

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Bolton College

June 1997

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

By June 1996, some 329 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 329 colleges are shown in the following table.

College grade profiles 1993-96

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 67/97

BOLTON COLLEGE

NORTH WEST REGION

Inspected May 1996-February 1997

Summary

Bolton College offers an extensive range of courses, particularly in vocational areas. It is responsive to the training needs of industry and commerce although some sectors could do more in this respect. Its schools partnership programme is successful in raising pupils' awareness of vocational education. Members of the corporation have a wide range of relevant experience and expertise. Senior managers have a strong sense of corporate identity and the will to take the college forward. There is a well-structured quality assurance system and a strong commitment to staff development. Students, including those with physical disabilities and sensory impairments, have access to a wide range of support services and a developing range of high-quality information technology facilities. The number of classes graded 1 or 2 was 7 per cent lower than the national average for the further education sector. In many courses, students' achievements, attendance and retention rates were poor. The management information system fails to provide accurate and timely data relating to students. The college should: do more to co-ordinate its links with industry; rectify weaknesses in the management structure and strengthen lines of accountability; strengthen aspects of the quality assurance system; improve the accuracy of, and make better use of, statistical data; address shortcomings in admission, enrolment and tutorial arrangements; continue to improve the range of resources in the library; and strive to bring more of its accommodation up to the standard of the best.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science, mathematics and computing	3	Hotel and catering including leisure and tourism	2
Construction	2	Health and social care including hairdressing and beauty	2
Engineering	2		
Business	3	Humanities	3

INTRODUCTION

1 Bolton College was inspected between May 1996 and February 1997. Twenty-two inspectors spent 92 days in the college. They observed 242 classes, inspected students' work and scrutinised college documentation, including the mission statement, strategic plan and self-assessment report. They attended a meeting of the corporation and held discussions with five of its members and the clerk. There were also meetings with college managers, staff and students, and with representatives from Bolton and Bury Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), industry, the careers service, local schools, higher education and the community.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Bolton College is a general further education college which mainly provides vocational education and training. Previously known as Bolton Metropolitan College it adopted its present name in 1993. The college was established in 1982 when Bolton Technical College, Horwich College of Further Education and Bolton College of Adult Education were amalgamated. In 1990, the local education authority (LEA) formed the community education service and withdrew adult education from the college's range of provision.

3 The Metropolitan Borough of Bolton has a population of about 265,000. Over 8 per cent belong to minority ethnic groups, mostly of Indian origin. In the past, the economy of Bolton depended heavily on manufacturing industries, particularly textiles. In the 1980s, work in manufacturing industries decreased by 14 per cent and jobs in service industries increased by 24 per cent. Many people still work in manufacturing industries, but a further decline in the manufacturing sector and more jobs in other sectors, including the service sector, are forecast. In December 1996, the unemployment rate for the borough was 5.5 per cent. The proportion of school-leavers remaining in full-time education is about 67 per cent, which is within 5 per cent of the corresponding figures for the north west and England. The college's competitors include two sixth form colleges, seven 11 to 18 schools and a major private training provider within the borough. As well as colleges in Manchester, there are six general further education or tertiary colleges within a radius of 12 miles.

4 The college is housed in buildings on four sites: Manchester Road, Great Moor Street and Hilden Street which are all within Bolton itself and Horwich which is about six miles away. Most vocational and general education courses are taught at the Manchester Road campus. Health and community care, motor vehicle engineering and fabrication and welding courses are based at Horwich but some health and community care and access classes are taught at Great Moor Street. Performing arts and some of the college's provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are based at Hilden Street. A partnership between the college

and the borough council's leisure services led to the opening, in January 1997, of a purpose-built sports, leisure and learning centre, Bolton Excel, on the college's Manchester Road site. The college's library and learning centre is also housed within the building, which cost £2 million.

5 In November 1996, there were 6,585 students enrolled on college programmes. Of these, 30 per cent were 16 to 18 years of age and 47 per cent were 25 or over. At least 9 per cent were from minority ethnic groups. About 81 per cent of students study part time. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3. In January 1997, the college employed the equivalent of 463 full-time staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

6 The college's mission is 'to promote, encourage and assist the enhancement of people and organisations through the provision of quality services in education'. In the college's summary of its strategic plan for the period 1996 to 1999, the mission has been translated into seven broad aims:

- to enable all learners to develop their full potential
- to ensure financial solvency
- to promote knowledge and skills in information technology
- to provide a professional 'in-house' marketing, public relations, promotions and publications service to sectors of the college and other clients, and to promote, develop and maintain a strong corporate image
- to enable all staff to fulfil their maximum potential through full participation in the life and development of the college
- to continue to increase the utilisation and raise the overall standard of premises and accommodation in all centres of the college
- to promote quality at all levels and in all aspects of work.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 The college offers an extensive range of provision, particularly in vocational areas. It also offers a consultancy service and a programme of courses tailored to meet the needs of clients. The following table illustrates the number and diversity of courses.

Type and number of courses offered

Courses	Number of courses
NVQ or equivalent level 1	63
NVQ or equivalent level 2	105
NVQ or equivalent level 3	89
NVQ or equivalent level 4	24
GNVQ foundation level	3
GNVQ intermediate level	9
GNVQ advanced level	7
BTEC qualifications: first level	4
BTEC qualifications: national level	25
BTEC qualifications: higher national level	14
GCSE subjects	32
GCE AS/A level subjects	25
Languages	8
Access to higher education options	5
Access to further education options	22
Higher education – first year of degree courses	2

Source: college data.

8 In many vocational areas, including electrical and electronic engineering, mechanical engineering, construction, hotel and catering and hairdressing and beauty, there is a broad range of craft and technician courses which cater for both school-leavers and adults and allow them to progress from foundation to advanced level. Some courses are not commonly offered in other colleges and these attract students from outside the immediate locality. For example, the college provides courses in roof-tiling and slating and is the designated roofing training centre for the north west. In catering, full-time and part-time bakery courses have recruited successfully this year. About 3,000 students attend the college to gain national vocational qualifications (NVQs). Many students are on modern apprenticeship programmes for which the college is one of the largest providers nationally. In most vocational areas, students can attend the college at times in the week which suit them or fit in with their other commitments. Full-time students have a wide choice of courses leading to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) and Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) diplomas but, this year, some courses such as the advanced GNVQ in hospitality and catering, and the intermediate GNVQ in engineering did not recruit enough students to form viable teaching groups. There are no courses leading to GNVQs in science.

9 The college caters well for mature students who are returning to education. Students on access courses have a wide choice of humanities subjects as well as options offered by some vocational areas in subjects

such as business and administration, community care and leisure and tourism. About 1,050 students are enrolled on access courses. Other notable elements in the college's general education provision include trade union education, teacher education and a range of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses.

10 Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has a high priority. About 300 students are enrolled, including 80 with sensory impairments. Many students with hearing impairments enrol on a separate course which caters for their particular needs. Links with special schools in Bolton are well established. Pupils are able to come to college to sample a range of activities before enrolling on college courses. Many students choose the college's foundation work skills programme which offers them 30 hours tuition and guidance and a work placement, usually in catering, retailing or business administration. The college provides care assistants to support the students in their work placements. A few pupils from special schools enrol directly on mainstream courses.

11 A particular strength of the college is its responsiveness to the training needs of industry and commerce. Currently, its list of clients includes many large regional and national organisations. Staff in some vocational areas have won contracts for training courses but in other areas staff have not done enough to identify potential clients. Training contracts are also sought by the college's consultancy service. This is a private limited company which acts as a broker between industry and the college to provide customised training packages, consultancy and technical support in a range of areas, including science, construction, engineering, hairdressing and beauty, and catering. The consultancy service operates successfully and makes a useful financial contribution to the college.

12 The college has a productive working relationship with the local TEC and has established a number of links at different levels. For example, the principal is an active member of working groups at strategic level. The college's training unit manages TEC-sponsored education and training and has about 450 trainees. Although some vocational areas are keen to offer youth and adult training, others could do more in this respect. At the time of the inspection, the number of trainees achieving NVQs were well below targets.

13 Industrialists commented positively on many features of the college and expressed their support for its work. In most vocational areas, there are strong links between individual staff and employers. Often these are developed through work placements which students have undertaken with these employers. College guidelines specify that potential placements should be checked by staff to ensure that they meet health and safety requirements. Employers and tutors assess students' performance in the workplace and their reports are included in students' records of achievement. Consultative panels also enable employers to meet college staff but in some areas such as engineering, attendance at meetings is often poor. In hairdressing and beauty and business, employers are not

sufficiently involved in curriculum-related activities. Although there are fruitful links between vocational areas, the college consultancy service and industry and commerce, they are poorly co-ordinated.

14 Links with local schools are developing well. An effective partnership between the college and 14 secondary schools enables pupils in their final years of compulsory schooling to take a wide range of vocational courses. College staff have devised programmes of study which meet the requirements of the national curriculum and allow pupils to achieve NVQs at levels 1 and 2. Subsequently, students who enrol on college courses can aim for NVQs at higher levels. An evaluation of the programme shows that many enrolments on catering, secretarial and business administration, hairdressing and beauty, community care and construction courses come from students who took part in the schools partnership programme. There are also effective links with primary schools. For example, to enhance their work in schools, children as young as five are able to visit a curriculum centre at the college to experience a range of activities in construction. Primary teachers can undertake a placement in the college to help them to incorporate appropriate vocational topics into the primary curriculum.

15 There are close links with higher education institutions in the locality. For example, students wishing to take particular degree courses at Salford University are able to undertake the foundation years at the college. Courses leading to postgraduate certificates of education are offered in partnership with Bolton Institute of Higher Education. In the past, the extent to which the college and the institute have forged curricular links has depended mainly on the initiatives of individuals. More recently, there have been formal meetings at management level to consider how both organisations might work together in the future.

16 International links are another notable feature of the college. For example, electrical engineering students have visited colleges in Sweden. A joint project involving mechanical engineering students from Bolton and a college in Italy was completed successfully. Italian students spent two weeks working alongside students in Bolton and, later, college students visited Italy to continue work on the project and to visit local engineering companies. Training contracts with colleges in Turkey have enabled college staff to forge further international links.

17 Staff in the marketing support unit work with all sections of the college to promote a strong corporate image within the community. Advertisements, publications and other marketing materials produced by the unit are attractive and well designed. Some other materials are produced by staff who want to promote particular courses. The editorial management of the full range of materials needs to be strengthened. Although the marketing support unit makes use of market intelligence from external agencies and particular vocational areas in the college, there is not enough emphasis on the collection and evaluation of such information to support the college's activities.

18 There is a comprehensive equal opportunities policy which sets out the college's position on issues relating to sex, race, gender, disability and harassment. A number of initiatives have been taken to try to increase participation from groups which have not usually sought to enrol on some courses. For example, some business courses were renamed in an attempt to attract more males. Health and social care tutors have responded to invitations from a local Muslim school to try to increase enrolments from black students. In some areas, such as engineering and computing, there are relatively few female students.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

19 Members of the corporation bring a wide range of relevant experience and expertise to the work of the college. Collectively, they have skills as directors and managers, knowledge of the local community, and understanding of important areas such as personnel, law, banking, education and training. At present, there are 19 members, five of whom are women. There is no governor from a minority ethnic background. More than half the present members were members of the governing body prior to incorporation. There are 12 independent members, a representative of the TEC, two co-opted members, the principal, two members of the college staff and a student. A local councillor, who is one of the co-opted members, is the chairman and the vice-principal is the clerk. Members have adopted a code of conduct and submitted information to enable a register of interests to be compiled. Pertinent documents from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and other bodies with an interest in further education are regularly sent to members to help them to understand their roles and responsibilities. In 1996, with the help of an external consultant, the corporation identified its training needs and organised a suitable training event. Individuals attend training events organised by the college and other bodies but, at present, there is no formal training programme for members of the corporation as a whole.

20 Termly meetings of the corporation are businesslike and usually well attended. There are five committees of the corporation: audit; finance and estates; personnel and student services; strategic planning; and remuneration. These committees monitor the implementation and effectiveness of college policies. The college's health and safety officer reports once a term directly to the corporation. The search committee was recently reconstituted and, at its first meeting, devised clear guidelines for the appointment of an independent member to fill a vacancy. Senior managers are closely linked to the functions of the committees of the corporation and work effectively with members. However, even during a prolonged period of difficult industrial relations within the college, which is now over, a clear distinction between governance and management was preserved. Members have an awareness of key strategic issues, particularly those relating to finance and assets, but they do not receive sufficient information to enable them to judge the quality of provision for

students. Attendance and retention rates are not reported to them and the form in which students' achievements are presented does not allow immediate comparison of examination results from year to year. Members do not receive regular progress reports which would enable them to monitor the extent to which the college is on course to achieve its strategic objectives. There are no formal arrangements to enable the corporation to review its own performance or appraise the principal.

21 Senior managers provide leadership and strongly promote the college in the community and in partnerships with external agencies and clients. They have enabled the college to regain its momentum after a difficult period when many staff were resistant to change. Ninety-six per cent of lecturers have now accepted new contracts. The existing management structure has evolved and been suitably adapted to meet changing circumstances. The senior management team comprises the principal and five directors. The vice-principal is the director of administration and the other four directors have cross-college responsibilities for college services, including accommodation, curriculum, personnel and student services, and finance, respectively. Senior managers have a strong sense of corporate identity and work closely with each other. However, there is some duplication and overlap in the roles of directors. In some related areas, where more than one director has responsibility, management is not effectively co-ordinated.

22 A curriculum management team made up of cross-college co-ordinators and led by the director of curriculum provides a focus for curriculum development in the college. Each member has clear objectives and an action plan which is reviewed termly with the director of curriculum. Members of the team provide helpful advice, information and support materials to staff. They try to ensure that curricular initiatives are integral to development plans and teaching and learning methods. For example, the curriculum entitlement co-ordinator is concerned with the extent to which courses include opportunities for students to develop communication, numeracy, information technology, problem-solving, personal and study skills. The academic board advises the principal on curricular matters and its minutes are received by the corporation. Following a self-assessment review, academic board members have made changes to the way in which the board operates. Agendas, minutes of meetings and comments from academic board members confirm that meetings are now more purposeful and that there has been rigorous debate on issues such as standards and policies.

23 Organisational structures are clear and well understood by staff. Courses are provided by 10 sectors of study, each of which is divided into sections and course teams. Communications from and between staff in the different tiers of the organisation are generally good. A well-planned timetable of meetings enables senior management issues to be disseminated promptly to heads of sector and other staff. Heads of sector and section leaders have detailed job descriptions. They also have the

discretion to interpret their roles flexibly. Some have responded innovatively to changing circumstances. Heads of sector do not have line managers but are paired with the five directors who provide senior management support. These links maintain channels of communication between strategic and operational levels of management. However, they fail to provide control mechanisms to ensure that heads of sector manage their resources effectively and efficiently and that they work within their budgets. A recent escalation in part-time staffing costs forced senior managers to take direct, corrective action to contain expenditure. Heads of sector are asked to respond to numerous demands from those associated with a multiplicity of cross-college functions and, in some areas, they have limited scope to devolve tasks to section leaders. In most areas, courses are managed competently. Planning and management are weaker where provision spans more than one sector and has not been developed collaboratively. For example, where some general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects are offered in differing sectors, the choice of syllabus and allocation of teaching time can vary widely.

24 Most policies and procedures are well established and appropriately reviewed. For example, there is a full range of detailed personnel policies which have been developed since incorporation. Financial procedures have been in place since 1993 and are currently being reviewed to take account of recent difficulties and new developments. Effective implementation of many policies relating to day-to-day management relies on the extent to which senior managers, teachers and support staff work collaboratively, understand the procedures and put them into practice. Designated directors are responsible for the support services of administration, information, estates management, marketing support, personnel and finance. They meet their key managers regularly to monitor what is happening and to keep them fully informed of senior management decisions. There are also formal links between some support services and sectors of study. For example, named officers in the finance section work directly with each sector. Administrative staff are organised in teams each of which works with a group of sectors. Links between sectors and some other support services are not as systematic.

25 Budgets for consumables and part-time teaching hours are delegated to heads of sector. Usually, they are based on historic levels with adjustments to reflect efficiency savings and performance in the previous year. Some support units such as the marketing unit and the estates management unit also have delegated budgets. Because of current cash-flow difficulties, allocations are made on a monthly basis. Financial procedures are clearly defined but weaknesses in monitoring and controlling levels of expenditure in the past have caused unexpected difficulties. The college is budgeting for a substantial deficit in the current financial period. The average level of funding for 1996-97 is £20.09 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.97 per unit. About 66 per cent of the college's income is allocated by

the FEFC. A further 20 per cent is expected from educational contracts and commercial activities. Staffing costs account for about 70 per cent of expenditure. The college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1997 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

26 The college's computerised management information system is not providing timely and accurate data relating to students. There have been delays in submitting crucial data to the FEFC, and reliable information from the central database on numbers of enrolments, retention rates and students' achievements for individual courses over the last three years was not readily available to inspectors. Sectors keep their own records and inspectors used this information. Lack of confidence in the reliability of data held centrally prevents senior managers from challenging sectors' statistics with confidence. At all levels of management, there is not enough use of performance indicators to set targets, to monitor and review progress and to inform decision making.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

27 Students have the opportunity to visit the college before they enrol. During the year, there are open days and other special events designed to inform school-leavers and adults of the range of courses on offer. Between June and September, advice and enrolment sessions offer students further help in choosing their courses. Specialist guidance is available to adults.

28 Applicants for full-time courses may have a pre-entry guidance interview if they request it or are unsure of their choice of course. However, most prospective, full-time students are interviewed only by staff from curriculum areas. Although there are interview guidelines and checklists for staff to complete, they are not used consistently. The extent to which students have access to impartial guidance and advice during these interviews is not monitored systematically. Some students are placed on courses which do not meet their career aspirations. Some students say that they were not given information about the full range of courses and only found out about suitable alternatives when it was too late to make changes. To date, about 230 students have changed course. Last year, the total was about 350. The college does not analyse this information to review the effectiveness of its admission arrangements. In February 1997, the college adopted an admissions policy. It states that, in future, all prospective students should receive impartial advice prior to finalising their choice of course.

29 Enrolment is well organised. Useful guidance notes help staff to answer questions and complete appropriate forms. The pre-entry advice and guidance record gives a clear agenda for individual interviews but there is little systematic monitoring of the extent to which applicants have access to impartial guidance during enrolment sessions.

30 A useful, comprehensive planning guide helps staff to devise induction programmes for full-time students. The guide is prepared centrally and

offers sectors a framework for induction. Sectors can adapt the framework to devise induction programmes which meet their particular needs. Most induction programmes include a mix of activities which aim to introduce students to the college, the sector and the requirements of the course. Some programmes are not sufficiently related to students' needs and do not give enough emphasis to course issues. During induction, students are provided with a pocket-size student handbook and diary which includes useful information about college services and policies, and a copy of the college charter. An audio tape explaining the college charter and the complaints procedure is available for visually-impaired students.

31 Additional support for students who need to improve their literacy and numeracy skills is readily available. Most students who begin foundation and intermediate level courses take an initial test so that their learning support needs can be identified. In the current year, 2,000 assessment documents were distributed to sectors, but only 600 were completed and returned. About 300 students were identified as needing extra help. At the time of the inspection, however, only 130 students had accepted offers of additional support. There is insufficient liaison between staff in the sectors and staff offering learning support to ensure that all students who would benefit from support receive it. The form in which students receive extra help is designed to meet their individual needs. Support is provided in various ways; for example, there is support for individuals in vocational classes, one-to-one tuition for 12 students for whom English is not their first language, and regular classes for 16 students who are dyslexic. Attendance at the learning support sessions observed by inspectors was poor. Most support is well planned but procedures for evaluating its effectiveness are inadequate.

32 Learning support for students with physical disabilities and sensory impairments is given a high priority and managed well. In mathematics, a support worker had prepared learning materials in Braille to complement audio tapes created by the teacher so that visually-impaired students could learn about scatter diagrams. About 50 visually-impaired students attend the college. To enable them to attend for a full day and assure the welfare of their guide dogs, the college has provided a guide dog run.

33 Students appreciate the quality of pastoral support offered to them by staff. Each student has a named personal tutor with whom he or she can discuss progress and concerns. Stemming from these meetings, some students have individual action plans. There is confusion among some staff and students about which documents should be used to record the key points emerging from tutorials. In most sectors, students are encouraged to maintain and develop their records of achievement. Within full-time courses, sessions are timetabled for groups of students to meet their personal tutors. A centrally-devised tutor handbook specifies topics which should be covered in tutorial time, but sectors have the freedom to devise their own tutorial programmes for individual courses. Most sectors have not set clear objectives for tutorial sessions and the quality of the

sessions varies significantly. Some are used effectively to prepare students for activities such as work experience. Others are extensions of teaching time or used for students' private study. There are no clear criteria for appointing tutors, and training and support for new tutors is variable. There is insufficient monitoring of the use of tutorial time to ensure effectiveness and consistency. Personal tutors monitor students' attendance and follow up prolonged absences but they do not report attendance rates to heads of sector.

34 The extent to which students receive careers education and guidance as a structured part of their course varies from sector to sector. There are no college-wide standards for this aspect of work. Some sectors arrange group sessions for their students at critical points in their courses but there is no requirement for them to do so. In 1995-96, staff from the local careers service were involved in 75 of these sessions. Other sectors work closely with the college's own trained, specialist staff who complement the work of the careers service. Support for students who intend to apply for higher education courses is readily available. In September, the college arranges a higher education evening so that students can hear how staff from universities and other higher education institutions select students from the applications they receive. College staff explain to students how the application process works and provide them with a useful booklet which highlights key points. Separate sections for students on access, advanced GNVQ and general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) courses deal with issues pertinent to their differing needs. Although careers education and guidance may not be integral to some courses, any student is entitled to and may request a careers guidance interview with one of the specialist staff. In 1995-96, about 2,500 students took advantage of this opportunity.

35 There is a wide and well-publicised range of other support services for students of all ages. All services are available to students at Manchester Road but some are not as easily accessible to students based at Horwich. Some services are used only by a small proportion of students. For example, the recently improved childcare centre offers 20 places a session and about 50 students use this facility over the course of a week. The college counsellor's records show that she interviews from 20 to 50 students each month. There is also a chaplain who divides her week between the college and Bolton Institute of Higher Education. Students who want to study but cannot afford to pay their fees are well supported by the college. To compensate for the withdrawal of a discretionary award scheme by the LEA, the college allocated £325,000 of its own money to create a study-award fund. This year over 1,000 applications for support have been dealt with.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

36 Two hundred and forty-two teaching sessions were observed. Of these, 56 per cent had strengths that outweighed weaknesses. This is

7 per cent lower than the average for all sessions recorded in the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. The weaknesses outweighed the strengths in 10 per cent of sessions; this is 2 per cent higher than the average for all subjects in 1995-96, according to the same report. Attendance rates in the classes inspected averaged 69 per cent and ranged from 63 per cent in hotel and catering, including leisure and tourism, to 73 per cent in engineering. The following table summarises the grades awarded to the sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	0	7	11	2	0	20
GCSE	1	6	6	3	0	16
GNVQ	0	15	13	2	0	30
NVQ	17	42	26	4	1	90
Access	4	3	7	1	0	15
Higher education	1	2	0	2	0	5
Other*	13	25	19	8	1	66
Total	36	100	82	22	2	242

* includes BTEC national certificate and diploma programmes.

37 Most teachers of computing, science and mathematics prepared their lessons carefully. Worksheets and study notes were well designed, and theory and practical work were effectively integrated. For example, in one successful lesson the teacher introduced a new topic in science by showing students a video-tape recording. Afterwards, the students answered a series of questions about what they had seen and then completed a practical task to reinforce the key points. In the better sessions, teachers linked new work to experiences which were familiar to students. For example, students in a GCSE mathematics class used published data from the national lottery to practise statistical techniques. In a computing class, part-time students explained to others in their group how they used particular features of software in their jobs. However, in some computing classes, such opportunities were missed. In all subjects, there were occasions when teachers did not make enough use of direct questioning to check students' understanding of topics. In mathematics, teachers failed to vary their teaching to take account of the different needs and levels of ability of students in their classes.

38 In construction, most staff were enthusiastic about their work and had sound industrial knowledge and experience. They devised realistic assignments and ensured that projects undertaken in workshops were of an appropriate scale. In craft areas, students made effective use of learning packs to work at their own pace with advice from their teachers. Students were encouraged to judge their own work prior to formal assessment by

their teachers. Criteria for assessment were closely aligned to the standards set by accrediting bodies. In a few practical classes, teachers and students did not take enough care to ensure safe working conditions. In the weaker theoretical sessions, teachers failed to make enough use of teaching and learning aids to reinforce key points. Some learning materials were of poor quality and contained outdated information.

39 Schemes of work, lesson plans and assessments in engineering accurately reflected the knowledge, skills and understanding required by accrediting bodies. In fabrication and welding, teachers provided individual learning programmes for students aiming for NVQs. The programmes built upon students' prior experience and took account of their different levels of ability. Teaching was usually well paced and included the judicious use of questions to test students' understanding and to encourage their participation in lessons. In electrical and electronic engineering, students experienced a range of effective learning activities which were often challenging but never daunting. Teachers used engine components and a range of teaching aids effectively to aid students' understanding of difficult concepts in motor vehicle engineering. In a few classes, students spent too much time silently copying down from the board information which teachers provided on theoretical aspects of the work. Health and safety requirements in workshops were not always fully enforced.

40 The quality of teaching in business was variable. Secretarial courses and those leading to NVQs in administration were generally well planned. Schemes of work had clear objectives, included the teaching methods and learning activities to be undertaken and indicated the resources required. Tasks were pitched at an appropriate level to enable students of differing abilities to make good progress during lessons. On courses leading to professional and vocational qualifications in accounting, supervisory management and retailing, the pace and challenge of the work were usually appropriate. In the better sessions, teachers incorporated a variety of activities and set them in a business context which was familiar to students. Poor classroom management was a feature of some weaker sessions. For example, in an advanced GNVQ class, group work was ineffective because the boisterous behaviour of some students was allowed to go unchecked. In some lessons, teachers had unrealistic expectations about what students could achieve in the time available. There were few lessons in which teachers provided imaginative or stimulating approaches to learning. On some courses, including those leading to professional qualifications, the quality of learning materials and visual aids used by teachers did not reflect business standards.

41 On hotel and catering courses and on leisure and tourism courses, schemes of work and lessons plans were clearly linked to the requirements of GNVQs and NVQs. Most teaching was of a good standard and took account of the needs of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students experienced a variety of activities to prepare

them for work in relevant industries. For example, to reinforce topics and skills covered in previous lessons, students from bakery, food service and food production classes worked collaboratively to prepare a selection of Italian food and wine which they served to customers in the college's restaurant. The presentation of dishes did not reflect the best industrial practice and was sometimes poor. Some activities were not set in a sufficiently realistic working environment and they failed to challenge students. Assignments were well designed but teachers did not provide enough written guidance on how the students could improve the quality of their work.

42 Most health and social care students understood the criteria which staff used to assess their work and valued the advice they received to improve the standard of their work. Systems to track students' progress and identify those in need of extra help worked well. Most teaching was of good quality and lessons were conducted in a relaxed and purposeful manner. Staff used a wide range of teaching methods and learning aids to engage students' interest and encourage learning. They skilfully related theoretical aspects of the work to students' own experiences in work placements and handled contentious issues sensitively. There were only a few occasions when the pace of work in lessons was too slow or when staff failed to adapt their teaching to take account of needs of individuals.

43 The quality of teaching in hairdressing and beauty ranged from good to poor. In the better sessions, teachers prepared their presentations carefully and used effective questioning techniques to check students' understanding of new topics. Suitable learning packages enabled individuals to follow coherent programmes of study at their own pace and with guidance from their teachers. Staff had high expectations of their students and tracked their progress carefully. In some of the weaker lessons, teachers did not encourage students to annotate worksheets or develop note taking skills. In some practical classes, students worked on tasks which were unsuitable for their stage of development. Schemes of work for hairdressing and beauty programmes did not include enough opportunities for students to develop and use information technology skills.

44 In teacher education, the teaching was generally effective. In other humanities subjects, the teaching was variable in quality. In the better sessions, social science teachers drew on students' own experiences to illustrate theoretical aspects. For example, in one sociology lesson, a lively question-and-answer session allowed students to learn new terminology and use it correctly to describe features of their work placements. In history, geography and teacher education, teachers usually succeeded in promoting discussion by using a range of methods and suitable learning materials. Some English teachers skilfully redirected their lessons to take account of students' comments and observations. However, most humanities teachers stuck rigidly to their lesson plans and missed opportunities to vary the pace of the work, follow up points of interest and introduce or reinforce key concepts. In some lessons, the work lacked

rigour and did not take enough account of the differing abilities of students. Individual teachers had too much freedom to determine the criteria for assessing students' work, and standards differed. In some cases, teachers' comments on marked work did not give students enough help in showing them how to improve what they were doing.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

45 Most students were interested in their courses and worked well in class. In many areas, students were able to apply what they had learnt to realistic tasks in workshops or other environments. For example, some engineering students used electronic tools and testing equipment to make electronic components of industrial standard. Catering students demonstrated good technical and social skills when serving food and drinks in the college restaurant. The practical skills of students on teacher education courses were well developed. In construction, engineering, health and social care, and hairdressing and beauty, the written work of some students was of a high standard. However, standards of literacy displayed by GCSE English students were low. In mathematics, GCSE students had weak algebraic and numerical skills and a significant proportion had not handed in work to be marked by their teachers even though work had been set regularly. Few students used their information technology skills to present written assignments. Poor levels of attendance and lack of punctuality were common among students in science, computing, construction, catering, leisure and tourism, hairdressing and beauty, and humanities.

46 There are serious weaknesses in the accuracy and reliability of college data relating to students' achievements. Individual sectors keep their own records. In the past, information has not been collected in a common form nor has it been collated to provide senior managers with a clear overview of examination results and retention rates. In 1995 and 1996, the college failed to meet both the statutory requirement and its charter commitment to publish a summary of students' achievements for the information of the general public. However, it did submit data to the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) so that its position in the performance tables for vocational and GCE A level qualifications could be determined. In February 1997, the college resubmitted data relating to students' achievements for 1996 because it identified errors in its initial submission. Some information submitted in previous years could not be reconciled with data provided for inspectors by individual sectors.

47 The college has not set target retention rates for individual sectors or for the college as a whole. In the past, it has not systematically monitored and analysed retention rates. Data provided by individual sectors showed that fewer than 70 per cent of students on many full-time vocational courses completed their studies. In 1996, only a few full-time courses had retention rates higher than 90 per cent. Retention rates on many part-time courses

were also poor. For example, in 1996, 10 GCSE classes had retention rates below 50 per cent. Retention rates for two-year GCE A level courses could not be provided. In the last academic year, half of the teachers refused to teach their classes during a five-week period of industrial action. This caused major disruption to students' learning programmes and may have had an adverse effect on retention rates.

48 According to information obtained from the sectors, students' achievements on full-time vocational courses are variable. A scrutiny of results for the last three years shows:

- pass rates of 90 per cent or better on courses leading to national diplomas in electronic engineering, social care and nursery nursing
- pass rates at least 30 per cent higher than corresponding national averages on courses leading to advanced GNVQs in hospitality and catering and leisure and tourism in each of the last two years
- pass rates at least 15 per cent higher than corresponding national averages in courses leading to intermediate GNVQs in information technology, engineering and social care in the last two years
- a pass rate of 61 per cent for students completing the course leading to the national diploma in construction in 1996, although pass rates were above 75 per cent in the two previous years
- pass rates below 40 per cent on most hairdressing and beauty therapy courses
- pass rates of 50 per cent and 31 per cent, respectively, for students completing courses leading to the medical secretary's diploma and private secretary's certificate in 1996
- pass rates lower than 25 per cent for students completing the intermediate GNVQ in hospitality and catering in each of the last two years. (The college has now withdrawn this course)
- a pass rate of less than 20 per cent for students completing the advanced GNVQ in information technology in 1996.

49 Results for part-time students for the last three years also varied considerably. For example:

- courses leading to higher national certificates in construction, manufacturing and business had pass rates of 90 per cent or higher
- courses leading to national certificates in business, mechanical and manufacturing engineering, electrical engineering, electronic engineering and instrumentation, had pass rates of 85 per cent or higher
- many adult students successfully completed modules as part of access to higher education courses
- achievements on the Association of Accounting Technicians courses were generally at or above national averages

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- in 1996, all students seeking NVQs in machine woodworking were successful
 - in 1994 and 1995, courses leading to the national certificate in building studies had pass rates below 50 per cent but, in 1996, this figure improved to 64 per cent
 - a few courses in fabrication and welding, motor vehicle engineering and electrical engineering had pass rates below 50 per cent
 - less than half the students who enrolled on short computing courses achieved their intended qualifications.

50 According to the DfEE's 1996 performance tables, 41 per cent of the 88 students aged between 16 and 18 gained their intended intermediate vocational qualifications. The tables also show that 69 per cent of the 170 students aged between 16 and 18 in their final year of study on advanced vocational courses were successful. This places the college in the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector based on these performance measures. In 1995, the corresponding figure for advanced qualifications was 92 per cent placing the college in the top third of colleges. In 1994, the figure was 73 per cent and the college was again in the bottom third.

51 In 1996, there were 483 entries for GCSE examinations in 22 subjects. Fifty-six per cent of students achieved grades C or above, an improvement of 10 per cent on the previous year's figure. The main features of students' performance at GCSE were:

- pass rates above 85 per cent in German (12 entries), Spanish (10 entries) and Italian (nine entries)
- a pass rate of 74 per cent in English (127 entries)
- a pass rate of 42 per cent in mathematics (128 entries)
- pass rates below 15 per cent in chemistry (10 entries), geography (nine entries), and history (nine entries).

52 Results in GCE A level examinations have fluctuated over the last three years. In 1996, there were 147 entries in 21 subjects. Only English language and literature, business studies, psychology and human biology had more than 10 entries. The overall pass rate for GCE A levels was 63 per cent. This figure was 11 per cent higher than the 1995 pass rate and matched the pass rate for 1994. The 1996 national average for GCE A level students of all ages in general further education colleges was 71 per cent. Scrutiny of the results in the last three years for subjects with at least five entries shows:

- in English language and literature, pass rates consistently higher than 75 per cent
- in psychology and chemistry, pass rates higher than corresponding national averages in two of the years
- in business studies, pass rates at least 15 per cent lower than corresponding national averages in 1995 and 1996

-
- in geography, history and geology, declining results: pass rates in 1996 were 30 per cent lower than in 1994.

53 Tables published by the DfEE show that the 31 students aged 16 to 18 who were entered for GCE A level examinations in 1996 scored, on average, 1.6 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This places the college among the bottom 10 per cent of colleges in the sector on this performance measure. In 1995, there were 63 students and the corresponding average was 3.2. As a result, the college was placed in the middle third of colleges in the sector. In 1994, the average points score per entry for the 55 students who were entered for GCE A level examinations was 2.6. This placed the college in the bottom third of colleges, according to the same performance measure.

54 In the past, some sectors have kept information about students' destinations but this information has not been collated to provide a college-wide perspective. In 1996, the college engaged staff from an external agency to help it to collect accurate information about students' destinations. This exercise revealed that, of the 1,831 full-time students who completed their courses, 18 per cent gained employment, 17 per cent continued in further education, 5 per cent went on to higher education and 5 per cent pursued other activities. The destinations of the remaining 55 per cent were unknown. This figure is too high. Such an incomplete picture prevents the college from using the information to judge the effectiveness of its existing provision.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

55 There is a well-structured quality assurance system. The policy and procedures are clearly defined. Staff understand how the system works and who is responsible for each stage. The 'quality' manager, who reports to the director of curriculum, co-ordinates the implementation of the system across the college. Each sector of study and support service has a quality team. Each sector is also represented on the cross-college team which carries out internal audits. Quality teams and internal audit teams produce useful reports which draw upon evidence gathered from meetings with students, questionnaires, external moderators' reports and analyses of performance indicators. These reports are considered by senior managers and contribute to an annual self-assessment report. Subsequent actions to remedy weaknesses at college level are identified in meetings of heads of sector and senior managers. Some aspects of the college's work already meet standards set by external bodies such as the TEC and the International Standards Organisation. In other areas, progress is slower. For example, in engineering, the process of internal verification is still being developed.

56 Implementation of the college's quality assurance system is not yet sufficiently rigorous, particularly at course level. There is not enough routine monitoring of statistics relating to students' attendance, punctuality and retention to give early warning of areas of concern. Course teams and

support teams meet regularly and formally review their work twice a year. In curriculum areas, these reviews take place in the autumn, when they focus on enrolment and induction and, at the end of the academic year, when they include analysis of data relating to students' retention, achievements and destinations. In many courses, these reviews lead to the setting of realistic targets for improvement and associated action plans. For example, a timescale for the return of students' work has now been set by some course teams. In areas such as business studies, catering, and hairdressing and beauty, course teams are not sufficiently self-critical and do not respond adequately to issues. Reviews from course teams inform sector reports which include comments on the previous year's action plans, and the priorities and targets for the following year. Although the whole process has led to some improvements in the quality of resources and the effectiveness of procedures, it has not yet raised the level of students' achievements.

57 There are appropriate procedures which allow students to comment on the quality of courses and support services. About 10 per cent of students are asked to complete questionnaires three times a year. A survey conducted in November 1996 showed that 90 per cent of students in the sample were satisfied with their course. Issues identified in these surveys are considered by course teams but are not always adequately addressed. Through their representatives, students can also express their views directly to staff at course team meetings and termly meetings which are specially arranged by heads of sector and senior managers to hear students' opinions of the college. Training to help student representatives to fulfil their role is provided. Attendance at such meetings varies but students who attend regularly say that they find them useful and that staff take their views into account. Technicians, staff who provide catering facilities and those who work in the marketing unit and the library have sought the opinions of people who use their services. As a result of feedback, action has been taken to effect improvements. Recently, using the services of an external agency, the college sought employers' perceptions of the institution. Findings from the survey indicate that the college has a good reputation but more needs to be done to inform employers of the courses and services it can offer. Parents have opportunities to attend parents' evenings once a year but there are no surveys to find out parents' perceptions of the college.

58 Commitments made to students in the college charter include few targets and measures and, as yet, they are not in step with some sections of the detailed, learner entitlement statement. A charter development group meets regularly and is rectifying these weaknesses. The extent to which the college is meeting its charter commitments is monitored by quality and internal audit teams. The complaints procedure is included in the college charter and works effectively. In 1995-96, there were 21 recorded complaints, most of which related to accommodation and resources.

59 A programme of internal audit and self-assessment is developing well in all areas of the college. In 1996, members of the cross-college audit team carried out audits of sectors to find out to what extent they fulfilled criteria identified in the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The process included observation of classes and useful feedback to individual teachers and heads of sector. Procedures to remedy poor performance and to share good practice identified in internal audits are not yet fully developed. Apart from work in marketing and finance, there have been few audits of support services to find out if they are meeting defined quality standards. The college is planning to implement a system from September 1997.

60 The college's self-assessment report prepared for the inspection drew upon evidence from all college teams, including senior management. Teams had already assessed themselves and identified areas for improvement. The report followed the headings of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement* and identified strengths, areas for development and priorities for action. All areas except resources were graded. The report was not sufficiently self-critical and failed to include some key weaknesses identified by inspectors. In three areas, the college's grades were one grade higher than those decided upon by inspectors.

61 The quality assurance system does not ensure that the performance of all teachers is regularly reviewed by managers. A staff-appraisal scheme has been in operation since 1992 but its focus is on staff development rather than on assessing job performance. For example, there is no requirement for managers to observe teachers for whom they are responsible. In practice, a large majority of teachers volunteer to be observed when sectors are internally audited, but assessments of their performance are not passed to their managers. Appraisal of full-time teaching staff has fallen behind schedule; at the time of the inspection, 44 per cent had not been appraised within the last two years. Part-time teachers are not included in the appraisal system.

62 The college is strongly committed to the development of its staff. A sum equivalent to over 2 per cent of the payroll budget is allocated to staff training. A requirement for each lecturer to spend five days each year updating professional skills is included in the new contracts. At the time of the inspection, 28 teachers had had recent placements in a wide variety of industrial organisations; more placements are planned for later in the year. Procedures for identifying and responding to staff training needs are appropriate. Most training is directly related to the college's strategic objectives and some is provided on a college-wide basis. Training for assessors, and a programme of management training for heads of sector and their senior staff, are recent examples of this. There is also a small fund to enable individuals to undertake training for their personal development. Induction of new staff is effective. Evaluation by managers of the effectiveness of training is poor, but this issue is currently being addressed by the college.

RESOURCES

Staffing

63 Data relating to staffing are systematically collected and regularly analysed. Profiles show a fairly even balance of men and women, although there is only one woman in the senior management team. About 4 per cent of staff come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Nineteen staff are registered as disabled. There are sufficient teachers to cover adequately the range of courses which the college offers. However, in science, mathematics, manufacturing, motor vehicle engineering, business and health and social care, there is an overdependence on part-time staff to co-ordinate and develop courses.

64 Most teachers are well qualified. Ninety-two per cent of full-time and fractional staff are graduates. Of these, 89 per cent have teaching qualifications and 34 per cent hold training and development lead body assessor awards. Full-time and fractional full-time staff make up three-quarters of the teaching force. Most part-time staff are appropriately qualified for the work they are asked to do but, as a group, they are not as highly qualified as their full-time colleagues; 55 per cent are graduates, 57 per cent have teaching qualifications and 14 per cent hold assessor awards. In health and social care, and business and catering, some staff have yet to gain assessor awards. The majority of teachers have appropriate industrial and commercial experience but in areas such as construction and business, some need to update their knowledge and skills. Over 100 staff are members of professional bodies.

65 Most support staff working in areas such as administration have relevant qualifications and appropriate commercial experience. Five of the seven members of the personnel team are graduates. Teaching is adequately supported by a team of qualified and experienced technicians, librarians and classroom assistants. The college also employs suitable numbers of communicators, care assistants and support workers to work with students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Equipment/learning resources

66 The college is committed to providing high-quality information technology facilities for its students. Over the last three years, it has spent about £800,000 to create a networked system in which 85 per cent of computer workstations are capable of running up-to-date software. At Manchester Road, students have good information technology facilities. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are able to use specialist facilities which include a speech synthesiser and Braille printers. Students who want to update their records of achievement can do so, using appropriate software. Thirty workstations are located in the new Excel Centre. A wide range of compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases has been purchased recently. At Horwich, only one computer is readily accessible to students in the library. Other workstations are located

in classrooms which are used frequently for lessons. Some computers and specialist software are available for staff and students to use in classes. At Great Moor Street and Lower Bridgeman Street, existing facilities are inadequate to enable teachers to integrate the development of students' information technology skills with their teaching. At present, although the college is linked to the Internet, students are unable to gain access to the information on it.

67 Generally, there are sufficient learning materials and specialist pieces of equipment to support adequately the range of courses offered by the college. Equipment in the reprographics section has been upgraded to improve the quality of the learning materials which are produced there. Through its links with local and national companies, the college has improved the quality of specialist equipment in some vocational areas. For example, there is a well-equipped travel agency in the college which is run by leisure and tourism students in conjunction with a local travel company. High-quality equipment for courses leading to NVQs in electronics was donated by a national company which uses the college to train its workforce. In motor vehicle engineering, a range of modern vehicles donated by motor companies enables the college to offer specialist short courses but there are not enough vehicles of suitable quality for general use. Some science equipment is old and in need of replacement. In construction, some woodworking equipment is out of date and does not allow students to develop the skills they need. Technicians encourage sectors to share specialist equipment to maximise its use and prevent unnecessary expenditure. There are clear policies and procedures relating to the purchase and use of equipment but there is no replacement strategy.

68 Currently, the number of books in the library at Manchester Road is low for the number of students in the college. There has been a recent purge of old stock to coincide with the relocation of the library to the Excel Centre. In humanities and business, there are insufficient texts and periodicals to enable students to develop their investigative and research skills. At Horwich and Great Moor Street, resources in the library are inadequate. This year, the college has committed over £50,000 to improve resources in libraries, an increase of about 50 per cent on last year's figure.

Accommodation

69 The college is on course to achieve the objectives identified in its accommodation strategy. There are plans to vacate Hilden Street and Great Moor Street, and to concentrate activities at Manchester Road and Horwich. Buildings at Hilden Street are in poor condition. Those in Great Moor Street were built at the beginning of the century, originally to house a grammar school. The college leases the building from, and shares its use with, Bolton Institute of Higher Education. The main buildings at Manchester Road were built in the 1930s. A food technology building and a sports hall were added about 30 years later. At Horwich, most buildings were constructed in the late 1950s and workshops were added a few years

later. The college shares the use of the buildings at Horwich with the community education service.

70 The quality of existing accommodation generally reflects the age of the buildings and the extent of refurbishment. In the last five years, much has been achieved and some accommodation is now of a high standard. Examples include the facilities for hotel and catering, the roofing training centre, and improvements to the reception area at Manchester Road. A major refurbishment of the Horwich site is underway. External work has been completed; the next stage is to improve the quality of teaching areas. On all sites there remain areas where accommodation is of a poor standard. For example, science laboratories are in need of refurbishment. Many classrooms are in poor condition and in need of decoration. A lack of storage space causes clutter and creates a poor impression in many teaching areas. There is little display of students' work or other artefacts to enliven the working environment.

71 At Manchester Road, students have access to good recreational and social facilities. The new Excel Centre includes indoor sports facilities, social areas and a refectory. At other sites, such facilities are poor. Lifts, ramps and designated car parking areas help students with restricted mobility to move easily round most of the Manchester Road site, but access to classrooms at Lower Bridgeman Street, Great Moor Street and Hilden Street is difficult for wheelchair users.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

72 The strengths of the college are:

- its extensive range of provision particularly in vocational areas
- its awareness of and responsiveness to the training needs of industry and commerce
- the effectiveness of its schools partnership programme in raising pupils' awareness of vocational education
- the wide range of relevant experience and expertise among members of the corporation
- a strong sense of corporate identity within the senior management team and a will to take the college forward
- a wide range of support services for students, including those with physical disabilities and sensory impairments
- a well-structured, comprehensive quality assurance system
- strong commitment to staff development
- a developing range of high-quality information technology facilities.

73 To make further progress the college should:

- improve the quality of teaching
- improve attendance and retention rates, and raise the levels of students' achievements

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- do more to co-ordinate its links with industry
 - rectify weaknesses in the management structure and strengthen lines of accountability
 - ensure that the management information system provides timely and accurate data relating to students, and publish a summary of students' achievements for the general public
 - make better use of statistical data to set targets, to monitor and review progress and to inform decision making
 - ensure students have access to impartial advice and guidance prior to enrolling on courses
 - address shortcomings in tutorial arrangements
 - strengthen aspects of the quality assurance system
 - continue to improve the range of books, periodicals and other learning materials in its libraries
 - strive to bring more of its accommodation up the standard of the best.

FIGURES

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

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

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

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at January 1997)

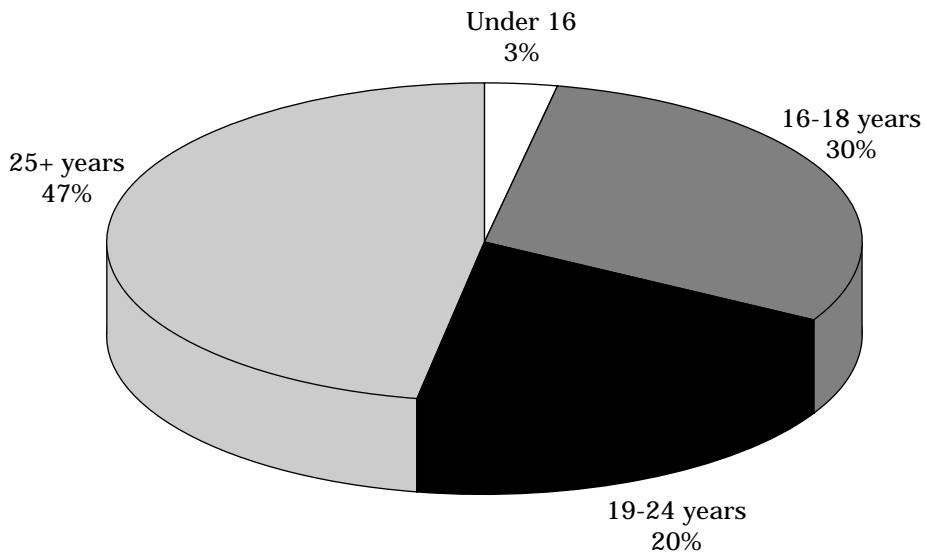
 - 5 Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1997)

 - 6 Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1997)

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

Figure 1

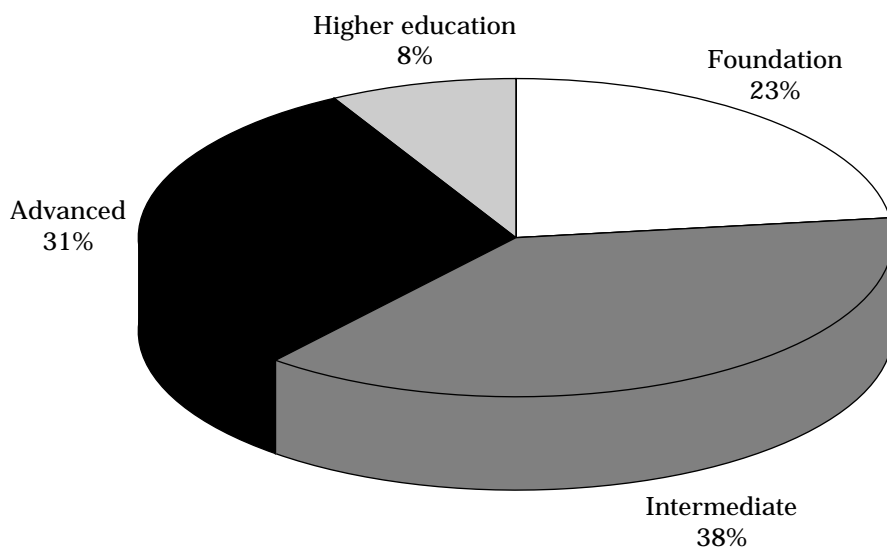
Bolton College: percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 6,585

Figure 2

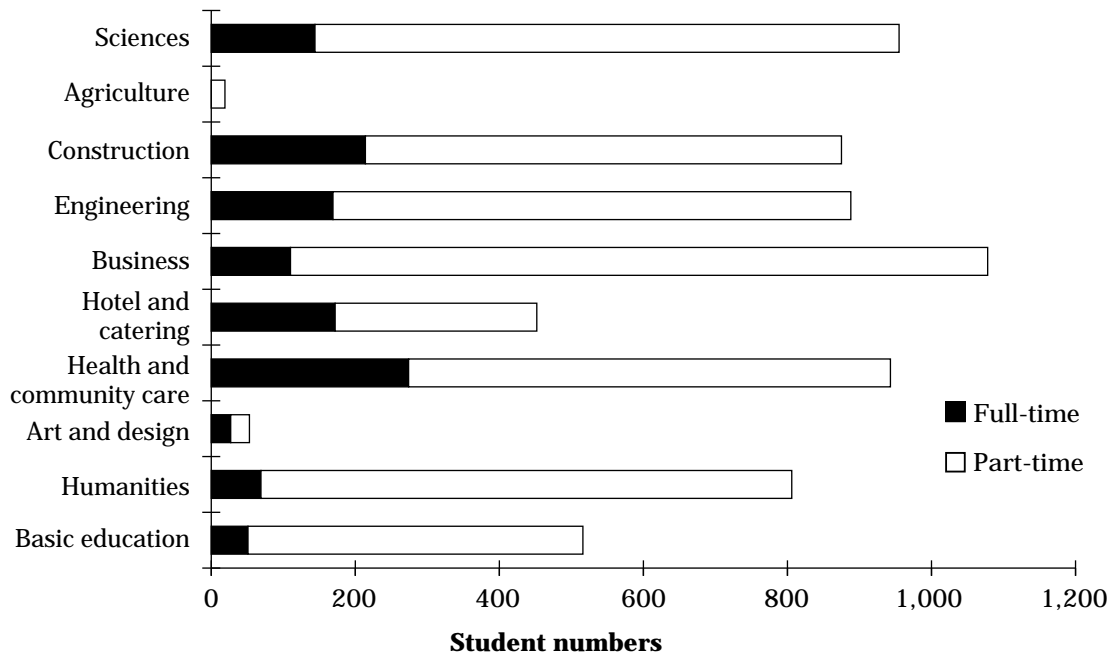
Bolton College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 6,585

Figure 3

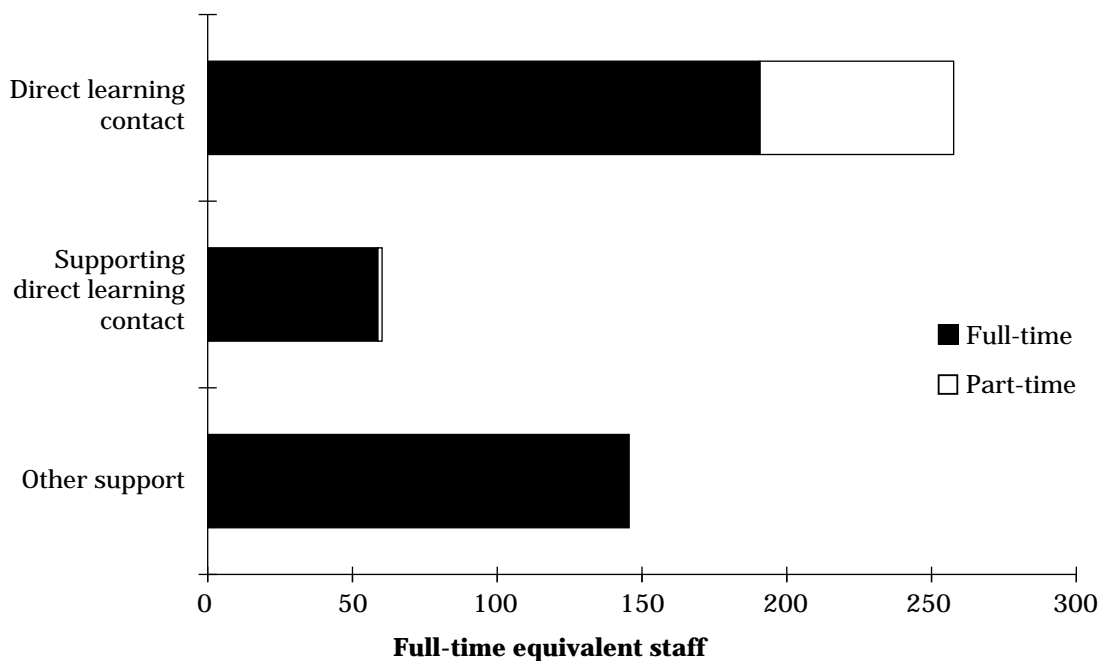
Bolton College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 6,585

Figure 4

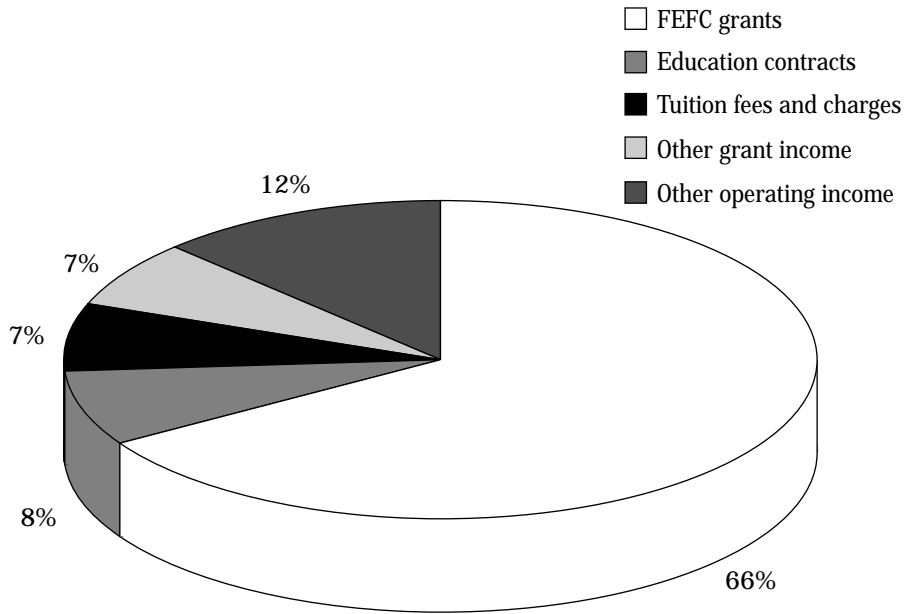
Bolton College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at January 1997)



Full-time equivalent staff: 463

Figure 5

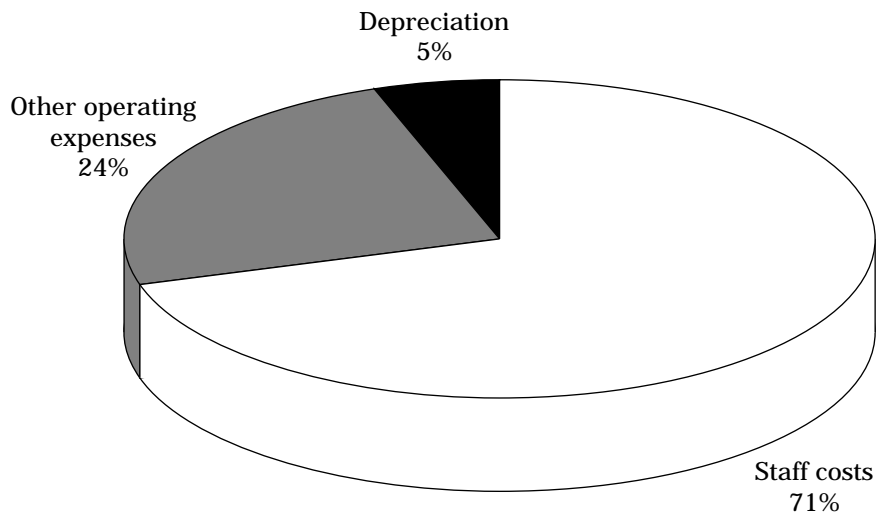
Bolton College: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1997)



Estimated income: £12,879,000

Figure 6

Bolton College: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1997)



Estimated expenditure: £13,439,000

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