

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

**Burton upon
Trent Technical
College**

February 1997

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL**

The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education every four years. 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.

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

CONTENTS

	Paragraph
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	2
Responsiveness and range of provision	6
Governance and management	17
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	27
Teaching and the promotion of learning	37
Students' achievements	48
Quality assurance	60
Resources	69
Conclusions and issues	78
Figures	

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

College grade profiles 1993-96

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 20/97

BURTON UPON TRENT TECHNICAL COLLEGE

WEST MIDLANDS REGION

Inspected March-November 1996

Summary

Burton upon Trent Technical College provides a wide range of courses and has created strong links with the local community and with employers. The members of the corporation are committed to the college and have a good knowledge and understanding of its curriculum. The strategic plan benefits from thorough consultation. There is a well-managed system of financial allocation. Enrolment and induction are effectively organised. Most teaching is of a good standard. Students' achievements on vocational and GCSE courses are generally good. Teachers manage most students' behaviour well and the relations between staff and students are positive. The quality system is established. Most programme areas have sufficient resources. Sites are clean and well maintained. The corporation and the academic board do not monitor students' achievements sufficiently closely. The management information system varies in its effectiveness. The use of performance indicators needs further development. Course reviews are variable in quality. The students' charter contains few service standards. Some schemes of work lack sufficient detail. Retention is low on some courses.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Sciences	2	Health care	2
Computing	2	Art and design	2
Construction	2	English, communications and psychology	2
Engineering	2	Access to higher education and SLDD provision	2
Business studies	2		
Leisure and tourism	2		

INTRODUCTION

1 Burton upon Trent Technical College was inspected between March and November 1996. Twelve inspectors spent a total of 61 days in the college, visited 145 lessons and examined students' work. They held discussions with corporation members, students, college managers, teaching and support staff. Inspectors met local employers, parents, members of the community, and representatives of local schools and higher education and the Staffordshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). They also attended college meetings and scrutinised documentation on the college and its courses.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Burton upon Trent Technical College was designated a 'technical college' in 1948. It serves the community of Burton and draws students from south Derbyshire, south east Staffordshire, north Staffordshire and north west Leicestershire. The college has two main sites: the town centre campus, and the Rolleston Campus five miles to the north. There is further provision at two small annexes close to the town centre. In its mission statement the college seeks 'to provide a diverse and flexible range of learning opportunities which is designed to meet the assessed education and training needs of individuals and of organisations'. The college aims to play a leading role in the economic development of Burton through the formation of strategic partnerships with commerce and industry.

3 Burton upon Trent is a major town in East Staffordshire. It has a population of 70,000. The town accounts for 70 per cent of employment in the local borough. Brewing continues to be the prominent industry. Investment and the development of other sectors, including rubber manufacture, food processing, and engineering, have widened the economic base of the area. The development nearby of a major car manufacturing plant has attracted other related companies to the town. Unemployment in the Burton area has been stable over the last three years at between 6.8 and 7.4 per cent. Long-term unemployment is just below the national and county averages. Projected employment patterns for Burton up to the year 2000 show a decline in full-time jobs and a rise for part-time work and self-employment. The college faces increased competition from eight local schools with sixth forms, two further education colleges on the south side of Derby and one in south east Staffordshire.

4 In 1995-96, 6,776 students were enrolled on college courses. Of these, 52 per cent were male and 11 per cent, slightly more than in the population at large, were from minority ethnic groups. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

5 In 1994, the college was awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize for further and higher education for joint development work with the Lycee

Marcel Dassault at Rochefort sur Mer, France in the field of Polymer Injection Mould Design and Manufacture. Exchanges between the two colleges have led to the councils of East Staffordshire and Rochefort sur Mer signing an economic and partnership agreement.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

6 There is an extensive and appropriate range of courses including national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at advanced, intermediate and foundation levels. Other vocational awards are available from the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) and the RSA Examinations Board (RSA). There are courses for professional qualifications such as those of the Chartered Institute of Building and the Institute of Legal Executives. Thirty general certificate of education advanced levels (GCE A levels) and 22 general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects are provided. There are access programmes to further and higher education. Higher education provision includes degrees and BTEC higher national diploma and higher national certificate courses.

7 The college responds well to new education initiatives and to local needs. Enrolments on GNVQs, NVQs and access to further and higher education programmes have grown significantly. There are 150 students who are following the North East Midlands Access Partnership programme. Recently, a course for air cabin crew was established. Increases in the provision of short courses have provided many more programmes for Burton employers; for example, the computer-aided design courses and the study skills courses which are available at local community centres. The higher national certificate in applied biology was designed in partnership with local brewers. Modes of attendance and course timetables were rearranged to respond to changes in the construction industry.

8 There are good links with the Universities of Derby, Coventry and Nottingham Trent. A compact with the University of Derby guarantees progression to higher education for students from groups which have not normally been involved in higher education. There are strong ties with Coventry University through the franchised degrees and higher national diplomas in the sciences, engineering and business information technology. There are partnership arrangements with a number of local further education colleges.

9 The college works closely with several local schools. One 11 to 18 school has received effective support from the college in art and design and performing arts. Another values the contribution made by the college to its careers programmes. Several local schools provide work placements for students and help with their projects. Long-standing co-operation with the Derby Royal School for the Deaf ensures support for the college's students with hearing impairments. Students from special schools attend

either part-time or link courses at the college, which also provides training for staff at those schools. Recently, the college has joined the local special schools consortium which has further increased the opportunities for co-operation.

10 Open learning provision is well developed. There are 260 enrolments for programmes which include information technology, GCSE and GCE A level courses and specialist subjects such as the certificate of professional competence for truck drivers. The learning packages are of a professional standard. Tutorials occur monthly and are based on individual requirements. However, records of tutorial contacts with these students who have access to all college facilities are too brief. A recent initiative which has proved to be popular is the Saturday school, particularly the computer courses for children and senior citizens, which have been heavily oversubscribed.

11 The college is cautiously expanding its off-site provision which, at present, comprises only 4 per cent of enrolments. The college's quality system extends to this provision. Internal auditing of the work takes place. The college's arrangements fulfil the requirements of Council Circular 96/06, *Franchising*. This is the second year of this work which mainly involves basic education, English for speakers of other languages and sports and recreation.

12 Local employers speak well of the college. They find that links are strong and that the college responds effectively to local industry. For example, employers are members of curriculum advisory committees which meet at least twice a year. The committees enable employers to give advice to teachers and to keep in touch with changes in education. The development of short courses specifically designed for industry is growing. The purchase of high standard equipment for the polymer laboratory has given the college the opportunity to offer short courses in an area where it is a leading provider.

13 The college has a well-established relationship with the East Staffordshire Borough Council. Information is regularly exchanged and joint initiatives have included a technical training project in Malawi, and several European ventures. A close working relationship exists with the Burton Chamber of Commerce and the college has helped the Chamber in overseas visits and trade missions. The college has effective links with Europe notably France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and Ireland, on programmes that include science and engineering, motor vehicle studies, art and design, construction and catering.

14 Links with the Staffordshire TEC are good. The TEC considers that the college meets the needs of the local community and provides further education of a high standard. It works closely with the college on the preparation of both the college's strategic plan and its assessment tasks for the Investors in People award. The college makes good use of the research and information on the labour market provided by the TEC. The

TEC sponsors 250 trainees on courses at the college. The college has been successful in obtaining TEC funds for its Internet facilities.

15 Market research is effective. The college has appointed its own researcher who provides information from a range of relevant reports and from surveys of employers and other groups in the locality. The information is essential for those who establish college policy, plan strategy, and make decisions on, for example, course planning and on publicity. The college has its own graphic design team which produces high-quality advertisements, course leaflets and prospectuses. Some photographs used in the prospectuses could be better chosen to avoid lending support to prejudices about jobs which are better suited to men or women. Relations with the local media are good. College activities are reported regularly and accurately. The evaluation of marketing is limited.

16 There is a successful programme of curriculum enrichment which includes language lessons and many sports activities. Students participate in sports fixtures with other colleges in hockey, football and table tennis. Some students have timetable commitments which prevent their participation in enrichment activities.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

17 The college has a committed and supportive corporation of 15 members, which includes the principal. At the time of the inspection, there was one vacancy. There are eight independent members, one of whom is the local TEC nominee. Members of the corporation come from a variety of backgrounds in the local community. They bring good experience of business, industry, the trade unions, public service, education and the professions. Three members are women. Corporation members have a clear view of the educational aims of the college and they distinguish between their strategic responsibilities and the operational roles of the college's senior managers. The corporation has adopted a register of interests and established a code of conduct. Most members attend training and briefing events regularly.

18 Attendance at meetings of the corporation and its committees is, for the most part, good. There are five committees of the corporation: accommodation; audit; finance and general purposes; remuneration and search. Each has terms of reference. Most committee members have relevant and appropriate expertise. Corporation members take part in many college activities. They are strongly involved in the curriculum advisory committees and gain from them direct knowledge and understanding of the college's curriculum. However, the corporation does not review students' achievements formally. The organisation of corporation and committee minutes is good and there are clear agendas and comprehensive briefing papers. Minutes of meetings of the corporation and its committees are freely available in the college library. The clerk to the corporation is a member of the college's senior

management team and is responsible for the college's legal affairs, insurance and personnel matters. The clerk's role is separate from his other college functions.

19 The strategic plan reflects the mission statement and the values of the college. There is a clear timetable for strategic planning. The process benefits from clear direction. The senior managers draft the plan. Section leaders, staff, students, corporation members and the Staffordshire TEC are all fully involved in making contributions. There is an annual review of the plan by senior managers and the corporation which, this year, has produced recommendations asking for a further increase in faculty involvement and more attention to the relationship between planning and finance. Links to the operating statement are clear and operational detail is appropriate. The statement specifies objectives, individual responsibilities, performance indicators and the process of evaluation.

20 There are sound and well-developed policies for health and safety, equal opportunities and the environment. Responsibilities for work in these areas are clearly allocated and a committee monitors progress for each area. A positive feature of the college's approach is the scrutiny of equal opportunities by an external group, which includes members of different sections of the local community. Some policies for the support of students are underdeveloped; there is no overall strategy.

21 The present management structure is generally effective. It is an interim arrangement which anticipated both the retirement of a number of senior managers, including the previous principal in August 1996, and the arrival of the new principal. A review of management is taking place, with the intention of setting up a new structure. At present, there are nine senior managers: the principal, the vice-principal, the head of financial services, the college secretary, and the five faculty heads, each of whom has curriculum and cross-college responsibilities. At section and cross-college level, organisation is generally good, lines of accountability are clear and communications are effective. Staff receive an informative weekly newsletter and special newsletters on specific issues. Information is also provided through the college's electronic mail system. Some teaching sections have fewer responsibilities than others.

22 The academic board pays careful attention to teaching and learning. It meets once a term. Its structure and terms of reference are clear. Members are allocated places on one of five groups that regularly report back to the board. The groups cover the curriculum, funding, efficiency, accommodation, quality and planning. The academic board does not discuss students' achievements.

23 The system of financial allocation is firmly established and well run. It meets the needs of the college and is understood by staff. The cost of all college courses and services is known and unit costs are calculated. Budgets are devolved to faculties, sections and cross-college cost centres. They are based on statistics on enrolments, retention, and student

achievements, on the type of education programme and on the services being provided. The senior management team and the financial and general purposes committee of the corporation monitor the operation. The college's average level of funding for 1995-96 was £20.22 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges was £18.13 and the median for all sector colleges was £18.99 per unit. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

24 The setting of targets plays a key part in strategic planning and the establishment of the budgets for each faculty. Financial allocations are later adjusted when the actual number of students enrolled and retained by a faculty is known. Senior managers know which courses meet enrolment targets and which do not. Under recruitment leads to review and, when necessary, course closures. If a course is discontinued students receive counselling about suitable alternatives.

25 Cross-college services make good use of a range of relevant and useful data provided by the management information system. The full potential of the system has not yet been achieved. Some data are unreliable, and there are difficulties in supplying up-to-date information on attendance. The senior management team does not review attendance statistics. Some managers and staff do not have confidence in the system.

26 Information on students' retention and progression is collected for some but not all courses. The senior management team has not evaluated the data on retention or the destinations of students. The college recognises that the collecting, monitoring and analysis of retention are an issue and have included improvement in these areas as a target in this year's operating statement. No similar approach has been planned for the evaluation of students' destinations.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

27 The college provides potential students with appropriate information which includes attractive and informative prospectuses and course leaflets. Staff visit local schools and careers events. The college runs several open days and advice sessions and attendance at these is good. Parents and prospective students see them as valuable sources of information and express considerable satisfaction with the pre-entry advice and guidance that is given. The college uses its Internet address to provide detailed information on its courses.

28 The student services unit is situated at the town centre campus and offers a comprehensive facility for recruitment, guidance and support. Students regard the unit's staff as welcoming, attentive and able to provide useful information. Access can be on a 'drop-in' basis or by appointment. The reception area has a well-stocked and up-to-date range of books and leaflets on careers, higher education and college services. Facilities at the Rolleston Campus are more restricted, although a representative from the unit visits the campus every weekday morning. Guidance officers liaise

closely with most teaching staff. They attend faculty meetings and run staff-development events. There have been difficulties in maintaining strong and regular links with some faculty areas although these are now improving. There are suitable arrangements for students to transfer between courses.

29 The college has an effective system for identifying those applicants who have specific learning needs or who require preliminary guidance on their choice of courses. There is a 10-day target for the acknowledgement of application forms but no targets are set for the completion of guidance and selection interviews which take place at faculty level. Enrolment procedures for September 1996 were well organised. Signposting was effective and staff were available to guide potential students to enrolment areas. Students felt that the process was efficient and that staff were friendly and helpful. The college has produced a policy statement that identifies clear procedures for the accreditation of students' prior learning.

30 Induction is carefully planned. All tutors are provided with comprehensive induction checklists and a handbook that gives clear guidance and suggests a range of useful activities. All students are given a handbook which is produced in a diary format and includes detailed and useful information on college facilities, contact telephone numbers and arrangements for examination entry. Student services staff regularly review this induction material.

31 Students appreciate the good tutorial support which they receive. There are clear and effective monitoring and reporting systems. All students have a personal tutor. Every full-time and some part-time students have weekly tutorials although on some part-time programmes there are limited opportunities for tutoring. There is a policy for tutorials and a set of guidelines for tutors. Tutorials have a clear framework, which personal tutors adapt to suit the particular needs of their students. There are opportunities to complete national records of achievement as part of the tutorial process although this process is underdeveloped in some curriculum areas. The tutorial programme for GCE and GCSE students is based on a useful study skills package and successful completion leads to accreditation.

32 There is an effective counselling service. Counsellors are professionally qualified and receive supervision. They are also trained careers advisers which helps in the effective integration of academic and personal counselling services. Counselling staff have good access to outside agencies through the Burton Advice Agency Network. There are regular reviews of the counselling service. Students who had used the service, and those that took part in a survey of student services, felt that it had met their personal needs. They would recommend the service to others.

33 Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Potential students with moderate learning difficulties have a personal interview before entry and receive useful and sensitive advice.

The learning services section provides specialist help with literacy, numeracy and dyslexia. All full-time students complete the Basic Skills Agency diagnostic assessment. The college has also devised its own screening procedures to meet the needs of higher level courses. Diagnostic assessment for part-time students is at the discretion of course tutors. The number of students taking up additional learning support is increasing although some students have timetables which prevent them attending sessions.

34 The college provides good careers advice and education. There is a service level agreement with the Staffordshire Careers Service whose staff work closely with the college's careers guidance officers. Careers service staff also contribute to the college's advice and open days and offer guidance in specific curriculum areas. There is effective support for students applying to higher education. The college operates a successful student mentor scheme with the Burton Community Education Project. The purpose is to provide additional support for students who may lack confidence in making applications or who are unsure of their next move. Mentors are drawn from industry and the community and include a veterinary surgeon, a police officer, a solicitor and managers from local companies. Students and mentors who have taken part in the scheme are enthusiastic about its value.

35 In all faculties, persistent absenteeism is followed up with letters to students and, where appropriate, to parents and employers. The electronic system for recording attendance provides a range of useful information but is slow at collecting and delivering up-to-date records of students' absences. As a result, some course tutors have devised their own systems for monitoring students' attendance. There is no college-wide monitoring of students' absences.

36 Guidance staff provide a quick response to requests from students for financial support. Each request is assessed on its individual merits. There are no clear written criteria for the allocation of these funds and no external reviews to ensure that the process of allocation is fair. The college operates a free bus service from some local areas for full-time students. There is also a free bus service between the college's campuses. A 20-place creche facility is available on the Rolleston Campus. Subsidised rates are arranged for full-time students. A creche of similar size is planned for the main campus from February 1997.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

37 Inspectors observed 145 lessons. Sixty-eight per cent had strengths which outweighed weaknesses which is 5 per cent higher than the average for all lessons observed during the 1995-96 inspection programme, according to the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. Eight per cent of the sessions had weaknesses which outweighed the strengths. Attendance at the lessons observed ranged from 71 per cent to 93 per cent with an overall average of 80 per cent. The average size of the classes

inspected was 12. The following table shows the grades awarded as a result of the inspection.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE A level		6	8	2	4	0	20
GCSE		1	4	1	2	0	8
GNVQ		7	13	7	3	0	30
NVQ		3	5	8	0	0	16
Other vocational		15	26	17	1	0	59
Access to higher education		1	3	0	0	0	4
Other		2	5	0	1	0	8
Total		35	64	35	11	0	145

38 Good teaching based on coherent plans is found in all programme areas. The better schemes of work are comprehensive and clear, but a number lack sufficient detail. A variety of effective teaching methods are in use. Teachers generally provide good supporting material for lessons. Students with disabilities receive effective support. Teachers manage students' behaviour well and there is a good rapport between students and staff. Some lessons were three hours in length and this made it difficult for teachers to sustain students' interest. Most students on vocational courses undertake well-organised programmes of work placements, although not all vocational students benefit from work experience.

39 Teaching in biology is good and in polymer science it is excellent. Good use is made of information technology. Teaching aids are used effectively. In polymer science and on some biology courses there is detailed and supportive marking of students' work. Some lessons in chemistry and physics failed to motivate students and relied too much on worksheets or formal presentation. No strategies exist for teaching students of different abilities. In both science and computing, there are regular assessments set at an appropriate standard. Teachers in these areas keep good records of students' progress. Teaching in computing is carefully planned. Some lessons are outstanding. Teachers engage students in a variety of activities and make good use of a range of support materials. Some lessons take place in unsuitable accommodation.

40 Construction courses are well planned. There is careful explanation of the context and purpose of most lessons, although the introduction to some building crafts lessons are not clear. Teachers provide effective links with the work covered in previous lessons. Practical work is of a high standard. Instructions for assignments contain clear assessment criteria. Teachers help students to draw up effective action plans for

learning. Schemes of work and criteria for competence are in use for all building crafts courses. However, teachers do not plan ahead sufficiently, direct too much of the work and leave students too little opportunity to work by themselves. Some students spend too much time copying teachers' notes.

41 Most teaching in engineering is of a good standard. Learning programmes cover syllabus topics well. Teachers use detailed lesson plans and employ a variety of teaching methods. Links between theoretical and practical work are good. Assessments are set to appropriate standards. Teachers keep careful and detailed records of students' work and progress. In some lessons, learning objectives are not achieved. Teachers rarely use handouts to support learning. Few checks take place during lessons to ensure that learning has occurred. Very little homework is set.

42 There is some excellent teaching in business studies and the work is appropriately challenging for students. In the best sessions, teachers make regular checks on students' learning. Assessments are set at an appropriate standard and the marking is fair and consistent. Teachers use schedules for setting and marking work and both teachers and students meet deadlines. Comprehensive schemes of work support the course programmes, although lesson plans are much more variable in quality. Some plans fail to take account of students' differing levels of ability. Teaching on the advanced GNVQ is less effective. Some teachers make poor use of overhead transparencies and the whiteboard.

43 Most teaching in leisure and tourism is good. Some lessons were of a particularly high standard. Teachers have a thorough knowledge and understanding of their subject. Many lessons are well planned. Teaching and learning programmes have a clear link to GNVQ units and meet the needs of students of differing ability. The coverage of topics is thorough. There is effective use of teaching aids. In most lessons, teachers provide helpful guidance and support, and the written and verbal instructions for tasks and assignments are clear. The quality of schemes of work varies. Some teachers did not time their lessons well or check that learning was taking place. Errors in students' English remained uncorrected and teachers failed to provide students with enough written feedback.

44 Health care lessons are well planned. The lessons are interesting, relevant and often fun. Most teaching is imaginative and stimulating. Teachers generally keep students occupied and interested throughout the three-hour lessons. Most lessons begin with a review of previous topics and the identification of key issues. Work in small groups or in pairs is effective. There are well-designed handouts to support different tasks and exercises. On the foundation GNVQ course there is good use of role-play. There was no challenge to students who arrived late and disrupted work in a number of lessons. Sometimes, students did not receive enough feedback on their written work and there was not enough attention to spelling mistakes and poor grammar.

45 Art and design students benefit from the experience of professional practitioners who work as part-time teachers. Course programmes have clearly-defined aims, and students know what they need to learn. Most teaching is good but it lacks variety. Teachers make insufficient use of supporting materials and learning aids. Nevertheless, there is generally a positive and industrious atmosphere in the studios and workshops. Programmes of study are suitably challenging and students are helped to develop their skills and knowledge. The course programmes include systematic assessment and monitoring of students' progress. The assessment of coursework is fair and conforms to an appropriate standard. The quality of students' assignments varies.

46 Teachers of English develop students' ideas and extend their understanding. Most make effective use of lesson plans and outline schemes of work, although these vary in quality. Teachers inform students of the aims and objectives of the lesson at the outset. A variety of teaching techniques, which include question and answer sessions, and work in small groups, helps to sustain students' interest in long sessions. Some teachers use handouts effectively to encourage students to think for themselves and contribute to discussions. On GCSE courses, there are some weaknesses in students' oral skills. Dictated notes are used in some sessions where the use of a whiteboard or handout would have been more effective. There is a lack of planned support to help GCE A level English students acquire information technology skills. In psychology, on both the access to higher education programme and on the GCE A level course, objectives are clearly identified and this helps to maintain students' interests. There is good use of worksheets. Some group work lacks clearly-specified activities and students receive insufficient feedback on their assignments.

47 The organisation of teaching and learning for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. There is careful attention to progression and the development of students' skills and self-confidence. Teachers are sensitive to individual needs and teach within the team's agreed approaches and lesson plans. They are up to date in their subject areas, and sustain their students' attention and interest well. The grading and marking of work is thorough. Students with learning difficulties and adult basic education students have limited opportunity to develop their information technology skills. Tasks for group work are not defined clearly and there is a lack of time for analysis of the results of these tasks. Basic elements of classroom organisation are sometimes absent; for example, in some lessons, students were not positioned to see the blackboard or projector screen.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

48 Most students enjoy their studies and their achievements in most vocational areas are good. They reach appropriate standards in internal assessment and some gain national recognition or awards. In 1994, two

students achieved the silver awards of the C&G for electrical installation work; in 1995 a student obtained first place in the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry private secretary's examinations; and a student taking the diploma in management studies won the Institute of Management's student of the year award. The college does not hold reliable data on students' achievements centrally. Each faculty holds information about its own course results and some of this is of variable quality. The college has no value-added data against which to evaluate students' achievements. Retention rates are low on some courses.

49 Students on science courses have a positive attitude to their studies. On polymer science courses students develop high levels of competence in practical work and use advanced computer software. Information technology is also integrated with other aspects of work in assignments for biology and pharmaceutical science. Information technology skills are underdeveloped in chemistry, physics and environmental sciences. Students work on their own and in groups and carry out practical work competently. Consistently high pass rates have been achieved in polymer science. Pass rates for GCSE and GCE A level courses in science are near to the national average for general further education and tertiary colleges but the proportion of higher grade passes is low. There was a significant improvement in the GCE A level human biology pass rate in 1996. Most students who complete vocational science courses achieve good examination results. Results for the national diploma in science have fallen significantly over the last three years.

50 Students studying computing are well motivated and their work is of a good standard. Results for students who complete their courses are good. In 1996 there were 100 per cent pass rates for the national diploma courses in computing and information technology. These courses also have the highest retention rates in the subject area. GCSE students have obtained particularly high grades. Non-completion rates for some courses in computing are high, particularly at GCSE and GCE A level, where over 50 per cent of students withdrew.

51 Students on construction courses achieve a sound level of subject knowledge. Assignment work is completed to a high standard. There is a good rate of progression to higher education. Students on construction crafts courses found their practical studies relevant to their work, although their work folders were badly kept. Students work safely and competently with a range of specialist equipment, both on their own and in groups. In 1996, pass rates for construction technicians averaged 96 per cent and 79 per cent for crafts. Both areas had courses with 100 per cent pass rates. Full-time students on courses for wood trades have a good record of progression into employment.

52 Engineering students reach a high standard in their practical work. The achievements of most are good and reflect their enthusiasm for their studies. On many courses, examination pass rates are frequently above

national averages. Most success rates for BTEC courses are over 90 per cent. There is a good record of progression into employment from mechanical engineering courses. Results in some external examinations are poor, particularly in the sound and light engineering course and the electrical technicians course.

53 Students on business courses enjoy their studies and their attendance is good. They acquire appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding, develop sound study skills and make good use of information technology. Success rates are generally good. Results on the Association of Accounting Technicians courses are significantly better than the national average. Notable achievements include 100 per cent passes in text and wordprocessing courses. Most of the intermediate GNVQ business students who resat GCSE English as part of their studies made significant improvements on the grades which they achieved at school. A number of students have taken too long to reach NVQ level 4 and 5 in management over the past two years.

54 Most students of leisure and tourism are well motivated. They are generally enthusiastic and their attendance is good. Students develop sound knowledge of their subject and apply their understanding effectively in classroom tasks. Most respond well in question and answer sessions. Examination results are generally good but some students have poor writing skills.

55 Childcare students and health studies students work well together. The standards of written work are generally good, although some students' work contained significant spelling mistakes and poor grammar. In 1995-96, GNVQ results were significantly above the national average. On GNVQ foundation courses they were nearly double the average. There was a 100 per cent pass rate on the diploma in pre-school practice. However, not all courses within the section were so successful. In 1996, there were several low pass rates. The results on the diploma in nursery nursing of the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education, for example, fell.

56 Students of art and design can discuss clearly their work and achievements. Their portfolios show that they attain skills steadily and achieve satisfactory results. Work in key art and design skills, such as drawing, is good. They are able to make sensible choices for further specialist study and most progress to higher education. For adult students, progression from the relevant access course is particularly good. Critical awareness and evaluation skills were generally underdeveloped.

57 In English GCSE results at grade C or above have been consistently above the average for general further education and tertiary colleges. The best students' work is of a high standard, but some students' written work, noticeably in GCSE English, is weak. GCE A level results in English have been above the national average but, in 1996, there was a decline in the proportion of students achieving grade C or above. Students' achievement

in other humanities subjects is generally good both in class work and in the standards achieved in public examinations. Students' achievements in psychology are at or above the national average for the sector in both GCSE and GCE A level examinations. The written work of most students is good. Appropriate attention is paid to presentation, grammar and spelling. Students, in particular those on access courses, participate well in class discussion. Retention rates are generally good but have been low on the access programme. There are some poor levels of attendance and a lack of punctuality in attending lessons, particularly psychology lessons.

58 At the time of the inspection, the Department for Education and Employment's (DfEE's) performance tables for 1996 were not yet available. Eighty-four per cent of the 248 students in their final year of study on vocational courses included in the DfEE's 1995 performance tables were successful. This placed the college among the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. The 213 students aged 16 to 18 who entered for GCE A level examinations in 1995 scored, on average, 3.1 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This placed the college in the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure based on the tables published by the DfEE. The number of students who took GCSE examinations in 1995 was three times greater than for GCE A level examinations. In most GCSE subjects the results at grade C or above are better than the national averages over the past two years.

59 Fifty-six per cent of the 1,783 full-time and part-time students who gained qualifications in 1995 were aged 19 and over. The college has records of the subsequent destinations for 63 per cent of the leavers. Some 37 per cent progressed into higher education, 6 per cent went into further education and 57 per cent into employment.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

60 The college has a well-established quality assurance system and is committed to securing continuous improvement in all its work. The system operates through a set of procedures that have been collected into a manual. It includes course team meetings, the internal review system and student surveys. The European Standard EN ISO 9002 quality assurance award has been achieved by the college's training organisations. The overall system is generally well understood, but there is a need to ensure that all parts of the college are fully involved. Methods for reviewing quality are not as strongly developed in non-teaching areas as they are in teaching areas.

61 The college has set some standards at the institutional level, monitored subsequent achievement, and then periodically reviewed progress to identify where there have been improvements. Targets have been set for retention and attainment across the whole college. These are set in the annual operating statement. A recent exercise, using agreed indicators, included a comparison of the college's performance with other

further education colleges. Performance indicators need to be further developed, to provide measures of quality in key areas of the college's work.

62 Teams running courses conduct evaluations of their work and write annual course reviews. There is a standard set of headings for use across the college but these are not always followed. Some reviews are thorough, others are cursory. Analysis of students' progress and achievements is limited. A particular weakness is the lack of any value-added analysis of students' performance since entry. There is little comparative analysis, using data accumulated over several years or national benchmarks, to indicate the quality of results. Performance indicators are not used in the review process. Reviews contain recommendations for future action, but these recommendations are often superficial, or unrelated to the analysis. Recommendations for action rarely include information on individual responsibilities, deadlines for completion or review cycles.

63 The internal review group examines the performance of sections within the faculties against agreed criteria. The group is helping to establish the practice of reviewing quality across the college. It has produced an excellent set of standards for assessing the quality of many areas of college life including teaching and support for students. Resulting action plans are carefully monitored to ensure that what is planned takes place. The group only reviews a few standards each year which means that its impact is limited. It is a well-designed system which deserves to be extended. The group should also establish an effective means of reporting on its findings to the senior managers of the college and the members of the corporation.

64 The college evaluates comments from external assessors and from students as part of its quality assurance. There are two main sources of students' opinions. The college's researcher gathers data on students' views and many course teams collect their own data. How these data are used to assess and improve courses is not well documented. Only a few course reviews and annual reports from course teams included a thorough analysis of views or recommendations based on students' evaluations.

65 There is extensive staff development. Requests for development, many of which result from appraisal are assessed for their contribution to the college's aims. Staff who take up development activities subsequently evaluate their experience together with their line manager. There are also procedures for sharing the knowledge and skills gained with other colleagues. The impact of staff development on the college is not yet evaluated adequately. The college is working towards the Investors in People Award. The pre-assessment took place in July 1996. The final assessment is planned for March 1997.

66 There is an established annual appraisal system for all staff. Line managers carry out the appraisals. Procedures are well documented and action plans are attached to each appraisal form. These action plans are

closely monitored and linked to the staff-development programme. A comprehensive staff handbook, revised regularly, is issued to new staff during their induction programme.

67 The college charter is attractively presented. The content is helpful as an introductory guide on where to find information and assistance. The charter does not provide students with a comprehensive description of the entitlement they can expect from the college nor does it contain many service standards. The commitments that are made to employers are limited and vague. All students receive a copy of the charter at enrolment.

68 The college's self-assessment report has been well prepared. Completed in June 1996, it is based on reviews at all levels within the college and follows the headings in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The self-assessment includes grades and lists of strengths and weaknesses. The grades and the assessments are mostly consistent with the findings of the inspection. An action plan to deal with the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment has been approved by senior managers.

RESOURCES

Staffing

69 Most teaching staff are suitably qualified and experienced for the courses they teach. Most hold a teaching qualification. Just over half of the teachers have training and development lead body assessor qualifications. In some areas, staff have good industrial and commercial experience. The college has accepted, as a staff-development priority, the need to provide more opportunities for staff to update their experience in some other areas.

70 Teachers are appropriately deployed. In English, good use is made of the most experienced staff to teach the more difficult lessons. There are management guidelines to determine the workloads of staff and these help managers to devise fair and reasonable work patterns for teachers on the new professional contracts. A teaching commitment is identified in the guidelines and this is used by college managers to monitor the deployment of staff.

71 Technician staff are well qualified and experienced and provide support which is valued in the college. Business support staff are competent and are effectively deployed in most areas.

72 There are well-established personnel practices. All key policies are in place including an anti-harassment policy. Procedures and policies for the recruitment of staff are clear. Comprehensive information on employment is set out in the staff handbook which also contains helpful information on conditions of service, appraisal, staff development, absence, code of conduct grievance and disciplinary procedures. Eleven

per cent of students but only 2 per cent of teachers are from minority ethnic groups. The college is aware of the situation and is taking measures to try to address it.

Equipment/learning resources

73 The purchase of resources is an integral part of strategic planning and there are effective procedures in place for replacing ageing equipment. Most programme areas have enough equipment and other resources to support learning. In polymer science, provision is outstanding. Most classrooms have an adequate range of teaching aids. The college has attracted significant external funding; for example, £370,000 from the competitiveness fund, and a single regeneration budget grant for the development of facilities for heavy goods vehicle maintenance. There are few learning packages for NVQ construction programmes and few modern computer numerical controlled machines in engineering.

74 The college has two libraries, one at the town centre campus and the other at Rolleston. Both provide pleasant environments and contain sufficient books and periodicals to cover most of the college's curriculum. Book issues have increased over the past three years. The libraries have satisfactory opening hours and are well staffed. There is a computerised catalogue at the main site. The annual library budget has nearly doubled since 1993-94 and, at £53,000, it is close to the Library Association guidelines. The figure does not include the money spent on text books acquired by the faculties. The number of private study places in the libraries is sufficient and there is a quiet room at the town centre campus. There are only five computers and 26 titles provided for compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases. In addition to the libraries, there are separate workshops for learning support, which include workshops for mathematics, communications and science.

75 The provision of computers for students is satisfactory and most computers are up to industrial standards. Since incorporation, there has been a significant investment in information technology. The college has identified a need to make it easier for students to use computers as and when they need. Improvements have been made, although further work is still required to improve access. The information technology help desk provides rapid and effective technical support for students. All industry standard computers are connected to the Internet. The application of information technology within most areas of the curriculum is widespread. All staff have access to electronic mail which is used extensively.

Accommodation

76 The college is well maintained. It is clean and tidy and free from graffiti. There is careful control of energy and other utility costs. Car parking at Rolleston is satisfactory but, at the town centre campus students have to pay to use nearby public parking. Signposting, both internal and external to the college, is adequate. The town centre campus is pleasantly

situated by the Memorial Gardens. The Rolleston Campus, five miles away, is set in an attractive open environment. Rolleston was originally built as a school, and although not ideal, it has been adapted to meet the needs of further education. The college's long-term aim is to close Rolleston and extend and rebuild on the town centre campus. Two small annexes close to the town centre also provide accommodation.

77 Buildings are suitable in size, layout, and furnishing to meet the college's curriculum. The accommodation for polymer sciences, engineering drawing, and for students with learning difficulties is of high quality. A useful range of sports and recreation facilities is provided. There are no travel agency facilities for students taking leisure and tourism and some rooms are too small for the groups using them. Students with restricted mobility have access to most of the town centre campus but, at Rolleston, access is restricted to the ground floor. There are good displays of students' work and other subject-related material in English, communications and health care. In science, engineering and some leisure and tourism rooms displays are less effective. Social facilities at the town centre campus, which have recently been refurbished, are popular with students. Several staff rooms are well positioned next to curriculum areas. Good room timetabling and an annual remodelling programme help the college to come to terms with the difficulties created by this design of the college buildings. The college recognises that further work is required.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

78 The college's strengths are:

- its extensive range of courses
- strong links with the local community and employers
- governors' understanding of the college's curriculum
- the strategic plan which benefits from thorough consultation
- a well-managed system of financial allocation
- effective enrolment and induction procedures
- teaching which is generally of a high standard
- clean and well-maintained buildings.

79 The college's weaknesses are:

- the failure of the corporation and the academic board to monitor students' achievements
- the limitations of the management information system
- underdeveloped performance indicators
- the variable quality of course reviews
- the lack of service standards in the students' charter.

FIGURES

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

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

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

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

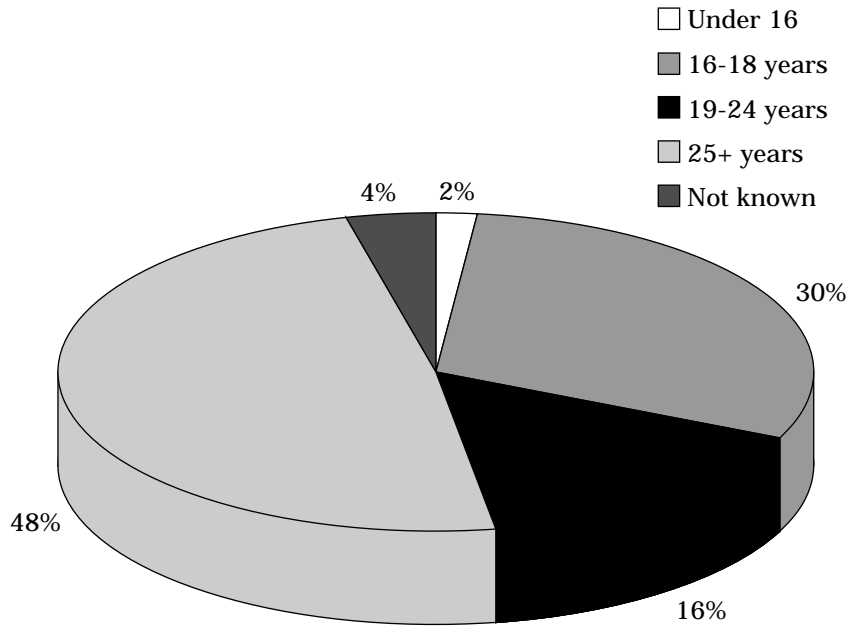
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

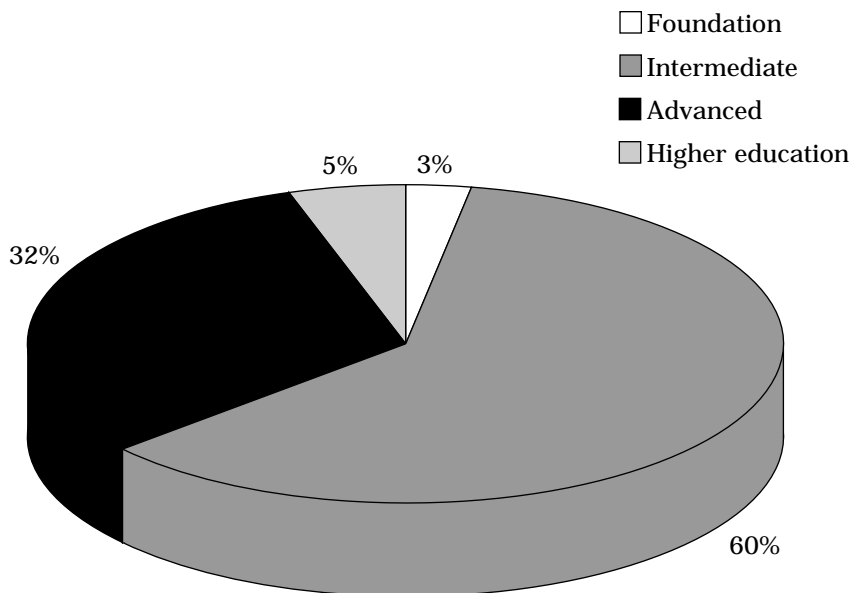
Burton upon Trent Technical College: percentage student numbers by age (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 6,776

Figure 2

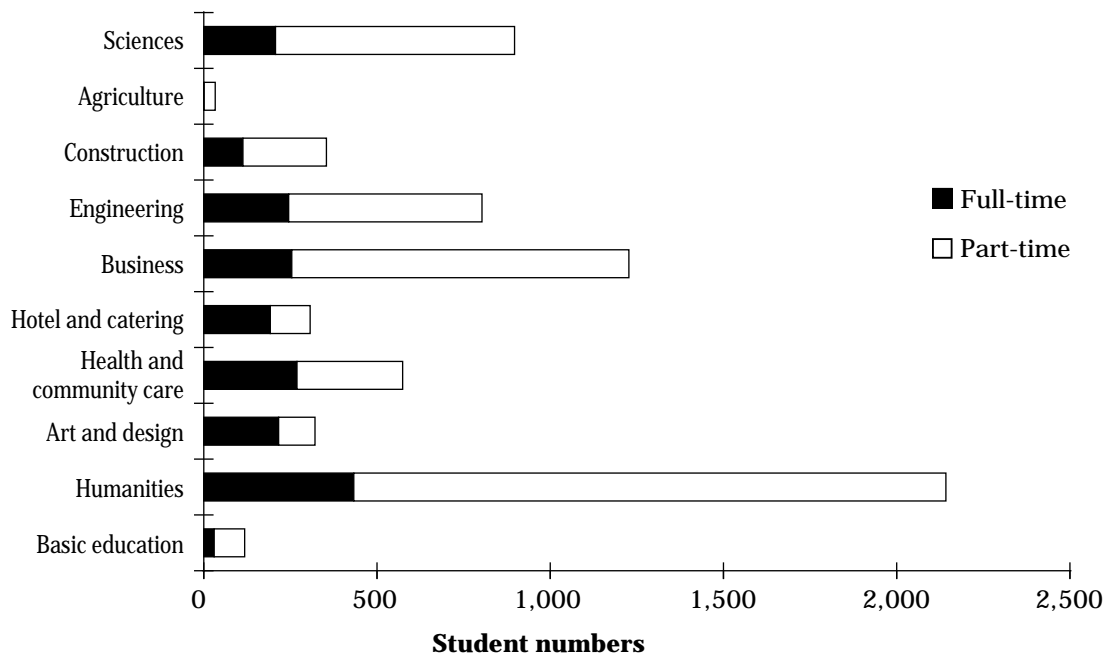
Burton upon Trent Technical College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 6,776

Figure 3

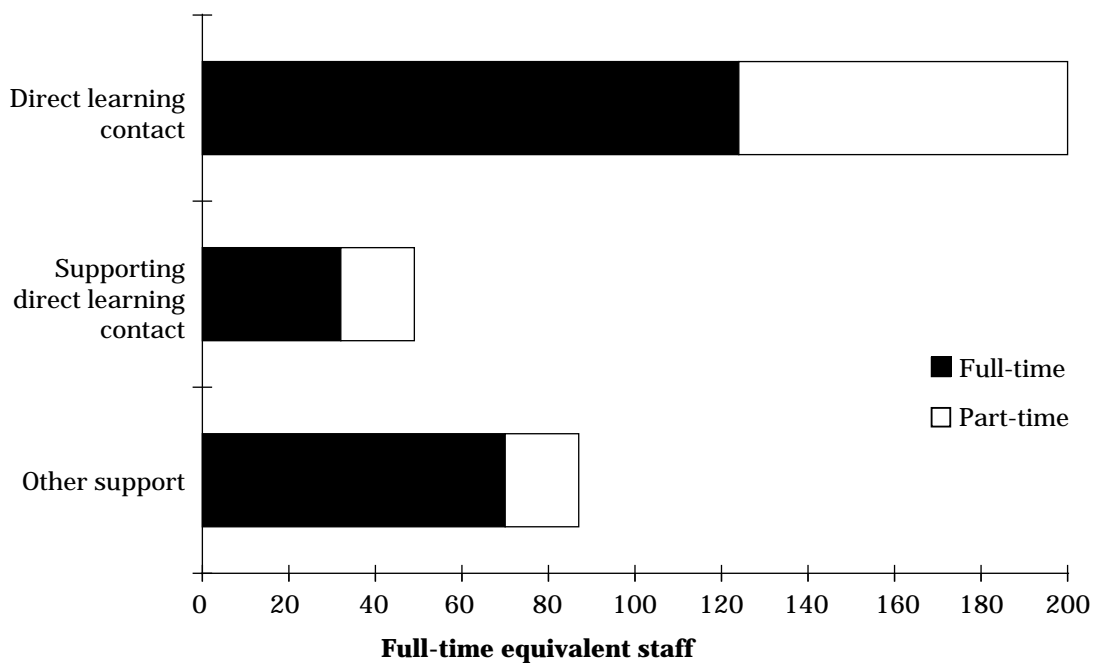
Burton upon Trent Technical College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 6,776

Figure 4

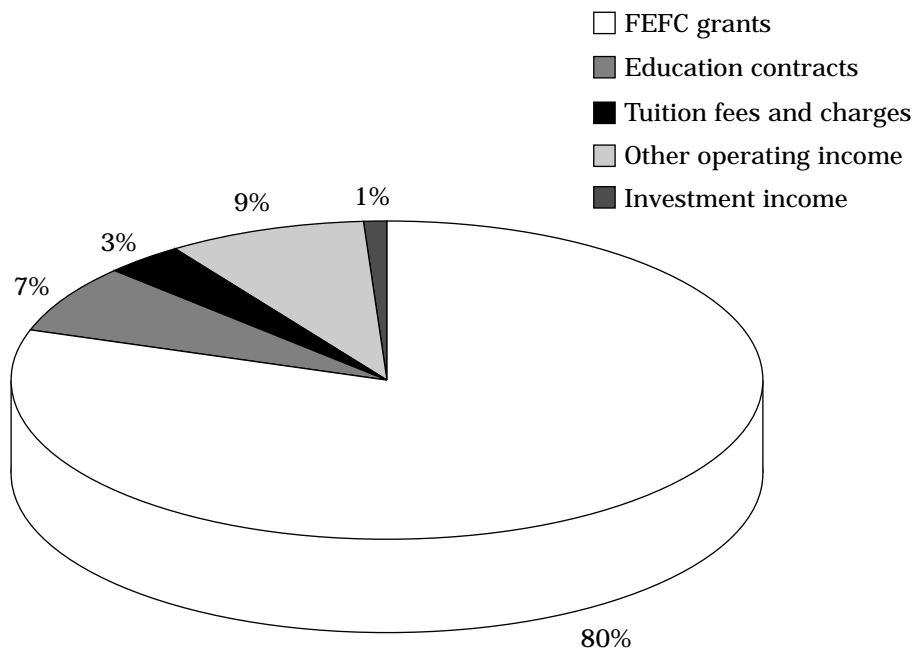
Burton upon Trent Technical College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1996)



Full-time equivalent staff: 336

Figure 5

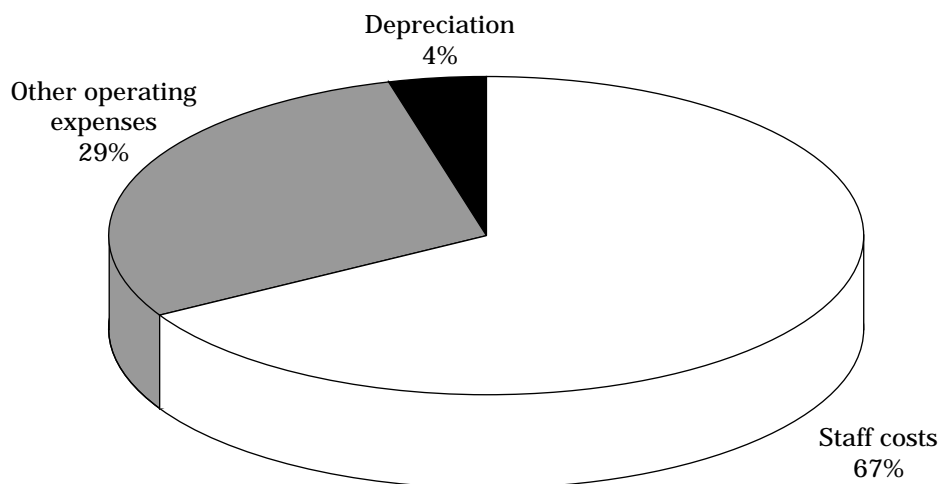
Burton upon Trent Technical College: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £9,739,000

Figure 6

Burton upon Trent Technical College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Expenditure: £9,774,000

Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
February 1997