that the postholder has no conflicts of interest. Minutes are generally good, and give clear identification of the actions to be taken and of the people responsible for carrying them out.

18 Prior to March 1996, the college had an executive board comprising the principal, the two directors, and the head of academic development. The curriculum is managed by four heads of department, the adult education co-ordinator and the special projects manager who all, with the executive board, constitute the college management team. The former executive board has now been discontinued in favour of the full college

management team which meets every week. The management team's meetings are carefully minuted. The team sensibly aims to secure a broad consensus of views on important issues and consider options for future action and improvement.

19 The college has suffered from a lack of effective strategic planning and strong leadership. These shortcomings have resulted in slow progress in developing and implementing policies, lack of consultation between managers and staff and some poor management control during a period of rapid national change. The low level of staff involvement in the development and review of the strategic plan has resulted in a lack of commitment to the plan among staff at all levels. The links between the strategic plan and the departmental operating plans are tenuous, with little evidence that the former influences the latter. The development of essential college policies has been slow. Many are new and their impact has yet to be seen. Some policies do not have measurable objectives so that review and monitoring of their implementation may be difficult.

20 The quality of curriculum management is variable. The range of GCE A level subjects is poorly managed and co-ordinated. In each department, there are managers responsible for subdivisions of the curriculum. Others oversee such areas as resources and student services. The range and weight of duties held by managers vary considerably. Some managers have taken on too much to allow them to do their jobs properly. Lines of management responsibility and accountability are clear and are understood. Nevertheless, some individuals have inappropriate or misleading job titles, and others have outdated job descriptions.

21 There has been a damaging delay in putting right a management information system which produces inadequate or erroneous student data. There has also been little impetus towards using student data for management control, quality assurance and planning. The college has two different computer systems for controlling financial and student data, managed by two separate groups of staff. The student information system does not produce information which is sufficient for either internal management purposes, or for meeting deadlines for returns to the Further Education Funding Council and other external bodies. The financial system provides cost centre managers, the college management team and the corporation with appropriate information on a regular basis. Cost centre managers receive monthly reports on their expenditure, with advice on their interpretation where needed. Those managers who have responsibility for generating income are also properly informed of their progress towards meeting targets. The college has begun to develop a unit costing system which will allow it to see whether or not each course is viable. The college's average level of funding for each unit of study in 1995-96 is £20.56, compared with a national median of £17.84 for general further education colleges. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6, respectively.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

22 There are effective procedures for providing students with guidance at all stages of their contact with the college. Parents, headteachers and students regard the college as caring and supportive. One parent commented on the need to look past the grim facade of the buildings to discover the high value the college puts on its students as individuals with their own interests, abilities and requirements. Policy statements on some aspects of recruitment, guidance and support have been produced only recently, and have not been translated into consistent practice. Some staff do not understand the definitions or the purpose of performance indicators. Statistical information varies in its detail, and data on the use of some services are not collected or collated in a systematic way.

23 The application, enrolment and admissions processes are conducted efficiently by the admissions unit and the departments. A rapid response is made to enquiries and applications. The college meets its aim of offering an interview within 10 days of application and providing written confirmation of the result within five days of interview. The organisational arrangements for enrolments and admissions are clearly understood by staff and detailed guidelines are available in the reference pack for tutors and the staff handbook. Records of achievement are taken into account when staff help applicants to choose a course most suited to their needs but are not maintained consistently while students are at the college.

24 Staff and students clearly understand the purposes of induction, which include not only familiarisation with the college but also an introduction to new methods of study and assessment, including the maintenance of portfolios of course work. Some students found it useful to go through sample assignments. Most students said that they found the induction helpful and informative. The college careers co-ordinator works in conjunction with Vosper-Thornycroft Southern Careers to provide a full-time information, advice and support service to students throughout their time at the college. Students particularly value the advice which is given to them following the publication of examination results in the summer, on preparing for jobs and higher education.

25 In 1995, all full-time students and part-time students embarking on substantial programmes, took the tests for numeracy and literacy devised by the national Basic Skills Agency. About one-fifth of students scored at level 2 or below in the tests for literacy, and one-sixth were at these same low levels for numeracy. Help with basic skills is available in mainstream lessons or through attendance at the adult education building. Some students are inhibited from making use of the adult education building because it is separate from their main teaching areas and they regard it as outside their sphere of interest. Support for study skills is provided on the Deanery site either on a drop-in basis or by appointment. The service is well used and of a high standard. A specialist co-ordinator is responsible for giving students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities additional

support for their learning. The co-ordinator liaises with schools and with the admissions unit to identify the needs of students as early as possible. A specialist teacher from a school for autistic children has been commissioned to advise staff at the college.

26 The college is strongly committed to ensuring the success of its tutorial system. It is designing a modular course in tutorial skills for staff, for which it is seeking national accreditation. Tutors receive a reference pack to ensure that tutorial practice is consistent across the college. Students are allocated to personal tutors early in their courses and most are also taught by their tutors. All full-time students are entitled to weekly group tutorials, supplemented by individual appointments with personal tutors. Students' reactions to tutorials are mixed. Some value the opportunities for guided reflection on their work and evaluation of their progress, but others were critical of time wasted in tutorials and of tutorial activities which they regarded as childlike games. Formal tutorial arrangements for part-time students are generally unsatisfactory. Some part-time students receive informal tutorial guidance, but others have little notion that they are entitled to tutorial support. Action planning is a strong element of tutorial work. Students' progress is recorded through an 'early impressions' report, a review four weeks into the programme and a 'student concern' report. These records are kept consistently throughout the college and they enable students to transfer between courses, if it is thought advisable for them to do so. Students are regularly involved in self-evaluation. Most felt able to voice their opinions about their courses and valued the fact that these would be taken into account.

27 The college nursery is an important facility for students with children between three months and five years old. Its 36 places are sufficient for present demand. The Deanery sports centre provides a sports curriculum and recreation for students. Facilities at the centre may be booked by student groups and a varied programme of sports is available, including step aerobics, volleyball, badminton and football. Approximately 100 students use the centre each week. The students' union offers a modest range of activities and the majority of students give it inadequate support to strengthen its role in college life.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

28 Of the 194 sessions inspected, over 55 per cent had strengths which outweighed the weaknesses, and over 8 per cent were judged to have weaknesses which outweighed strengths. Standards were higher in the departments of food and creative services and of technology. 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		0	3	13	4	0	20
GCSE		1	3	2	0	1	7
GNVQ		2	10	11	2	0	25
NVQ		10	35	18	1	0	64
Access		2	1	0	0	0	3
Other vocational		0	23	14	6	0	43
Other		5	13	12	2	0	32
Total		20	88	70	15	1	194

29 In most curriculum areas teachers had produced schemes of work. These varied in their usefulness both across and within departments. They ranged from no more than a list of weekly topic titles to a full analysis of content, teaching and learning strategies, and resources. In marine technology, some schemes of work were models of good practice and in engineering teachers had planned their area of the curriculum in great detail. Teachers in hairdressing and beauty therapy had translated schemes of work into guidelines for students, so that they could be constantly aware of their progress. Lesson plans in health and social care were closely related to the overall scheme of work, and they included measurable objectives. In science and mathematics, however, teachers of the same subjects used different schemes and materials. One scheme was so poorly planned that students had little chance of covering the work on which they were to be assessed in the end-of-year examination. Teachers helped basic education students to devise individual learning plans, but many of these plans were unstructured and did not set specific targets for progress and achievement.

30 Most teachers prepared their lessons thoroughly. In the better classes, aims and objectives were stated clearly at the start, and students were aware that the work was part of a continuing process. Reference was made to previous work, students' knowledge and understanding were checked, and there was logical development of the topic through a variety of activities. In a GNVQ advanced level course in health and social care, the teacher analysed concepts of prejudice, using cartoons to make complex arguments clear and entertaining. In small groups, students were asked to illustrate the similarities and differences between the experiences of two elderly people in residential care. Students made progress in understanding the practical applications of this sensitive subject.

31 Relationships between staff and students were relaxed and friendly. Many students described the college as one which valued students as individuals. The enthusiasm of staff in adult basic education courses inspired students to learn. Teachers showed high levels of concern, and

provided valuable support for students with personal problems in hairdressing and beauty therapy and in catering courses. These students received every encouragement to cope and persevere with their work. Students in mathematics and science who were either concentrating both years of a two-year programme into one year, or taking one year of study in college and one year at home, received excellent support from their teachers.

32 In the better lessons, teachers used imaginative methods to attract and hold the interest of their students. They employed a variety of techniques such as question and answer, group work, working in pairs, plenary discussion and team teaching. In a lesson in English for speakers of other languages, students were giving and receiving directional instructions. Students enjoyed making effective use of a large plastic town plan with authentic road signs and a variety of toy vehicles to simulate reality. The final part of the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) engineering craft competencies course was delivered through a series of assignments, which students tackled individually with help from each other and the teacher. Assignments involved the students in core skills such as time management, information seeking, assembly and analysis of data, communicating and working with others. In an economics lesson, the teacher made good use of a video on monetarist theory. The students were shown sections of the video. The teacher expanded on aspects of monetarist theory and prompted class discussions before moving on to further considerations on the topic.

33 Many teachers have developed substantial skills in teaching adults. They were sensitive to the apprehensions of people returning to education and careful to value the experiences of their students. Access courses have been repeatedly adjusted to match the different profiles of each intake of students. Most curriculum areas have made efforts to alter their timetables, attendance patterns and pace of study for adults. In vocational courses such as engineering and health and social care, teachers were often able to present theory effectively by drawing upon students' experience at work as illustration.

34 In most curriculum areas, assignments were set regularly and marked promptly. The better teachers provided detailed guidance on how students could improve their work. In art and design, students made an evaluation of their work and sometimes predicted their examination grade on assessment sheets. In some areas, the quality of marking was poor and teachers provided few, if any, written comments. Grammatical and spelling errors were left uncorrected. Teachers kept records of students' achievements and informed the students regularly of their progress. A number of adult basic education courses have formal accreditation. Students who do not complete their programmes may receive an attendance certificate instead of a qualification or some form of accreditation. Assessment was generally of an appropriate standard.

35 Practical work was well organised and, in most areas, due attention was paid to health and safety regulations. There was good team teaching in practical lessons in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Students on the second year of the BTEC national diploma in marine technology worked in three groups on their major project. Three boats of different design were in an advanced stage of building. The quality of workmanship, planning and design were good. Students develop their skills to a high level through work experience on health and social care, and leisure and tourism courses, and through participation in demonstrations and competitions in catering and hairdressing.

36 In most curriculum areas, there were some lessons in which students learned little. Common features of poor practice were poor planning, vague objectives, lack of momentum or challenge, and teaching methods too narrow in their range to engage the full participation and interest of every student. In some lessons, teachers missed opportunities to use group work to encourage students to join in discussion. In some lessons, students were required to spend an excessive amount of time copying notes from the whiteboard or from overhead transparencies, on information they could have discovered by their own initiatives, or on concepts they could have thought out for themselves. Small group sizes in many curriculum areas limited the range of learning styles that could be employed. Classes in adult basic education frequently had only three or four students. Whilst some useful individual work and personal tuition took place when only a few students were present, role-playing exercises and effective group work were not possible in a very small class. In art and design, classes with low numbers were sometimes merged with the result that students of varying abilities were carrying out the same work. Some lessons for these merged groups were unsatisfactory because teachers lacked the expertise to deal effectively with the wide span of students' abilities. In many instances, teachers made no adjustment to their teaching methods in order to make them more suitable for a small number of students. For example, in one lesson a formal lecture was delivered to two students for 40 minutes. Working from notes, the teacher wrote all the material on to the whiteboard which was then copied into their notebooks by the two students. Small breaks occurred while the whiteboard was cleaned ready for the next set of notes. There was no other activity apart from some brief discussion of one or two points.

37 The unsatisfactory characteristics of the small classes were exacerbated by the poor punctuality and attendance of some of the students. Attendance in the classes inspected ranged from 51 per cent in hairdressing and beauty, to 80 per cent in engineering. In most lessons about 65 per cent of students were present. Teachers were not systematic in dealing with poor attendance and there was little evidence that its importance was sufficiently emphasised or recognised. Some students considered that they had the freedom to choose whether or not to attend classes. A significant number of lessons were disrupted by latecomers but

few staff asked them for an apology or an explanation for their lack of punctuality, either then or later.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

38 The college was unable to produce three years of data on students' achievements for some of its curriculum areas. The only reliable records of examination results relate to 1995. Students aged 16 to 18 taking GCE AS/A level examinations in 1995, scored on average 3.2 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1995 performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment. The college failed to provide data on its vocational courses to the Department so is not included in the Department's performance tables for 1995.

39 Examination results vary widely both between and within departments. There are, however, low retention and attendance rates on many courses and many students are late for lessons. On a significant number of courses, the achievements and retention of part-time students are better than those of full-time students. On the full-time access to higher education programme, however, both examination results and retention rates are good.

40 Over the last two years, 67 per cent of students enrolled on the GNVQ intermediate course in leisure and tourism gained the full qualification. In 1995, the retention rate on this course was also very good. In 1995, there was a 77 per cent retention rate on the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma course in travel and tourism and all the students who completed the course gained the qualification. On the GNVQ advanced course in leisure and tourism there was a low retention rate of 65 per cent and only 29 per cent of students who completed the course gained the award. These results have led to a rigorous review of the academic guidance and support provided for these students. Sixty-seven per cent of the small number of students who took GCSE travel and tourism obtained grades A to C.

41 In engineering, a significant proportion of the pass rates for courses were equal to or better than the averages given in the inspectorate's national survey for engineering. Particularly good retention and pass rates were recorded over two years for C&G mechanical and production competencies, with retention rates of 91 and 100 per cent and pass rates for those originally enrolled of 85 and 86 per cent, in 1994 and 1995, respectively. The results of the BTEC national certificate in engineering were well above the national average in 1994. In 1995, the retention rate of students on this course was low and results plummeted. The majority of students who completed the BTEC national diploma course in engineering in 1994 and 1995 gained the award. Retention rates on this course have however, been only 50 per cent or less during the last two

years. Examination success rates are above the national average in the BTEC national certificate and national diplomas in electrical and electronic engineering, instrumentation and communications and in electronics servicing. Pass rates range between 70 and 100 per cent and retention rates on the courses leading to these awards have normally exceeded 80 per cent. Results for the electrical competencies courses have been poor. High pass rates and high retention rates were achieved by large numbers of students on AutoCAD courses.

42 Most students in hairdressing and beauty therapy are working towards NVQ levels 2 and 3, although some cover parts of level 1 as an introduction to their courses. Results for full-time students in beauty therapy have been good with 88 per cent of those originally enrolled gaining the qualification in 1995. Results for part-time students are less good, with only 26 per cent of students gaining their qualification in the normal timescale. In hairdressing, between 89 and 96 per cent of the large numbers of students enrolled for the course, gained an NVQ.

43 In art and design there have been consistently good achievement rates on the foundation course for the three years it has been running at the college. In 1995, 92 per cent of those enrolled were successful. The access to higher education course also has consistently good results; in 1995, 75 per cent of those enrolled were successful. Progression to higher education from both these courses is consistently good. In 1995, 93 per cent of the foundation course students who chose to apply to higher education were successful and 79 per cent of the access course students progressed to higher education. Results among the first cohort of students from the advanced GNVQ in art and design were poor, with only 37 per cent of those enrolled achieving the qualification after two years.

44 Results for two-year GCE A level courses in 1995 were generally poor. In only six subjects; computing, performing arts, physics, psychology, sociology and theatre studies, were results above the national average for further education colleges. Results in the remaining 15 subjects were below the national average. In 1994 and 1995, only six GCE A level classes had retention rates of 85 per cent or more. In eight classes, the retention rate was below 50 per cent. In 1995, results for one-year GCE A level courses were slightly better than those for two-year courses. In 13 subjects, results were above the national average and in nine subjects, they were below. Many of the students on the one-year GCE A level courses are adults who study in the adult education centres. The college's own data indicate that, on average, adult part-time students achieve point scores 10 per cent higher than their 16 to 19 year old counterparts. Retention is an even greater problem with these one-year groups. Of 30 teaching groups, only two had a retention rate of 85 per cent or above; three were below 50 per cent.

45 Adult students on basic education courses receive every encouragement to strive for high achievement and to gain qualifications

such as numberpower or wordpower. Where the accreditation that is available is not appropriate, staff are working with the open college network to provide students with alternative accreditation. From interviews they held with the students and observations of their work, it was evident to the inspectors that students on adult basic education courses were making progress. Learning plans and records of students' work were, however, insufficiently thorough.

46 In 1995, 15 per cent of full-time students who completed their courses progressed from the college to higher education whilst a further 24 per cent continued in further education, either within the college or at another college in the further education sector. Thirty per cent went into employment, 9 per cent were unemployed when last contacted and 2 per cent entered training schemes or other activities. The destinations of 20 per cent of students were unknown. There is scope for the college to give greater attention to the accurate recording and analysis of the destinations of its students.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

47 The college has a detailed framework for quality assurance which has been developed over a number of years. It is based on a carefully-organised calendar of questionnaires and reviews to find out students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the ways in which they were helped to enter the college, the quality of their learning process, and of the standards of college services. The outlines of the course review process are set out in a comprehensive quality assurance manual that is used by all departments. Review of the quality of the college's services has only recently been initiated and the evaluation procedures for those areas providing services are still developing. A pilot review scheme in the library and media unit has been completed and a similar scheme is being implemented for finance and computer services.

48 The quality assurance system is managed by a quality assurance manager who, since March 1996, reports to the head of academic development. The quality manager leads a group of departmental representatives with responsibility for the quality assurance procedures in their respective departments. Systematic involvement in quality assurance by the college management team, the academic board and the governors is recent and so far, slight. The level of commitment to quality assurance varies across the college. Course review documentation is not being used consistently. There is no provision for any systematic survey of employers' and other clients' views. The low reliability of student data from the management information system impedes the successful operation of course reviews. Some improvement has stemmed from quality assurance. For example, the induction process for students has been made more effective. However, there is no sign yet of improvement in the levels of enrolments, and students' retention and achievements. It is too early to

assess whether or not the action plans devised by staff to increase enrolments and improve students' retention and achievement will be successfully translated into practice.

49 Appraisal was introduced in March 1993 for teaching staff and in November 1994 for support staff. Those who have gone through the appraisal process speak about it positively. For teaching staff, observation of their work in the classroom is an option, and only a minority have taken it up. The first two-year cycle of appraisal is incomplete and less than 65 per cent of full-time staff have gone through the process. Only 23 per cent of support staff have been appraised. The scheme limits the number of staff who can be appraised by one person to four. Some managers are responsible for large groups of staff and there have been some difficulties in matching staff with appropriate appraisers who have sufficient knowledge of their work. The appraisal process has been reviewed by senior managers, and a new pattern of team appraisal is being tried in two service areas and two curriculum areas.

50 The college achieved the Investor in People award in 1995. The staff-development policy clearly states a set of procedures which are supported by staff. The staff-development budget for 1995-96 is £144,000, which is about 1.4 per cent of the college's recurrent income. It is well managed by the staff development officer. All applications for staff-development training are considered centrally and must be approved by course team leaders. Staff-development activities are evaluated. There is an understanding that staff will tell other members of their teams about the courses and conferences they have attended. There are, however, no systematic arrangements for staff to report back on their staff-development training and share their newly-acquired knowledge with their colleagues. The college has procedures for the induction and support of new members of staff, both full time and part time. The college has replaced a three-day induction programme with a new and more effective induction process. This includes a short introduction to the college and support for the new member of staff from a mentor. New staff are also given an induction pack. This contains a range of useful information. It explains how staff may identify their training needs and ask for these to be met. The college will pay the cost of courses which lead to qualified teacher status for new members of staff who do not have a teacher qualification.

51 The college has produced a comprehensive charter. This incorporates a charter for students, a charter for the community and a complaints procedure. It also explains where more information about the college may be found and what help is available to all who use the college. The document is the product of extensive consultations with staff, students and employers. The charter was reviewed after a year. The document includes some crisply-defined operating standards. The college undertakes to acknowledge any complaint within three working days and to provide a full response to it within three weeks. An abridged version of the charter

is included in the student diary and the prospectus. It is available in six languages and in Braille. Most students are aware of the abridged charter, but few know the contents of the full document.

52 A self-assessment report in the format of the Council Circular 93/28 *Assessing Achievement* was prepared by the college prior to inspection. The report was of a very high standard; it was self-critical, and it gave a fair representation of the present position of the college. In general, the report's findings agreed with those of the inspection team. The quality of the self-assessment report and the extent to which staff had contributed to it, are strong indications that the college is facing up to its problems and has taken the first steps towards solving them.

RESOURCES

Staffing

53 Most teachers are well qualified and are appropriately experienced for their work. Many staff have a range of industrial or commercial experience, although in areas such as leisure and motor vehicle engineering, this is not recent. Part-time tutors have up-to-date professional expertise in areas such as boat building and hairdressing. Eighty-seven per cent of full-time staff have a teaching qualification. In business studies and information technology, the proportion of staff with a teaching qualification is low at 82 per cent. Most staff now have the appropriate awards of the training and development lead body to qualify them to assess and verify GNVQs and NVQs.

54 Technicians and other support staff are enthusiastic and appropriately qualified. Technician support is adequate except in art and design. There are technical instructors who play a useful part in assessing students' work in realistic work environments, particularly in catering. Teaching and support staff work well together.

55 Thirty-nine per cent of teaching staff and 62 per cent of support staff are women. One of the nine members of the senior management team is a woman and five out of 29 departmental middle managers are women. The number of staff from minority ethnic backgrounds is proportionately lower than the number of those with comparable backgrounds in the population of Southampton or in the body of students at the college. The college has recently revised its guidelines on staff selection and recruitment to ensure they reflect equal opportunities practices more clearly. There is a well-qualified personnel team. There are relevant policies on, and established procedures for, the management of personnel; these are not set out in a personnel handbook. Staff records are fragmented. Different elements, such as those relating to the payroll, staff development and files on individuals, are held in different places. The college is exploring the feasibility of establishing a more integrated system of staff records. Staff timetables are reviewed every year by a senior manager. Many class sizes

are very small. Staff-to-student ratios are not calculated, and costing models for the deployment of staff are at an early stage of development.

Equipment/learning resources

56 Most curriculum areas are well equipped with a wide range of teaching aids including whiteboards, overhead projectors and video replay equipment. There is an appropriate range of specialist equipment in most areas. Equipment is of a particularly high standard in business studies, leisure and recreation, care, science, beauty therapy, fabrication and welding, boat building, dental technology, sculpture and three-dimensional design. Facilities for computer-aided design and manufacture are good. Some items of equipment for hairdressing, motor vehicle diagnostic testing, and some machine tools in the mechanical engineering workshops need to be replaced. Even in some of the better equipped curriculum areas, some equipment does not necessarily match that used in industry or professional practice. For example: in dental technology, the powered hand tools need replacing; a new body alignment jig is needed for motor vehicle body repair; and in marine technology additional modern marine engines are required. The college has, however, been recently successful in securing industrial sponsorship for the acquisition of two large marine outboard units. The outdated language laboratory is being replaced. The college does not have a travel shop; there are limited facilities for fashion, textiles, photography and printmaking. At some centres there is a shortage of books and reference materials for basic education. The college has a good central reprographic facility. There is a central assets register. The college has no policy on, or schedule for, the replacement of equipment.

57 The college has recently developed a policy on information technology for the curriculum, and is developing a policy on information technology in relation to administration. Management and purchasing of information technology resources are centralised. The college has a ratio of one modern computer for every eight full-time equivalent students. Students have satisfactory or good access to computers in business studies, leisure and tourism and care. There is inadequate provision of computers in basic education, catering, construction, science, humanities and marine technology. In art and design, there is some good equipment. There are, however, insufficient computers for the number of students on courses and the provision of software is inadequate. Students have limited access to computers in the departments, the library and the learning centres. A new learning centre is being built.

58 There is a central library and adjoining learning centre, and there are two smaller learning centres in the technology block and on the Deanery site. The majority of learning resources for each curriculum area are held in the learning centre nearest to it. All materials are centrally catalogued and the centres are well managed. Liaison between the library and curriculum areas is good. The library has service standards which are monitored through the quality assurance system. Usage of the library

is analysed. The library has only 18,000 books but there is an extensive collection of non-book material, including 80 compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases, 229 audio tapes and 3,500 video tapes. The library subscribes to 256 periodicals. An Internet link was being installed at the time of the inspection. The college spends £16.28 per full-time equivalent student on learning resources and £6.49 per full-time equivalent student on books. For some areas, such as business studies and travel and tourism, the provision of books is good. In care and art and design, the bookstock is very poor. Marine engineering and boat building students on the Woolston site, have few books or periodicals.

Accommodation

59 The college has a complex set of buildings, ranging from those that provide good teaching accommodation to those that are unfit for their current educational purpose. The college has developed a far-reaching estates strategy. A major building programme was starting at the time of inspection. This is intended to provide accommodation for technology and construction, and a new library and learning centre. A new entrance and reception area for the St Mary Street site is under construction.

60 The college occupies five sites. The two main sites are at St Mary Street and the Deanery, which together provide over 85 per cent of the college's floor space. The St Mary Street buildings are nearly 150 years old and they include the original Poor Law Workhouse built in the 1840s, and the catering block and technology buildings which were constructed during the 1960s and 1970s. The college's attractive library was formerly the workhouse Chapel. At present, the accommodation in the workhouse does not give the college a good image. Business studies, leisure and tourism and hairdressing teaching takes place in rooms which are drab. The mechanical engineering workshops and the electrical, electronic, computer-aided design and dental laboratories in the technology block are of a high standard, and they are well ordered, clean and tidy. The classrooms are big enough but their roughly finished blockwork walls and poor furnishings create an uncongenial environment for teaching and learning. There are good facilities for fabrication and heating and ventilation. The small, cluttered spray shop is due to be relocated. Catering is based in a modern three-storey block. Classroom facilities and the kitchen and bakery are excellent. The student and staff refectories provide good realistic work environments. Accommodation for beauty therapy has been refurbished recently and it now has salons of a professional standard.

61 The Deanery is a former school which was built in the 1930s. In the 1970s, a science and design technology block, and a sports hall which was designed to be shared with the local community, were built at the Deanery. The science accommodation and the sports centre are satisfactory, but many of the classrooms used for humanities, care and art teaching, are small and not entirely suitable for the purpose. The mathematics accommodation in the only temporary building is particularly poor.

62 Two of the college's smaller sites at Melbourne Street and Albert Road, separated from St Mary Street by a railway line, are isolated. Albert Road, which is soon to be vacated, was originally a Victorian school. It provides cramped but acceptable accommodation for painting and decorating, wood trades and plumbing. Motor vehicle body repair has had to be housed temporarily in unsuitable accommodation adjacent to this site while the first phase of the new buildings is started. There is purpose-built accommodation for motor vehicle engineering on the Melbourne Street site, in two buildings dating from the 1970s. The large mechanical engineering workshop provides a good realistic working environment. The adjacent brickwork teaching facilities are poor and will be replaced as part of the new building programme. The marine technology centre at Woolston is one-and-a-half miles from the main college, beside the River Itchen. It has access to a public slipway. It was built as a training complex for yacht and boat building and it has particularly good workshops for woodworking, wood machining and glass-reinforced plastic moulding. Refectory and social facilities for students at Woolston are very limited.

63 The college provides adult education classes in community halls and schools throughout the city. Within the limitations which result from the primary use of these buildings for other purposes, the majority are appropriate for adult education. The college has just acquired the Argyle adult education centre. It was originally a Victorian school and it needs major refurbishment.

64 The college has a planned maintenance programme. The Hunter survey suggested the college should have a repair budget in excess of £7 million. Much maintenance remains to be carried out. The estates team is capable and enthusiastic but it lacks the experience of managing large building developments. Room allocation is planned and controlled by departments. The college cannot provide details of its overall usage of rooms for 1995-96.

65 There is poor access to most of the buildings for wheelchair users and those with restricted mobility. The college has timetabled some classes which are attended by wheelchair users into ground-floor rooms. A deaf alert fire alarm system for persons with hearing impairment has been installed in the college.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

66 The particular strengths of the college are:

- its wide range of courses
- its responsiveness to the community and to under-represented groups
- its good links with employers and schools
- the commitment of staff to helping individual students

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- its commitment to staff development
 - its self-assessment report.

67 If it is to continue to improve the quality of its provision, the college should address the following issues:

- its poor strategic planning process
- the lack of strategic direction and corporate control
- the slow formulation and implementation of policies
- its inadequate and unreliable student data
- poor curriculum management in some areas
- poor attendance and retention of students on many courses
- restricted access to information technology
- some unsuitable teaching accommodation.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1995)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1995)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)

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

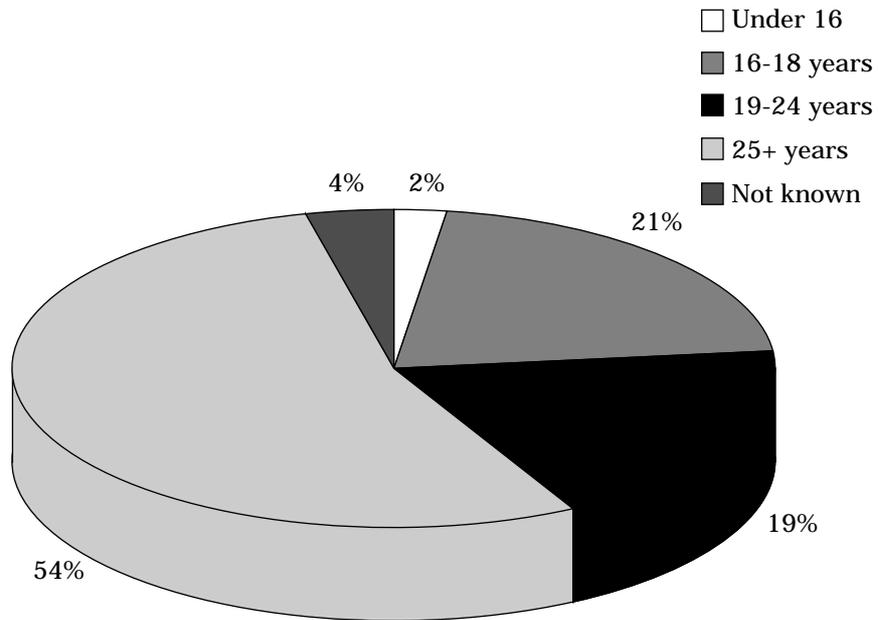
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1995)

 - 6 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

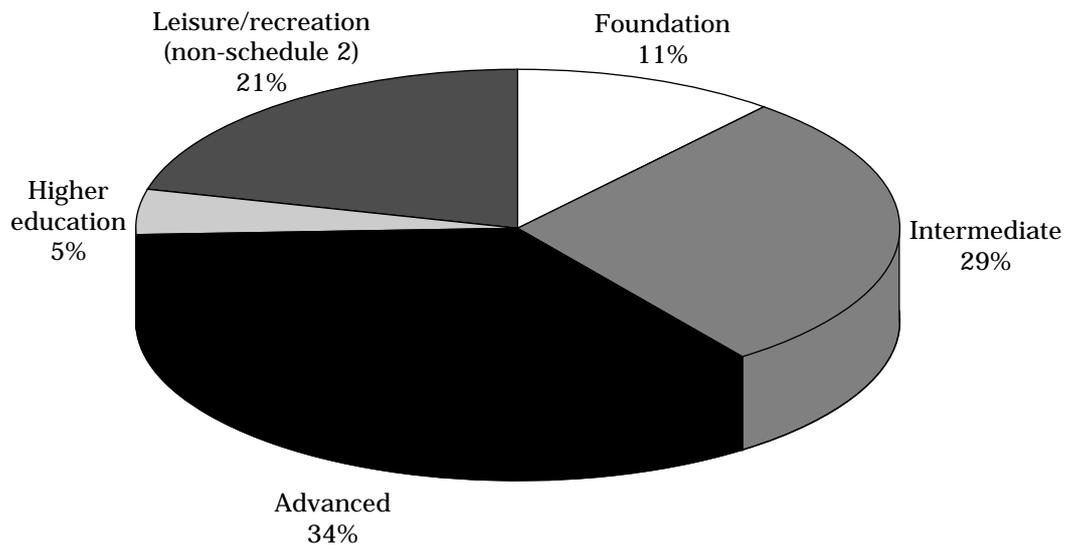
Southampton City College: percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1995)



Enrolments: 17,520

Figure 2

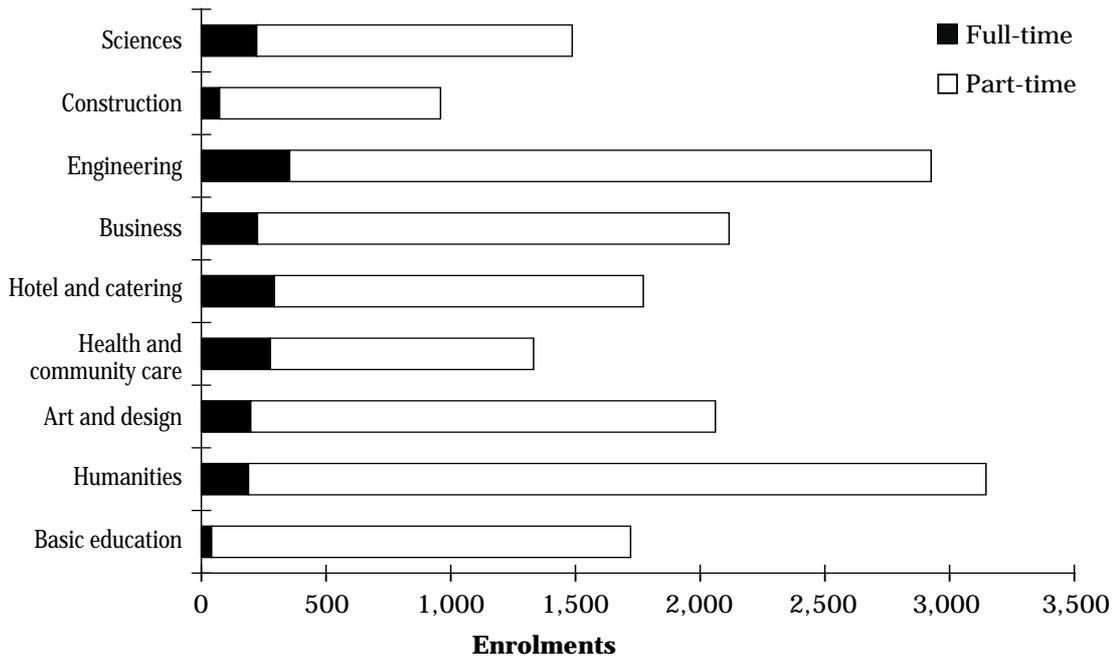
Southampton City College: percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1995)



Enrolments: 17,520

Figure 3

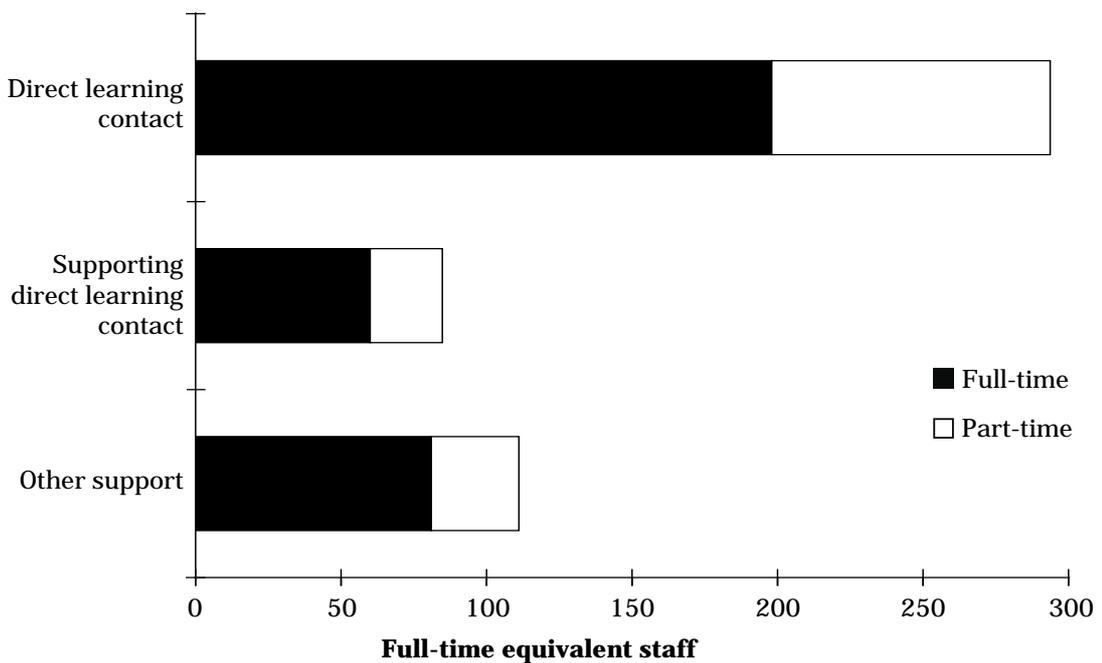
Southampton City College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)



Enrolments: 17,520

Figure 4

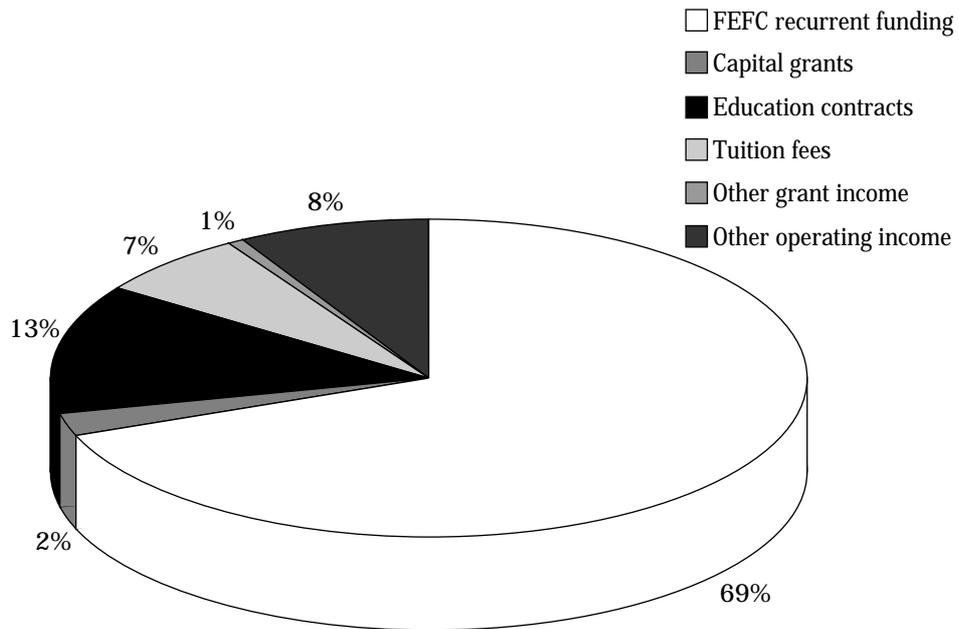
Southampton City College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)



Full-time equivalent staff: 490

Figure 5

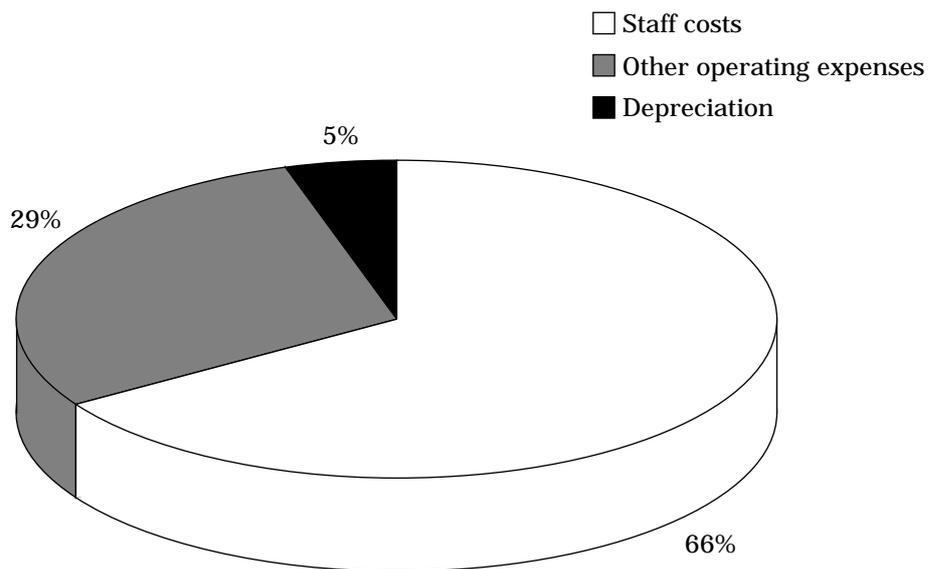
Southampton City College: income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Income: £14,284,000

Figure 6

Southampton City College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Expenditure: £14,798,000

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