

REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE

Curriculum Area  
Survey Report

January 1996

*Art, Design and  
Performing Arts*

THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL

---


***THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL***

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

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

© FEFC 1996 You may photocopy this report.

---



---

## SUMMARY

Art, design, media studies and the performing arts together make up **the third largest of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) programme areas** with nearly 100,000 full-time students and 250,000 part-time students. About half a million people in the United Kingdom make all or part of their living in the arts. Among them are a significant number who are world renowned. They set standards of excellence to which students aspire. This vigorous cultural life is also economically important, accounting for an estimated 2.5 per cent of annual consumer spending and making £4 billion a year in overseas earnings.

There are **almost 400 vocational and academic awards** in the field of art, design, media studies and the performing arts. There is no indication that their number is diminishing or that comparability between them is becoming clearer. The new National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) and General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) are establishing themselves alongside existing awards rather than replacing them.

Despite the plethora of awards, there is no evidence that students have difficulty in recognising **the four main routes for progression:** an academic route, a general route, a specialist route, or part-time skills training. Entry to courses is based more on practical attainment, demonstrated in portfolios of work or at auditions, than on academic achievement. A large proportion of the students following further education courses intend to progress to higher education.

The quality of teaching and the promotion of learning is high, although standards on some of the new GNVQ programmes have yet to reach the levels achieved on courses leading to longer-established awards. An analysis of the inspection grades awarded to colleges for 1993-95, shows that 7 per cent more of the provision in art, design, the performing arts and media studies had strengths which outweighed the

---

weaknesses (grades 1 and 2) compared with the average for all programme areas. The main areas of weakness are the variable quality of teaching in theoretical studies, the relative neglect of fundamental vocational skills such as drawing, voice development and movement studies, and the failure to integrate the core skills of numeracy, literacy and information technology with other aspects of work. In some colleges, there is also a lack of attention to health and safety.

The **quality of students' work** is generally good and some of it is of a very high standard. Students learn to talk about their work and to offer one another constructive criticism. Many of them are also able to subject their work to the test of public exhibition or performance. Examination results and retention rates are generally high across the programme area and there is a strong correlation between the quality of teaching and students' achievements.

Colleges are having mixed success in maintaining standards with diminishing **resources**. Those that are doing least well, are those which continue to offer the same curriculum and the same teaching methods in reduced amounts. Many of those that are succeeding, have made changes which take overall account of curriculum, staffing, and the organisation of workshop and learning support. As a valuable by-product, these colleges often achieve better integrated teams of teaching, technical and library staff. A commendably large number of staff are active practitioners in the arts or design and the programme area benefits particularly from the employment of part-time staff, whose main occupation is professional practice in art, design, the performing arts or the media. Colleges also benefit from the use of public galleries, concert halls and theatres to give their students experience of working for real customers. Changing technologies and improving connections with industry are challenging colleges to make a more careful selection of equipment, rather than invariably seeking to buy production machinery.

---

## CONTENTS

	<b>Paragraph</b>
The range of courses and employment	1
Qualifications	8
Progression	19
Teaching and the promotion of learning	35
Students' achievements	57
Resources	65

---

## THE RANGE OF COURSES AND EMPLOYMENT

1 Art, design, the performing arts and media studies comprise the third largest of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) 10 programme areas. With 351,000 students in 1994-95, their enrolment is exceeded only by those in humanities and business studies. In the academic year 1994-95, the FEFC provided funds for 81,000 full-time and 84,000 part time students. Other sources of funding, for example local authorities and training and enterprise councils (TECs), supported 11,000 full-time and 174,000 part-time students. The growth in enrolments expected by colleges is no less substantial. An additional 12,200 full-time FEFC-funded enrolments, representing a 15 per cent increase, are forecast between 1994-95 and 1996-97. An extra 11,000 part-time enrolments, a 13 per cent increase, are projected for the same period. These are the largest percentage growth predictions in any group of subjects. Of the 457 colleges in the further education sector, 432 (95 per cent) have courses in art and design. Only in the 33 agriculture colleges are they largely unrepresented.

2 The programme area is extraordinarily diverse. Art and design include the traditional artistic disciplines of painting, drawing, sculpture and print-making as well as the full range of design specialisms. Two-dimensional design includes design for printed media such as newspapers, books, advertisements and packaging; design for television and other screen-based media such as computers; photography, film and video; and scientific, medical, natural history and general illustration. Three-dimensional design covers areas such as industrial product design, fashion, textiles and interior design. Design crafts include ceramics, jewellery, fine metalwork, glass, embroidery, leatherwork and fine furniture-making. Performing arts include classical and popular music; ballet and contemporary dance; drama, theatre studies and the theatre crafts and technologies.

---

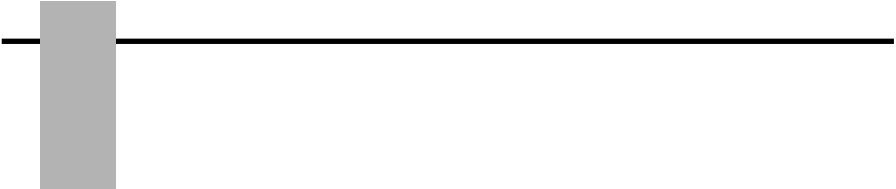
There is a broad range of theoretical and practical work in media studies, including film, television and video, radio and the press. Although this great variety of work covers many different disciplines, there is a shared emphasis on personal creativity.

3 Students enrol on further education arts courses with many different aspirations; higher education, a wish to fulfil a talent, a leisure interest or a determined career intention. Whilst courses may be categorised as preparing people directly for employment, the motivations of students may differ. Part-time students on recreational courses often use their new expertise to earn money. There is no evident link between the strong demand for courses in the arts and the availability of jobs.

4 Surveys of the employment available in art, design, the performing arts and the media use different, overlapping definitions of the arts. Their reliability is affected by the high proportion of part-time, freelance and casual employment which is typical of the sector. Nevertheless a reasonable estimate, based on current data, is that some 500,000 people make all or part of their living in the arts.

5 According to the Policy Studies Institute, there were 175,000 people employed by organisations in the cultural sector in 1991. This definition includes artists, film production and distribution, radio and television services, galleries and museums, theatres, playwrights, performers and musicians. However, this figure represents only a core of people in regular employment with established organisations. The 1993 labour force survey carried out by the then Department of Employment suggests that over 235,000 people work in the visual arts, design and the crafts. Recent surveys show 20,000 working in the crafts (Crafts Council), 35,000 artists (Arts Council), 30,000 designers (Chartered Society of Designers), 3,000 qualified designers employed in 194 major design consultancies (Design Week) and 30,000 secondary teachers of art, design and technology (Department for Education and

---



---

Employment). Large numbers of people in drama, dance and music are employed in technical and administrative support roles. The Institute of Employment Studies estimated in 1993 that 61,000 people were employed in drama and dance-related roles. The United Kingdom Council of Music Education and Training estimated that in 1993, there were 252,000 people working in musical performance and support, of whom 67,000 were members of the Musicians' Union.

6 In addition to their importance in preparing for employment, courses in art, design and the performing arts also educate students to become enlightened consumers of the arts and media. The Arts and Entertainment Training Council estimates that the arts account for 2.5 per cent of annual consumer spending and generate £4 billion in overseas earnings. The Arts Council estimates that 36 per cent of the adult population attended one or more of the following in 1991-92: theatre, opera, dance, classical music, jazz, art galleries and exhibitions. Many, many more are patrons of popular music.

7 The importance of the arts industries as export earners is a consequence of the high standing in the world enjoyed by British artists, designers and creative technicians. They include household names such as the artist David Hockney, film directors and producers Tony and Ridley Scott and Sir David Puttnam, fashion designers such as John Galliano, actors such as Kenneth Branagh and Dame Judy Dench, musicians ranging from Mark Knopfler to Evelyn Glennie and Sir Simon Rattle, and industrial designers such as Sir Terence Conran. International companies which are British include the Royal Shakespeare Company, the media conglomerate Virgin, the BBC, and the many renowned orchestras which play and record worldwide. Festivals such as Edinburgh, Aldeburgh and Bath draw in visitors and performers from all over the world. This vigorous national cultural life draws most of its practitioners from the further and higher education sectors.



---

## QUALIFICATIONS

8 There are 392 different vocational further education qualifications available within the programme area. There is no indication that their number is diminishing. Equally, there is no evidence that comparability between them is becoming clearer. Some awarding bodies are widely-known national concerns, such as the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) and the RSA Examinations Board (RSA). Others are small specialist organisations. Some have a regional basis, such as the Black Country Access Federation. Qualifications range in scope from those which are generic, such as the BTEC national diplomas in general art and design or performing arts, to highly specialised craft qualifications such as the British Antique Dealers' Association diploma in the restoration of antique clocks or the C&G certificate for lockstitch machinists. Bodies such as the former regional advisory councils for further education are extending their activities by validating art and design foundation courses.

9 Five General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) boards and seven General Certificate of Education advanced supplementary/advanced level (GCE AS/A level) boards offer qualifications in the arts in a variety of syllabuses and specialisations, although the results published by the Department for Education and Employment each year list only five GCSE and three GCE A level subject divisions for the programme area. For example, GCE A levels are available in theatre studies, dance, drama and theatre arts, music, music technology, music performance, and in performing arts. GCSE and GCE AS/A levels constitute a substantial range of further education options which are offered as part of a full-time GCSE or GCE A level course, as standalone subjects for part-time study, or in combination with other qualifications such as the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ).

---

10 Many courses in the programme area are small and student numbers are widely distributed among the available qualifications. For the GNVQ, there were in 1994-95, 435 students enrolled on 62 art and design courses at foundation level (an average of 7 per course), 6,589 students on 292 intermediate courses (23 per one-year course), and 8,100 students on 242 two-year advanced programmes (33 per two-year course). In comparison, there were 13,614 students on the advanced level diplomas in art and design validated by BTEC in 1994-95 and 13,144 students were entered for GCE A level examinations in art and design in 1994. Since most GCE A level students were taking a two-year course, it can be inferred that at least 25,000 were enrolled in 1993-94.

11 In practice, the plethora of qualifications can be categorised into four main progression routes; an academic strand, a general strand, a specialist strand and part-time skills training. For example, a student might choose to take GCE A levels including art and design, and follow these with a one-year foundation course before proceeding to higher education. Alternatively, at the age of 16, students can choose either a specialist national diploma in a single subject such as photography or fashion before proceeding to higher education in the same field, or a broader course such as a BTEC national diploma in general art and design or an advanced GNVQ in art and design, before applying for a higher national diploma or degree course place. In some areas, such as printing where there is a tradition of day release from employment to college, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and modern apprenticeships provide work-based qualifications.

12 Comparisons between NVQ and GNVQ levels have been difficult to make because they involve drawing parallels between awards that are based on testing the skills of professional artists and designers, and courses aimed at young students. Industry lead bodies in this programme area include those for design, arts and entertainment (including technical training and stage management), printing, photography, fashion and jewellery. Progress in devising and validating

---

NVQs has been slow, and few college students are currently enrolled on programmes leading to NVQs. Some colleges are developing simulated working environments with the assistance of the appropriate industry, notably in printing, although the delays in launching NVQs have resulted in the continuation of the BTEC first diploma, on which 171 students were enrolled in 1994-95.

13 Some colleges planned their provision on the assumption that the introduction of GNVQ awards would bring together the general and specialist strands of qualification for full-time students by replacing, for example, the BTEC first and national diplomas in general art and design, and the BTEC specialist diplomas in design. Among perceived advantages were the broad educational base of GNVQs, particularly for students at the age of 16, and the operational benefits accruing from having a single, large intake of students who would specialise later, instead of small specialist intakes.

14 Colleges' acceptance of the challenge to compete with each other, and with school sixth forms, has led them to retain BTEC national awards as a means of differentiating their services. The need for differentiation has been emphasised by the diminished availability of local authority discretionary awards, so that some students who would formerly have received assistance with travel costs to attend regional specialist centres, are losing that support if a GNVQ is available closer to their homes. In February 1995, BTEC confirmed that, for the foreseeable future, it would continue to offer both its national diplomas in general art and design and its specialist national diplomas in design. This clarification has been widely welcomed by colleges, and approximately 55 new national diplomas are currently being validated in the programme area. Between February and July 1995, 32 colleges decided that GNVQ courses which had previously been BTEC national diplomas in general art and design, would revert to their original form. The option to offer national diplomas in general art and design is not open to colleges which did not previously do so.

---

15 Written tests set by the validating bodies to evaluate underpinning knowledge in visual arts have caused particular difficulty during the first years of GNVQ. Firstly, because the programmes had no specified syllabus, questions about the body of knowledge could be drawn from an unlimited range of cultural and technological issues. Secondly, their short answer format demanded the identification of a single correct reply in areas where a range of responses might have been equally appropriate. The National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) has subsequently reduced the requirement for external testing, and in the summer of 1995, alternative assessment methods were tested in 18 centres involving 400 students. A more advanced trial is planned for the academic year 1995-96 to enable a revised external test regime to be introduced with the support of colleges from 1996-97. The intention of the modified assessment methods is that the tests should contribute to the effective delivery of the curriculum, rather than being wholly external to it.

16 There is a continuing concern among institutions about the excessive use of jargon in course specifications and assessments for GNVQ. This issue is also receiving some attention from NCVQ and the awarding bodies. Some of the obscurity may be a by-product of the difficult task of describing in words, abstract ideas which deal with visual images.

17 In 1994-95, advanced and intermediate GNVQ programmes in media production and communications were piloted, with 915 students enrolled. A GNVQ in performing arts is being developed with the intention of beginning a pilot phase in 1996-97.

18 A unique feature of the qualifications structure in art and design is the wide availability of one-year foundation courses designed to prepare students with GCE A levels for higher education. These courses derive from 'pre-diploma' programmes which were part of the degree-equivalent national diploma in art and design introduced from 1962. As post-GCE A level courses, they are anomalous in further education. Nevertheless, between 10,000 and 12,000 students study on foundation

---

courses. Of these 8,300 have their awards validated by BTEC, a further 1,200 by five regional advisory councils for further education, and the remainder by higher education institutions.

## PROGRESSION

19 The examination of portfolios of work has been the principal means of selection for progression both into and within professional practice in art and design. This emphasis has been mirrored by entry procedures for many educational courses, which give relatively little weight to prerequisite qualifications, but depend rather upon appraisal of a portfolio and a personal interview. A comparable process in the performing arts has been the widespread use of entry auditions.

20 Entry requirements for GNVQ in art and design are based largely on possession of GCSE grades. The average entrant to GNVQ intermediate courses in 1993-94 had between one and two GCSE grades at C or above, according to a report published by the Further Education Unit. Entrants to advanced GNVQ possessed, on average, between three and four GCSE grades A to C, although colleges usually laid down a formal requirement for a minimum of four. In general further education colleges, the GCSE qualifications of students entering advanced GNVQ in art and design were much the same as in other subjects, but in sixth form colleges they were somewhat lower on average, at just over three grades A to C. The acceptance of students with lower entry qualifications than are formally required for both GNVQ intermediate and advanced, is judged by the Further Education Unit to cast doubt on the equivalences of GNVQ with GCSE and GCE A level, and to hamper or delay progression. Inspectors saw some evidence that students on GNVQ intermediate courses had difficulty in developing sufficiently to enter advanced level programmes in one year. They most often had problems in attaining the general educational development necessary to achieve proficiency in core skills such as numeracy and literacy.

---

21 Many GCE A level entrants are required to have five or more GCSE grades A to C, and evidence produced by the Audit Commission in its report, *Unfinished Business* (1993), suggested that this was a prerequisite to their reliably staying the course.

22 Entrants to BTEC specialist or general national diploma courses are normally required to hold at least four GCSE grades A to C, plus a portfolio of art and design work or an audition in the performing arts. In many colleges, national diploma places remain fewer than the number of applicants who have the basic educational qualifications, and entry interviews therefore remain competitive rather than being for guidance purposes only.

23 Entry to foundation studies normally requires a minimum of five GCSE grades A to C, together with a portfolio of art and design work. However, in practice, most entrants have GCE A level, and their intention is to complement this with the development of an improved portfolio through a year's intensive art and design work, and experience of a range of visual disciplines. The purpose of foundation courses is not only to prepare students for higher education but also to help them choose the most suitable degree or higher national diploma course.

24 Professional employment in the arts and design is mainly open to graduates and those with higher diplomas. Surveys in the programme area indicate that approximately 80 per cent of full-time students intend to progress from further education courses to higher education, rather than directly into work. Progression into higher education in the visual arts and design has been mostly through the specialist national Art and Design Admissions Registry (ADAR) and to a lesser extent, through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). In the performing arts, progression is through UCAS to degree courses, or by individual audition and interview to professional training courses and conservatories. Increasingly, the clearing houses have become integrated and ADAR will merge with UCAS with effect from the 1997 student entry.

---

25 The length of full-time programmes of study undertaken by students from the age of 16 up to first degree level is five years at least, and more commonly six years. In 1994, 91 per cent of applicants to first degree courses in art and design were aged 19 or over and 88 per cent of applicants to higher national diploma courses were aged 19 or over. Thirty-three per cent of applicants under 19 were accepted to first degree courses in art and design, compared with 46 per cent of applicants aged 19 or over. For higher national diploma courses in art and design, 13 per cent of applicants under 19 and 41 per cent of applicants aged 19 or over were accepted. This pattern emphasises the importance accorded by interviewers to both practical experience demonstrated in a portfolio of work, and personal maturity gained with age.

26 The statistics produced by ADAR for 1994 entrants do not include all those applying for visual arts courses in higher education, but with over 30,000 applicants they do reveal clearly the routes through further education which most students follow. By far the most certain route to degree courses was GCE A level plus a one-year foundation course. Applicants through this academic strand achieved a 61 per cent entry rate. Of students applying from BTEC specialist and general national diplomas, 39 per cent gained degree places. Direct applications from GCE A level to degree courses were only a small proportion of the total, 17 per cent, and only a very few of these students, 17 per cent or about one in six, were accepted. Progression to higher national diploma courses on the other hand, was more certain for applicants who had gone through further education in either specialist or general national diploma programmes. Forty-seven per cent of BTEC national diploma holders were accepted for higher national diploma courses, compared with 39 per cent of those who had come through the GCE A level and foundation diploma route. Applicants from schools for places on higher national diploma courses did slightly better than those who intended to enter degrees, with a 19 per cent or one in five entry rate.

---

27 Applications from students with GNVQs are still too few to make sound judgements about their success in progressing to higher education. At the end of the 1992-93 academic year, only 69 GNVQ students in art and design applied through UCAS. Of this small number, 60 per cent received at least one offer, whereas 85 per cent of the 905 GNVQ applicants in the UCAS scheme as a whole, received at least one offer of a place. GNVQ applicants submitting through ADAR in the same year totalled 114 of whom 91, or 80 per cent, were successful in gaining places. ADAR reported that applicants in 1994 were also few. Their numbers will be sufficient to form a basis for reliable comparison from 1995 onwards.

28 Adults applying from access courses formed a small proportion of the total; some 3 per cent of degree applicants and 2 per cent of higher national diploma applicants. They were more successful in gaining entrance to degrees, with 38 per cent achieving places, than to higher national diplomas, where only 27 per cent were accepted.

29 Of the 30,000 students applying through ADAR, it is estimated that 13,000 remain unplaced. There are no national data to reveal what happens to these students.

30 The ADAR statistics show that women were generally more successful in progressing to higher education in art and design. For degree courses, women's progression rate is 9 per cent better than that for men. For higher national diplomas, the difference is much less marked, at 3 per cent. The gap varies among disciplines, with women being nearly 20 per cent more successful in gaining product design degree places but only 5 per cent more successful in textiles. The data show that gender stereotyping is still prevalent; few women apply for product design and few men for textiles. Applicants of either sex forming a small minority of a cohort have disproportionately higher levels of success in gaining places. This may reflect the determination of candidates who choose to contradict gender stereotypes or, perhaps,



---

that institutions compensate for gender stereotyping through positive discrimination.

31 Data from ADAR show that students from minority ethnic groups do not fare as well as white applicants in progressing to higher education courses in art and design. Whilst 46 per cent of white applicants to degree courses were successful, only 36 per cent of students from minority ethnic groups gained places. The discrepancy is somewhat less marked but still significant among higher national diploma applications; 42 per cent of white applicants gained places compared with 35 per cent of those from minority ethnic groups.

32 There are no co-ordinated statistics for students progressing to higher education in music and the performing arts.

33 Progression through portfolio examination and personal interview is a matter of matching the particular strengths and interests of each applicant with those of the receiving institution. Success therefore depends, to an appreciable extent, on the applicant receiving good advice. In this programme area, such advice comes mainly from teachers and personal tutors, not professional careers officers. The contribution of part-time teachers, who may well work in both further education and higher education institutions, is particularly significant.

34 More and more further education sector colleges are seeking to provide opportunities for their students to progress from further to higher education by mounting degree and higher national diploma programmes themselves. This is a response to the rising number of further education students who cannot move away from home owing to lack of money or family commitments. Many higher education courses are offered through franchise agreements in which the finance, the validation of the award and quality control derive from a university or college. Others are operated by the further education sector colleges themselves, particularly in the case of those specialist colleges that carried forward a range of related further and higher education courses

---

when they were incorporated. Rather than being defined solely by the level of work they offer, some further education colleges now define themselves in terms of their ability to provide a ladder of opportunities for progression to local students of all ages.

## TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

35 Judgements about the quality of provision are based on 321 inspections of art, design, the performing arts and media studies in the two years 1993-95. Inspections included observation of 3,025 sessions. The work took place in 209 institutions, of which 105 were general further education colleges, 60 were sixth form colleges, 36 tertiary colleges, seven specialist colleges, and an adult education institute operating throughout the country.

### **Inspection grades (percentages) for art, design, the performing arts and media studies compared with average inspection grades for all programme areas: 1993-95**

	<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Grade 2</i>	<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>Grade 5</i>
Art and design	14	62	21	3	< 1
All programme areas	9	60	28	3	< 1

The evidence of inspection is that provision in these subjects is better than average for the sector, with 7 per cent more grades 1 and 2 awarded.

36 There were considerable variations between types of course. During 1994-95, 61 per cent of intermediate GNVQ sessions were graded 1 or 2 by inspectors. Seventy-nine per cent of other intermediate level sessions, such as those in BTEC first diploma courses, were awarded grades 1 or 2. A similar pattern was evident for advanced level courses. Fifty-six per cent of advanced GNVQ sessions were graded 1 or 2 compared with 70 per cent of sessions on other advanced vocational

---

courses such as the BTEC national diploma in general art and design. These figures tend to confirm the anecdotal evidence reported by inspectors, that teachers found the new GNVQ qualifications hard to introduce.

37 The majority of classes seen were practical sessions in the studio, in workshops, and at rehearsals. In many of these sessions, students were continuing work which was already under way; nevertheless, the better classes began with an introduction by the teacher which set the day's work in context and laid down expectations of what was to be achieved. Similarly, these classes ended with the teacher drawing out general conclusions, reviewing progress and setting homework. Good practical classes exhibited no less structure than good theory lessons.

38 In practical classes, students inevitably spent much of their time working either by themselves or with others on projects. These activities were as various as drawing from a life model; developing designs through a succession of sketches or on a computer; preparing a play for performance, and rehearsing a folk band. Good teaching in these circumstances involved discussing with students their progress, analysing their achievements and drawing out promising avenues for development and, as often as possible, sharing the lessons learned with the whole group. This approach allowed good teachers to show their enthusiasm for the work of their students and to bring in their own erudition in a manner which in no way suppressed students' confidence about pursuing individual explorations. This style of teaching, which was common to the whole programme area, led to a happy and productive atmosphere, in which staff and students were clearly pursuing shared interests and ambitions.

39 The difference in effectiveness between classes where this technique worked well and those where the teacher was concerned merely with correction and progress towards a predetermined end, was very marked. A good example at a college in the North East, involved

---

students on a performing arts GCE A level course. The students were exploring characters from a play. They did so without self-consciousness, encouraged by a teacher who challenged their ideas without deflating them. At the end of a two-hour session, the teacher asked them to enact a quiz show, during which they were questioned about what they had learned so that the knowledge of character they had gained was summarised and confirmed for the whole class. In a much less productive session in another college, a skeleton was set up instead of the life model who did not turn up. It was suspended on a frame, and several students sat where their view was almost totally obscured. The teacher had not noticed, and did nothing about it when it was pointed out to him. He went from student to student, often rubbing out what they had done and drawing over the top, so denying them the opportunity of using his guidance to help them improve their own work.

40 This last example also shows how vital good classroom organisation is for practical teaching in the arts. A successful result often depends upon the teacher bringing together a project which is appropriate for the students, the right specialist room, the necessary materials, and enough equipment in good working order. A session which wasted a great deal of time was observed in a basic photography course. Students were being taught the rudiments of developing a film. The darkroom was not large enough for the whole group, and four students were left outside to practice loading film into a single developing tank. Each student loaded the tank in turn while the others watched. They persisted dutifully for 10 minutes, until the possibilities of this simple task were exhausted. They then talked about other matters until the lecturer returned 25 minutes later. Staff confronted with inadequacies of this kind, sometimes sought to justify them as stemming from a creative environment, whereas the same activities carried out professionally would in fact be subject to normal commercial constraints of time, cost and efficiency.

---

41 Good teachers also extended the process of learning through generalisation from individual experience by encouraging students to take a lead. For example, in an art and design foundation course in one London college, students were presenting their work to others. They had to describe their ideas, drawings and finished designs, explaining why they had made their decisions and how they intended to complete the project. There were at least 15 different potential design solutions presented by the group, and the students' and teacher's enthusiasm never flagged.

42 A more directive approach worked well when it was appropriate to the stage of development which students had reached. For example, in a sixth form college in the South East, a group of students not used to singing and who would normally have been self conscious about doing so, were split into four small groups; bass, tenor, alto, and soprano. They were asked to sing certain notes at first separately and then together, creating a chord. By varying the note sung by one or more groups, the effect of changing harmonies was demonstrated convincingly. At the same time, the students were helped to lose their shyness and gain confidence in what they were doing. There is a substantial element of personal development involved in good learning in this programme area. Some students who might not have experienced success before are able to forget themselves sufficiently to become fully involved and to do well.

43 In good hands, demonstration remains a most effective means of teaching. In a general further education college on the south coast, a teacher showed a class how to construct the shadows cast by geometric solids lit from different directions. He made his points at an easel, using brushes, paper and paint. Students enjoyed the dash of showmanship and remembered what they had been taught when they came to use the techniques themselves. At a college in the Midlands, a teacher showed students how to make photographic presentation portfolios suited to different kinds of work. He showed them his own portfolios,

---

emphasising how cheap and easy to make they were, passing them round the class to underline the point. In neither of these examples did the teacher seek authority, but in both it was evident that students respected staff who were skilled themselves and who showed those skills in a way which minimised difficulties.

44 Standards of teaching in theoretical studies varied widely. The absence of even basic teaching materials in some colleges, such as slides to illustrate works of art, suggested that teachers or managers did not appreciate either the interdependence of practical and theoretical classes, nor the importance to students of their being able to demonstrate experience of systematic theoretical study in order to progress to higher education. At a specialist college in the South West, an excellent lecture on Japanese prints included a wide range of reference to social issues in nineteenth century Japan, and to the characteristics of modern society which were derived from them. The lecturer had built up an extensive slide collection, which included illustrations of the prints themselves as well as of visual context such as Zen gardens. The sexually explicit 'pillow books', to which most of the Japanese masters contributed, were dealt with fully and with sensitivity to an audience which included both adolescents and mature students with a scholarly background. In contrast, a part-time lecturer at another college had to deal with a lack of illustrative material, and with students who arrived in dribs and drabs up to half an hour after the start of the lesson. He repeated his introduction for each group of newcomers, so losing coherence and pace, and then showed videos recorded from television for some 40 minutes, a period of time when he commented little and when his presence was not really necessary.

45 Effective learning in the subject area requires the grasp of a wide range of theory. Theoretical studies include music theory and history; choreography and the history of dance; the study of texts for performance and theatre history; technical studies in sound and lighting; media institutions, audiences and genres; the history of art and

---

design; cultural studies; professional practice; and materials and manufacturing technologies.

46 In most colleges, the quality of these studies depended heavily on the abilities of a single teacher, or at best a very small team. Where the teacher had no specialist qualification in history or theory, the scheme of work was sometimes more a reflection of the current interests of students than a structured plan which assured balance and wide chronological or thematic coverage. Theory teachers were sometimes not regarded as essential members of teaching teams, so that low attendance at their classes was countenanced or even encouraged by colleagues. Capable staff were often seen to be struggling to overcome the limitations imposed by small or outdated collections of books and journals in college libraries.

47 Undertaking work for local and national companies has been a longstanding method of helping students to understand the needs of industry, and giving them a taste of professional necessities such as meeting deadlines. Colleges often claim that they undertake 'live commercial projects', but evidence from inspections suggests that this does not always involve students in working with company personnel. Students need to negotiate with the customer, discussing costing, pricing, methods of production and delivery deadlines, and should experience a client's reaction to their work. In a London college, display design students discussed with the creative director of a local store the theme, costs, and planning as well as the execution of window displays for the Christmas season. At a college in the North West, students were presented with real briefs to produce logos and brochures for businesses including the new local tram service, and the Metropolitan Police. These materials are now in use. A sixth form college in East Anglia supports a student theatre group, which puts on two or three productions a year, touring them to local schools and to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. This involves students not only in acting in front of a

---

paying audience but also in the whole gamut of technical and administrative jobs which are needed to run a theatre company.

48 Placement of students with design studios, advertising agencies, theatres, music production companies, shops and the media happens in most general further education and specialist colleges. Work placement is mandatory in BTEC national diploma courses, and students clearly benefit from it. Placements are successful where: there is careful planning, with students involved in the negotiation; the time spent in the company involves the student in some practical work; and careful evaluation takes place afterwards. Work placements are not a required element of GNVQ courses and, where BTEC national diplomas have been converted to GNVQs, work placements and their potential for developing links with employers are declining. In sixth form colleges, work placements are not well developed, although inspectors saw several examples of good practice. At a specialist college in the South East each student in graphic design is allocated to a 'godfather'; a local employer who may also be a part-time teacher or a college governor. Godfathers play a central role in planning, monitoring and evaluating work placements and students consult them throughout their courses.

49 General educational development has long been an explicit requirement of courses in the programme area. For example, BTEC national diplomas include 'common skills', and the GNVQ now places substantial emphasis on core skills. It is stipulated that the possession of these skills should be assessed in the vocational context. In the better GNVQ provision, core skills are integral to the projects which students undertake. However, some staff remain uncertain as to how best this should be achieved, and numeracy and information technology are sometimes given prominence only when they are required as a tool to complete assignments. In one college three different core skills were studied in three consecutive classes, in which the ability range of the group was diverse: several students had grades A to C in GCSE English and mathematics, while others needed support in basic literacy and



---

numeracy. The students became bored and disenchanted with activities which they saw, wrongly but understandably, as peripheral to their main interests. At a general further education college, a much more successful approach to teaching mathematical skills was seen. They were normally an integral part of projects, and where students found themselves unable to cope with a problem, specific classes were provided to help them. Because they needed the knowledge, there and then, to complete their project work they were well motivated, and there was no stigma attached to a process which was analogous to other research.

50 Good practice of this kind depends both on far-sighted curriculum design, so that projects cover the required core skills and enable students' weaknesses to be identified, and on staff who deal sensitively with deficiencies in students' prior learning.

51 All learning in the creative arts includes formal elements such as drawing, visual language, voice, movement studies, aural skills and presentation. Their acquisition is the foundation for the development of individual creativity. Often, these vocational core skills are not well taught. Some shortcomings derive from a failure to recognise that a range of separate courses contain substantial common elements which, if all the students were taught together, could be better resourced and tackled more systematically. The many aspects of drawing are a common example. When drawing is neglected, the impact is felt in inadequate gathering of information in sketchbooks, inability to set down ideas fluently as they form in the mind, and ineffective presentation of the final proposal. Good practice was seen at a sixth form college in the North West where students working on large paintings were developing them from their sketches. Their sketchbooks were exciting and fresh, full of highly personalised visual statements. Their skills were well developed, the work displaying facility with a range of media and materials. Conversely, in a specialist college of art and design, the lack of a concerted approach to drawing was manifest as a weakness in courses as distinct as fashion and three-dimensional design.

---

52 There was often little contact between courses in the arts and design. In some cases, and particularly in specialist colleges and sixth form colleges, this was the result of departmentalism, where a single subject was the province of each department. Sometimes, such divisions were exaggerated by the location in separate faculties of disciplines which are related to each other. This was most marked in media studies and design technology which often suffered by being separated from the areas whose equipment and expertise they needed to share. Where students with complementary interests and skills did work together with some frequency, they had a taste of the interdisciplinary teamwork which is indispensable in professional practice, and they often achieved particularly good results. For example, at a college in the Midlands, students were designing and making innovative basques with the help of a local corsetry company. Performing arts students were responsible for conceiving and choreographing an event to be staged at the local arts centre for which the basques were to be the costumes. The county arts officer had worked closely with college staff to bring together the necessary skills, sponsorship and venue. It was a worthwhile demonstration that an ability not only to make things, but to make things happen, is an essential ingredient of success in the arts.

53 It is only just becoming common for adults, and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to be fully integrated with school leavers. Even where it has already happened, colleges sometimes do not acknowledge it. For example, one course had 70 per cent of adult students but the curriculum remained unchanged from the time when it was designed for teenagers. An excellent example of the merits of integration was seen at a tertiary college in Yorkshire, where music students who were members of a world-famous brass band played alongside those studying for GCE A level, the former gaining in theoretical knowledge and the latter in practical musicianship. At a college in the South West, students with learning difficulties were studying for GCSE drama, and were working successfully on this

---

practical syllabus alongside students who were on full-time GCSE programmes.

54 Inspectors have criticised the lack of attention paid to health and safety issues in a number of colleges offering art and design and performing arts courses. They noted a wide range of dangers including:

- the storage of heavy buckets of glaze on high shelves which were not secured to their supporting brackets
- the failure to maintain first aid points with the necessary supplies
- the use of open compressed air lines to blow off dust without providing protection
- a disinclination among staff to enforce regulations on the use of protective clothing and footwear
- neglect of the statutory controls on the use, identification and storage of hazardous substances
- lack of knowledge of fire-proofing regulations for stage sets and properties.

55 In some colleges, health and safety precautions are seen as restrictive and, without a positive determination by staff to promote safe working practices, students do not acquire the attitudes they will need later for independent professional work. There were some grounds for the suspicion that poor health and safety practice was regarded by some teachers as natural in a creative environment, or even that danger made workshops exciting. At a sixth form college in the West Midlands, staff in design technology had reacted to this surmise by keeping machinery scrupulously clean, by annual sanding and varnishing of work benches, by making safety precautions a priority and by growing plants in the workshops to dispel their traditional utilitarian appearance. An important by-product was that, in recent years, the number of women students had grown to equal the number of men.

---

56 Surprisingly few visual arts teachers appeared to give priority to making the teaching environment an aid to learning. A remarkable example of a teacher using a specialist classroom to support the curriculum was seen at a sixth form college on the south coast. From the cardboard skeleton by the door labelled 'the last student to fail the GCE A level examinations', to its abundance of textbooks, posters, illustrations, models and computer software, the room left little doubt in students' minds that they were expected to work with dedication to excel in technical drawing and illustration. In many colleges there was a sad contrast between fine student work shut away in portfolios, and corridors devoid of any display or celebration of students' successes and boardrooms hung with reproductions available from high street chainstores or photographs of governors long departed.

## STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

57 Examination results and student retention are generally high across the programme area. However, in many colleges, information on results was incomplete and in a few colleges, managers were unable to provide any detailed data about examination outcomes. In one sixth form college, the head of faculty was unable to say which courses in art and design were being followed, and had no record of previous examination results although this information was held by individual teachers.

58 Where results were poor or inconsistent in colleges, teachers often blamed their students' lack of ability. The grades awarded by inspectors for teaching and learning, and for students' achievements, show a correlation between the two. This evidence suggests that good teaching leads to good results. Art and design staff collectively do too little to analyse outcomes data, in order first to perceive and then to address poor, or uneven performance.

---

59 Assessment in the programme area takes a number of forms, but group critique is common to the visual and performing arts. This approach provides students with the opportunity to display or perform their work together, with each person's work being discussed and evaluated by the group and usually by more than one staff member. Students learn to talk about their work and to offer one another constructive criticism. In some colleges, this is taken further, with students contributing to the grading process. Assessment also takes the form of individual portfolio review, written work, and the involvement of employers or practising professionals, particularly in the case of live projects.

60 Judgements based on evaluation of outcomes, whether they be objects or performances, inevitably have a subjective element. The reliability of those judgements is deliberately enhanced by the involvement of several staff assessors, each marking independently. The introduction of more explicit marking criteria, which are particularly closely associated with GNVQ and NVQ, is likely to contribute further to objectivity. In the great majority of the colleges inspected, records of assessment gave evidence of a healthy critical atmosphere and a good correlation between the judgements of staff and those of the external assessors employed by the validating bodies.

61 The use of explicit performance criteria to grade GNVQ work has varied widely in effectiveness. A good example was seen at a general further education college in the South East, where a teacher conducted a series of one-to-one project assessments with students, checking their fulfilment of each performance criterion methodically. Because the process was an informal but intensive dialogue with the student, it served to reveal and confirm new achievements. Elsewhere, assessment was sometimes reduced to mere checking of characteristics against a list, giving some credence to the common fear that students might pass all stages of assessment without producing work of any real quality.

---

62 It is a feature of this programme area that almost all students show very high levels of commitment to their work. At a college in the Eastern Region, students spent many hours at the college outside classes, rehearsing and using the music practice rooms and the library. A theatre studies GCE A level student spent the evening operating the stage-lighting for another course, and GCE A level music students joined a degree group in a demanding rehearsal of Stravinsky's opera *The Rake's Progress*. In many colleges, classes of 16 or 17 year olds were seen working hard and effectively without continuous supervision by a teacher, often making responsible use of expensive and delicate equipment.

63 Poor punctuality and poor levels of attendance occur in too many colleges. In one college, only three out of 15 students on the register in a design crafts group were present 20 minutes after the start of the session. In the same college, 16 out of 41 students in an art history class were present at the beginning of the session, and the number only rose to 25 after 15 minutes. The signing-in procedure which some colleges use for registration is an appropriate recognition of adult responsibility, and of the need to work outside the studio to carry out research and practical work during a project. However, examples were often found where this approach had been abused by students and where its unreliability was allowed by staff to colour their attitude to remedying deficiencies of timekeeping and attendance which would hinder students in their working lives.

64 Some students' work is of a very high standard. It encompasses achievement in traditional skills such as illumination, lettering or embroidery; professional design work across the whole spectrum of industry; and music and performance covering both the established canon and work of real innovatory quality. It is significant that students in this programme area, possibly more than those in any other, are able to subject their work to the test of public exhibition or performance.

---

## RESOURCES

65 Studio teaching has developed over several centuries from methods used for instructing apprentices in artists' studios. This heritage contains the seeds of benefits and difficulties. On the one hand, relations between teacher and student continue to be cordial and informal, students learn by doing, and they have the satisfaction of producing work of their own. On the other hand, intensive discussion of issues as they arise is expensive of staff time, the materials needed for many of the disciplines are costly, and the production of finished work entails both a large space and equipment which is increasingly sophisticated.

66 A few years ago, it was not uncommon for there to be only five students for each member of staff and for up to 36 hours to be timetabled each week. In 1994-95, inspectors observed excellent teaching with a student-to-staff ratio of under 10:1, and 29 timetabled hours a week. The same college had a very high level of funding from the FEFC and spent nearly 10 per cent of the value of its considerable holdings of major equipment on new machinery during the year; a sum of nearly £500 for each full-time equivalent student. However, very good results were achieved where student-to-staff ratios were as high as 20:1, and where timetabled hours were much the same as in other subjects, at between 15 and 18 hours a week. Where resources were greatly reduced and quality was retained, it was invariably the case that the college had carefully reconsidered the curriculum rather than simply doing less of the same. Changes affected staffing, accommodation and equipment in almost equal measure.

67 At a general further education college in the North East, a thorough curriculum review had reasserted the central importance of project work, and defined how access to workshops and learning resources should be structured so that students should have all the help they needed to carry out their design work. Each student's weekly

---

commitment was defined as 30 hours, 15 of which were to be taught and 15 of which were to be spent in carefully-defined independent study with access to studio facilities. Project briefs were designed to a standard format, whose consistent application was assured by having them processed by a single secretary, mandated to refuse any that were incomplete. Briefs set out what was to be achieved, how the project related to the course as a whole, the deadline, the research required and the equipment available. When the brief was produced, workshop managers who were responsible for scheduling and supervising technical areas arranged the necessary workshop access, and learning resource managers who maintained collections of books, ephemera, videos and compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database disks, made packs of the information which students would need. The roles of teachers, technicians, librarians and administrators were explicitly defined and were complementary. Workshops were separated from individual courses to become resources available to all on a booking basis, and the respective responsibilities of teacher and learner were more fully worked out.

68 An innovative variation on this approach was seen at a college in Yorkshire where a staffing model adapted from university science faculties was being tried. Some staff on technician grades had a mixture of duties which included both teaching and workshop supervision. The college also supported them through postgraduate studies. Such posts were most likely to attract young graduates staying only for a few years, so that college students would have the benefit of contact with some staff of much the same age as themselves, and would learn from their current research interests.

69 Inspectors found little evidence of inadequacy in either the numbers or the capability of staff. Teachers were appropriately qualified, most holding a degree in a specialist area of the arts or design. In sixth form colleges, a greater proportion of staff had studied their specialism as part of a teacher training degree, and they were less likely



---

to have had experience as a practitioner of their subject. A strength of teaching in art, design and the performing arts has been the encouragement by most colleges, and the willing acceptance by most full-time teachers, that they should continue to exhibit, practise or perform professionally. Fewer are now able to do so to any significant degree, and there is a consequent need for colleges to plan professional updating more systematically, and to resource it more generously. A countervailing benefit, however, is the acknowledgement by teachers that they are, first and foremost, professional educators.

70 General further education colleges and specialist colleges continue to meet a proportion of their staffing needs with part-time teachers on short contracts. Between 15 and 50 per cent of teaching hours are provided by this means. Students benefit most from part-time teachers who spend the majority of their time in professional practice and bring the benefits of their current experience to the college, either for a short time each week or on a block basis. However, where college departments are small and work separately from others, high proportions of visiting staff sometimes leave only one or two full-time staff to plan and organise the curriculum.

71 Most sixth form colleges employ only small numbers of part-time teachers, either because of their different traditions, or because of the practical difficulty of matching the availability of visiting practitioners to the short classes found in many GCE A level timetables. The benefits of employing visiting professionals in terms both of flexibility and vocational relevance, are likely to become more obvious as sixth form colleges develop GNVQ programmes.

72 Sufficient teachers are gaining accreditation as assessors and verifiers to allow GNVQs to grow. Other areas of staff development have been relatively neglected during the introductory phase of these new qualifications. Many staff would benefit from more support from their colleges to cope with new awards, new technologies in the curriculum and more efficient teaching methods. For example, it is ironic that few

---

staff teaching visual disciplines used even simple visual aids such as overhead projectors to make complex issues easier for students to understand.

73 Many technical staff have degrees or advanced professional awards, and they are often practising artists, crafts people or musicians. In fields such as music technology, which have reached considerable sophistication over a short period, technicians who have gained their skills through following a personal enthusiasm are often particularly impressive. However, the high quality of technical staff was frequently offset by inadequate numbers or historical patterns of deployment which were no longer appropriate. Only a minority of colleges have devised coherent staffing strategies in which all the different members of education teams are brought together in appropriate numerical balance and on appropriate conditions of service to deliver the new curricula.

74 The suitability of workshop machinery and equipment requires careful thought. A college which is moving onwards from its standing as a regional centre of excellence in printing to offer a realistic simulated workplace for NVQ programmes, has had no choice but to invest in expensive modern printing presses. However, the ability of suitable computer software to produce printed text and illustrations quickly has meant that choices other than the purchase of production machinery are more appropriate in many instances. In one college, graphic design students had computers, industry standard software and photocopiers in their studio, but printing presses had been abandoned altogether.

75 Many colleges hold on to old equipment that they no longer need, in the hope that patterns of student demand will change and bring it back into use. This is particularly true of engineering machine tools. Several examples were seen of design students using engineering workshops as studios, and attempting to achieve a modern working environment and to produce clean work amid the dirt of ages. Other departments have retained big equipment, such as large format lithographic presses or pottery kilns, for which they can no longer afford

---

the materials. One sixth form college had a full range of woodworking machinery which was used only to provide surfaces on which to store students' work. To respond to a more rapidly changing curriculum and a less homogeneous student body, colleges will need: to make greater use of leasing schemes which leave them more flexibility; to be more decisive in disposing of unwanted machines; and to devote space to storage of equipment so that it can be brought out only when required.

76 A wide variety of equipment is essential to give students choice of techniques and materials. Learning by doing remains fundamental to all aspects of the programme area. The installation of a new technique, for instance glass blowing at a specialist college in the South West, can justify its costs by attracting new students and stimulating livelier work. Where equipment is inadequate, for example where the means for radio and television production are unavailable to media courses, the curriculum is impoverished. Smaller centres are likely to find it increasingly hard to resource an adequate range of courses, unless it be in co-operation with others.

77 The use of information technology is improving rapidly in the sector as a whole. It is not uncommon to find one, modern computer for every seven full-time equivalent students. A growing number of colleges have large computer networks, enabling students in many areas to use a variety of software, and to gain access to visual material stored on CD-ROM databases. On a few courses in graphics and communications, inspectors saw a computer at every workstation, alongside the traditional drawing board. Some courses remain disadvantaged by colleges' policies for purchasing computers which forbid the acquisition of the equipment in common use in this particular industry.

78 Colleges which offer higher education courses alongside further education are usually better equipped. However, by allowing departmental boundaries to interfere with access, some fail to make sure that their students benefit from this.

---

79 The growing dominance of electronic media is evident in a new range of courses which were uncommon in colleges only a few years ago. Media studies is one such focus for development, with a few larger colleges sometimes having not only internal radio and television services, but local broadcasting stations as well. Performance and recording of popular music are another point of growth. Some colleges invest very large sums in commercial standard recording studios and equipment, and musical instruments, which will allow them not only to serve an industry of which Britain is an international leader, but also to forge new links with young people in their local communities.

80 An increasing number of colleges are supporting the costs of new technology by using it to provide a commercial service as well as meeting students' needs. For example, a specialist college in the North West has a copying and print centre which offers local companies access to excellent modern equipment, and therefore has the means to give students the experience of working with it too.

81 Some colleges are finding it hard to achieve the greater efficiency in use of space which is required by the reduction in the planning allocation from 13 square metres to 10 square metres for each student on workshop-based courses. The problems are more acute in the many colleges where provision in art, design and the performing arts has grown piecemeal, but nevertheless rapidly, in recent years. There, accommodation is often scattered among several buildings and much of it is inflexible or inappropriate, having been taken over from other purposes.

82 A common approach to increasing efficiency in space utilisation is elimination of a dedicated studio or baseroom for each student group. This can hinder the formation of coherent groups of students, and prevent them from working independently of staff on their design projects or performances. Students often react to the loss of their own space by using unsuitable places to work, such as the quiet room of the

---

library for group projects, or the common room. The best results were achieved where changes in the use of space were part of a wider review of the curriculum and its resourcing.

83 Inadequate storage for partially-completed work, for finished work, for work from earlier years held as a course archive, for materials, and for equipment which is not in daily use, is a significant problem in itself and a factor in more general untidiness. Much accommodation used for art and design is made worse than it need be by clutter, by poor cleaning, and by staff not insisting that their students learn good housekeeping as part of their portfolio of professional skills. In planning their courses, colleges need to take as much account of storage as of teaching space.

84 Some colleges have excellent accommodation for visual and performing arts and for design, and benefit from regarding it as a cultural core. A sixth form college in the Midlands, for example, has a concert hall surrounded by music rehearsal rooms, a second theatre with a proscenium arch, a small art gallery, and studios and workshops for visual art and design. They are used for a wide range of college activities, for public performance, and for community arts groups. Many courses in the programme area also benefit from using accommodation outside the college. This includes London galleries and hotels used for annual diploma shows, local galleries used for exhibitions, and local theatres and concert halls used for performance. This approach fosters among students a view of their college as offering them a secure base to use to prepare for frequent forays into the professional world.

**Published by the  
Further Education  
Funding Council**

**January 1996**

**Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry CV1 2WT**