

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Brockenhurst College

March 1996

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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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 43/96

BROCKENHURST COLLEGE

SOUTH EAST REGION

Inspected April 1995-January 1996

Summary

Brockenhurst College, a medium-size tertiary college in the New Forest, offers a wide range of courses. Links with contributory schools are soundly established, despite strong competition to recruit local school leavers, which has been made more intense by the opening of three new sixth forms. The college has responded vigorously and has exceeded its enrolment targets for 1995. It has a strong commitment to adult education in the area, which it has managed since 1986. It makes a valuable contribution to the life of the community. The college is well governed and well led. Senior managers work together as an effective team and internal communications are good. The productive relations between staff and students are underpinned by sound teaching and a very good system of pastoral care. Examination results on academic courses are good. Parents value the high levels of student guidance and support. Adult students, especially those on access courses, speak warmly of the college. The college is making good progress in developing its quality assurance system and there is an excellent staff-development programme. The following issues should be addressed: the decline in retention rates on vocational courses during the past year, which has contributed to poor results in some subjects; the further development of tutorial group work; uncertainties about the role of middle managers; the variable quality of planning at faculty and programme level; and lack of consistency in the application of quality assurance procedures.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science	2	Health and community care	2
Mathematics, information technology and engineering	2	Art and design, and the performing arts	2
Business studies	2	English	2
Hotel and catering, and leisure and tourism	2	Humanities including foreign languages	2

INTRODUCTION

1 The inspection of Brockenhurst College took place in three stages. Enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the beginning of the 1995 autumn term. Between April and November 1995, 11 inspectors spent 46 days assessing quality and standards in the college's main curriculum areas. They visited 142 classes attended by approximately 1,700 students and examined students' work. In January 1996, seven inspectors spent 27 days assessing aspects of cross-college provision. Meetings were held with members of the corporation board, the college senior management team, curriculum managers, staff with cross-college responsibilities, teachers, support staff, administrative staff and students. Inspectors consulted employers, representatives of the Hampshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), the New Forest District Council, contributory schools and the local community, and parents of students at the college. They also attended college meetings and examined a wide range of college documents.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Brockenhurst College in the New Forest, Hampshire, became a tertiary college in 1984. The college is at the heart of a travel-to-work area stretching from Southampton in the east to the dormitory towns and villages around Salisbury in the north and Bournemouth in the west. The area is largely rural but it includes a number of larger centres of population such as Lymington, New Milton, Lyndhurst and Ringwood. Brockenhurst has a station on the main railway line from Waterloo to Bournemouth but public transport is difficult for those living in many of the local towns and villages.

3 In 1994-95, 6,568 students were enrolled at Brockenhurst College, of whom 1,687 were full time and 4,881 were part time. Since incorporation, full-time student numbers have increased by 21 per cent and part-time numbers have declined by 13 per cent. Early indications in the current academic year suggest that this downward trend has been reversed. 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 is organised into four faculties which incorporate the following curriculum sections: visual arts; performing arts and media studies; English; humanities; modern languages; social sciences; business and management; business administration; hotel and catering studies; science; mathematics; technology; health and social care; leisure and tourism; public services; special educational needs; and adult education. In addition, there are two faculties which are responsible for the pastoral curriculum and support services. Following a major building programme which was completed early in 1995, the majority of the college's activities, other than those related to outreach adult education, are located on the main site in Brockenhurst. At July 1995, the college employed 228 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 150 were teachers and 78 were support

staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

4 The local adult population includes a high proportion of people over 60 years of age; 33 per cent in the New Forest and over 40 per cent in the coastal communities. There are few large employers. Over 80 per cent of companies employ five people or less. The largest employers are to be found on Southampton waterside; they include the Esso refinery, a large powerstation and Southampton docks. The major employer in the New Forest is the district council, with which the college has developed strong links. The occupational sectors employing the largest numbers are health and care, retailing, and the hotel and leisure industries. Statistics produced by the Hampshire TEC for December 1994 show an unemployment rate in the Southampton travel-to-work area of 7.4 per cent, which is below average for Hampshire and for the country as a whole.

5 Brockenhurst College is committed to provide its various client groups with access to a wide range of academic, vocational and non-vocational programmes. Its services include flexible arrangements for teaching and learning and off-site provision to meet local needs. The college aims to increase participation in education and training in a cost-effective way, and to encourage personal growth and development. Its management philosophy is based on a commitment to continuous improvement.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

6 The college's full-time students are drawn primarily from schools in Hampshire and east Dorset, several of which are grant maintained. The opening of new sixth forms in three of these schools in September 1995, the prospect of a fourth in September 1996, and two applications awaiting decision by the secretary of state for education and employment, have presented the college with a significant challenge. The proportion of pupils remaining in education after the age of 16 is already over 75 per cent. In addition to the local state schools, there are a number of independent schools, most with their own sixth form. There is also a sixth form college, 10 miles away at Totton, and general further education colleges in Southampton, Bournemouth and Salisbury. Changes in local authority transport policy threaten to reduce the number of students who are able to travel to the college. The college has responded to these developments with great vigour. It has negotiated special bus services and rail travel, both of which are subsidised by the college. It has, at the same time, sought to recruit students from a larger area. The college exceeded its recruitment target for 1995-96.

7 The college is committed to the national targets for education and training and takes account of information provided by the Hampshire Careers and Guidance Service and the Hampshire TEC. There is a choice of 42 subjects at General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) including some which are offered with alternative syllabuses. Nine subjects are offered for the GCE advanced supplementary (AS)

examinations and 29 for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). Vocational courses have been developed over a number of years and have grown significantly in the past two. General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) programmes are available at intermediate and advanced level in art and design, business, health and social care, and leisure and tourism. The National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) is offered in business administration, catering, and nursery nursing. Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) first and national diplomas are offered in electrical and electronic engineering, science (health studies) and public services. There is a small combined GNVQ at foundation level. It is possible for different courses and subjects to be assembled to produce individual learning programmes for students.

8 The optional general education programme provides opportunities for students to take part in a broad range of extra-curricular activities. About 30 per cent of full-time students are involved in courses which include drama, dance, driving test preparation, languages, information technology, community service and sports. Many lead to certification by the open college network. Exchange programmes have been developed with France, Germany and Spain, including work placements in Le Havre.

9 Provision for students with moderate or severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities includes full-time and part-time specialist courses for 16 to 19 year olds and adults at Brockenhurst. Part-time courses within the adult basic education programmes at other centres include sign language, lip-reading and classes for the visually impaired. The college co-operates with New Forest day services and MENCAP to provide courses for adults with severe learning difficulties. This year, 15 students with learning difficulties, four speakers of other languages, and one student with a disability are being provided with additional support to enable them to take mainstream courses.

10 The college is developing vocational programmes for adults at Brockenhurst, and more flexible methods of providing adult education for people in outlying areas. Thirty students are enrolled on distance-learning courses leading to GCE A level, GCSE, and qualifications in book-keeping. An access course preparing students for entry to higher education recruited 40 students in 1995-96. The course is validated by the University of Portsmouth, which guarantees places to those achieving the required standard. Both access students and full-time GCE A level students benefit from compacts established with three institutes of higher education. A one-year GNVQ advanced business course is designed specifically for adults and there are 40 mature students studying on full-time GCE A level courses.

11 Adult education in the New Forest has been managed by the college since 1986. Over 3,000 students take part in courses, some at weekends, in 27 community centres, village halls and schools. A number of courses, such as art and design, flower arranging, patchwork and quilting,

counselling and first aid, lead to accreditation by the Hampshire Open College Network, the RSA Examinations Board (RSA) or the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G). Some GCE A level and GCSE subjects, as well as short courses in information technology and business skills, are available at outreach centres. A new information technology centre at New Milton provides courses leading to the NVQ, as well as a drop-in facility for students.

12 The college makes a valuable contribution to the local community and is responsive to its needs. The corporation has established an open annual general meeting and senior managers meet members of the parish council regularly. The student population at Brockenhurst almost doubles the size of the village during the day. Local people benefit from access to the college nursery, the sports facilities and the training restaurant, and from participation in social and cultural events. The college hires out its facilities to a number of local organisations, such as the Brockenhurst Music Society, the New Forest and District Fine Arts Society, and the Lymington Sprites Junior Football Club. Students help with village events and in the primary school. The college works in collaboration with the New Forest District Council, especially in providing sports facilities.

13 Relationships with the contributory schools are good. Senior tutors each have responsibility for establishing and maintaining links with a number of schools. The links provide valuable information on the demand for college courses. Additional courses in music, performing arts, dance, nursery nursing and modern languages have been introduced as a consequence. Subject teachers in the college and schools meet in subject panels through job shadowing and exchanges.

14 The college places a high priority on establishing good communication with parents. There are three open evenings each year. Soon after their children have started their courses, parents are invited to the college to meet personal tutors and senior tutors, with whom they are encouraged to maintain contact. There are regular parents' evenings for discussion of students' progress. Parents are quickly advised if attendance gives cause for concern. In the course of a year, parents receive invitations to a range of events introducing the choices available across the college, including careers conventions and a higher education information evening. The college has written a guide to the higher education application process specifically for parents. Parents speak highly of the college's efforts to involve them, and they attend college events in large numbers.

15 Employers in the area support the college by providing work placements, and through participation in the south-west Hampshire education business partnership and the college's industry liaison committee. The latter has been poorly attended and the college is therefore establishing advisory groups linked to specific curriculum areas. These groups, which comprise college staff and local employers, meet on a termly basis and provide an effective forum. Their introduction into all

programme areas should help to strengthen links with employers. The college's relationship with the Hampshire TEC is good. It has been involved in a number of projects with the TEC and has been successful recently in its bid for competitiveness funds, made in collaboration with Alton College. The money has been used to improve information technology facilities available for training courses offered to local employers.

16 There is an equal opportunities group which monitors the implementation of a carefully-prepared policy. Course teams are required to identify issues which may arise during the year and these are reported to the equal opportunities group, the academic board, the senior management team and the governors. However, little use is made of statistical information and there is no formal system to ensure that the issues raised are taken account of in marketing the college's courses. Publicity materials are designed and produced to high standards and the college has demonstrated its expertise in promoting its services by continuing to expand in the face of stiff competition.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

17 The college has an effective and committed corporation board. There are 19 members. Eleven are employed in senior management or other professional posts, or are recently retired from business. One is nominated by the TEC, and the chairman and a local head teacher have been co-opted. There are two elected staff members, one student member and the principal. At the time of the inspection, there was one vacancy. Members bring considerable expertise to the corporation and this is skilfully exploited by the chairman. They have a clear understanding of their role and are active in considering strategic matters and curriculum quality issues. They have a distinct view of the role of the college in the local community and a thorough understanding of the issues which influence it. Several are parents of current or former students.

18 The board is efficiently clerked by the director of administrative services. There is a regular schedule of meetings, and members receive well-produced reports to inform their decisions. Attendance at meetings is good. The board has established an appropriate range of committees: audit; employment and personnel; finance and general purposes; remuneration; and corporation membership. There is a subcommittee to oversee the work of the students' union and this is both vigilant and supportive. All committees have detailed terms of reference. The relationship between the principal and the board is good. The vice-principal attends most meetings and senior managers often make useful presentations to committees.

19 The board has recently reviewed its own effectiveness. Some of its meetings are extended to provide training sessions or informal opportunities to meet students and staff. A skills audit is now complete and the corporation membership committee will deal accordingly with

vacancies as they arise. The board has been keen to embrace recent reports on the conduct of public bodies. It has adopted a code of conduct and a register of members' interests.

20 The college is well led by senior managers who have created an environment in which frank discussion is encouraged. While the management structure has been sufficiently robust to cope with the significant external threats to the college, the burdens on senior managers are considerable. The senior management team comprises: the principal; the vice-principal; four faculty heads of curriculum who also have cross-college roles; and the directors of administrative services and student services. They work well as a team. Reporting to the four curriculum faculty heads, there are 18 section managers. They have a broad brief and, in some instances, report to more than one line manager. There is no generic job description for them and this deficiency has contributed to inconsistency and some confusion in interpreting their roles. The college recognises the need for clarification. The curriculum managers' forum, which was established a year ago, is starting to improve communication and to encourage initiative and the sharing of good practice. The group has made significant recommendations on the structure of the college timetable to further enhance flexibility. It is important that a timely response be made to the group's proposals if the momentum for change is to be sustained. Three new middle management positions were created recently to give greater coherence to learning support, staff development and curriculum development.

21 The senior management team meets at least monthly. However, faculties, faculty management teams, and sections meet with varying frequency. In a few sections there is heavy reliance on informal management and no formal structure of consultative meetings. Approaches to recording decisions and monitoring the outcomes of agreed action are inconsistent. The principal has daily briefings with staff and there are also more formal termly meetings. Staff report that there are adequate opportunities for communication and that they feel that their opinions are valued.

22 Brockenhurst College has a clear view of its mission and reviews it in the light of changing circumstances. Strategic and operational planning have been strengthened by the use of an agreed code for setting and revising targets. Planning at faculty level is improving although the extent to which staff are involved in the process varies. The academic board considers the strategic plan in detail and the senior management team assesses the financial implications of all proposals. The corporation board is appropriately involved in setting and reviewing objectives and in adopting the strategic plan. Although the plan is presented to staff at various stages, more could be done to promote a sense of ownership of the final document.

23 Brockenhurst College has forecast an operating deficit for 1996, 1997 and 1998; reserves will be committed to achieve a balanced budget. Variations from forecasts are recognised quickly when they occur and appropriate action is taken. The Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) auditors have raised no serious issues in regard to the college's financial management. The college's average level of funding for 1995-96 is £17.54 for each unit, compared with the median for general further education colleges of £17.84. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college has made judicious use of consultants to assure effective use of its resources. It is clear about its costs at faculty level and is developing unit costing. There is a clearly-understood process for allocating funds for staffing and educational supplies, which is related to student numbers. Curriculum managers are often budget holders for consumable materials. The way in which money is devolved to them differs from faculty to faculty, and their financial capabilities vary. There are positive developments in two faculties, where allocation is based upon sophisticated models. All budget holders receive reliable monthly data.

24 The management information system, which is based on an established commercial model, produces reliable data. It is linked to the college's timetabling system, the EARS electronic student registration system, and to specialist financial software. Staff have appropriate access to information through the networked administration computer system. The college is working on its systems to meet the needs of staff more fully.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

25 The college is energetic in providing information and guidance for potential students. It has developed good, informative literature, complemented by a promotional video, frequent press releases and a college newsletter. Some information is produced specially to meet the needs of particular schools or groups of clients. Senior tutors have established close working relationships with many schools and their visits often involve current students, whose views are valued by potential applicants. The college is quick to respond to requests for help including, for example, providing staff to conduct mock interviews with school pupils. Interviews for classes at the college are often conducted on school premises and further contact is available for those who feel they need it. The college systematically logs enquiries and writes to all those who do not eventually apply. Many schools, as well as individual applicants, are confident about the impartiality of the advice they receive from Brockenhurst College staff. Some schools which have recently opened sixth forms, or which plan to do so, no longer work closely with the college. There is a demand from schools and from parents for more 'taster' days to allow potential students to gain first-hand knowledge of courses and of subjects which are unfamiliar to them.

26 Once applicants have been interviewed and offered a place, they are kept well informed about matters such as travel arrangements and what to do after the publication of examination results. A carefully-planned and well-documented induction programme is provided. A variety of staff and second-year students are involved. Welcoming parties meet new students at the railway station at the beginning of the day. The college ensures that others who have some distance to go are safely installed on the appropriate bus home. Assistance is available throughout the programme, without it ever being obtrusive. Induction for part-time students is carried out at the first session of their courses.

27 The college is quick to provide advice to the few students who find themselves on a course unsuited to their needs. Transfer between courses is closely controlled by senior tutors, who use the computerised record system to enable them to monitor movements between courses and to highlight any patterns that may emerge. This year, withdrawals from full-time courses are less than 4 per cent of enrolments.

28 At the start of their courses, all full-time and part-time vocational students sign a learner agreement which summarises their rights and responsibilities. The student handbook and course handbooks provide further detail on obligations and entitlements. There is a separate handbook for part-time and full-time adult students. Students on GNVQ, NVQ and BTEC diplomas are advised about assessment and appeals procedures. Personal tutors discuss these matters with students during induction.

29 All full-time students, including adult students who join daytime classes, have a personal tutor who is responsible for their guidance. Students on the continuing education programme have their own designated tutor. Staff may choose whether or not to be a personal tutor and some volunteer to take more than one tutorial group. Training has been provided for tutors and more is planned. Tutor groups meet every week for an hour. The time is used for work which involves the whole group, or for individual students to discuss their progress with their tutor. A revised system for reviewing students' progress and drawing up action plans has been introduced this year to enable both the student and the tutor to keep a closer eye on development. Some students have difficulty in adjusting to the element of self-criticism involved in action planning, which involves them in setting their own learning objectives and evaluating their performance. The process leads to reports which are sent to parents, who are then able to discuss issues with staff.

30 Personal tutors are guided by a comprehensive handbook and by weekly notes which often include materials designed to help them focus on specific tasks. Tutors often link their activities to college theme weeks which explore, for example, environmental or human-rights issues. Some students find, nevertheless, that tutorial meetings differ a good deal in their value. The college has set ambitious targets for tutorial group work.

While progress has been made towards achieving them, further improvement is needed. The work that tutors do with students individually is considered by students and their parents to be excellent.

31 This year the college is using an electronic system to register students' attendance. It gives tutors prompt and reliable information, so that they can see patterns of attendance easily. Students are well aware that absence from class is pursued vigorously by their tutors.

32 The learning support needs of students are identified both at interview, and by diagnostic testing introduced in the first instance for students following foundation and intermediate level courses. The college received the Basic Skills Agency quality mark for its work in this area in June 1995. Learning support is available through the mathematics and information technology workshops, through the learning resources centre, and through one-to-one tuition. The college is continuing to develop its programme of support with the help of funding from Hampshire TEC. Developments include training course tutors to give special help to students during normal classes.

33 Careers and higher education guidance are of a high standard. The south-west Hampshire careers office is based on the college site. It offers a wide range of information and professional advice, not only to college students, but to the whole community. A careers officer attends the college for 10 evenings a year to advise adults. Students also take advantage of the two careers conventions each year, a higher education information evening to which parents are invited, a higher education evening for mature students, and visits by representatives from a variety of jobs and professions.

34 The college has sought to expand services to students in a number of ways. It has recently appointed a professional counsellor. Volunteers from a local advisory service and representatives from the Citizens Advice Bureau come to the college for three lunchtimes each week. A member of the teaching staff acts as the college nurse and has begun to widen her role to take responsibility for health education, including activities which coincide with World AIDS Day or National No Smoking Day. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have the support of special needs co-ordinators, some for the 16 to 18 age group and some for adults. Adult basic skills co-ordinators are located at three of the college's out-centres.

35 The students' union has been active not only in organising successful social events but also in promoting the wider interests of students through its representation on the academic board and on the corporation board. The union's executive has regular meetings with the principal and with governors. The present executive has steered through a revision of the union's constitution, and the incoming student representatives are well placed to carry on the good work of their predecessors. The union is ably supported by members of the teaching and administrative staff.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

36 In 64 per cent of the 142 sessions inspected, strengths outweighed the weaknesses. Five per cent of lessons had weaknesses which outweighed strengths. The following table summarises the inspection grades which were awarded.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		7	34	20	2	0	63
GCSE		5	3	1	3	0	12
GNVQ		6	9	9	1	0	25
NVQ		1	5	2	0	0	8
Other		6	15	12	1	0	34
Total		25	66	44	7	0	142

37 The average attendance for all the sessions inspected was 81 per cent. This figure includes rates of attendance which range from an average of 86 per cent for full-time classes in engineering and design technology to 61 per cent for part-time day and evening classes in humanities for adults.

38 Courses are carefully planned; they take full account of the requirements of the examining bodies. Most schemes of work contain a statement of aims, a coherent sequence of topics and a reference to the teaching methods and resources to be used. A small number are little more than a weekly list of items taken from the relevant syllabus. Staff demonstrate a sound knowledge of their subjects and use appropriate teaching methods. There is much good teamwork. Handouts are generally well prepared and are used to good effect. In the main, lesson planning is thorough and consistent with course requirements. In some sessions the aims of the lesson were not shared with students and in some they were not achieved. In all subjects, work is set regularly for students to carry out on their own. Most marking is accurate, thorough and amplified by constructive comment. In engineering, and in some humanities courses, the standard of marking is not consistently satisfactory. Relations between staff and their students are good.

39 Teaching in mathematics and computing varied from very good to satisfactory. In some lessons, the heavy use of textbooks limited the range of teaching methods and made students work at the same speed rather than at a pace which best suited them. In a GCSE mathematics class, imaginative use of simple cut-out shapes placed on line drawings on an overhead transparency, illustrated most effectively the formulae for calculating the areas of parallelograms and triangles. Subsequently, students were able to apply this technique in other situations. In contrast, the first 15 minutes of a computing session were wasted because the teacher had not brought together the necessary resources and because the

instructions given to students were confusing. In technology, teaching was generally effective. Students responded well to group work, particularly so where tasks had been presented to them in fresh and interesting ways. Handouts were used intelligently. However, teachers made little use of visual aids or demonstration. There were a number of occasions when students could have been more fully involved in improving their own knowledge and skills. Teachers did not always check that their students were learning. Vocational students and some GCE A level students used information technology to good effect in their work.

40 In science, good discipline, combined with friendly relations, created a productive learning environment. Practical work was carried out competently and safely. There was little evidence that information technology was an integral element in teaching schemes. In an adult evening class in astronomy, the group went outside armed with torches to simulate the solar system. They enjoyed the experience and their understanding was greatly enhanced by this. A GCSE science class failed to achieve its objectives because discussion was unstructured and the teacher had too little appreciation of the different needs of the students in the group.

41 In business studies, a professional environment was created in which teaching was always competent and often better. Course teams worked together effectively and had produced good resource materials. In a GCSE business studies class, the topic of product promotion was discussed, with perfume as the focus. Students sampled a number of perfumes, ranked them in order of preference, and analysed their prices and the differing approaches to advertising. This was a particularly successful session which helped to develop subject-specific and core skills.

42 In catering, and in leisure and tourism, well-planned lessons were carefully linked to previous work. Core skills were developed successfully in the vocational context. In several sessions, students engaged in activities which fostered teamwork and greater independence. In catering, the integration of students with learning difficulties was well managed. Good use was made of an extensive range of sports facilities in GCE A level, GCSE and GNVQ programmes. While the relationships between staff and students were generally good, the approach to discipline in some elements of the public services programme should be reviewed.

43 In health and community care, there was some very good teaching. Students demonstrated an awareness of the sensitivities which arise in health and care. In a cookery class, adult students with learning difficulties were clearly developing greater confidence in their ability to live independently.

44 In the visual and performing arts, the quality of teaching and learning was high. Thorough planning and preparation together with a range of appropriate teaching methods helped to foster good working relations. A key objective of the work was to develop students' confidence in their

own ability. Students were making steady progress and showed an ability to work on their own initiative. There was a consistently high standard of teaching on the GCE A level music course. In art, students with learning difficulties were well supported and received good tuition.

45 In English, communication and media studies, teaching was good. Some sessions were based on well-chosen course materials produced by the teacher, although these were not always shared with colleagues so that students in their classes might benefit. Adult students in an evening GCE A level language and literature class were helped to tackle examination questions with confidence through an imaginative approach to analysis of unseen texts. In modern languages, students were confident enough to participate fully in oral work. Account was taken of their differing abilities, for example, by providing additional material for the more able, and more help and encouragement for the slower learners. A beginners' Italian class held in the evening was particularly successful. The teacher sustained the language throughout the session, even though students were at an early stage of the course. In contrast, the teacher of a GCSE Spanish class failed to address the different needs and levels of ability of students.

46 In humanities and social sciences, all sessions were purposeful and held the interest of students. Teaching was well matched to students of average or above-average ability. However, classes did not always cater effectively for the needs of the slow learner. Most sessions provided opportunities for students to develop a range of skills, including communication, analysis, observation and evaluation. One GCE A level geography session on flooding and storm surges in Bangladesh was an excellent example of how skilful use of audio-visual material can develop students' analytical skills and understanding. Learning was reinforced by good worksheets and by appropriate homework.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

47 Students express confidence in the college and its staff. They appreciate the support they receive and are enthusiastic about their studies. Motivation is high. The good relationships between students and their teachers enhance learning and students speak knowledgeably about their work. Because of this fruitful environment, students are developing their ability to work effectively, independently and with others. Adult students, particularly those on access to higher education courses, value the ethos of this college in which collaboration underpins achievement.

48 In 1994, students aged 16 to 18 entered for one or more GCE AS/A level examinations scored, on average, 4.7 points per entry (where grade A=10, E=2). In 1995, the average score per entry was very similar at 4.6 points. This placed the college in the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, according to data published by the Department for Education and Employment. The average points scored by each candidate attempting one or more GCE A level, or the AS equivalent, in 1995 was 11.8, compared with a national average of 10.0

for tertiary colleges. This measure again placed the college in the top third of further education colleges in the sector. Retention on GCE A level programmes is good.

49 In 1995, there were 1,269 entries for GCE A level examinations in 35 subjects. The average pass rate (grades A to E) was 85 per cent, almost identical to the college's performance in 1994. Both years were well above the national average for further education colleges of 69 per cent; it was marginally above the 84 per cent average for sixth form colleges; and directly comparable with the 86 per cent average for schools. In 1995, there were 100 per cent pass rates in eight subjects; accounting, ceramics, music, performing arts, photography, Spanish, electronics, and technology. Numbers were small in the last two. Students in another six subjects achieved pass rates of over 90 per cent. In both years, the average passes at grades A to C were approximately 47 per cent, again well above the national average (37 per cent) for further education colleges. In 1995, grade A to C passes were above or well above national averages in accounting, law, mathematics, music, history, performing arts, psychology and physics. A similar outcome was achieved in 1994.

50 In 1995, students aged 16 to 18 accounted for 583 entries in 22 subjects at GCSE. The average pass rate was 49 per cent, compared with national averages of 48 per cent for sixth form colleges, and 37 per cent for other further education colleges. In 1995, students achieved a pass rate above the national average in 15 of the 22 subjects; results in accounts, computer studies, sociology and Spanish were particularly good. In 1994, there were 705 entries for GCSE from students aged 16 to 18. The average pass rate was 55 per cent, compared with a national average of 49 per cent for sixth form colleges, and 38 per cent for other further education colleges. These are very good results. Overall, performance in the GCSE was better in 1994 than in 1995. The reduction in the number of entries over the two years is due to the introduction of GNVQ as a more appropriate programme for some students.

51 On vocational courses, the rate at which students achieve their primary learning goals varies widely from subject to subject. In 1995, there was an overall decline both in retention rates and in the number of students obtaining the full qualification. In 1994, students in their final year of vocational courses included in the Department for Education's (now the Department for Education and Employment) table achieved results which placed the college in the top third of colleges within the sector. In 1995, equivalent results were much weaker, placing the college in the bottom third of all further education colleges. The sudden drop appears to stem at least, in part, from the transition from well-established vocational courses to new GNVQ programmes. Changes made by validating bodies during the year affected the specifications of GNVQ units and assessment procedures, and have caused confusion. In 1995, achievements were good in GNVQ advanced art and design; the BTEC

national diplomas in science (health studies), and in electrical and electronic engineering; the BTEC continuing education unit in wordprocessing; RSA wordprocessing; and in single subject examinations. While pass rates in other programmes were modest, many students were awarded merits or distinctions. Students with learning difficulties have achieved good results on specialist vocational and continuing education courses. Some progress to mainstream courses. Retention is high.

52 On access to higher education courses, the increasing number of students has gone hand-in-hand with much improved retention rates. Pass rates were over 90 per cent in 1994 and in 1995, and 96 out of a total of 101 students progressed to higher education. These results are very good.

53 The college systematically records the first destinations of its leavers. In 1995, 52 per cent of students completing a GCE A level programme proceeded to higher education. In addition, 41 students gained admission to higher education through advanced vocational programmes. Eleven per cent of all students completing advanced programmes in 1995 went on to additional further education; 22 per cent went directly into employment. Nearly all students completing intermediate or foundation programmes found employment or continued in further education. While the overall profile of destinations in 1995 was similar to 1994, significantly more students progressed to higher education through vocational routes in the earlier year.

54 The college celebrates the achievements of its students at an annual presentation evening. On this important occasion, it marks not only the success of students in examinations, but also their achievements in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Students have raised over £3,000 for local and national charities in the past year. There are regular drama productions and concerts, which are well attended by the local community. In the summer of 1995, an art and design exhibition was held in a specially-erected marquee on the college lawn, and in 1994 some students' work was exhibited at the Royal Academy. With the benefit of sponsorship, students' original compositions were performed by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Sinfonietta. Students represented the college in the prestigious International Youth Science convention. Two students on the public services programme received awards from the Hampshire Constabulary and the army. In sport, the college under-19 soccer team has a good record in league and cup competitions. Four of the team have represented their county, including one who has played regularly for the England under-19 team. Other students have represented the county at golf, ladies' hockey, archery, rugby and gymnastics. The college has a national schools champion in skiing, and south-east area champions in table-tennis and cross-country running. Over the last eight years, some 40 students have achieved the gold standard in the Duke of Edinburgh awards scheme.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

55 Brockenhurst College's charter was developed through broad consultation. It makes a series of promises to applicants and students which are reflected in other documents, notably the learner agreement which is signed by every new entrant. The charter sets out few measurable service standards and its language could, with benefit, be more concise and direct. The college decided that the charter should not be issued to every student, but rather made available at a number of focal points and on the computer network. Few students have sought out a copy of the charter or are aware of its contents. The college should consider a more effective means of communication; for example, including a shortened charter in the student handbook. The charter commitments have been monitored formally and a report made on their fulfilment to the academic board.

56 There is a policy for quality assurance which includes a set of precise definitions, a description of procedures, and assigned responsibilities for staff. It is based on course review. After a pilot scheme involving a small number of courses in 1992-93, increasingly comprehensive and effective reviews have been carried out for the past two years. In 1994-95, the scheme covered all full-time and part-time academic and vocational courses. Part-time non-vocational programmes will be included from 1995-96. Consistency in implementing the review process relies on the use of a checklist of well-chosen questions to be answered by all course teams and on summary sheets which require a report on the extent to which the previous year's targets have been achieved and the new action points which have been set. The quality of these summaries varies. Areas such as GCE A level law and NVQ business administration list specific objectives, while others such as GCSE art and GCE A level history, state general aspirations against which progress will be more difficult to discern. The extent to which students are allowed to participate in course reviews also varies, and their views are not sought consistently through a uniform set of questionnaires. The procedures generally work well for the 60 courses that have been included so far. However, the college recognises that the data would be unmanageable for the 400 which might be involved. Redefinition of a 'course', and the introduction of a means of focusing on less successful provision or of sampling, will be required.

57 Course review summaries are collected by heads of faculty and discussed by faculty management teams. Heads of faculty report to course leaders on the rigour of the process and its outcomes. The vice-principal extracts significant points from each course review and reports them to the academic board. Matters of cross-college concern, such as staff-development requirements or resource implications, are also summarised and passed to the appropriate managers who use them to draw up detailed plans. Staff find the review process helpful in crystallising the work they need to do to secure improvement, and there is evidence that improvements result. Minutes of both the academic board and

faculties should record more systematically, and in detail, the outcomes of the review process in order that year-on-year improvement can be tracked.

58 Brockenhurst College uses a range of statistical indicators of performance, including those provided by the national Advanced Level Information System, to which it has subscribed for four years. The college receives the whole range of Advanced Level Information System statistics, including data on students' attitudes to various aspects of college life and to different teaching methods, as well as examination results. The Advanced Level Information System enables a comparison to be drawn between students' results at GCE A level and the grades that were predicted on the basis of their GCSE performance, with national averages providing a benchmark to establish whether or not the college 'adds value'. Most subjects have done so to a significant degree, although a handful have consistently under performed for the past four years. There is evidence that the combination of Advanced Level Information System data and the maturing course review structure is leading to corrective action, including changes of staff, of syllabus and of teaching methods, wherever appropriate. In 1994-95, college students took the international test of developed ability for the first time, confirming that GCSE results are not always a good predictor of students' potential to undertake more advanced study. This is a worthwhile initiative which more clearly identifies the few areas where there might be real cause for concern.

59 The college has an appraisal scheme for all staff, with the exception of part-time teachers on sessional contracts. It includes work observation and review by line managers. Its operation is overseen by a review group representing managers, staff, and trade unions. The scheme is based on a two-year cycle, but the first round is likely to be completed at the end of 1995-96 after three years of operation. Many appraisals have been protracted by the need to update old job descriptions. A separate scheme for senior staff results in grading and performance-related pay but the main scheme has no influence on salary. The otherwise good documentation designed for the main scheme does not include a standard form to record appraisal interviews. Fulfilment of action points, therefore, may be difficult to ascertain. Whilst over 90 appraisals have been carried out so far, only 10 monitoring forms have been returned, so that the group reviewing the scheme is working with incomplete information.

60 There is a lively development programme for all staff, which is solidly established. It is supervised by a staff-development manager and, with a budget of nearly £60,000 in 1995-96, costs about 1 per cent of the college's income. There is a methodical process of needs analysis which is informed by the priorities laid down in the strategic plan, but which has no certain connection with staff appraisal. The needs analysis is logically assembled into an annual plan. Staff attending external or in-house courses have to agree their objectives with their managers and to report on the extent of achievement. The use of standard forms helps in the production of accurate

college staff-development reports and up-to-date individual records. A good example of staff development was the management training programme provided in 1994-95 for managers of curriculum areas and support functions. It was designed with the help of external consultants. Both consultants and college staff acted as tutors and most participants aimed to achieve NVQ level 4. There is a parallel system of professional development, through which staff bid directly to the principal for support for courses to which the college will need to commit expenditure for several years.

61 New staff attend an induction day which includes a well-chosen mixture of introduction to the college and instruction in routine matters such as student registration, access to databases and use of the reprographics service. A useful checklist, which refers to the staff handbook, helps staff to identify any gaps in their induction. Line managers act as mentors. The principal holds an informal discussion with each new member of staff. The consistently-high standard of staff procedures results, in part, from their inclusion in the college's work towards Investors in People status. It is likely to achieve the award in the spring of 1996.

62 The college has recently established a group to oversee quality matters. For the present, there is no evident structure and procedure through which self-assessment reports can be produced as a matter of annual routine, in a coherent cycle with the strategic plan, operational plans and course review. Nevertheless, Brockenhurst College's first self-assessment report is excellent, not only in its thoroughness and clarity, but also in its presentation. It is based on a quality audit carried out in the spring of 1995, and follows the headings of the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Under each heading strengths and weaknesses are set out as bullet points, with more detail and evaluative comment provided in narrative paragraphs. The document therefore resembles the FEFC's college reports. In most respects, the judgements made by college staff in the self-assessment report coincided with those of inspectors.

RESOURCES

Staffing

63 The college has a committed and enthusiastic staff. Of a total of 228 full-time equivalent staff, 150 are teachers. There are 96 full-time teachers, and a large number of hourly-paid teachers who deliver the community programme. All full-time teachers have degrees or other appropriate qualifications and all but four hold a teaching qualification. Only 20 per cent of part-time teachers are not teacher trained and it is a priority of the staff-development plan to assist them to complete a teacher-training programme. Progress in acquiring Training and Development Lead Body qualifications has been uneven among curriculum areas. Twenty-seven teachers have assessor and verifier qualifications, and others are in the process of qualifying. Only eight have obtained the advanced internal

verifiers' qualification. From a position three years ago, where 50 per cent of the full-time teaching staff had served for 20 years or more, the college has used staff retirements and careful selection to achieve staffing with a more appropriate balance of youth and experience. Most long-serving staff have adapted well to a rapidly changing organisation, although some have limited experience of modern industrial practice. All staff are encouraged to update their skills regularly.

64 A particularly flexible support staff assists teaching and learning. There are several examples of versatile people who have responsibility for more than one area of work and of opportunities given to staff to develop fresh initiatives for the college. New posts have been created among support staff to meet the changing needs of the college, such as an estates manager. Heads of faculty, closely monitored by the principal and vice-principal, are responsible for the efficient deployment of staff. There are procedures to record staff hours. A report summarising workloads is produced twice each term. Any anomalies are discussed and, where necessary, adjustments are made. Contact for teachers averages 20 hours per week and the ratio of students to teaching staff is 13.6:1.

65 Personnel policies are systematic and efficient; they apply to all staff. The policies are implemented with notable competence and staff are generally at ease in their work. All support staff and 75 per cent of teachers, are on new flexible contracts. Apart from some curriculum areas in which one gender predominates, men and women are represented equally at all levels. About 1.5 per cent of staff come from minority ethnic backgrounds, mirroring the composition of the local community.

Equipment/learning resources

66 The work of students and staff is assisted by good, up-to-date equipment in most areas. Rooms in the newest teaching block have been equipped to a high standard, to which the rest of the college aspires, and a systematic programme of improvement is in place. The upgrading of one science laboratory each year is a demonstration of the practical application of this measured approach. The college has an up-to-date assets register and an established equipment replacement policy. Students and staff on all sites have access to video and audio-recording equipment, overhead projectors, and whiteboards. Although facilities are more limited away from the main site, arrangements are made to provide to order what teachers require. Art and design has access to a variety of materials and has been innovative in their use. A feature of the college grounds is a totem pole carved by design students from a tree blown down in a gale.

67 Information technology is used naturally as part of the life of the college. A college network is accessible to the majority of students and staff on the main site. It is well managed and largely trouble free. Students recognise the value of this resource as a learning tool and staff appreciate the availability of management information. The ratio of one personal computer to 10 full-time equivalent students allows ready access by the

majority of students. Not all machines are of the same standard. However, only 10 of the 193 on the main site are not powerful enough to run modern software. A successful bid for external funding has enabled the college to accelerate the upgrading of its computers both on the main site and at a centre eight miles away.

68 The well-managed learning resource centre has a relatively modest budget. Approximately 18,500 books provide only eight volumes per full-time equivalent student but the annual revenue budget of about £12 per student provides a resource which most students find satisfactory. There are book collections in most departments, including additional copies of popular texts. A catalogue, which includes not only the central stock but also that held in departments, is circulated to all staff. The learning resource centre includes a library, two pleasant areas for private study and an open access area. A compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database collection is being gradually extended in consultation with curriculum managers. Pressure on space in the library at peak times of the day is of concern to students. The problem relates more to the accessibility of other recreation and study space than to the size of the library itself. Students based at outlying sites have limited access to the learning resource centre, although a courier service responds to requests made by staff.

Accommodation

69 An accommodation strategy has resulted in the replacement of huts with a good new building, and in recent upgrading of much of the existing accommodation. The main site in Brockenhurst provides nearly 8,000 square metres of teaching space for 1,800 full-time equivalent students. The buildings range in age and style from the original 1930s' grammar school, to which additions have been made, to the latest buildings which comprise a teaching block and a social centre completed in 1994. Some huts on the site are still used, although there are plans to replace most of them. The refectory which is housed in a large hut, has nevertheless been made very attractive. It is popular with students, but its opening hours are limited. Other buildings owned and used by the college include a large Victorian house a short distance from the college, its small lodge, and a purpose-built adult education centre in New Milton which is located in the grounds of a school. The college also rents accommodation in schools and community centres for its adult education programme. The main site includes nine hectares of playing fields, a sports hall, and an all-weather pitch. The college community enjoys a notably pleasant environment which is imaginatively managed so that, for example, students may display their three-dimensional work in a sculpture park.

70 Colour, cleanliness and lively wall displays help to make some otherwise unexciting buildings pleasant to work in. Wheelchair users have good access to most of the main site and a stair lift has been installed at one adult education centre. Where access is difficult, the college attempts

to relocate classes. Accommodation problems adversely affect a few areas of work. For example: the art and design department is based in three different buildings and has problems with storage; science subjects are taught in two locations; the physics laboratories are sometimes used by students of other subjects; and some rooms used for adult education are cramped.

71 Efficient utilisation of the main site is achieved only between 09.00 and 16.30. Many students travel to the college on buses and trains and cannot easily travel later in the evening. During the college day, the utilisation of teaching space is 89 per cent. Some innovative use is made of the site during the summer holidays and at weekends, particularly in collaboration with other agencies. For example, a summer camp enables children from cities to enjoy the New Forest and another joint venture with the armed services is renovating a rifle-range. There is further scope for development of the college's attractive position and accommodation.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

72 The particular strengths of the college are:

- its good links with schools and lively response to competition
- its wide range of courses for school leavers and adults
- the capable corporation board and senior management
- good examination results on academic courses
- excellent guidance and support for students
- good relations between staff and students
- the well-planned staff-development programme
- its enthusiastic and committed staff
- the attractive site and buildings.

73 If the college is to continue to improve its service, it should:

- improve poor student retention rates and examination results in some vocational courses
- improve further the quality of tutorial group work
- iron out inconsistencies in the application of the quality assurance system
- resolve uncertainties in accountability and responsibility at middle management level
- address the variable quality of planning at faculty and programme levels.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)

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

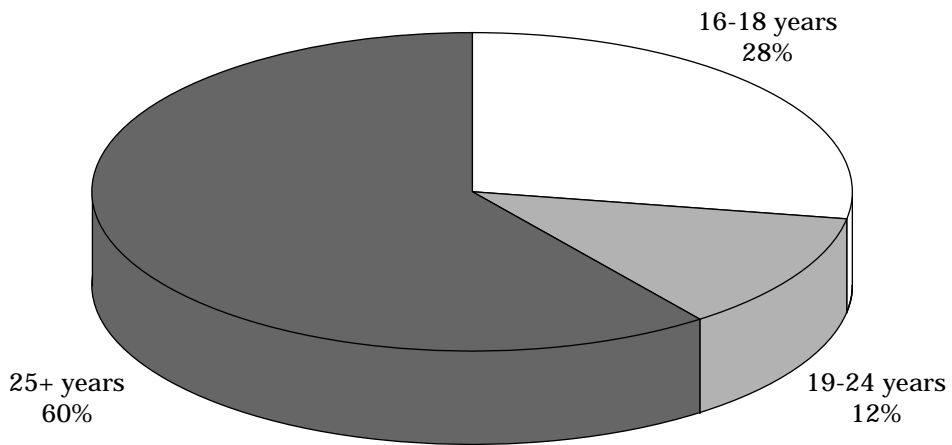
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1995)

 - 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

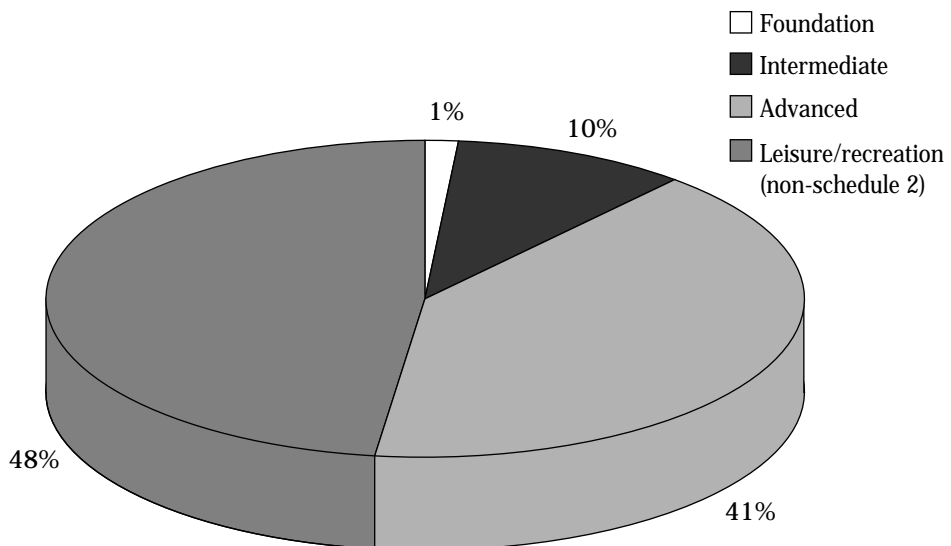
Brockenhurst College: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)



Enrolments: 6,568

Figure 2

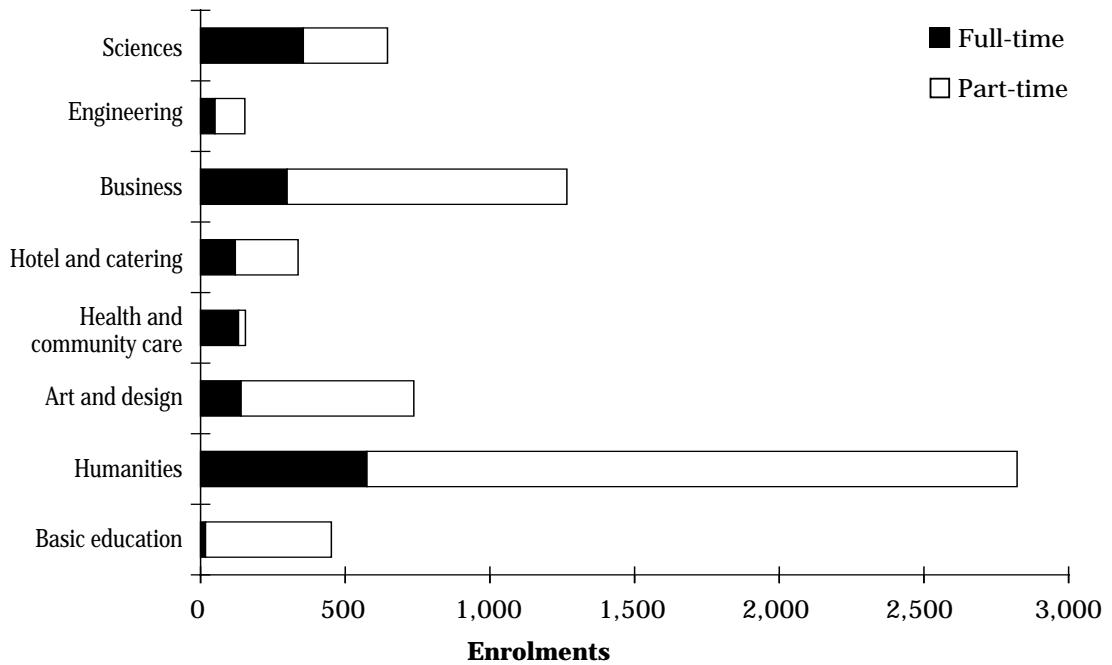
Brockenhurst College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)



Enrolments: 6,568

Figure 3

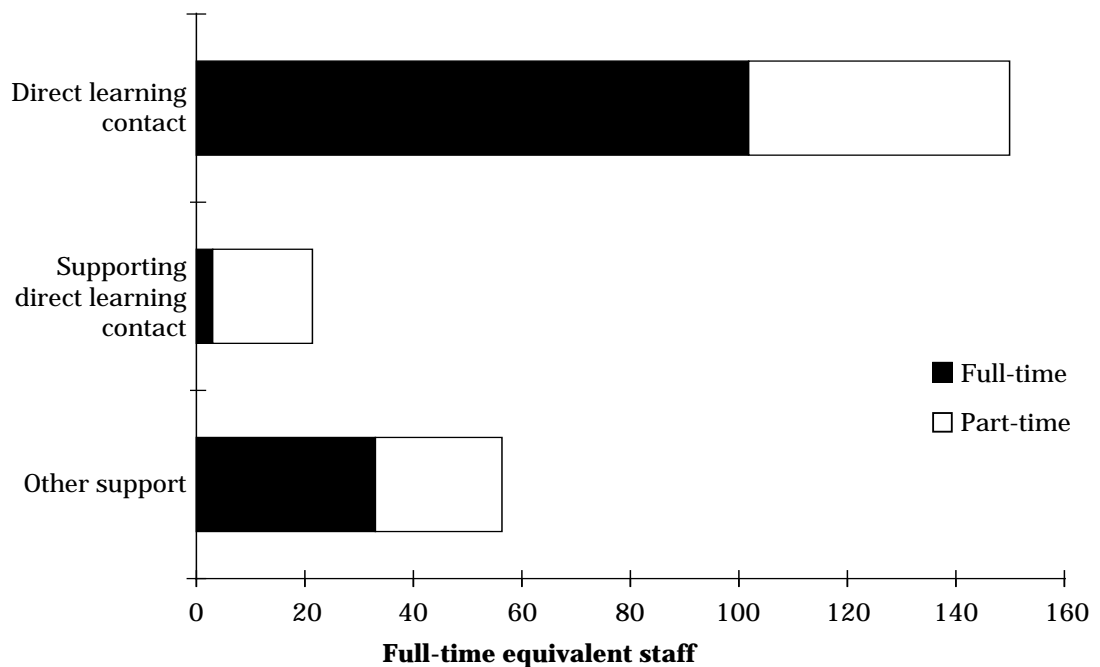
Brockenhurst College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)



Enrolments: 6,568

Figure 4

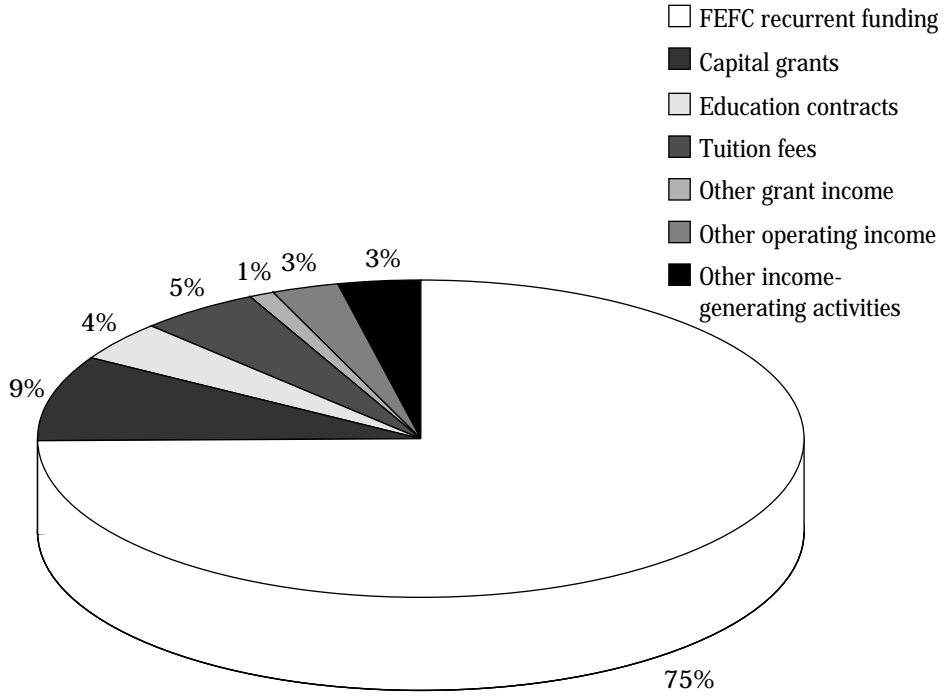
Brockenhurst College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at July 1995)



Full-time equivalent staff: 228

Figure 5

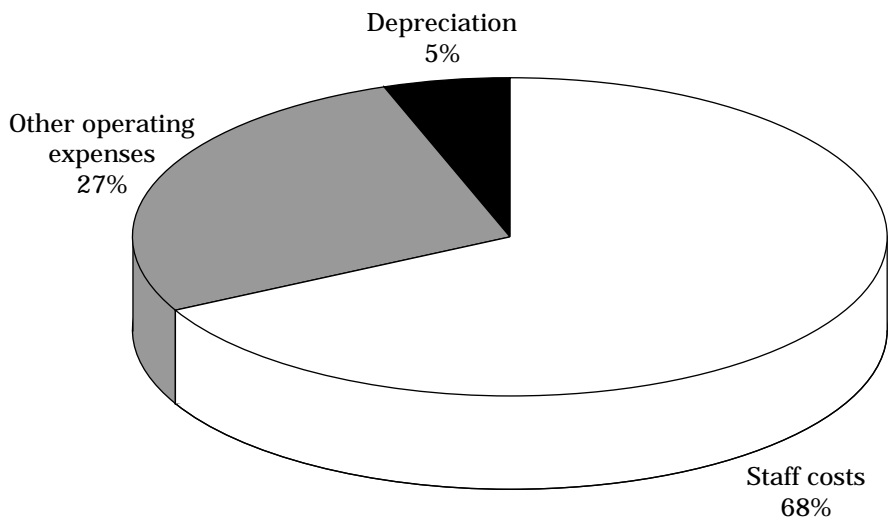
Brockenhurst College: income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Income: £6,031,000

Figure 6

Brockenhurst College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Expenditure: £6,345,000

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