

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

**Birmingham
College of Food,
Tourism and
Creative Studies**

January 1996

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

College grade profiles 1993-95

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 01/96

BIRMINGHAM COLLEGE OF FOOD, TOURISM AND CREATIVE STUDIES WEST MIDLANDS REGION

Inspected March-October 1995

Summary

Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies is a specialist provider of courses for the hospitality and related service industries. It offers vocational programmes which have achieved national and international recognition. The range of further and higher education courses provides good opportunities for students to progress within the college. There are strong links with industry, both in the United Kingdom and overseas. The college is well governed and well managed. Lines of management and accountability are clear and internal communications are good. The corporation and senior management provide strong, supportive leadership. Students receive impartial guidance in choosing their courses and subsequent tutorial support is highly effective. Staff are well qualified and the quality of teaching is very good. The majority of students successfully achieve vocational qualifications. A high proportion enter higher education or take up relevant employment. The college is committed to quality at all levels. There are effective procedures for internal audit and quality assurance although the college should strengthen its analysis of, and reporting on, performance at the institutional level. Staff development is well organised and supported by a substantial budget. Curriculum areas are very well equipped to industrial standards. Library facilities are also good. Accommodation is effectively managed, in good condition and appropriate for its purpose. Realistic work training environments of high quality enable students to develop highly-marketable practical and social skills. The college should: develop open learning and increase the flexibility of its course provision; improve attendance levels on some of its courses; establish agreed standards for work experience placements; and review its policy on records of achievement.

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	1
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	1
Quality assurance	2
Resources: staffing	1
equipment/learning resources	1
accommodation	1

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Hospitality administration	1	Modern languages	2
Catering, including bakery and food service	1	Health and care	2
Leisure and tourism	2	Hairdressing and beauty	1

INTRODUCTION

1 Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies was inspected between March and October 1995. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the beginning of the autumn term 1995, specialist subject areas in March, April and May 1995, and aspects of cross-college provision from 9 to 12 October 1995. Ten inspectors spent a total of 53 days in the college. They observed 101 classes involving 1,167 students, examined representative samples of students' work, and held discussions with governors, college staff, students, local employers, a representative of the Birmingham Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), parents, teachers from local schools and representatives of the local community.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies is a specialist provider of education, training and services to the hospitality and related service industries. The college, whose origins can be traced back to the late nineteenth century, serves local, regional, national and international communities. It has occupied its present site in the centre of Birmingham since 1967 and this central location enables thousands of members of the general public to use its shops, restaurants and other client services each year, providing students with a broad range of experience. The hospitality industry is an international one and the college reflects this in its dealings with industry, students, other education providers and the public.

3 There are seven other further education colleges and four sixth form colleges within the Birmingham conurbation and at least 15 further education colleges within reasonable travelling distance of the city centre. The college has few local competitors in its further education hospitality work and although many other West Midlands colleges compete with it for tourism, caring, hairdressing and beauty therapy students, it has increased its student numbers each year since the mid-1980s. In recent years there has been a particularly marked increase in higher education enrolments, especially in tourism and leisure. The college has the highest proportion of higher education students of any further education college in England and Wales and receives more than 65 per cent of its funding from sources other than the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). It offers a range of courses that enables students to progress from foundation to postgraduate level.

4 At the time of the inspection, the college had 3,052 FEFC-funded enrolments, of which 1,757 were full time. Forty-nine per cent of the students were over 19 years of age. FEFC-funded enrolments by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. The college also had 2,303 students enrolled on full-time higher education programmes. There were 320 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 169 were teachers. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

5 The college's mission is 'to create an environment in which all clients can develop appropriate skills, knowledge and quality standards to enable them to compete, with advantage, at any level within the sectors we serve'. The college is committed to maintaining its mix of further and higher education provision which provides clear pathways for students' progression from the age of 16 onwards. Priorities include working closely with schools, employers, TECs and other agencies to identify the needs of students and communities, and providing development opportunities, including access to the latest learning resources, such as computer-based learning and the Internet.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

6 Staff are knowledgeable about further education issues. The college's mission statement and strategic objectives have been widely and well communicated. The college is committed to the national targets for education and training. Its programmes include National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) and higher national certificates. There is a wide range of courses in hospitality and catering, for which the college is a recognised centre of excellence. There is also a good range of tourism, leisure, hairdressing and beauty therapy courses and, in recent years, there has been an expansion of health and care courses. Students have access to a wide variety of enrichment programmes including certification in first aid, the Wines and Spirits Education Trust and several other subsidiary awards.

7 A key feature of the college's strategic plan is the provision of routes for students to progress from further to higher education. The college has a long history of developing and teaching degree level programmes, most recently under an accreditation agreement with the University of Birmingham. There are also strong links with De Montfort University and the University of Central England. Many of the college's further education and higher national certificate programmes are internally validated through an arrangement with the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC). The college has established links with higher education institutions in Europe and the Far East.

8 The college has an effective marketing strategy which is regularly reviewed by senior management. The range of marketing activities organised by the college caters well for the local, regional and international dimensions of its course provision. College publicity and advertising materials include videos and an interactive screen prospectus which is available in the reception area. The marketing manager and two assistants work with a graphic designer to produce well-designed prospectuses and course booklets. Internal and external market research has enabled the college to develop effective strategies for its different markets. The college makes good use of the TEC's labour market analysis and information provided by the Birmingham economic development unit.

9 The links with local schools are well developed and form a key element of college marketing. The college is involved in the compact arrangements across the city and is keen to assist with curriculum development. This has included specialist support for a local hospital school for emotionally damaged pupils as well as direct support for events in schools, for example, in running an international week. The college organises a range of open days and taster events and provides places for pupils to undertake work experience. Corporation members and college staff regularly support college marketing and public relations activities, such as the students' entry in the catering and hospitality show 'live kitchen' class and the Toque d'Or Nestlé food service award.

10 The college has secured substantial funding and sponsorship from a range of different organisations. These include Bass Taverns, who have recently refurbished a college restaurant to a very high standard, and Nestlé, who have sponsored the coffee shop. A major wholesaler was involved in supporting the development of the college's international restaurant. The college has obtained funding from the European Social Fund for a skills development programme in tourism training. European funding from Horizon, Leonardo and ADAPT has helped students to undertake educational visits and work experience in several countries. Work with agencies and employers has involved students in tourism projects both locally, with the Birmingham Jewellery Quarter, and internationally, with Jersey European Airways.

11 Long-standing working relationships are maintained with industrial groups and employers and the college arranges industrial placements for almost all full-time students. Links with employers are reinforced by long-established advisory panels, in which the local business community is an enthusiastic participant. Links with the TEC are primarily of a strategic nature, although TEC flexibility funds have been provided to develop multi-media facilities for teaching food service theory. The range of cost-recovery work undertaken by the college is varied and includes consultancy to industry. Recent projects have included: consultancy for a college in Malaysia wishing to set up vocational programmes in the areas of tourism and hospitality; the design of a tearoom for the City of Birmingham Museum; and training courses in catering for licensees for Bass Taverns.

12 The college has strong links with industry throughout the world. There is an annual exchange programme with the United States of America, the Far East and a wide range of European countries. Students and staff have taken part in exchange visits, most recently to China. Language tuition at a range of levels is offered to all students, irrespective of whether it is a prescribed element of their course. There is also good support in English as a foreign language for the wide range of overseas students who attend the college.

13 Although there is well-structured support material of high quality to enable students to undertake independent study, the college has not developed open and distance learning opportunities. The provision of such opportunities, together with more flexibility over the times of year at which students can enrol on courses and complete their awards, would enable the college to cater for a wider clientele than at present.

14 A revised equal opportunities policy has recently been approved by the academic board and is to be submitted to the corporation. The policy is accompanied by a code of practice and a comprehensive action plan. It is well supported by an extensive programme of staff development. The college has an equal opportunities officer who reports regularly to a subcommittee of the academic board. There is an annual review of the effectiveness of the policy and code of practice which identifies the progress achieved and the priorities for action. Enrolments are monitored by age, ethnicity, and disability. College publicity material is regularly monitored by the equal opportunities co-ordinator. The access to higher education programme has been particularly successful in recruiting students from minority ethnic groups.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

15 The college has a highly effective corporation, which provides strong strategic direction. There are 16 members. One of the 10 independent members is a trade union leader; the others are drawn from the hospitality industry, business and the professions. There is also a nominee of the Birmingham TEC, a police officer, a pro-vice-chancellor from a local university, a member of the college teaching staff nominated by the academic board, the president of the college guild of students, and the principal. At the time of the inspection there was one vacancy for an independent member. Members of the corporation bring a wealth of relevant expertise to the college. Procedures and criteria for the appointment of new members are currently under discussion. The corporation meets at least termly. Meetings are well attended and supported by well-written reports and concise minutes. Corporation papers, apart from those dealing with a small number of confidential items, are available to members of the public. The corporation has agreed a governors' code of conduct and maintains a register of members' interests. A helpful and comprehensive governors' handbook has been issued to all members.

16 The corporation has established an appropriate committee structure and revised terms of reference have been established for all committees. Although there is a remuneration committee, there is a lack of clarity about where responsibility lies for determining the remuneration of senior postholders. Committee meetings are almost always well attended. Only one committee meeting has been inquorate and effective action was taken to address this. The frequency of audit committee meetings has been increased in accordance with recommendations from the FEFC's auditors.

Governors are well informed about further education matters in general and about the key strategic issues to be addressed by the college. The chairman and clerk provide able leadership and support. Governors have attended training seminars and have conducted an assessment of their future training needs. They receive regular reports and briefings from senior staff.

17 The college's 1994-97 strategic plan has well-defined aims and objectives and clearly-stated strategies for achieving them. The plan is supported by extensive needs analysis and market research. It includes a number of operating statements each with their own short-term aims and objectives, the methods to be used for achieving these, the staff responsible for seeing that they are achieved, the timescales, and the budgets available. The operating statement in the 1995-97 updated plan does not reflect all the key corporate objectives of the original plan. The senior management team regularly monitors progress on the achievement of the college's strategic aims and operational objectives. The results of this monitoring, together with adjustments made when targets are not achieved, are reported to the corporation. Corporation members receive regular information on staffing and other non-financial information, such as enrolment, examination results, and destinations but data are provided for the current year only. The monitoring of college performance should be strengthened by the production of data showing trends in performance from year to year and by the provision of an overall summary evaluation of annual performance.

18 Governors have a clear understanding of the distinction between their responsibilities and those of the principal. They focus broadly on strategic matters but are also developing their understanding of the educational context within which they operate in order to make a better informed contribution to the strategic planning process. The process is co-ordinated by the deputy principal and begins with a review of the achievement of the previous year's targets. Faculty and central services plans contribute to the process, and use is made of labour market and other intelligence from a variety of sources. Corporation members discuss the plan in detail before approving it. Some programme area plans lack targets and are not linked closely enough to faculty and college plans.

19 The senior management team has formal terms of reference. The principal is supported by a deputy, two faculty heads, the director of finance and the college secretary. They work closely as a team and provide strong leadership which is valued by staff. They pay close attention to matters of strategic detail, including legislation, finance and the ethos of the college, and are united in their belief that the quality of provision for students should be the basis for all decision making. In this they are fully supported by staff. The management style of the college enables staff and students to feel confident about making proposals and taking initiatives. Agreed action is effectively implemented by faculty and cross-college teams.

20 The academic board is at the head of an effective network for ensuring that the principal is fully informed and advised on academic matters. It meets once a term. Three committees and two faculty boards report to it. The faculty boards co-ordinate the work of a range of programme boards. Within the two college faculties and the central services departments, lines of management and accountability are clear and well understood. Regular meetings of faculty and programme boards support the planning and monitoring of curriculum provision. A well-received new development has been the staff handbook, which contains key policies and procedures and is a useful reference document for all staff. Regular newsletters, weekly diary updates and twice-yearly meetings of all staff contribute effectively to good communications and a shared sense of purpose within the college. At the level of individual programmes, and especially where large numbers of staff are involved, there is sometimes too much reliance on informal communications.

21 College policies are well established and regularly revised. They make clear what the college aims to do about a wide range of issues including health and safety, equal opportunities, personnel, and student support. Guiding principles, detailed practices, and monitoring arrangements are well documented. For instance, the health and safety policy is supplemented by a manual of procedures and an inventory of potentially dangerous equipment which serves as the basis for a weekly audit. College policies are effectively monitored.

22 Enrolment targets are set in accordance with faculty priorities agreed by the senior management. Enrolment targets, retention rates and attendance are closely monitored. There are useful procedures for obtaining information on students' destinations and these are being developed further. The college met its growth target in the academic year 1994-95 and, at the time of the inspection in October 1995, it was expecting to meet its target for 1995-96.

23 The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college's average level of funding for 1995-96 is £16.28 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.84 and the median for all sector colleges is £18.56 per unit.

24 Finance within the college has been controlled centrally but from September 1995 pay and non-pay expenditure budgets have been delegated to the appropriate senior managers. Budgets for pay expenditure are allocated on the basis of an agreed staffing complement for each area of the college, while those for non-pay expenditure are made on a historical basis. In both cases, adjustments are made for overachievement or underachievement of target enrolments. Progress on the development of unit costing has been cautious. The procedure for allocations has been under review and the college intends, during the current year, to implement

a new system based on the actual unit cost of delivery. Financial reports are presented at each meeting of the corporation and to the corporation chair, the finance and general purposes committee and the senior management team at monthly intervals. The quality of financial reports has been progressively improved to make them easier to understand and more useful to managers and corporation members. The college has built up a healthy financial position which has enabled it to undertake major improvements and developments from its own resources.

25 The college has recently installed a new, fully-integrated computerised management information system. Under the previous system faculty managers had ready access to information, but the information was not fully developed at programme area level. A new information systems policy is in place and there is a clear strategy for implementation. The new system is already producing management information. Data are collected on student enrolments, retention, examinations and students' destinations. Attendance data are collected by the faculties, but not yet collated at college level. Teaching divisions are linked to the system and further cable points are being installed to provide all staff with on-line information tailored to their needs. Internal electronic mail and connection to the Internet have been included in the new system.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

26 The college student services unit and faculties are responsible for students' recruitment, guidance and support. Their work is effectively supported by the city careers partnership, with which the college has a substantial service level agreement. This arrangement ensures that students receive the advice and guidance they need. The student services unit makes provision for personal counselling, careers guidance, study support, health care, overseas liaison, accommodation, nursery places and financial and welfare advice. It has established links with external agencies to enhance the services provided.

27 Attendance at more than 50 careers events throughout the city enables staff and students to act as ambassadors for the college. College staff also play a full and active part in college open days and evenings, contribute to guided tours of the college and provide taster days for school pupils. Members of staff make overseas visits to recruit students. High-quality promotional materials and other documents support these activities. Careers events also take place in city centre sites and courses are advertised in the local press. Posters are placed in city libraries and public amenity areas. Students had been made aware of the courses available by the city careers partnership, college publicity and open days and evenings, employers, relations and friends.

28 The college's admission's policy ensures that prospective students receive the impartial advice and guidance they need to make well-informed career choices. The procedures for admitting students are set out clearly.

Where appropriate, parents are invited to accompany prospective students to admission interviews. Parents welcome the opportunity to be involved. Interviews are conducted by a team of teachers working to a common format. Further advice and guidance is given at this time. The range of programmes available in the college provides opportunities for internal transfers, and some students take advantage of this. The initial choice of course is checked again during induction and students wishing to transfer from one course to another or to enter full-time employment are referred to the college or city careers advisers for further guidance.

29 Enrolment is effectively organised. The procedures used ensure that students continue to receive full and impartial advice. All aspects of enrolment are well integrated; students move smoothly from one phase to the next. For new students, the process commences with pre-enrolment activities in July. For continuing students, enrolment can take place at any time from late June onwards. Sufficient opportunities are given for students to ask questions and receive the information they need. Enrolment data are recorded electronically and continuously updated so that up-to-the-minute information can be obtained from the system.

30 Induction is well organised. All full-time students have one day allocated for faculty induction and three days for the divisional induction programme. There is a shorter induction programme for part-time students. Overseas students have a two-week induction programme. Further induction is conducted at the beginning of each course, or module, during the first weeks of teaching. To support induction, student and faculty handbooks and the student charter are distributed. The student handbook includes information on programme content and a statement on assessment regulations and appeals procedures. The faculty handbook contains key information on fire procedures and college rules and regulations. Full-time and part-time students report that induction arrangements are helpful. During induction, all students, apart from those being admitted to higher national certificate courses, are assessed for basic literacy and numeracy. Where additional support is necessary, it is delivered through timetabled sessions, workshops or attendance at the study support centre.

31 The college mentoring system is a strong feature of the arrangements made for academic and personal guidance. Timetabled tutorials enable mentors to give high-quality pastoral and academic support to students. A handbook for mentors has been produced to ensure that this is conducted uniformly across the college. A detailed careers resource pack for mentors enhances the delivery of careers education. Teachers receive staff development on mentoring to support this aspect of their work.

32 A well-used confidential counselling service is provided by a full-time qualified student counsellor. Appointments can be made through the student services unit, although students requiring urgent help are seen immediately. The counselling service offered is well managed and operates

effectively. The service is appropriately located and accessible to students. Health care is provided by a qualified nurse. Clear aims and objectives have been set to govern the service provided. The nurse works closely with the student counsellor and is a member of the college's health and safety committee.

33 There are effective arrangements to support overseas students. During their induction period they are allocated accommodation in the college's halls of residence. The accommodation officer maintains an extensive list of private sector accommodation, which has been vetted by college staff. Overseas students may obtain assistance on any aspect of student life from the overseas students' liaison officer.

34 The college has a policy and procedures for accrediting students' prior achievement. However, the college's alternative and preferred approach is to use fast-tracking procedures to exempt from relevant units the students who demonstrate that they have the necessary competence. This approach is quicker than gathering a portfolio of evidence and has been particularly useful for students transferring from a course at another college. The college has conducted a research project with the Hotel and Catering Training Company to examine the possibilities for the accreditation of prior learning in the hospitality sector. The potential for this method of accreditation has not yet been fully realised.

35 The college asks school leavers to bring their national records of achievement to the admission interview. Not all do so. It is not college practice to issue or to systematically maintain the national records of achievement. The college position is that course portfolios of students' work provide sufficient evidence of their achievements.

36 The study support centre provides learning support for students identified through diagnostic screening as needing additional help with literacy, numeracy and information technology, as well as for those requiring general help with their studies. To ensure that students diagnosed as requiring support attend the centre, links have been established between the centre and mentors who are responsible for monitoring students' attendance and performance. A daily usage record is maintained which enables the manager to monitor attendance and file samples of students' work in order to monitor their progress. Mentors receive formal notes informing them of students' attendance and progress. The modern languages division conducts individual interviews with students to help place them in a class at the appropriate level. The division has a clearly-understood system of referral for students who fail to reach the required standard in their assignments. Some students receive good support through the language workshop. However, take-up for this is low and students should be encouraged to make more use of the provision.

37 High-quality careers advice and guidance are provided by mentors and the college careers adviser, in conjunction with the city careers partnership. Careers surgeries are conducted throughout the year to

ensure that students are following the right course, can make well-informed career choices and gain suitable employment on the successful completion of their course. Careers resources are conveniently located and sufficient careers literature is provided. The absence of computerised careers databases is a weakness; the college is addressing this issue. Employers are invited to the college to recruit students who are nearing the end of their course. An annual careers event provides students with an opportunity to meet a wide range of employers. The Department for Education and Employment's employment service operates a job shop throughout the year for students requiring more information about work opportunities. Some students had been unable to visit this because their timetables did not permit it. Part-time and full-time jobs are also advertised on strategically-placed notice boards throughout the college.

38 The college provides a range of additional resources to assist students, including specialist facilities for students with hearing or visual impairment. To enable students with young children to enter courses, the college has a well-resourced 50-place nursery, which it shares with the local community. The college has an access fund and two hardship funds and, where necessary, gives generous support to students for travel expenses and for purchasing specialist equipment required for vocational courses.

39 The students' guild provides representation, welfare information and social and sporting activities. It caters for all students. The guild has a full-time president, who is a member of the corporation and the academic board. The guild's activities and societies are popular with students.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

40 Of the 101 sessions observed 78 per cent received a grade 1 or 2. In only 4 per cent of sessions did weaknesses clearly outweigh strengths. In the sessions inspected the average attendance level was 76 per cent. The following table summarises the grades given for the teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GNVQ		3	9	3	0	0	15
NVQ		28	15	3	1	0	47
Access to higher education		1	2	0	0	0	3
Higher education		3	4	1	2	0	10
Other vocational		6	8	11	1	0	26
Total		41	38	18	4	0	101

41 High standards of teaching were achieved in catering, hospitality, and hairdressing and beauty. Staff were expert in their field. In all subjects the curriculum was well planned and carefully constructed to provide students with opportunities to develop practical skills. Much teaching took place in realistic working environments. There are long-standing arrangements for work experience which include codes of conduct for students and a well-managed assessment and reporting mechanism. More than 1,760 students each year undertake periods of work experience ranging from three weeks to one year.

42 Catering and food service sessions were well planned and exceptionally well taught. Courses were appropriate for the students recruited and their intended careers. Schemes of work were well developed and met the requirements of awarding bodies. NVQ sessions had a good balance of tuition in basic practical skills and underpinning theoretical knowledge. Teaching in theory classes had clear aims, provided accurate relevant and up-to-date information, and reinforced practical learning. In practical classes the quality of teaching and learning was exceptionally good and the standards achieved by the students were high. Students benefited from the realistic work environments and industrial working practices were frequently adopted. For example, students following the stores module started at 07.00 each morning in the basement where they worked alongside teachers, receiving and checking provisions. Students being taught in the college restaurants dealt with a wide variety of customers, had opportunities to develop their social skills, and learned to work under pressure. Staff showed high levels of professional skill and provided good role models.

43 Teachers in hospitality administration were enthusiastic, knowledgeable and caring. They provided effective support for adults returning to college, building their confidence and developing their study skills. When students fell behind with their work, they received friendly but firm guidance. Much classroom activity was directly related to vocational work. In some classes there was good use of learning aids to stimulate interest and to minimise the time students spent taking notes. There were regular tutorials to review progress and provide support. However, in more than a quarter of the classes seen attendance was approximately 50 per cent.

44 Classes in leisure and tourism were often stimulating and challenging; there was a good balance of input from tutors and activities which involved students working alone or in groups. Techniques to involve students, for example the use of questionnaires to create discussion points during classes, were well developed. The majority of teaching was well organised and effective. In some less effective teaching sessions tutors displayed limited presentational skills.

45 Standards of teaching were high in hairdressing and beauty. The teaching of practical work was particularly expert. The salons provided a

highly realistic work environment in which there was always a professional atmosphere. The curriculum was well planned and organised so that students worked with a wide range of clients and treatments. However, courses did not include sufficient opportunities for students to develop core skills in information technology. Attendance on some courses was a matter for concern.

46 In health and care, many classes included practical activities which developed students' skills and confidence and helped them to practise using the equipment and materials to be found in their work placements. Tutors were knowledgeable and had relevant experience in social services. Students responded well to group activities. In some of the better sessions they were encouraged to undertake independent research on the topic. Tutors frequently used questions to draw out and build on students' experience. In some weaker sessions, they spent too long asking simple factual questions on familiar topics. Some students contributed little orally and made only moderate progress with individual tasks. Students' use of information technology on these programmes was limited.

47 Schemes of work in foreign languages had a clear vocational focus which helped students to become familiar with the language related to their main programmes of study. Students were able to practise the full range of language skills in class. There were examples of lively sessions where they confidently used the foreign language in response to teachers' questions and in role-play. Some effective use was made of the language laboratory and audio-visual aids. Teachers were fluent in the languages they taught. However, in a significant number of classes there was too much use of English. Learning was supported by good-quality handouts but these were sometimes overused. In some sessions too little was expected of students. There was little checking by teachers of what students had learned and records of students' progress were inadequate. The attendance level in some classes was low.

48 In most programme areas the assessment and recording of students' progress was thorough. The assessment of practical work was carefully planned. Tutors explained assessment tasks and there were often opportunities for students to progress at speeds suited to their needs and abilities. Assessments were challenging and took a variety of forms. Systems for monitoring students' work and progress on NVQs were well developed. The marking of students' assignments was usually accompanied by clear guidelines on how they could improve the quality of their work.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

49 Students are well motivated and enjoy their studies. They speak highly of the college, its staff and facilities. The many customers and clients of the college's restaurants, salons and shops provide the opportunity for students to display well-developed social and practical skills. Students are proud of the college's reputation, eager to be part of it and to add to it.

50 Students develop knowledge and understanding through a wide range of activity in both theory and practical classes. This includes: a thorough knowledge of food theory and science; an understanding of management issues in hospitality management; good background knowledge in travel and tourism; and good technical knowledge in hairdressing and beauty. Their ability to apply this knowledge and understanding is clearly demonstrated through assessed work leading to a range of qualifications.

51 In all curriculum areas students learn to carry out practical work safely and with high levels of competence. High professional standards are developed through the provision of realistic work environments inside the college and through the use of outside placements. Excellent levels of achievement in catering and bakery reflect the high professional calibre of staff and the standard of equipment in the college restaurants and kitchens. Hairdressing and beauty students acquire professional and social skills by working in well-equipped salons which have a continuous flow of customers. Students studying health and care benefit from a well-planned placement programme. In travel and tourism, and in language learning, the acquisition of skills through the practical provision in the college is less strong.

52 Students regularly achieve success in regional and national competitions and take part in joint ventures with the National Exhibition Centre and other agencies and employers. In the recent past, college students have been regional and national finalists in a number of prestigious competitions. They have twice won the Moët Champagne challenge and achieved third place in the National Indian Cookery competition. The college has twice been designated Craft College of the Year (catering). Students from the division of travel and tourism won the American Express student of the year in 1992 and the American Express best achiever award in 1993. Such activities enhance students' experiences and career prospects, and strengthen the college's reputation as a centre of excellence.

53 Students' core skills are particularly well developed through integrated work. Students' written and oral work demonstrate that appropriate levels are attained in communication. Numeracy is demonstrated through a range of activities requiring a knowledge of quantity and the application of calculation skills. Information technology skills are used in data and spreadsheet creation and the use of specialist computerised systems is built into a number of programmes. Some students, however, do not acquire appropriate wordprocessing skills in the initial stages of their courses.

54 Students on NVQ and GNVQ courses have high levels of achievement. Ninety-four per cent of the 162 students aged 16-18 were successful in their final year of study on the vocational courses included in 1994 performance tables produced by the Department for Education (now the Department for Education and Employment). This places the college

among the top third of colleges in the further education sector using this performance measure. At NVQ level 1, 92 per cent of students aged 16-18 and 78 per cent of students aged 19 years and over gained the award. At NVQ level 2, the respective figures were 86 per cent and 82 per cent and, at NVQ level 3, 100 per cent and 78 per cent. There was a 100 per cent pass rate at GNVQ intermediate level. Pass rates in GNVQ external tests were high. Performance in programmes giving NVQ equivalence from levels 1 to 4 ranged from 67 to 100 per cent.

55 In 1994-95, the overall college pass rate for NVQ levels 1 and 2 was 88 per cent and for NVQ level 3, 92 per cent. Many students also achieved additional specialist certificates in food, beverage, hygiene and health-related subjects. One hundred and seven students were entered for the English Speaking Board examinations and 95 per cent passed. In 1994, 60 students enrolled on access courses for entry to higher education; 46 per cent successfully completed the course and the majority of the remainder achieved some unit credits.

56 In catering and in hospitality administration, examination results were especially good. In 1994, no subject area had pass rates below 83 per cent and there was a 100 per cent pass rate in some areas of work. Results in hairdressing and beauty were good; in 1994 there was a 100 per cent pass rate in foundation certificate and national diploma programmes. The introduction of the Confederation of International Beauty Therapy and Cosmetology programme in beauty therapy at NVQ level 3 was particularly successful: 19 of the 20 students originally enrolled achieved the award. Success rates for nursery nursing varied between 68 and 70 per cent; BTEC social care achieved 95 per cent. Large numbers of students achieve accreditation at one of five levels in one or more modern languages; the majority of students achieve at least modest levels of language competence.

57 Full-time students have a good record of progress to further and higher education and employment. The table below shows students' destinations as a percentage of full-time students leaving the college in 1994.

Level	Higher education	Further education	Employment	Other
Foundation/ NVQ level 1	0	93	5	2
Intermediate/ NVQ level 2	7	18	70	5
Advanced/ NVQ level 3	25	7	63	5
NVQ level 4	59	0	34	7

In 1994, 39 students progressed from the national diploma in travel and tourism to higher national diploma and BA honours programmes in leisure and tourism management. In the same year, 20 national diploma students in hospitality and catering progressed directly into the second year of the higher national diploma. Where students sought direct employment, the quality of the posts obtained was high and closely related to the training undertaken at college. Part-time students, who were usually already employed, often used their training to further their careers.

58 In 1994-95, just over 87 per cent of students completed their programmes. This is slightly below the regional and national average for sector colleges which is just under 90 per cent. In a small number of courses more than 20 per cent of students withdrew in the first year. However, withdrawal is monitored through the college mentor system and students who withdraw often enter other courses or take up employment.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

59 The college has a commitment to quality assurance and to the improvement of quality which covers all programmes and support services. The quality policy has been agreed by the academic board and is monitored by its curriculum and quality development subcommittee. An annual evaluation of quality is produced. Regular newsletters provide staff with information on the implementation of relevant procedures and associated staff development. Faculty boards and programme boards also support the development of quality assurance. The college is committed to attaining the International Standards Organisation (ISO) 9000 but has not achieved its original target date of May 1994 and estimates that it will require a further two years to complete the work required.

60 Existing procedures for quality assurance are clear and well implemented. A continual quality review procedure has been developed from a college system of annual programme review; it will include a planned schedule of reports at key points throughout the year. The system was piloted towards the end of the last academic year. Whilst there is a commitment from staff to implement this new approach to reporting, it is in its first year of operation and is, as yet, untested.

61 Effective action is taken in response to feedback from students and from internal and external assessors. The programme boards established for each programme area produce clear minutes of their meetings showing the actions required and the points which are to be taken to the faculty board. Comments made by internal and external assessors are discussed and any necessary action is taken following internal and external assessment and moderation.

62 An internal audit team of 12 members of staff representing all faculties and support areas has been recently recruited and trained to carry out internal quality audits modelled on Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The team conducted audits during the last academic year

and further audits are scheduled to take place through to August 1997. In response to the audit, the head of the faculty or department produces an action plan to address any weaknesses identified. This plan is reviewed by the curriculum and quality development subcommittee. A summary of the strengths and weaknesses found by the audit team is also sent to the principal. Improvements have taken place as a result of this audit process.

63 Staff and students are fully aware of the student charter and, together with corporation members, have participated in its recent review. The charter contains clear targets which underpin the college's commitments to its students. Whilst there is evidence of the monitoring of achievement against charter targets at programme and faculty operational levels, there is no overall summary evaluation to give a college-wide perspective of achievement against the targets set.

64 Industrial placements are a significant element in the learning experience of the students but there is no overall college policy or procedure to ensure agreed standards for the control and quality assurance of such placements.

65 The college is committed to gaining the Investors in People award and intends to apply for recognition status in November 1995. The staff-development policy is well established and has been agreed by the academic board. The policy applies to all college staff. The college invests a considerable percentage of its expenditure in staff development. Priorities are clearly stated in the staff training and development plan and these are agreed by the academic board. Progress against priorities is monitored. Evaluation includes an analysis of participation and expenditure against priorities by faculty and department. It includes an assessment of the quality of the training supplied by providers which is then used to inform future planning of training.

66 The college introduced a staff-appraisal system in September 1994. There is an intention that all staff will be appraised annually, but this target has not been achieved; at the time of the inspection 92 per cent of staff had been appraised. There are procedures designed to promote consistency in the implementation of the appraisal policy. Staff have found the appraisal process supportive; it is focused on the identification of individual needs for training and development to support improved performance. The continuous improvement of teamwork is also addressed by the allocation of a £500 budget to each team to support agreed team-development activities.

67 All new staff undertake a period of induction. Criteria have been developed to assess teaching competence and teaching is observed and assessed against these criteria during the first year of the appointment. Strengths and weaknesses are discussed with the teacher and an action plan agreed where appropriate. These procedures apply to all newly-recruited teachers, regardless of their previous teaching experience.

68 The college has produced a self-assessment report which addresses aspects of its operation under the headings of the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Many of the strengths identified in the report were confirmed by the inspection team. However, there was insufficient analysis of weaknesses and judgements were not sufficiently linked to supporting evidence.

RESOURCES

Staffing

69 All college staff, whether teaching or non-teaching, work effectively in teams and have equal access to the full range of college procedures, including professional development and appraisal.

70 Teaching staff have a wide range of expertise and are highly qualified. Many staff have previous industrial experience which is substantial and of high quality. Much experience has been gained in international contexts. Since incorporation, the level of staff turnover has permitted the college to recruit staff with recent industrial experience whilst maintaining a core of staff with extensive teaching experience. Most of those teaching practical subjects have advanced qualifications. Eighty-six per cent of teaching staff have an initial degree and 39 per cent have a higher degree. Seventy-four per cent of teachers have a teaching qualification. Over 100 staff now hold Training and Development Lead Body awards.

71 Well-qualified support staff play a key role in the work of the college. The college has adopted a policy of deliberately employing a high ratio of support staff so that teaching staff can concentrate on their teaching role. Since 1993, the number and range of support staff has grown significantly. Their deployment has been carefully monitored.

72 The personnel function has recently been reorganised to focus more strongly on changing employment legislation and industrial relations. Ninety-seven per cent of teaching staff have new employment contracts. Personnel policies and procedures are well documented. Training events have been organised to ensure that staff have information about the college's approach to matters such as equal opportunities, recruitment and sickness absence.

73 Forty-six per cent of teaching staff are female. Whilst there are currently no female members of the senior management team, there are many female middle managers. Eight per cent of teaching staff are from non-white groups. The proportion of staff from minority ethnic groups has been increasing; almost 14 per cent of the staff recruited in the past 12 months are from these groups.

Equipment/learning resources

74 The college is strongly committed to providing the best possible equipment for staff and students. There is an effective policy for the

replacement of equipment on a rolling programme. Major capital expenditure proposals are incorporated in the strategic plan. The college has sufficient resources to finance capital expenditure from its own reserves.

75 Curriculum areas are equipped to industry standards. Courses in catering are well supported by the high quality of equipment. In leisure and tourism the quality of equipment is generally satisfactory, although the travel information centre would benefit from the availability of relevant computer software. In hairdressing and beauty therapy the salons are well equipped to industrial standards and benefit from the use of an up-to-date compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database. Foreign languages teaching is supported by a new 16-position language laboratory, relevant videos and CD-ROMs.

76 The library has recently been refurbished at a cost of £250,000. It now shares space with the resource centre and this gives students easy access to different forms of learning materials. The library is a specialist national centre for hotel and catering and for tourism and leisure courses. Further education students benefit from access to the substantial learning resources available for higher education. The library is well staffed and has an adequate budget which has increased substantially in recent years. Catalogues and purchases are computerised. Book issues have increased very rapidly in the last three years. Helpful library guides are produced for students and the library is highly responsive to requests for assistance. The environment is attractive and a quiet room is available for private study. In the main, the bookstock and journals provide good support for the curriculum areas and there are 12 stand-alone CD-ROM players. Further education students under 19 receive free textbooks and other students receive essential texts on annual loan. The three library catalogue terminals available to students are insufficient to cope with the demand, although upgrading of this facility is under discussion.

77 The college has over 300 personal computers, most of which are recent models, and 90 machines are available in the resources centre on a drop-in basis. A useful facility enables students to book equipment up to one week in advance. The ratio of full-time equivalent students to computers is approximately 10:1. The resource centre has good weekday opening hours, and is also open at weekends. There are some useful introductory guides to software applications. Computers are available in other rooms for students to use outside timetabled hours. There have been some recent shortages in technician support; the college has now advertised for replacements. Information technology is well integrated with the curriculum in most areas and there are some outstanding examples of its use, notably the Remanco point-of-sale data systems used in realistic working environments. Although most students enter the college with information technology skills, there is no survey to establish the levels of skills possessed by further education students; this makes it difficult to match fully teaching and resources to students' requirements.

78 The college information technology users' group, which meets frequently, plays a major role in advising senior management on future policy and in making specific recommendations for the purchase of hardware and the development of networks. The growing importance of information technology for library resources would indicate a need for the library to be represented on this group. Although the library and resource centre are physically integrated, their management is separate.

Accommodation

79 The college is housed in purpose-built premises on a prominent site very close to the city's business centre and major tourist facilities. The college also rents some teaching and student residential accommodation away from the main site. The main building is an 11-storey tower block; teaching and administrative support is housed on the first nine floors and some student social and residential accommodation on the remaining two. There are four distinctively-designed restaurants, a students' refectory, four hairdressing and beauty therapy salons, a tourist information centre, a leisure centre and a bakery and patisserie shop. Members of the public who have used these facilities are warm in their praise of the quality and service provided. The reception area is constantly busy and reception staff are always welcoming and willing to provide information. There is a 24-hour security service during term time and effective external lighting at night. Car parking on this city centre site, even with the addition of some leased spaces in a nearby car park, is very restricted.

80 The college has a well-developed accommodation strategy. A new campus is being developed on a nearby site within walking distance of the main building. Work, scheduled for completion in the summer of 1996, has already begun on new residential accommodation for students. The new site is adjacent to a residential campus of the University of Birmingham and this may enable the college to reduce costs, for example, in cabling to bring the Internet to students' residences. Completion of this accommodation will release other accommodation on the top three floors of the main building for conversion to teaching and other uses. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, any future growth will require additional accommodation. In catering, some teaching areas are too small or of inappropriate design for the number of students who occupy them.

81 Accommodation is effectively managed. The quality of rooms is generally good and there has been substantial investment in essential works and a rolling programme of improvements. Windows have been replaced and new lifts have been installed in the centre of the building. Much redecoration has taken place. The building is clean and tidy and conveys a lively, busy ethos. There are attractive displays in some areas and the signposting is clear. Close attention has been paid to energy and water conservation. Ventilation of some parts of the building could be improved. Some accommodation is cramped and stuffy.

82 The nature of the building has made it difficult to provide easy access for those with restricted mobility. However, there are lifts to all floors, ramps to bridge changes in floor levels, and doorways which have been widened to accept wheelchairs. Special arrangements have been made for evacuation in case of fire. The new lifts have been specially designed to cater for those with a range of disabilities. It is unfortunate that toilet facilities for students with disabilities are available only on the seventh and ninth floors. The new hall of residence will have 18 rooms specially adapted to the needs of students with disabilities.

83 A room-utilisation survey is carried out twice a year and is used as a basis for policy on future allocation. Most rooms are allocated to the faculties; the number of centrally-pooled rooms is small. The flexible partitioning on each floor makes changes of use and size relatively easy, for example, the conversion of a former science laboratory into general teaching accommodation. Modern languages accommodation has been refurbished but the location of rooms on different floors means that they are not used as effectively as they might be.

84 Students resident in the main building have access to their own social accommodation. The students' refectory has been refurbished and is a lively meeting place. Other social accommodation for non-resident students is restricted to a basement bar in which smoking is allowed. There is no general social accommodation for non-smokers nor any which is well adapted to the needs of mature students.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

85 The major strengths of Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies are:

- the strong and supportive leadership provided by the corporation and senior management
- clear lines of management and accountability, supported by good internal communications
- courses that offer substantial opportunities for the development of skills in realistic work environments
- strong links with industry in the United Kingdom and overseas
- highly-qualified and suitably-experienced staff
- high standards of teaching on most courses
- good pass rates in most vocational areas
- the range of courses and opportunities for students to progress
- well-formulated and effective procedures for the recruitment, support and guidance of students
- a commitment to quality at all levels
- well-developed policy and practice for staff development
- equipment and accommodation which meet industrial standards.

86 If it is to continue to develop the quality of its provision, the college should:

- improve its procedures for monitoring and reporting on performance at college level
- establish a college policy for the management and quality assurance of external work experience placements
- develop the provision of open and flexible learning
- review institutional policy on records of achievement
- improve attendance levels on some of its courses.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage of FEFC-funded enrolments by age (1995-96)

 - 2 Percentage of FEFC-funded enrolments by level of study (1995-96)

 - 3 FEFC-funded enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1995-96)

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

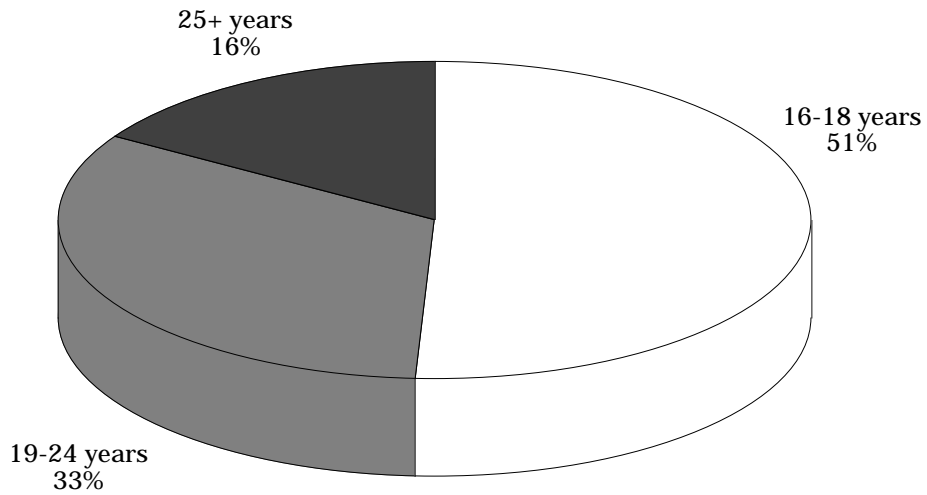
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1995)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

Figure 1

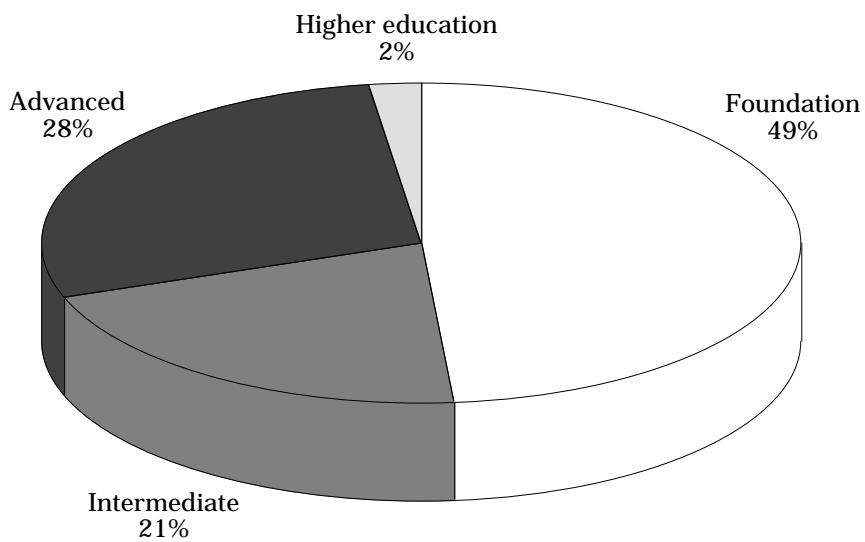
Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies: percentage of FEFC-funded enrolments by age (1995-96)



FEFC-funded enrolments: 3,052

Figure 2

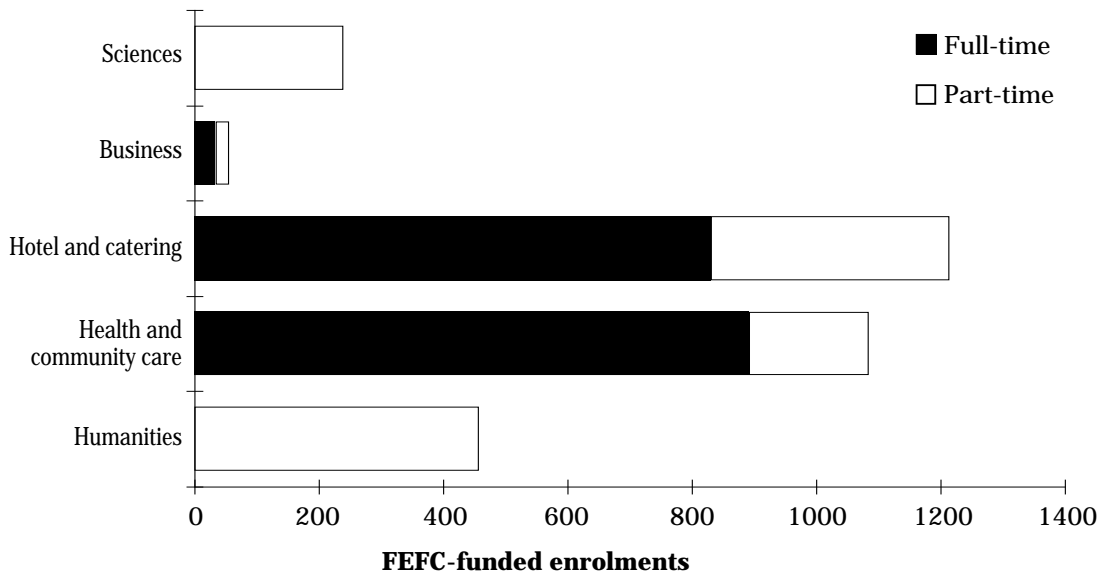
Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies: percentage of FEFC-funded enrolments by level of study (1995-96)



FEFC-funded enrolments: 3,052

Figure 3

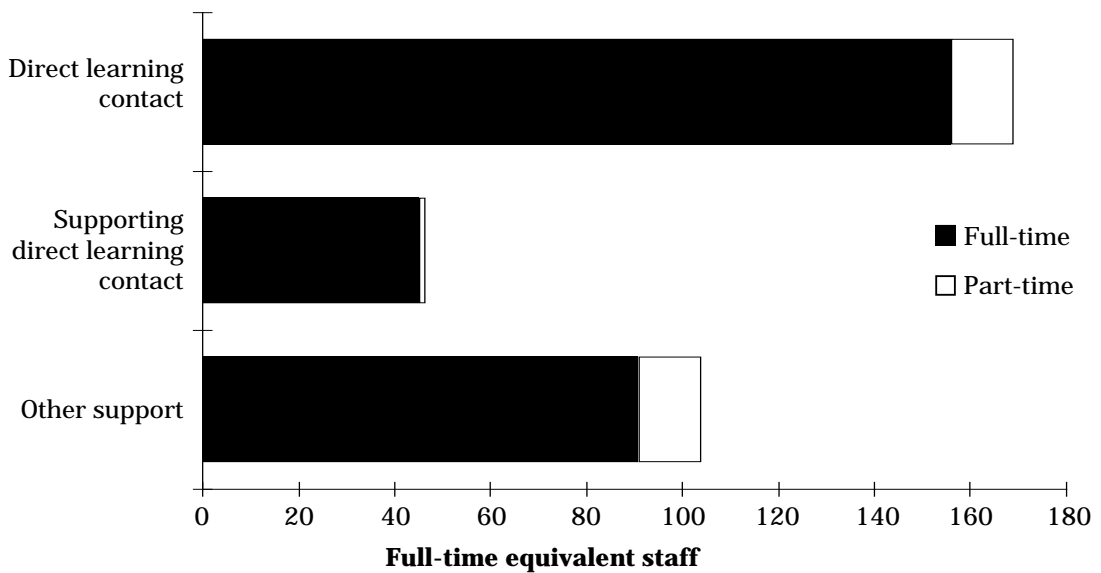
Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies: FEFC-funded enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1995-96)



FEFC-funded enrolments: 3,052

Figure 4

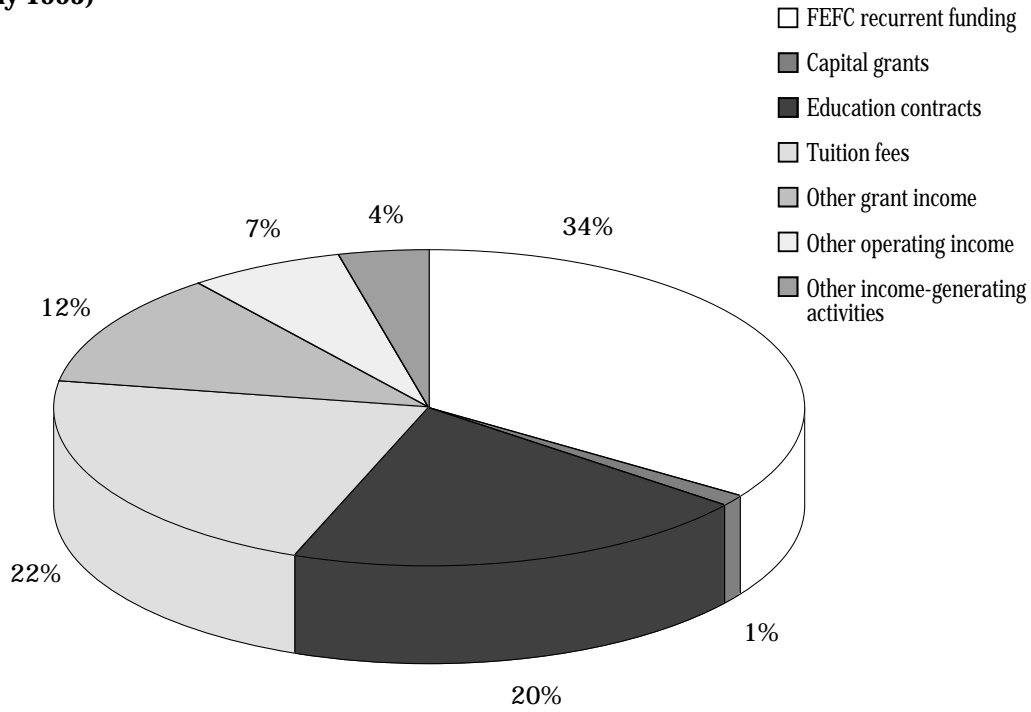
Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)



Full-time equivalent staff: 320

Figure 5

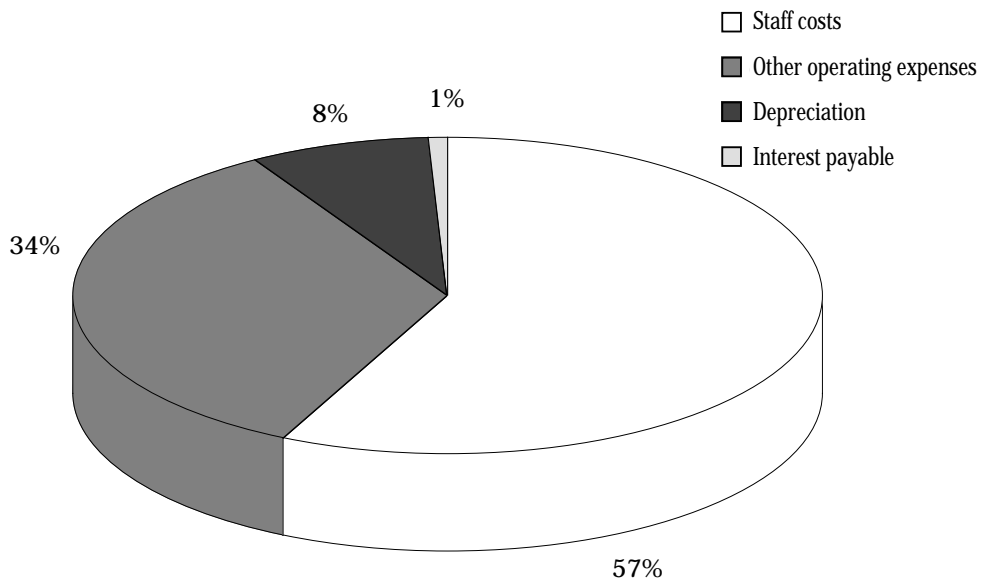
Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies: income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Income: £14,169,000

Figure 6

Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Expenditure: £10,930,000

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