

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Telford College of Arts and Technology

February 1997

**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	8
Governance and management	17
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	27
Teaching and the promotion of learning	35
Students' achievements	46
Quality assurance	59
Resources	69
Conclusions and issues	82
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 1996, some 329 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 329 colleges are shown in the following table.

College grade profiles 1993-96

Activity	Inspection grades				
	1	2	3	4	5
Programme area	9%	59%	29%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	14%	50%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	12%	54%	30%	4%	<1%

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 12/97

TELFORD COLLEGE OF ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY

WEST MIDLANDS REGION

Inspected January-November 1996

Summary

Telford College of Arts and Technology responds effectively and flexibly to the needs of its community. The college has undertaken an analysis of the locality which it serves and created strong links with external bodies including schools, universities, employers and the TEC. There is a well-developed community education programme and extensive provision of in-company NVQs. Senior managers and the governing body have a productive working relationship and governors make a valuable contribution to the college's mission and strategic direction. Student numbers have increased steadily in recent years. Well-developed initial guidance and enrolment procedures help students to settle into the college. Teachers are well qualified and teaching is effectively organised. Students' achievements are good, particularly on vocational programmes. Much of the college's equipment is of a high standard and the accommodation is improving as new facilities are added. To build on its strengths, the college should: develop the review by governors of students' achievements and destinations; integrate key skills more effectively with other aspects of curricula; continue to increase retention rates; improve the effectiveness of the quality assurance system; update the industrial experience of staff; and improve access for students with restricted mobility.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision	Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision	1
Governance and management	2
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	2
Quality assurance	3
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science, mathematics and computing	2	Social care, early years and hairdressing	2
Engineering	2	Art, design and media	3
Business studies and management	2	English and communications	3
Business administration	2	Adult basic education, SLDD provision and English for speakers of other languages	2
Leisure and tourism	2		

INTRODUCTION

1 Telford College of Arts and Technology was inspected during the period January to November 1996. Enrolment and induction were inspected in August and September 1996. Eighteen inspectors spent a total of 66 days in the college. They visited 183 classes, scrutinised students' work and held discussions with corporation members, college managers, teaching and support staff, local employers, parents, representatives of local schools, careers staff and the Shropshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Inspectors also examined statistical evidence and documentation on the college and its courses.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Telford College of Arts and Technology was founded as the Walker Technical College in 1926. It is a medium-sized general further education college which operates from two sites. It provides community education in 70 centres in school and community accommodation, and also supplies in-house training on the premises of 47 employers. The college offers franchised courses with the University of Central England and Wolverhampton University.

3 The college is located in Telford within the Wrekin District which is the most densely populated part of Shropshire, with the largest concentration of industry and commerce. Manufacturing provides 42 per cent of jobs in the district compared with 20 per cent nationally. The majority of jobs are in the engineering sector and 98 per cent of businesses employ less than 200 people. The college serves an area with a population of approximately 145,000. Recently, Telford has experienced one of the largest increases in population in the country, a growth of 17 per cent since 1981 compared with an average of 3 per cent for England and Wales. The average age of the population is 35. Telford has been particularly successful in attracting investment from multinational companies. One hundred and forty companies from 17 overseas countries are located in the town. Wages are significantly lower than the national average; 53 per cent of workers earn less than the low pay threshold. The unemployment rate is 5.6 per cent.

4 In the academic year 1995-96, the college had 14,388 enrolments, 1,311 full time and 13,077 part time. Some 65 per cent of students were female. Minority ethnic groups made up 12 per cent of full-time and 6.6 per cent of part-time enrolments. In the Wrekin District, 3.5 per cent of the population come from minority ethnic groups. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. The college employs 169 full-time equivalent teaching staff and 95 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

5 New College, Telford, a nearby sixth form college, is the only other further education provider in the Wrekin. There are 12 secondary schools,

including one city technology college, four of which have sixth forms. In 1995-96 the staying-on rate for post-16 education was 57 per cent, the lowest in Shropshire. School-leavers from the south Telford schools achieved an average of 2.6 general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) passes at grade C or above compared with an average of 4.2 for those from north Telford.

6 The college has a senior management team of seven, comprising the principal, the vice-principal, two assistant principals who are also faculty heads, one assistant principal for personnel and administration, one assistant principal for planning and resources, and the college accountant. There are two faculties. One has six schools offering courses in the manufacturing, commercial and business sectors. The other has four schools offering courses in the caring and service sectors, continuing and general education, and community education.

7 In its recently-revised mission statement, the college states that its intention is to be the first-choice provider of lifetime further education and training in the community that it serves. To help achieve its mission it has drafted five strategic aims:

- to be recognised as a centre of excellence for further education and training
- to optimise the range, flexibility and access of college provision to meet the lifetime needs of the individual learner
- to be proactive in building and consolidating partnerships in education and training for the benefit of the college and the community it serves
- to exploit new technology to deliver education and training and provide a focus for supporting technological progress
- to become a centre for social, cultural and educational activity for the Telford community.

The college seeks to achieve its mission by working with partners to contribute to the economic development of the Wrekin and by constantly improving access to its services and facilities for education and training and its social, cultural and leisure activities.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 The college recognises it has a role to play in raising levels of participation in education and training in the Telford area. Its analysis of the patterns of education and employment indicates a thorough understanding of the implications of low achievement and the low level of participation in education after the age of 16. In a locality where many of the employees are unskilled or semi-skilled and the demands for a better equipped workforce are increasing, the college has taken many initiatives to raise the levels of basic competence and improve skills. It is strongly committed to playing its part in meeting the national targets for education and training.

9 The emphasis of the curriculum is highly vocational. Although the college offers some general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and GCSE courses, the bulk of this work post-16 is located at New College, Telford. About 75 per cent of the college's students are 25 years of age or over. Some 85 per cent of part-time and evening students come from Telford or neighbouring areas of Shropshire and many of the full-time students are recruited from the 12 neighbouring partner schools. The college offers courses in all the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) programme areas except agriculture. The largest numbers of enrolments are in science, engineering, health and community care and business. The community education programme accounts for a substantial proportion of enrolments. Four general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) are offered at advanced level, seven at intermediate level and seven at foundation level. The college offers many Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diplomas and City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) courses. Full-time and part-time access to higher education courses are available, some based at the college, others located in the community. The foundation year of degree courses, in science and engineering respectively, are offered in conjunction with the University of Wolverhampton and the University of Central England at Birmingham. Enrichment programmes for students include the opportunity to study modern foreign languages and to take a computer literacy and information technology course. The college is strongly committed to recruit, and provide for, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

10 There are strong and effective links with partner schools, New College, Telford and some universities. College staff attend evenings for the parents of year 9 pupils and many pupils attend the college for 'taster' days, attending classes with students to whom they are attached. Some pupils have work placements in the college. There has been valuable collaboration with two schools in the development of GNVQs at foundation and intermediate level. School representatives warmly praised the college's responsiveness to parents and pupils and emphasised the thoroughness with which the college continues to support students whose particular needs had been identified at school. The information sent to schools on their former pupils' progress was particularly welcomed. Teachers also cited examples of college support for schools in training for health and safety and management training. The college has close links with the University of Central England at Birmingham and with the University of Wolverhampton, which has established a campus in Telford. It also has higher education compacts with four other universities. University representatives stressed the value of their links with the college and the importance of the access courses which had been developed.

11 Close and effective contacts have been made with the TEC. The principal is a member of the TEC Telford area board. The TEC has given valuable support to the college's competitiveness fund bid. It has provided

financial assistance for work placements for staff teaching on GNVQs to help them to update their industrial and commercial experience. It has also helped to finance curriculum development in multi-skilling for engineering and basic skills in the workplace. The college makes effective use of the labour market intelligence produced by the TEC. Representatives from the TEC acknowledged the college's responsiveness and effectiveness in identifying skills gaps and training needs. TEC officers suggested there was scope for further development of community initiatives such as family literacy projects.

12 The college is involved with a wide range of local organisations, including the Telford Development Agency and the Community Education Forum. It is also contributing to the development of the education policy for the new unitary local authority which will be established in 1998. Community representatives stressed the importance of the college in the life of the town. They cited many examples of college activity in the community, including its encouragement of basic skills. College staff work with community teams in the locality; for example, at a local job club, they provide free help in drawing up curricula vitae.

13 The growth of in-company national vocational qualifications (NVQs) has been an outstanding college initiative. The prime emphasis has been on the development of courses from levels 1 to 5 which provide employees with a recognised qualification, improve their skills, and increase their confidence. Courses are taught by college staff at times suited to both companies' and employees' circumstances. Links with companies cover a range of curriculum areas, including engineering, business studies, customer care, and information technology. Basics skills are also taught in some companies. The college's ability to respond to employers' needs has been enhanced by visits to Japan which enable staff to improve their awareness of the working practices of parent companies which have factories in Telford. College staff visiting Japan have also used the opportunity to give advice on training to managers of Japanese companies. A manager for business development has recently been appointed to promote the college's programmes for industry more vigorously.

14 The college has won national awards for its responsiveness to employers including four Beacon awards and the *Daily Telegraph's* customer first award (1994) for improvements in its responsiveness to customers' needs. The National Examining Board for Supervisory Management has awarded the college a 'centre of excellence' status. The extent and nature of the contacts with employers vary across the college but, in many curriculum areas, staff consult employers about curriculum development and training, and employers attend advisory committees or are involved in annual reviews. Employers reported favourably upon the regularity and quality of feedback they received on their employees' progress. Many have been helpful in supporting the college's young enterprise scheme.

15 Marketing is generally effective. The responsibility for marketing is delegated to those senior and middle managers who are most in touch with the needs of actual and potential clients. New course proposals have to conform with the strategic plan and be based on recent market research. The college records and analyses the enquiries made about its provision and this has sometimes led to the development of new courses, such as the welding course. The college maintains an extensive database of employers and conducts a regular survey of their perceptions. Publicity is well managed. There is a publicity calendar and a publicity committee has recently been established to co-ordinate the programme of events. A full-time and part-time prospectus, newsletters and course leaflets are well designed and give clear guidance on course content, entrance requirements and progression routes for prospective students. The college makes effective use of an external consultant to design publicity material, prepare advertisements and promote college activities in the local and national press. Promotional activities include information evenings, an adult learners' week, college displays in the town centre and staff visits to schools and careers fairs.

16 The college has a well-devised equal opportunities policy, which has recently been revised and approved by the corporation. The policy contains commitments that seek to prevent discrimination and to promote positive attitudes. It includes statements of principle relating to age, gender, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, race, religion, colour and harassment, and emphasises the need for fair recruitment practices. The college's concern to promote equal opportunities is reflected in the content and design of its publicity materials. Some of these materials are translated into the various languages that are spoken in the community. Surveys of students' perception contain questions on the degree of support received by students with hearing impairments or those using wheelchairs. Each of the college's schools regularly review how effectively their courses meet the needs of groups within the community which have not previously been involved in education post-16. This year, for the first time, schools have set themselves equal opportunity targets. The equal opportunities committee, which has been responsible for developing the new policy, deals with a broad range of equal opportunity issues. In its reorganised form it will now evaluate the achievement of the targets which are set and report to the academic board.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

17 The corporation of the college has a membership of 20 which includes three nominated members, two staff members, the principal and a member from the Shropshire TEC. At incorporation, the governing body decided not to appoint a student member and to seek other ways of keeping themselves in touch with the views of students. Business governors bring with them a wide range of experience. Several are chief executives or directors of major companies or public bodies. Four members, recently

appointed, have added fresh perspectives to the work of the board, but none of them are women and the proportion of woman governors continues to be low. The corporation has four standing committees: finance and general purposes; audit; estates; and remuneration. Terms of reference are reviewed regularly. Corporation meetings take place once a term and committee meetings are held at regular intervals. Some meetings have been poorly attended. Governors provide the college with strong advice and support.

18 The business of the corporation is conducted efficiently. There is thorough preparation for meetings. An assistant principal, who has responsibility for personnel in the college, acts as clerk to the corporation. Informative reports are regularly presented by the principal and senior managers. Governors have a good understanding of a wide range of issues and are keen to find out more about the strengths and weaknesses of each curriculum area. The effective working relationship between governors and senior managers has helped in developing several aspects of the college's work. One of the governors was recently involved in discussions on the college's approach to self-assessment. Governors take care to avoid becoming involved in the day-to-day management of the college but are fully involved in all strategic matters. They have given careful attention to the college's mission statement and the college has welcomed their advice on its content. Governors consider reports on students' achievements but their involvement in assessing this aspect of the college's performance is not yet fully developed. The corporation has established systematic procedures for assessing its own performance and agreed a code of conduct. It should give further attention to the method of registering members' interests to ensure that current requirements are met.

19 The college is well managed. The management structure is firmly in place, supported by staff and provides a framework within which the college has been able to develop. The senior management team meets regularly. It gives close consideration to the financial position of the college and keeps in touch with the work of the two faculties by scrutinising all their board agendas and minutes. College managers provide teaching and support staff with the assistance necessary to enable them to carry out their responsibilities and encourage them to make proposals for improving and extending their work. Communications in the college are generally good. However, there is scope to improve dissemination of good practice and encourage the joint development of initiatives.

20 The college's academic board has not been effective. It has 24 members and generally meets once a term. In 1995, however, the interval between two of its meetings was extended to eight months. Board agendas have been mainly concerned with a general updating of information on the curriculum. The board's recommendations have had a limited impact on the college. For example, there were no relevant recommendations for change or for improvement following last year's review of examination

results. A recent meeting, which focused on the monitoring and review of schools' performance and faculty action plans, stimulated proposals for a revised role for the board.

21 The strategic plan for 1996-2000 has been developed in close consultation with staff. It includes a detailed needs analysis together with precise objectives and targets. Strategic aims are broken down into specific objectives. There is clear indication of the dates by which targets are expected to be achieved, and those responsible for taking action and reviewing progress are identified. The plan is not always sufficiently specific about the resources which are required to achieve objectives. Business and development plans at faculty and school level are produced in a variety of formats.

22 Schools are allocated budgets for books, stationery, materials and small items of equipment. Allocations are based on student numbers with some adjustments for the perceived costs of particular courses. Budget holders receive timely and reliable information which enables them to monitor their budgets with confidence. Full costs are calculated for all off-site and short courses. The college has recognised that it needs better information on the costing of its other courses and is developing more sophisticated comparative information on these.

23 The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £17.38 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.97. The college receives 78 per cent of its funding from the FEFC.

24 The college's management information system is able to produce the information required by the FEFC. It also generates useful information for senior managers on the use of resources, including analyses of the use of space and teaching costs. The computerised information on students is less thorough and lack of confidence in its accuracy means that staff sometimes put more trust in the data held in their own records.

25 The college has exceeded its enrolment targets for the last three years and it achieved significant growth in part-time enrolments in 1995-96. Enrolment targets are set and monitored. The senior management team decides the enrolment targets for each curriculum area on the basis of course team reviews that are carried through at school and faculty level. Student retention rates are monitored at various levels in the college and the annual operating statement for 1995-96 contains a college-wide review of retention rates for the previous year.

26 The student services team collects information on the destination of full-time and part-time students which is then collated by the management information unit. For 1995-96 the college was able to obtain information on the destinations of a significant proportion of its students. For example, the destinations of 90 per cent of students on two-year advanced groups were known.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

27 Initial guidance, pre-entry and enrolment procedures for students are well organised and generally effective. The student services unit, located in a pleasant, well-resourced but rather cramped area, is responsible for managing all aspects of these processes. The unit maintains high standards of service and students are generally provided with appropriate information. Links with local schools and an admissions procedure operated jointly with New College, Telford, help to ensure that students receive sound, impartial advice. Initial interviews are conducted by the client services manager and a team of admissions tutors who have links with specific partner schools. Adult students receive good support and encouragement.

28 Generally, induction to the college is well managed and effective. College-wide guidelines for tutors and induction packs for students ensure a basic level of consistency. In many sessions the presentation of the material was well organised and interesting; students quickly developed a feeling of belonging to the course and began to work together on specific tasks. However, in some sessions the work was pedestrian and students became bored. There is significant variation in the length of time spent on induction activities. In a few cases, it is too long and students lose their enthusiasm. Students who commence a course late and miss induction receive a late admissions induction pack and are allotted a student mentor to help them to settle in. Students are made aware of the possibility of transferring to another course if they feel they have made the wrong choice. Surveys of students' and staffs' views are used to monitor induction and improve its management.

29 Procedures for accrediting students' prior learning are developing although the college recognises that further staff development is required if these are to be extended. At present accreditation is used mainly to determine the level at which students enter courses. In some instances, however, students may be exempted from certain course modules or allowed to undertake assessments without attending taught classes. Most accreditation of prior learning is offered for NVQ in-company work, and for secretarial and business administration, and NVQ management courses. At present, the numbers involved are still small. An innovative pilot scheme enabled school-leavers from a partner school to finish their GNVQ programmes at a college summer school. The college delivered the vocationally-specific units within a four-week block, which meant that full certificates could be awarded.

30 Each school has provision for learning support. Students are screened during induction to assess their needs for additional support for numeracy and literacy. Full-time students' assessments are related to the courses to be taken. Recently, the schools have strengthened their procedures in an attempt to overcome the reluctance of some students, identified as needing learning support, to take advantage of the facilities offered. Students now receive personal reports on their needs and achievements, and reports

sent to course leaders indicate where students can benefit from participation in the key skills programme. Some vocational tutors require further training to ensure that the system of support is effective. Part-time students are provided with a self-assessment checklist during induction but, only a small percentage take up the offer of additional learning support.

31 Generally, the tutorial support for full-time students is strong. Full-time students meet their personal tutor for 1.5 hours a week as members of a tutor group and meet their tutor once every eight weeks to review progress and to adjust their personal action plans for learning. Students are responsible for updating their record of achievement using computer software and most do this effectively. Tutors are issued with a handbook and a checklist of subjects to be covered during tutorials, but they have the freedom to work flexibly in ways suited to the needs of particular groups. Staff from the student services unit provide tutorial support materials and offer a planned programme of talks on relevant subjects.

32 The quality of careers advice and guidance is good. Careers notices are displayed around the college. The college has a full-time client guidance manager supported by four careers advisers from Shropshire Careers Service Ltd. Tutors are provided with guidelines for the use of careers material within the tutorial programme. There is a careers area in student services which is well stocked with plenty of up-to-date information. There are also some resources in the library, but these are not as comprehensive or up to date as those held in the careers area and there is no overview of the two banks of resources. Students are encouraged to attend centrally-organised 'job seeking' workshops. Those approaching the end of their course can register for work through student services and are notified of any vacancies received by the college. The college hosts a higher education, careers and employers' convention.

33 Approximately 10 hours a week are available for student counselling. Students in urgent need can arrange to see a counsellor at short notice. Where appropriate, students receive initial counselling and are then referred to specialist agencies with which the college has good links. There is a careful record of how the counselling service is used and it is audited as part of the audit of student services.

34 The college childcare centre provides for 20 children from the age of four months to five years. For some students the cost of childcare is covered from college hardship funds. In certain cases, the college pays the cost of childminder services.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

35 Of the 183 sessions inspected, 63 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses. In just under 7 per cent of sessions the weaknesses clearly outweighed the strengths. The average attendance in the lessons inspected was 73 per cent; an average of 10 students was

present in each class. The following table summarises the grades given to the teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE A level and GCSE		0	5	4	2	0	11
GNVQ		5	10	11	3	0	29
NVQ		12	19	13	2	0	46
Higher education		3	2	3	1	0	9
Access to further education/higher education		2	4	2	0	0	8
Basic education		1	8	5	0	0	14
Other vocational		5	17	12	4	0	38
Other		10	13	5	0	0	28
Total		38	78	55	12	0	183

36 There were good working relationships between staff and students in all programme areas. Schemes of work and lesson plans were completed in most areas but some of these were of variable quality. Teaching was generally well organised and teachers used an appropriate variety of methods for teaching and learning. Many courses enabled students to undertake work experience as part of their learning. Students were well prepared for work placements and communication with employers and providers of placements was good. Assessment of students' achievement was regular and generally accurate. In most cases, it provided students with useful feedback on their progress.

37 Features of the better teaching sessions included the clear definition of aims and objectives, work which was appropriately challenging and interesting, and effective methods of learning, including work in small groups. Less successful sessions were characterised by teachers' poor presentational skills, slow progress, and an overall lack of stimulation. In some areas, key skills were not effectively integrated with other aspects of the curriculum.

38 Teaching in science, mathematics and computing was generally effective. Classes were well planned and supported by detailed schemes of work. In the better classes, students were presented with varied learning activities which were vocationally relevant. Opportunities were provided for students to work individually and in groups. Most practical classes were well managed and there was appropriate attention to safe working practices.

39 Most engineering sessions were well planned and supported by effective schemes of work. Teachers used a variety of techniques and

teaching aids to engage students' interest and encourage discussion and this led to some lively and stimulating sessions. The setting and marking of assignment work was generally satisfactory although, on some courses, students were not given enough opportunity to assess their own progress. There is a policy for dealing with the late submission of assignments, but this was not being applied consistently.

40 In business studies and management the majority of teaching sessions had clear aims and objectives which were shared with students. Lessons were well structured and contained a variety of activities. Tutors made particularly good use of questions and answers, and supported their teaching with suitable audio-visual aids. In the best sessions, regular checks were made to ensure that learning was taking place. In a wordprocessing skills workshop, all levels of ability from beginners to RSA Examinations Board (RSA) III were included; the good management of activities ensured that all students were busy and that none were disadvantaged by the mixed ability grouping. In a few sessions, the presentation of work was dull and unimaginative and students were not given the opportunity to think for themselves or to work effectively. Some lesson plans, although otherwise comprehensive, contained no reference to assessment methods or failed to differentiate between the needs of students of differing abilities.

41 In leisure and sports studies, teaching was generally well planned and well managed. Good attention was paid to the development of relevant skills although teaching schemes gave inadequate attention to how key skills were to be integrated with other aspects of the curriculum. In most sessions, teachers made effective use of visual aids and class exercises. In some of the longer sessions the material was not sufficiently well organised to maintain students' interest. Feedback to students on their assignments was sometimes too subjective or too limited in scope.

42 In health care and hairdressing, good use was made of work experience as part of learning. Work placements were well monitored by staff and supported by appropriate documentation. In the best health care sessions, the work was suitably challenging for students and there was a good balance between the teacher's and students' contributions. For example, in one lesson, students taking the certificate in childcare and education had themselves prepared sophisticated presentations outlining the features, causes, and treatments relating to a chosen illness; the teacher then used the intervals between presentations to ask questions and to provide further relevant information. In some sessions, staff made good use of well-produced handouts, worksheets and overhead projector displays. In a small number of lessons, however, these materials were dull and uninspiring; some, for example, were poorly photocopied or out of date. Teaching and learning in hairdressing was more variable in quality. Teaching methods lacked variety and work was not organised in such a way as to enable students to achieve their full potential. Some hairdressing courses lacked coherent written schemes of work and lesson plans.

43 Some lively teaching sessions in art, design and media studies encouraged students to think for themselves and to work on their own. Staff were knowledgeable and enthusiastic and sensitive to individual students' needs. However, too many sessions were weakened by poor organisation of space and equipment and, in a few lessons, the teacher's approach was too informal so that students' attention wandered. Most assignments had clear deadlines, provided opportunities to cover the syllabus and encouraged imaginative responses from students. Some assignment briefs did not list the criteria for assessment. However, the assessment of students' work was systematic and generally accurate. Students felt well informed about their progress. Lesson plans were inadequate; they consisted mainly of a list of the topics to be covered and rarely focused on methods of teaching and learning.

44 Teachers of English and communications used a good variety of teaching methods and assignment tasks. Access courses included an appropriate emphasis on group work and study skills. In GCE A level English language and literature, the teaching was stimulating and well informed and students' responded well. Although most programmes were soundly structured, and their aims and objectives understood by students, staff failed to provide well-developed and effective schemes of work and there were no arrangements to ensure consistency in assessment. In some lessons the pace and level of work was inappropriate and, in others, teachers failed to differentiate between the needs of individual students.

45 Most teaching was of good quality on programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, adult basic education, and on courses for English for speakers of other languages. Courses were supported by detailed lesson plans, most of which included clear learning objectives. The differing learning needs of individual students were carefully taken into account, although teachers of English for speakers of other languages gave insufficient attention to the teaching and assessing of students' writing. The flexible provision of workshop sessions enabled adult students to attend according to their circumstances and commitments. A range of activities, which were relevant to students' lives, was used to promote the development of skills. For instance, in one literacy class students working in pairs and taking turns to describe their leisure activities were able to use elements of 'wordpower' that included oral presentation, listening, and note taking.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

46 Students enjoy their studies and are consistently supportive of the college and their courses. They are well motivated and work purposefully. Many, particularly the adult students, are able to talk confidently about their work. In some areas, including media, a sound technical vocabulary is being developed. Students across many programmes are acquiring knowledge and skills that are directly related to the workplace. In computing studies, this is helped by effective work placements and

students' production of software for local companies. Practical activities are undertaken competently, with careful attention to safety. There is evidence from a number of curriculum areas, including science, communication and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, that students are able to work effectively in groups. Many of the students' assignments and notebooks are well presented.

47 The college keeps accurate records of its students' examination performance. Data are held centrally and checked at course level by the heads of school. The college has recognised the need for more rigorous monitoring of the achievements of the growing number of students on its in-company training provision. Overall, the examination achievements of students on post-16 vocational programmes are good. In 1995, of the 223 students in their final year of study on the vocational courses included in the performance tables produced by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), 95 per cent were successful. This places the college in the top 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector, on this performance measure, which is an improvement on 1994. When compared with the academic qualifications of students on entry this represents a significant achievement.

48 Only 25 students in the 16 to 18 age group were entered for GCE A level examinations in 1995. They scored, on average, 3.3 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This is a fall from the 1994 figure of 4.2. However, it still places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector, based on the data in the 1995 tables published by the DfEE. In 1995, the 108 entries for GCE A level examinations from students aged 19 and over produced a pass rate of 75 per cent, which is substantially above the average for further education sector colleges. Over 35 per cent of candidates gained grades A to C. The GCSE results for 1995 were variable. Approximately 24 per cent of the 66 entries in the 16 to 18 age group obtained grade C or above, which is well below the national average. Amongst students aged 19 and over, 59 per cent of the 220 GCSE entries were graded C or above.

49 While the achievements of students completing their programmes are good, course retention rates vary widely, and are low on many programmes. This produces some poor overall results when examination pass rates are compared with initial enrolments. The problem is recognised within the college and the reasons for non-completion are now being monitored more systematically. The main reason for withdrawals during 1996 was that students found jobs. Figures for 1995-96 show that the college retention rate is nearly 85 per cent for full-time students and just over 92 per cent for part-time students, which is an improvement on the figures for 1995. Records of students' destinations show that full-time students are generally successful in progressing to employment or further study and/or training on completion of their courses. Some 32 per cent obtained employment in 1996, an increase of over 100 per cent since

1993. A similar proportion progressed to other further education programmes. The other significant increase is in the proportion of students progressing to higher education, which has risen by over 40 per cent in the same period. Around 8 per cent of leavers were unemployed and the destinations of 13 per cent were unknown.

50 Students on GNVQ and BTEC programmes are made aware of core and common skills, and their importance. The college policy is to include 1.5 hours of tuition per week in each of the mandatory core skills on all GNVQ programmes. Progress is monitored through course log books and annual course reviews. There is significant variation in levels of achievement in core skills.

51 In science, mathematics and information technology, most students perform well on vocational courses and the proportion of GCSE students achieving grade C or above in mathematics is above the national average. Most of the students taking the national diploma in science and the bachelor of science applied sciences foundation year are successful in progressing to higher education. In 1996, some 90 per cent of bachelor of science foundation-year students went on to first-year degree study. In information technology lessons, students use the relevant hardware and software with confidence. There are good and improving results on the BTEC national diploma in computer studies, though retention rates, down to 60 per cent in 1995-96, are low. Some GCSE students do not have a grasp of basic specialist terminology.

52 Examination pass rates in engineering are generally good, particularly so in mechanical options, where on many of the programmes all students achieve the final award. Course completion rates and attendance rates are both high. Students regularly achieve regional and national awards. Recent awards include regional apprentice of the year and an Institute of Electrical Engineers university sponsorship. Full-time students are extending their knowledge and developing skills relevant to the workplace and part-time students are improving their practical workshop skills. There are poor examination results on two C&G programmes and there is a lack of rigour in the application of some standard experimental techniques.

53 In business and management studies, results in examinations are often at or above the national average; for example, in group secretarial diplomas. There was a 100 per cent success rate for NVQ level 1 in 1994 and 1995. NVQ students' secretarial portfolios at levels 1 and 2 are well indexed and incorporate pertinent evidence from work placements. Students are able to apply their knowledge and skills. Secretarial and information technology students gain valuable vocational insights from their experience in a simulated office and reception area. There are inconsistencies in the quality of level 3 portfolios, with particular weaknesses where students have had no work experience. Some students lack relevant skills in touch-typing and information technology.

54 There are good examination and test results across the range of leisure and tourism courses. The level of student progression to higher education and to a wide range of employment is high on most programmes. Students are gaining good practical skills and vocational awareness, helped by local sports initiatives linked to work-based assessment. Students are not always able to link their knowledge to practical activities. Core skills are unevenly developed.

55 Examination results on health courses are generally good. The pass rate is over 90 per cent on many courses, including BTEC programmes and all C&G courses. GNVQ pass rates in health are above the national average, though pass rates have fallen significantly on the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education nursery nurse course. Core skills are not being acquired systematically. In hairdressing, students are generally successful in achieving their learning objectives, and NVQ students are developing relevant practical skills. Some hairdressing students have insufficient information technology skills.

56 Art and design students possess appropriate skills, though in a limited range of subjects. A sound technical vocabulary is being developed. Examination results are varied. Some GCE A level results are poor. The proportion of students progressing to higher education is modest; for example, only 42 per cent from the BTEC national diploma in general art and design. Practical work is sometimes poorly presented.

57 In humanities, students of communication and English have good subject knowledge and language skills. GCE A level results have shown improvement and are good for 1995. The proportion of GCSE students achieving grade C or above is low, although there has been a substantial improvement in English in 1996. Students' skills in managing their own time are not consistently developed. In general, students following access to higher education courses acquire relevant study skills, although some have limited ability in taking notes.

58 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well motivated. Most are gaining appropriate knowledge and skills. Students' destinations are meticulously monitored. A large proportion of students are successful in gaining college certificates but external accreditation has only been achieved by about 8 per cent of adult basic education and English for speakers of other languages students. A limited range of writing skills is being developed.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

59 The college's charter is made available to all students. It outlines the responsibilities both of the college and of students. Whilst it establishes standards and entitlements, it does not identify those who provide support within the college or the community. Measures of performance have been established and monitoring has started in some of the support areas. Although the college involved representatives from industry in formulating

the charter there is no specific reference to employers nor is there a separate employers' charter.

60 A clear policy statement commits the college to developing quality standards in all aspects of its work. A quality assurance committee has been in operation for several years. It has been used mainly to receive information on quality rather than to set the agenda for quality improvement. Quality assurance is firmly based at the course team level in all curriculum areas and staff commitment to, and involvement in, the processes of quality assurance are growing. A full-time college quality manager develops the system and gives guidance and support. The extensive provision of courses provided in-house for companies has been included within the quality assurance system. In the support areas, quality assurance processes have been defined only for student services, staff services and information technology.

61 For the last two years, all curriculum teams have produced an annual course review as part of their quality process. These are prepared using a standard format which is defined in the college's comprehensive quality manual. Course reviews are wide ranging and backed by course files which give essential background information for improving the quality of provision. Reviews include information on students' reactions to their course and proposed actions to bring about improvements. The course team reviews are generally of a high standard although a few lack sufficiently critical analysis and evaluation. The monitoring of reviews at school level is effective but it is not formal enough above that level. School and faculty reviews of course provision have led to courses being discontinued where they are no longer meeting a need.

62 The college has performance indicators for examination results, retention rates and students' destinations. Although these are monitored at school, faculty and senior management levels, evaluation of the data is not sufficiently thorough. The college has yet to establish other indicators for the curriculum and support services. No use is made of value-added measures for students' achievements.

63 Surveys of the views of full-time, part-time and evening students have been used for several years. Findings are produced for the whole college and for each school. The data have helped to improve the quality of the induction process between 1995 and 1996. However, the findings of these surveys and other information, such as that provided in comments from moderators' reports, are not incorporated into the annual report on courses and schools. A survey of employers' perception of the college has been undertaken for the last two years but there has been little analysis of the results as a means of improving provision.

64 Support staff are appraised annually. Approximately one-third have now received their second interview. This process has contributed well to their development. Appraisal for teachers was started four years ago. However, the original two-year cycle did not prove effective and, after

consultation, the process has been changed to an annual activity. Some senior managers and heads of school have been appraised using the new approach. Observation of teaching is incorporated into the appraisal scheme and part of the appraisal activity is concerned with identifying staff-development needs. Appraisal is offered to all part-time staff who have a significant teaching commitment.

65 The college has engaged in significant staff-development activities, linked to strategic, curriculum and personal development needs. In January 1996 the college received Investor in People status and preparation for this was used to provide a focus for improving staff development. In-house courses are evaluated by questionnaires, and staff participating in staff-development activities are required to disseminate the information that they acquire. The staff-development budget is nearly £60,000 which is around 0.86 per cent of recurrent expenditure. This figure excludes the costs of in-house events and other associated expenses. A member of staff has responsibility for co-ordinating staff development, induction and staff appraisal. The college has maintained its commitment to offering all part-time and agency staff the benefits of induction, support and staff development.

66 The college offers a comprehensive induction for new staff. An induction course is available to new teaching and support staff and members of the corporation. Parts of the course are taken by staff and governors together. Mentors assist new staff and progress is monitored by line managers. The initial course is backed up by half-day sessions later in the first term. Significant numbers of staff have benefited from this training over the last few years.

67 The college's self-assessment report is a comprehensive document which used the headings of the FEFC inspection guidelines published in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Each section has been graded under the inspectorate's five-point grading scale. The strengths identified are cross-referenced to evidence which can be located in the college's documentation. The report shows each area of work developing, the actions being taken, the people responsible, completion dates for targets, and the dates for monitoring or review. In addition, particular aspects of provision are identified for further development over the longer term. Some sections of the report are not critical enough and there are few indications of the measures to be used in evaluating action when it has been taken. The findings of this self-assessment report corresponded closely to the inspection findings and the grades awarded by inspectors. The document helped the inspection team in its task.

68 Although the current quality system is still being developed, the college has now embarked on developing comprehensive procedures for self-assessment. All course and support quality documents are to be completed using a standard format which emphasises areas of strengths and areas of concern. A self-assessment score book which is based upon a commercial scheme has been modified to meet further education

requirements. Large numbers of staff have undergone training in self-assessment and as a consequence staff are developing a more self-critical approach to evaluation and review. Corporation members themselves have evaluated their own performance through a self-assessment questionnaire and then reviewed its findings.

RESOURCES

Staffing

69 The majority of teachers are appropriately qualified. Forty-nine per cent are graduates and 10 per cent have postgraduate degrees. Eighty-four per cent of full-time teachers have a certificate of education or the equivalent, and a further 5 per cent have a C&G teaching certificate. Good progress has been made towards the college's target of ensuring that all the staff who need them will have obtained the requisite training and development lead body assessor awards by June 1997. Of the full-time staff for whom these awards are relevant, 71 per cent currently hold the vocational assessors' award and 38 per cent the internal verifiers' award. A further 9 per cent of full-time staff are qualified to assess students' prior learning. Although a large number of staff have industrial or commercial experience, this experience is often outdated. The college has recognised this as a deficiency and is taking steps to improve the situation. One aspect of the planned updating of professional skills involves the use of staff secondment to industry. A total of 19 staff, including the principal, has recently undertaken some form of work-shadowing, industrial secondment or placement activity. Many staff visit companies to deliver in-company training.

70 There is a permanent staffing complement of 219 full-time equivalents. Nearly all of the permanent teaching staff have signed new contracts which have been phased in over a two-year period. This has enabled the college to make efficiency savings and to adopt a more flexible approach to staff deployment. The college has also moved towards the establishment of a core teaching staff and has been able to appoint a number of its previous part-time teachers to permanent fractional contracts. Since September 1996, hourly-paid teachers have been engaged through the services of an independent staffing agency. Staff appointed through the agency continue to be offered appropriate induction, training and staff development.

71 Teachers receive good levels of assistance from well-qualified technical and administrative staff. The staff in the information technology 'drop-in' centre have a good level of technical expertise and provide effective support and there is particularly effective interaction between teaching and support staff within the school of technology. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by volunteer tutors. Close links have been established between the personnel and administrative services section of the college and the staff services unit.

72 The senior management team consists of six men and one woman. The middle management comprises fourteen staff of whom half are women. The college's self-assessment report acknowledges the need to take action to improve the ratio of male to female staff in some curriculum areas where imbalances exist. There is close monitoring of all applications for staffing posts. Only one full-time member of the teaching staff is from a minority ethnic background compared with more than one in 10 full-time students.

Equipment/learning resources

73 The college is generally well equipped and resources are usually effectively deployed to support learning. Most teaching rooms have appropriate teaching aids. A good range of equipment and materials is available for teaching adult basic education in the college and in the community outreach centres. Good learning packs are used on secretarial courses. Most specialist areas are well equipped. The standard of equipment in the electrical and electronic workshops is particularly good. The college has been successful in attracting funding and donations of equipment from major local companies. It recently secured £303,000 from the competitiveness fund which has led to the opening of a new technology training centre. In a number of curriculum areas, including English and communications and leisure and sports studies, equipment and materials were not being used effectively. In addition, a number of weaknesses were identified in art and design, which lacked appropriate three-dimensional fabrication and printing equipment, and in hairdressing where one of the salons had a range of out-of-date equipment.

74 The college has a well-developed information technology strategy. Significant sums of money have been spent on extending provision. Most of the computers are of industrial standard and the ratio of full-time equivalent students to computers is 8:1. The college has over 70 machines available on open access and the new combined library and information technology centre, due to open in January 1997, is planned to double this quantity. All computers will be linked into the Internet.

75 The college has sought to extend the use of information technology in all curriculum areas. A recent survey has shown clear progress. For example over 70 per cent of lecturers use information technology in preparing for teaching and nearly 70 per cent of students use it for producing their work. There is sufficient skilled technical support available during the day and also in the evenings.

76 The college library and learning resource centre fails to meet the needs of students, primarily because it is too small. When the new combined library and information technology centre opens, this space will be tripled. The present library has appropriately-qualified staff, adequate staffing, and satisfactory opening hours. The college has recognised that its system for library stock purchasing needs improving. Inspections of the curriculum areas revealed book deficiencies in art and design and in

business and management. The college library has a good range of periodicals and there are 103 compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases which can be used on six workstations. The maintenance of these resources needs improving.

Accommodation

77 The college's main site at Wellington, is a large pleasant and well-maintained campus, with buildings dating from the 1960s and 1970s. In addition, there are 12 good-quality mobile classrooms which have been well maintained. Some have heating problems. The college hires a small part of a nearby primary school for use by its students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A major part of the college's educational facilities are at the Oakengates site which is approximately two miles from the Wellington campus.

78 The college's accommodation is improving as new facilities are completed. An attractive new refectory was opened in the summer. Conversion of the assembly hall to the new library and open-access information technology centre will permit further accommodation improvements to take place. For example, the student services centre will be moved to more spacious accommodation in the present library area and this in turn will make possible a much-needed improvement for students' reception, away from the austere main college reception area.

79 The suitability of existing accommodation varies. Many rooms are appropriate for their purpose; for example, the secretarial bureau provides a good, realistic working environment, and the electrical and electronic workshops provide excellent accommodation for teaching and learning. However, some specialist areas have weaknesses. For example, one hairdressing salon is not up to commercial standards, and some accommodation for art and design studies is used inappropriately. The college has taken steps to rectify some of these failings.

80 College buildings have been well maintained. The college is clean, tidy and free from graffiti. Much redecoration and refurbishment has taken place. Close attention has been paid to energy and other utility costs. Room allocation and use of space is carefully reviewed. Both have improved over the past three years and this has enabled the college to meet the growth in student numbers. A centralised room timetabling system has helped to improve the use of rooms.

81 Access for students with restricted mobility is confined to the ground floors of all buildings. Managers try to offset this deficiency through a combination of measures including duplicating facilities and good timetabling. The college has recognised that lack of access to the top floor of the accommodation at the primary school is unacceptable and has plans to move these classes to a single-storey building on the main site. Signposting to the college sites is good but, within the college, it is not always helpful. Students have access to on-site sports facilities, and the college arranges off-site educational visits that are appropriate to courses. There is no general social accommodation for students.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

82 The college is making good progress towards the aim of providing high-quality education for its students. Its strengths are:

- its strong links with external bodies, including schools, universities, employers and the TEC
- extensive provision of in-company NVQs based on flexible responses to employers' needs
- productive working relationship between governors and senior managers
- valuable contributions from the governors in setting the college's mission and providing strategic direction
- the regular achievement of growth above funding and enrolment targets
- well-developed initial guidance and enrolment procedures
- teaching which is generally well organised and suitably varied
- good examination results on vocational programmes
- well-qualified and experienced staff
- the high quality of specialist equipment in many curriculum areas
- well-maintained accommodation which is being steadily improved.

83 If the college is to build on its strengths it should:

- improve governors' reviews of students' achievements and destinations on completion of their courses
- integrate key skills more effectively with other aspects of curricula
- continue to improve student retention rates
- develop procedures for measuring the value which is added to students' qualifications on entry as a performance indicator of students' achievements
- widen the application of, and improve the effectiveness of, the quality assurance system
- update the industrial and commercial experience of staff
- improve access for students with restricted mobility.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage student numbers by age (as at July 1996)

 - 2 Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at July 1996)

 - 3 Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at July 1996)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1996-97)

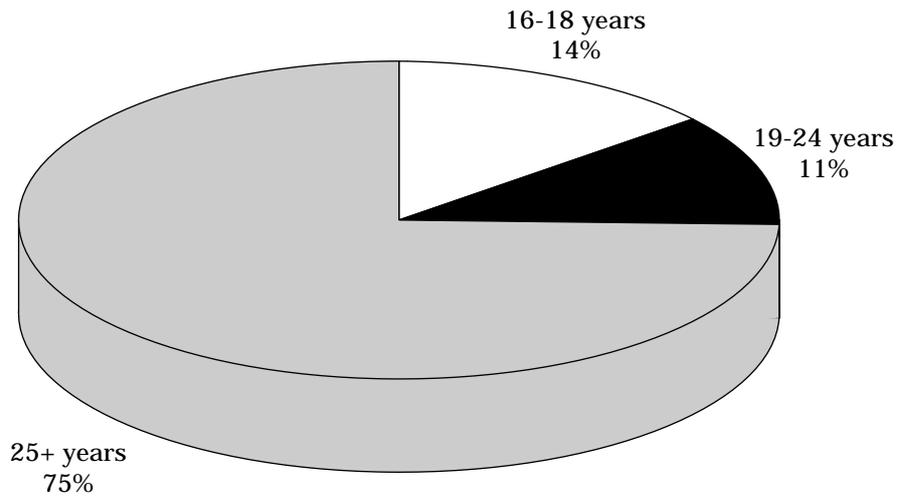
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

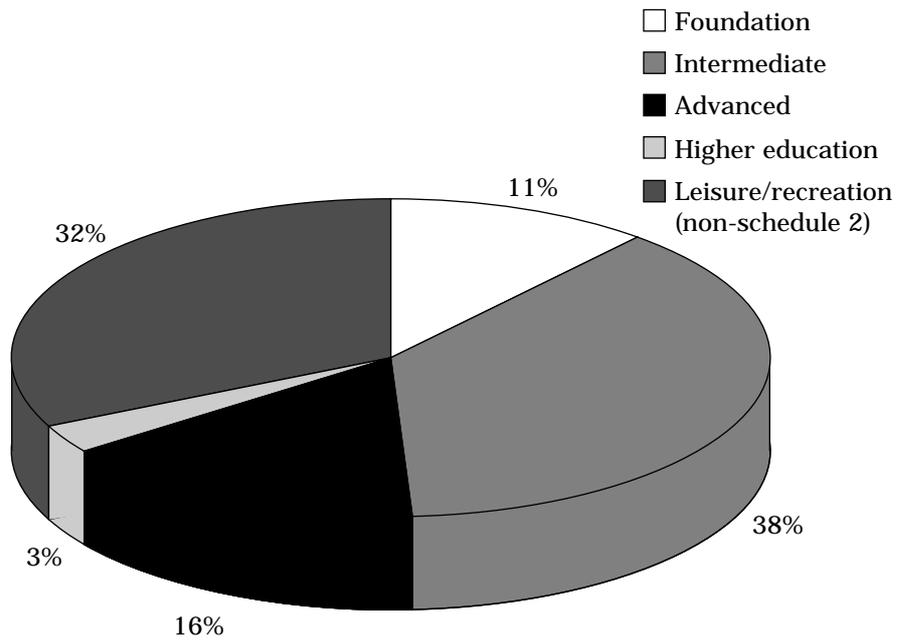
Telford College of Arts and Technology: percentage student numbers by age (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 14,388

Figure 2

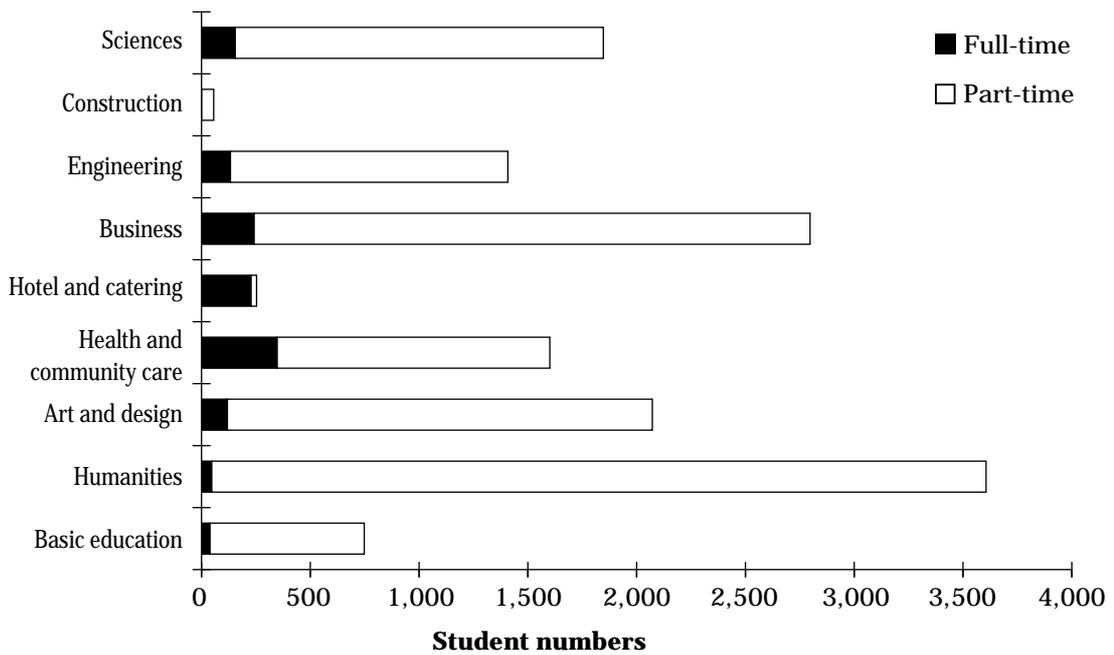
Telford College of Arts and Technology: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 14,388

Figure 3

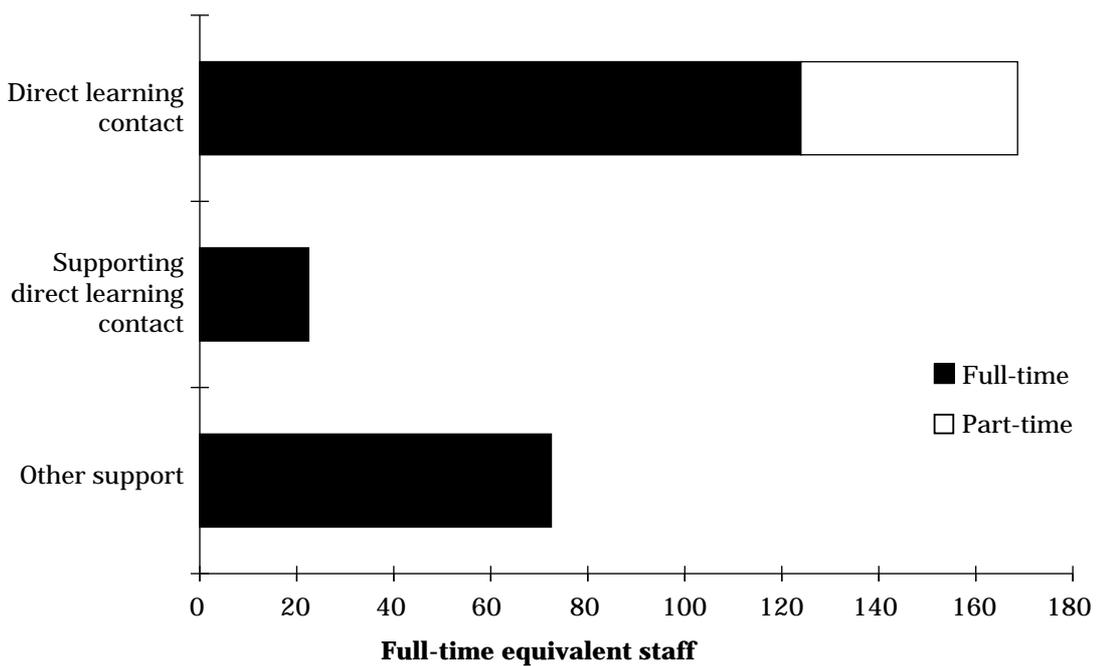
Telford College of Arts and Technology: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 14,388

Figure 4

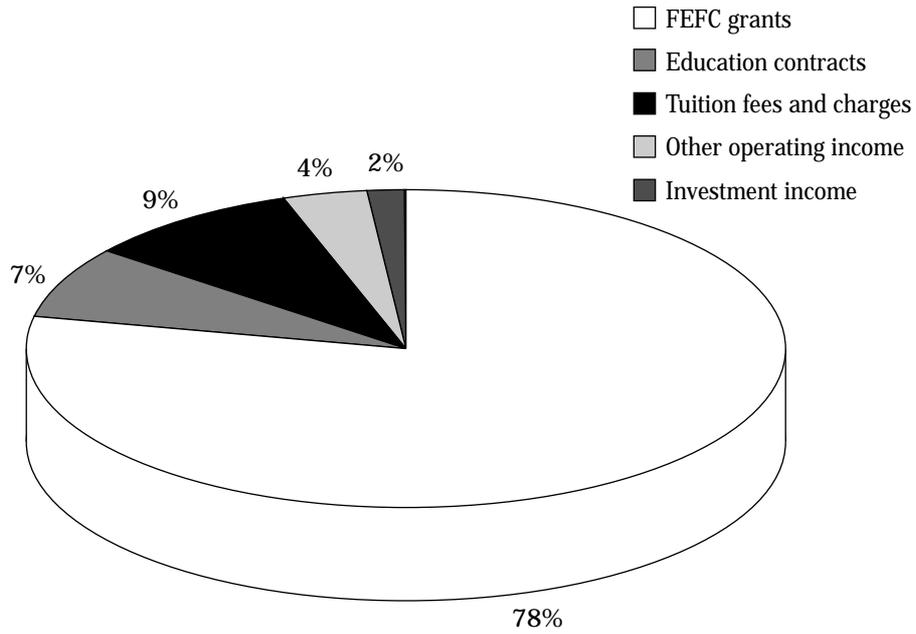
Telford College of Arts and Technology: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1996-97)



Full-time equivalent staff: 264

Figure 5

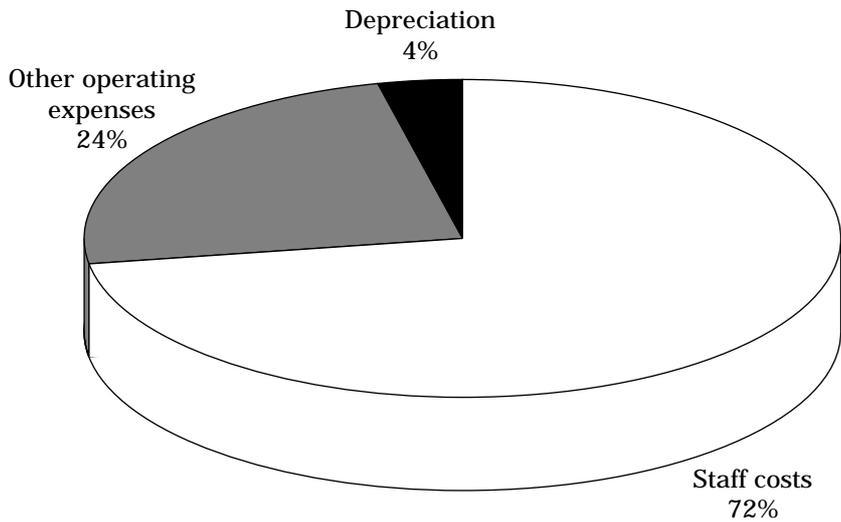
Telford College of Arts and Technology: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £7,347,149

Figure 6

Telford College of Arts and Technology: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Expenditure: £7,258,788

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