

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Chippenham College

March 1995

**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.

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.*

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 27/95

CHIPPENHAM COLLEGE

SOUTH WEST REGION

Inspected September – November 1994

Summary

Chippenham College is a major provider of education and training for a wide area of north-west Wiltshire. Particular strengths are the committed and enthusiastic staff, the effective leadership and management of the college executive and the well-managed strategic planning process. Strong support is provided by members of the board who take an active interest in the life of the college. There is an expanding range of provision and examples of good teaching in all subjects. Students' examination results are generally satisfactory. The college is responsive to the needs of local employers and has developed some excellent work in the accreditation of prior learning, recently recognised by the award of a Queen's Anniversary prize. There are strong and effective links with local schools, co-ordinated by the student services team. There is a well-managed staff-appraisal scheme. The college should: encourage greater variety in teaching methods in some subjects; develop a systematic approach to learning support; improve examination results in the few areas where they are less than satisfactory; develop a strategy for adult learners; and improve the co-ordination of learning resources across the college, including access to information technology. The college should also strengthen and extend the quality assurance framework, further develop its management information system, and establish a college marketing plan.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and mathematics	3	Care and hairdressing	2
Engineering	2	Creative arts	2
Management and business studies	3	English/communications and social science	3
Administrative and secretarial studies	2	Adult and community education	3
Leisure/sport and catering	3	Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3

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INTRODUCTION

1 Chippenham College was inspected during the period September to November 1994. Twenty-one inspectors spent a total of 75 inspector days in the college, 49 of which were spent on specialist subject areas and 26 on aspects of cross-college provision. The team inspected science and mathematics, engineering, management and business studies, administrative, secretarial and computer studies, leisure and sport, catering, care, hairdressing, creative arts, English and communications, social science, adult and community education, and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Inspectors visited 250 classes, examined students' written work and had access to a wide range of college documentation. Meetings took place with board members, senior managers, staff, full-time and part-time students, parents, staff from local schools and representatives of employers, the local community and the training and enterprise council (TEC).

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Chippenham College was established in 1947, although vocational adult evening classes had taken place in a secondary technical school on the site since the end of the last century. The college occupies a 12-acre site near the centre of Chippenham and has centres in the neighbouring towns of Calne, Corsham, Malmesbury and Melksham. There is also regular use of teaching accommodation at Lyneham.

3 At the end of the 1993-94 academic year there were 10,375 enrolments, of which 1,234 were full time. Enrolments by age, level of study, and mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. The college employs 205 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 131 are teachers and 74 are support staff. Approximately 36 per cent of the teaching is undertaken by part-time staff. The staff profile expressed as full-time equivalents is shown in figure 4.

4 Wiltshire is a largely rural county with many industries based on agriculture and food products. There are Royal Air Force, army and naval bases near the college. During recent years, a number of local manufacturing industries have reduced their workforce and there has been a drop in the number of agriculture and defence-related jobs. In the same period, there has been a growth in service industries and smaller companies attracted by the good communications provided by the railway and the M4 corridor.

5 The college serves a population of approximately 120,000 in north-west Wiltshire extending to the county boundary in the north and including the four towns with college centres. Within this area, there are six secondary schools, all of which have sixth forms and three of which are grant maintained. There are five further education colleges within 25 miles: City of Bath to the south-west, Trowbridge to the south, Swindon College and New College Swindon to the north-east and Cirencester in the

north. Lackham College of Agriculture is nearby and has links with the college for equestrian studies and engineering.

6 Seventy-one per cent of 16 year olds in the area continue in full-time education or training. The unemployment rate for the Chippenham travel-to-work area, 6.3 per cent in October 1994, is below the national average of 9 per cent and is falling. Job vacancies tend to be in part-time employment.

7 The college offer a wide range of vocational, General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses. They are taught within two faculties, sub-divided into 20 teaching sections.

8 The college describes its mission as providing 'a high quality service of continuing education, consultancy and training mainly focused on the economic and social development of the community of north-west Wiltshire'. The corporate plan identifies targets, responsibilities and monitoring arrangements to assist in achieving its aims.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9 The college is firmly committed to expanding its student numbers, extending its range of provision and responding to local needs. Staff in the college are aware of the National Targets for Education and Training and the college's corporate plan outlines strategies to meet them.

10 There is a good spread of GCE A level, advanced supplementary (AS) and GCSE subjects. GCE A level enrolments have increased by approximately 19 per cent this year. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are offered in most vocational areas. General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) are currently available at intermediate and advanced level in business, leisure and tourism, health and social care, and art and design. Business and leisure and tourism are also offered on a part-time basis. Other GNVQs are planned for next year. The college is considering the introduction of foundation GNVQs. In areas where GNVQs and NVQs are not yet available, students are prepared for nationally-recognised certificates and diplomas, such as those leading to Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) qualifications.

11 There are courses for students with learning difficulties which meet a wide variety of needs, some of which are quite complex. Provision for adults with sensory impairments includes three courses for visually-impaired students and two sign language courses. Four students with disabilities are studying on other college courses.

12 The college has a large number of adults studying part time, but there is no strategy for the development of courses and learning opportunities specifically for adults. For example, adults would benefit from more flexible timetabling arrangements. Part-time provision includes courses which prepare students for entry to higher education in nursing and social science. There is a good range of adult basic education delivered in a

flexible way, including opportunities for students to be taught and assessed in their own homes. Mainly non-vocational provision is provided at the four centres in neighbouring towns. This extends the college's ability to respond to the wider community.

13 Strong links have been formed with local employers, who speak highly of the college and its work. Consultative committees have been established, and college staff and employers are working together on a range of activities including the provision of work experience and the development of specific programmes of study. Employers commented on the commitment and professionalism of college staff and their willingness to respond to training needs.

14 There are well-developed arrangements for recognising and accrediting students' prior learning and experience in engineering, management and secretarial studies. A particular feature of the college is the work carried out in local industry and the armed forces to enable individual employees to obtain NVQs through accreditation of prior learning. This has been managed by the college's consultancy unit which draws on the expertise of college lecturers to deliver the programmes. As a result of this work, the college has recently been awarded a Queen's Anniversary Prize for higher and further education which recognises 'exceptional work of the highest standard'. A recently-established accreditation of prior learning working party has produced an action plan to support the development of the accreditation of prior learning throughout the college.

15 The college has delivered a number of contracts for Wiltshire TEC. The TEC speaks highly of the work of the college, and the consultancy unit in particular, and continues to seek the college's support in delivering projects.

16 Wiltshire Local Education Authority has a history of effective collaboration between schools and colleges. Although all local schools have their own sixth forms there are excellent arrangements which provide all students in their final year of compulsory schooling with information about opportunities for post-16 study. Collaboration has been enhanced through the work of the technical vocational education initiative and careers service networks. There are indications that increased competition to recruit students is creating some tensions for the traditionally strong relationships between schools and the college. There is extensive development of GNVQ provision at intermediate and advanced level in local schools for business studies, art and design, leisure and tourism, health and social care. This is paralleled by reduced enrolments in some subjects at the college, for example, in business studies.

17 The county of Wiltshire does not have a university. As a result, the college has developed a number of BTEC higher national diploma and certificate awards, for example in business studies and engineering. Franchised higher education provision includes the teaching of the first

year of a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in social sciences from the University of the West of England and a part-time certificate in education and BA in education from Portsmouth University. Links are supported by the college's higher education panel which has membership from nearby higher education institutions and is chaired by a member of the governing body.

18 The college does not have a marketing plan. A head of marketing has recently been appointed who is supported by two part-time staff working with a cross-college marketing team. Activity is at present largely restricted to advertising and promotional issues. Inadequate attention is given to market research and the analysis of labour market intelligence to inform course planning. Some teaching sections are actively promoting their own courses but would benefit from further support and advice on marketing techniques.

19 The college's main prospectus 'FEature', is in a newspaper format and lists all the courses on offer. There is also a wide range of leaflets. Full-time course leaflets have recently been redesigned to a standard style. There is also a leaflet listing all full-time provision, but it gives insufficient information and fails to reflect the college as a whole.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

20 The college has an active and supportive board with a membership of 15, the majority of whom have been board members for many years. Membership includes representatives from business, the Wiltshire TEC, local authorities including the chief education officer of Wiltshire, and teaching staff, together with the principal and vice-principal. There are only two women members. Members bring a range of experience particularly from business and accountancy. They play an active part in the life of the college and most are members of college consultative committees. Student views are communicated to the board through the student liaison committee which is chaired by a board member. An appropriate range of subcommittees has been established with clear terms of reference. The board and subcommittees meet on a regular basis and are provided with good-quality information from the college managers. Agendas and minutes are comprehensive, and attendance at meetings is satisfactory.

21 The college management structure was changed in 1992 to take account of the major new responsibilities of incorporation particularly in relation to finance. A number of senior and middle managers took early retirement. This has resulted in a layer of management being removed and the transfer of additional responsibilities to assistant principals and section leaders. The structure is led by a college executive of six, consisting of the principal, vice-principal, two assistant principals, the administration manager, and the finance manager. Five of them have additional cross-college responsibilities; for example, the principal oversees

marketing, the vice-principal student services, the assistant principals management information systems and quality assurance, and the administration manager staff development. The assistant principals act as the respective heads of the two faculties with line management responsibility for the section leaders.

22 The principal and vice-principal co-operate well and share many of the main responsibilities. The full executive provides effective management and leadership; responsibilities are clearly defined and the members work well as a group. The executive meets weekly and minutes identifying responsibility for action are circulated quickly. The assistant principals are responsible for communicating decisions to the section leaders.

23 Following the restructuring, the college has operated effectively. The structure is less hierarchical and more responsibilities are devolved to section leaders. Section leaders welcome the increased autonomy and responsibility for decision making. However, they retain a heavy teaching load which can make it difficult for them to find time for their management and administrative responsibilities. Sections are nominally grouped together into four divisions in order to achieve certain tasks, for example, to contribute to the strategic planning process and to timetable accommodation. Staff understand the management structure and the executive takes care to consult on college matters through informal and formal meetings.

24 A curriculum management team chaired by the vice-principal comprises the assistant principals and a number of cross-college co-ordinators. As a subcommittee of the executive it acts as a think-tank on curriculum matters, meeting for approximately one half day every three weeks. The effectiveness of this group overshadows the operation of the academic board which, apart from a special meeting to consider the strategic plan has become an approving rather than an advisory body. The role of the academic board should be reviewed.

25 There is a well-organised strategic planning process which is generally understood by staff. The framework for the corporate plan is drawn up by the executive, based on the previous year's plan. Each of the four divisions co-ordinates responses from the teaching sections and, with the support of the assistant principals, draws up an annual plan containing a strategic overview, objectives for the next three years and annual operating statements. Staff at all levels contribute to this process. The executive considers the draft plan which is presented to the board of governors for their comment and approval. Although market research is carried out, there is little evidence of its findings being incorporated into the planning process.

26 The overall monitoring of the corporate plan is the responsibility of the vice-principal who reports to the executive committee on progress. Responsibility for monitoring specific objectives is indicated in the plan.

Corporate plan objectives are a central feature of appraisal interviews with staff. During the period of the inspection, the college's self-assessment exercise, required for the inspection, replaced the normal monitoring process.

27 The college's average level of funding per funded unit of activity for 1994-95 is £16.58. The median for general further education colleges is £18.17. The college's income and expenditure for the 16 months to July 1994 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

28 The management information system provides information on a range of matters including enrolments, attendance, financial allocations and expenditure. Senior managers are able to check the deployment of teaching staff, although at present the process is cumbersome. Figures on student recruitment are available to section leaders soon after enrolment. Financial statements are circulated monthly but section leaders are not yet able to access financial information directly. Although there has been some recent staff development on management information systems, staff awareness of what the system can offer is variable. The system is not yet meeting the full needs of staff. Further improvements are planned; for example, new software will shortly be introduced which will enable more effective monitoring of full-time and part-time staff teaching hours and room use. There is also a management information systems development plan which has assessed the present arrangements and identified targets for improvement.

29 The college failed to achieve its growth target for 1993-94. This year, enrolment targets have been exceeded in sport and recreation, engineering, motor vehicle and across the GCE A level programme. However, targets have not been achieved on a number of full-time courses including intermediate and advanced GNVQs in business studies, intermediate GNVQ in health and social care and the national diploma in computing. There is also a general decline in the numbers on part-time vocational courses. Projections at the time of the inspection indicate that the overall growth target for the college is unlikely to be achieved in 1994-95. The college has responded promptly and appropriately to this situation, and all teaching sections are preparing action plans aimed at increasing student numbers.

30 Retention rates are calculated from attendance registers, analysed manually and communicated to sections three times during the year. Student attendance is generally monitored effectively through personal tutors. There has been a significant improvement in retention rates in the first two months of 1994-95 compared with the previous year.

31 The central collection and circulation of information on students' destinations is not well developed. Although information is compiled by individual sections, a more systematic cross-college approach is required to produce accurate information which can be used in marketing and course planning.

32 The college has an appropriate range of policies including those for equal opportunities, health and safety, student support and environmental issues. Although college working groups monitor most of these policies, the quality of the monitoring varies. There are no monitoring arrangements for the equal opportunities policy. There has however, been progress in a number of the areas identified in the equal opportunities action plan including the development of a policy to counter sexual harassment and the positioning of Braille labels on doors. The health and safety policy has recently been amended and is shortly to be considered by the board. Further work is needed in this area to ensure that all legal requirements are met.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

33 Student services have been restructured in the last 18 months following the appointment of a student services manager in January 1993. The new structure involves cross-college teams responsible for admissions, tutorial support, guidance, complementary activities and support for the student council. The teams work alongside the central student services team which includes the careers adviser/counsellor and the student council and activities co-ordinator. The work of these teams has developed well in a short period and is appreciated by students, though it continues to relate mainly to full-time students. There is no area in the college designated for the use of student services, and students sometimes have difficulty in locating staff. As yet, the provision is not seen by students as a fully-integrated college service.

34 Prospective students receive accurate and impartial advice and guidance prior to entry. The student services manager and a team of staff drawn from teaching sections visit schools, give presentations to small groups and invite prospective students and their parents to open days at the college. Teaching staff are available on a rota throughout the summer to respond to specific enquiries, and advice days are organised to coincide with the publication of GCSE and GCE A level examinations.

35 The college's admissions system was reorganised during 1993-94 and responsibility was transferred to student services. This has led to an improvement in the co-ordination of student recruitment but further work is required to ensure effective tracking of admissions, consistent documentation, and effective use of the management information system. Enrolment takes place over four days in September for full-time students, and on two enrolment days in July and September for part-time students and for students enrolling at the further education centres in neighbouring towns. In addition, students can enrol by post or at the college throughout the summer. Procedures are generally efficient and there are clear signs, access for students with disabilities, childcare provision, and adequate car parking. There is, however, scope for refinement of the various forms used and clarification on the methods of payment of fees.

36 Teaching sections are responsible for ensuring that all students receive adequate induction, and support is provided by student services. There are examples of thorough induction taking place on many courses but it is not consistent across the college. The induction guidelines are currently being reviewed. Two handbooks, one for full-time and one for part-time students, contain the college charter, the student's contract, the college code of conduct, college rules and regulations and information about the services available.

37 The tutorial system for full-time students, involving some 70 tutorial groups, is operated by section leaders and co-ordinated by the two senior tutors. A tutorial support team provides guidance with the help of a tutorial handbook, monthly notes, tutor training, careers evenings and special events. Annual tutorial programmes are produced for each course, though some programmes were not available at the time of the inspection. Most students speak positively about the value of tutorials but attendance at some tutorials is unsatisfactory. Some part-time students have a tutorial as part of their course, but most do not have a personal tutor. They are, however, offered appointments with the college adult guidance advisers.

38 The college has very strong links with the Wiltshire Careers Service. One careers officer works full time in the college on careers, counselling and other activities including attendance at tutorials, and visits to employers. Three others, one of them specialising in employment, spend one day per week in the college. Another specialises in learning difficulties and/or disabilities and provides a valuable link between home, school and college. Careers staff are seen as an integral part of student services and work well with personal tutors, assisting the training of tutors in the implementation of personal development plans and action plans. The full-time careers officer also has the role of college counsellor and welfare officer. Students spoke highly of the counselling service. The college should examine the relationship between the roles of careers officer, counsellor and welfare officer in order to assess the extent of the demand on each of these roles; in particular, to ensure that counselling needs are being met.

39 An adult guidance worker from the careers service provides advice sessions at the college throughout the year on one afternoon a week. She visits classes at the start of courses to raise awareness of the guidance service and often works with tutors helping adults, particularly those adults returning to learn, with their personal development plans.

40 All full-time students have a completed record of achievement on leaving the college. There are some inconsistencies in practice; for example, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are sometimes not being encouraged to collect information to support their record of achievement. This academic year, the college has introduced a procedure for validating records of achievement, initially with four full-time courses.

41 Arrangements for providing additional learning support are at an early stage of development. The application and enrolment forms do not provide an opportunity for students to identify their needs for additional support. Screening for literacy and numeracy at induction has been gradually introduced in the last two years and staff specialising in the provision of basic skills have recently developed an assessment and referral process. Some effective though limited support is offered in the college's study centre and there are some excellent examples of support provided for individual students with disabilities. However, there is no systematic, co-ordinated approach to learning support for the whole college.

42 A student council has been established to represent students' views and to organise social activities. It is supported by a student liaison co-ordinator. Three members of the council, together with adult-student representatives nominated by the assistant principals, serve on a student liaison committee which acts as a channel of communication between students, staff and the board of governors. Many students are unaware of this arrangement.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

43 Two hundred and fifty teaching sessions were inspected involving a total of 2,835 students. Of these sessions, 54.5 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses, 36.5 per cent had a balance of strengths and weaknesses, and 9 per cent had weaknesses which outweighed the strengths. This profile is very similar to the grades awarded to the 11,000 lessons observed nationally during 1993-94.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	2	16	22	3	1	44
GCSE	1	8	18	4	0	31
GNVQ	2	21	9	5	1	38
NVQ	6	18	12	6	1	43
Higher education	0	9	2	1	0	12
Basic education	2	3	7	1	0	13
Non-schedule 2	0	7	4	0	0	11
Other	7	34	17	0	0	58
Total	20	116	91	20	3	250

44 The grades awarded for curriculum areas reflect a fairly even standard of teaching across the college. Some effective teaching was observed in all subjects. The highest standards were in engineering, secretarial and administrative studies, care, hairdressing and creative arts. A higher than average number of weaker sessions were observed in catering.

45 In science, there were some good investigative approaches to learning. Assignments and tests were generally appropriate and feedback was thorough. In most sessions, there was questioning to check students' understanding, but this was not always the case. GCSE mathematics is taught largely through the use of resource materials and students work at their own pace with tutor support. Students found this easier and more relevant than the way they had learned in the past. Records of progress are kept and checked regularly with students. Generally, in science and mathematics there was insufficient variety in teaching styles. In GCE A level mathematics, for example, there was a lack of practical work and experimental design.

46 Teaching and learning in engineering was generally well planned and well delivered. Staff-student relationships were positive and purposeful. In a national diploma class in electronics, the teacher used well-prepared visual aids to explain how to achieve a particular design. Students then used the same methodology to produce another design, working individually and together with support from the tutor. Students were challenged by the task and responded well. The content of sessions was directly related to the syllabus, and assessment methods were well designed. In contrast, some of the practical tasks set for students in the engineering workshop were unimaginative and the responses less good.

47 Learning programmes on performing arts courses were well designed. There were clear assignment schedules and assessment criteria firmly related to course objectives. Students from both years of the BTEC national diploma in performing arts have good opportunities to take part in performances. Some theory sessions lacked variety and groups were not managed effectively.

48 Project briefs on art and design courses were clearly set out and discussed in detail. Teachers gave helpful explanations. A sense of purpose prevailed in the studios and any students whose enthusiasm or concentration was flagging were given immediate encouragement. However, teachers made little use of audio-visual teaching aids, and there was an absence of appropriate resource materials. A GCSE art class included a number of students with learning difficulties who were benefiting from good individual tutor support.

49 There are three courses specifically designed for students with a range of learning difficulties. Staff know their students well and have a good understanding of their needs. They are supported by skilled and enthusiastic support assistants. Work experience is available to these students and is monitored by staff. While some work has been done to identify individual learning goals, initial assessment is not undertaken consistently and it has had a limited impact on learning programmes.

50 In modern languages teaching there were examples of careful preparation and inventiveness. Audio-visual facilities are very good, and there is support from a skilled specialist staff. Satellite television is

available but little used. Overall, there is a need for a clearer team approach to ensure consistent objectives and methods.

51 In catering, the teaching was generally thoughtful and supportive, but there were also a number of weaknesses. Theory classes lacked direction and some lesson plans lacked aims and objectives. Second-year students were not sufficiently challenged, either in theory or in practical classes. Insufficient attention was given to aspects of health and safety; for example some students engaged in practical work were wearing jewellery.

52 In sport and leisure, the teaching and promotion of learning was of a variable standard. Work was generally conducted at an effective pace and an appropriate level. Assignments benefited from a revised format which sets out tasks, a check list and planning notes. However, some teaching lacked clear objectives and some students were insufficiently challenged. There are no course handbooks for sport and leisure programmes and there is little evidence of the integration of core skills into vocational assignments.

53 On secretarial and administrative courses, there were clear schemes of work and good, varied teaching. The mix of activities helped to encourage effective learning. Assignments were well designed, and for part-time students these were helpfully linked to their own work experience. On management and business studies courses, there were examples of good teaching which also encouraged students' personal development. However, in some of the sessions for 16-18 year olds, the work was insufficiently challenging for the students. The level of teaching in some adult groups was also inappropriate.

54 On care courses, there was a strong emphasis on students' vocational and personal needs. The work was organised systematically and effectively. Some teaching and tutorial work was of a high standard, and work experience was well planned and monitored. There were a few examples of students experiencing unnecessarily lengthy periods of dictation and of teachers failing to provide adequate feedback on students' assignments. Students' understanding of some basic concepts and social issues needs strengthening.

55 In adult basic education, teaching staff are well supported by volunteer tutors and have a thorough understanding of students and their needs. Home-based assessment and the option of home tuition are a strength. The teaching style is supportive and encourages students to take responsibility for their learning. Progress has been made in tracking student progress but this requires further refinement to ensure that monitoring is effective and, where appropriate, that learning programmes are modified.

56 The pace and level of work in hairdressing was appropriately varied although in some courses there was an inadequate emphasis on creative work. Good support is given to adult students, and students with learning difficulties are effectively integrated with other students for practical

sessions. There was sometimes insufficient challenge for students in practical sessions because of a shortage of clients. This should improve with the addition of a town centre salon in the new year.

57 In English, communications and social science there were positive staff-student relationships. There were some examples of effective classwork but in general the teaching lacked variety. Instances of students working in pairs or small groups were rare. Students' work was generally carefully marked and teachers' comments were helpful. There were good examples of support for students with disabilities. A teaching room was rearranged in order to provide access for a student who uses a wheelchair. Specific resources were available for students who required additional learning support.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

58 There is a purposeful atmosphere in the college. Most students are positively engaged in their studies. Creative arts students were well informed, well motivated and able to relate their course clearly to career aspirations. Engineering students were enthusiastic about the quality of their learning experience. In catering, some students' views were less positive. In GCSE classes, attendance was sometimes low.

59 In adult basic education, there was clear evidence of students growing in self-confidence and improving their literacy and numeracy skills. On care courses there were examples of high-quality presentations from students, both written and oral. On courses for students with learning difficulties, students talked with enthusiasm and understanding about their work.

60 Group work is an important feature of a number of courses. The best examples enable students to learn from each other, reinforce their own learning and develop confidence in expressing themselves. Students in a GNVQ advanced business studies session took part in a group exercise in which they clearly gained a real understanding of how to conduct financial transactions. In a French evening class, adult students were filmed while practising a well-prepared interview. There was a visible sense of achievement at being able to sustain an interview in French while being observed by other students.

61 The development of study skills was variable. There were examples of good provision of study skills in many areas. On secretarial and administrative studies courses, research and study skills were appropriately developed, and students had well-organised portfolios. In art and design, adult students were successfully applying research skills and were generally developing the skills required to present their work. However, on many other courses there were examples of students having difficulty with various kinds of written work, with the organisation of files and portfolios and in presenting their work. Limited access to information technology was also causing difficulties.

62 Core skills on GNVQ courses across the college are not yet satisfactorily integrated with work in the relevant vocational area. For example, numeracy is taught by mathematics staff who make little reference to the vocational context. Generally, the lack of integration of core skills on GNVQ courses made it difficult for students to see the relevance of such skills to their chosen vocational area.

63 Adult basic education offers an appropriate range of accreditation at different levels. Where formal examinations were taken, the results were satisfactory.

64 In 1994, there were 325 entries for GCE A level and an overall pass rate of 74 per cent. This compares with a provisional national average of 68 per cent for further education colleges other than sixth form colleges. The best results were achieved in philosophy, archaeology, physics, government and politics, English language and literature, French, geography, German, history, photography, environmental studies and general studies. All these achieved pass rates of between 81 and 100 per cent. There were weaker results in accounting (33 per cent), biology (50 per cent), chemistry (50 per cent) and law (55 per cent).

65 Students aged 16-18 entered for GCE A/AS level examinations in 1993-94 scored, on average 3.4 points per entry. This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector based on data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education.

66 Of the 898 entries for GCSE, 758 sat the examination and 56 per cent achieved grades A-C. This compares with a 1993 average for the sector of 50 per cent. The college's figures for 1994 are significantly lower than for the last two years; 68 per cent in 1993, and 73 per cent in 1992. There has been a considerable increase in the numbers sitting GCSE examinations; 490 in 1992, 545 in 1993, 758 in 1994. Sixteen subjects achieved better results in 1994 and eight subjects achieved worse results including mathematics and English. The numbers achieving grades A-C in mathematics have dropped from 65 per cent in 1993 to 45 per cent in 1994. English results at grades A-C have dropped from 82 per cent to 67 per cent. This coincides with changes to the structure of the examination, involving a major reduction in course work. The best GCSE results were in accounting, French, German, information technology, Italian, British government and politics, Spanish, history, English literature, chemistry and physics. All these achieved between 75 per cent and 100 per cent passes at grades A-C. Life science results (51 per cent) have been consistently weaker than earth sciences and physics. Science results have generally been better where there has been more emphasis on investigative and problem-solving approaches to teaching. Other subjects with weaker results include motor vehicle engineering (35 per cent), drama (28 per cent) and health studies (20 per cent).

67 Eighty-one per cent of students in the final year of study on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education's 1994 performance tables were successful. This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector. There has been significant improvement in results in the BTEC first diploma in engineering, from 47 per cent in 1992 to 82 per cent in 1994. Results in the national diploma were less good with 12 students out of an original 21 achieving the award in two years. In care, there were generally good results, and early tests on the advanced GNVQ course were encouraging. However, there were a number of withdrawals from the intermediate GNVQ course and only 44 per cent achieved the full award. In performing arts, there were a significant number of distinctions on the BTEC national diploma in media and a good record of progression to higher education. In the final year of operation of the national diploma in design, 92 per cent per cent achieved the full award. In the first year of the new intermediate GNVQ in art and design, the figure was 63 per cent.

68 In secretarial and administrative studies, there was a pattern of good results, particularly in the RSA Examination Board (RSA) certificate in business administration, and outstanding results in the higher diploma in administration procedures. Almost all full-time students gained the NVQs for which they were aiming. There were examples of weaker results on management and professional courses.

69 Sport and leisure students performed well in the travel and tourism national diploma and in external tests on the GNVQ advanced course. There were weaker results on the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) sport and leisure course. Although sport is a substantial element in the sport and leisure programme, apart from GCSE physical education, there is no other sports accreditation.

70 In catering, there were good results on the guest house management course but weaker results on a number of other courses including cookery for the catering industry, and food and beverage service. In hairdressing and beauty, students achieved good results on all courses.

71 Pass rates are high on teacher training courses. For the last three years all students on the further and adult education teachers' certificate have passed and there were good results on the initial certificate in teaching basic skills.

72 The college is placing increasing emphasis on the importance of monitoring student withdrawals from courses. Improvements in the management information system are helping and the development of student services is providing increased guidance through the tutorial system. There has been a significant improvement in retention rates this year.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

73 In accordance with the new requirements of the inspection process, the college produced a self-assessment report. This year it was compiled to fit in with the timing of the inspection, but the college intends to include it as a key element in the annual quality assurance cycle from next year. The report consisted of a series of tables following the same headings as the inspection framework set out in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. It included a list of issues indicating strengths and weaknesses, comments and proposed actions, cross-referenced to aspects of the college organisation.

74 The report was clearly set out and will provide a useful starting point for an annual process of self assessment. In general, the judgements were supported by the findings of the inspection. Future self-assessment reports would benefit from a fuller analysis of strengths and weaknesses.

75 A recent policy statement, approved by the board, sets out a clear intention to seek continuous improvement in all aspects of the college and recognises the need to review existing practice. The executive are planning modifications to the existing quality assurance procedures in line with the policy statement. Responsibilities for the management of quality require further clarification, both at senior management and section leader levels.

76 The quality assurance framework is potentially sound, but it is not consistently applied. In some teaching sections, the process is rigorous and provides valuable feedback on resource issues, training needs and trends in examination performance. In others, this is not the case and, as a consequence, a comprehensive picture of quality issues is not available. The system concentrates on curriculum matters and is yet to be fully extended to other college services, but there is a firm intention to do this in stages.

77 There is a detailed process of course evaluation, supported by a range of comprehensive surveys and questionnaires, which track a number of quality issues including students' views. This process is managed at section level, sometimes very effectively, and is understood by course teams and supported by the college evaluation co-ordinator.

78 Some performance indicators, for example, the reasons students give for leaving a course, are incorporated into the programme of monitoring and evaluation. Examination results are scrutinised but targets for achievement are not consistently set or routinely matched against national pass rates. The college is making progress in addressing this issue and recognises the need to set benchmarks for assessing its achievement.

79 The comments of external moderators are followed up effectively at section level. Co-ordinators for NVQ and GNVQ have been established on a cross-college basis but there are no college-wide procedures for standardising assessment and the internal verification of courses. There are good arrangements for the involvement of employers in reviewing the

quality of courses specifically commissioned by them, but their involvement in a review of other provision, for example day-release courses, is less evident.

80 Staff development is co-ordinated by the administration manager working with a cross-college team which reports to the academic board. A professional tutor has recently been appointed. Priorities for staff development are closely linked to the corporate plan, but the identification of training needs does not formally draw upon the outcomes of the course evaluation procedures. There is scope for closer integration of appraisal, staff development and quality assurance.

81 Management training has been a priority, with particular reference to the needs of section leaders. Training for managers is linked to the management charter initiative which assesses managers' competences against national benchmarks. There is a wider need for staff to update their commercial and industrial experience which has been recognised in the staff-development plan. Assistance is provided from the local agency which supports the placement of college staff in industry. A number of staff have worked with the college's consultancy unit and this has provided them with good opportunities to update their knowledge of commerce, their experience of commercial training and the needs of local employers.

82 Staff-development evaluation includes a requirement for staff to indicate how they will disseminate the information and ideas gathered during training events. A summary of each year's training is sent to section leaders. However, further work is required to ensure that information is communicated to all appropriate staff so that full advantage is taken of the staff-development programme.

83 The arrangements for the induction of new academic and support staff are well organised. The college is seeking Investors in People recognition which it hopes to secure in early 1995.

84 An appraisal scheme for teaching staff has been introduced and is being extended to include support staff. All academic staff have now been appraised and there is a high level of staff support for the process. It is well managed, tightly structured, and includes task and class observation. An appraisal monitoring group has been established. The success of the appraisal scheme makes it a significant contribution to the assurance of quality.

85 The college charter has been published and relevant extracts are included in the student handbook and college newspaper. Monitoring and review procedures for the charter have yet to be established.

RESOURCES

Staffing

86 Staff are enthusiastic, committed and prepared to be flexible. There are many examples of effective team work. Staff are generally appropriately qualified and experienced.

87 There has been a strong emphasis on training teachers working on NVQ and GNVQ courses, to provide them with the skills to assess students' work against national standards. Seventy per cent of staff are working towards or have already achieved assessor awards. All full-time teaching staff and most longer-serving, part-time teachers have or are working towards a relevant professional teaching qualification.

88 There is generally an effective use of part-time teachers. Many bring skills and experience which complement that of the full-time teaching team; for example in computing, sport and leisure, health and care. The college aims to operate at a level where 30 per cent of teachers are part time. Currently there is considerable variation across the sections; for example, 42 per cent of the teachers on health and caring courses and equestrian studies are part time compared with 8 per cent of teachers on management and electrical engineering courses.

89 Specialist technicians have appropriate craft and technical qualifications and/or experience. The amount of technician support varies between divisions. There are strengths in science and languages, but in the developing curriculum areas of art and design and performing arts more technician support is required. Provision of audio-visual technician services is appropriate. An unfilled vacancy for an information technology technician is creating considerable difficulty for staff and students. There is limited clerical and administrative support for lecturing staff although, in some areas, there are computers in staff rooms to enable staff to prepare their own teaching materials.

Equipment/learning resources

90 There are good levels of general-purpose teaching and learning aids including overhead projectors, video tapes and reprographic facilities. Most teaching rooms are wired into the television relay system which allows off-air recordings and video material to be relayed directly from the technician work area. Staff use these facilities well.

91 There are satisfactory levels of specialist equipment to support teaching and learning in many areas, including motor vehicle engineering, leisure and tourism, hairdressing, science, modern languages, catering, and art and design. However, much of the equipment, although it meets present requirements, is becoming obsolete and the college has no capital replacement policy. For example, there is old machinery in the engineering workshop which requires a planned programme of replacement. The college has specialist equipment for visually-impaired students. Facilities

for students with hearing impairments are good; many of the teaching rooms are wired with induction loop systems. There are also radio link facilities for individual students.

92 The library is located on the top floor of a teaching block. It offers a pleasant and appropriate environment for learning, including a private study area, a careers reference area, and a study centre for learning support. There are approximately 70 study spaces for students' use. A range of services is provided including book loans, inter-library loans, access to periodicals, self-study packs, photocopying, computer workstations and compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database machines. Provision for curriculum areas, such as science and business and management, are good. Work in languages, media, and art and design is less well supported. Library opening hours are satisfactory and staffing levels are adequate. Some sections make little use of the library and have developed their own resources for study and reference by students. A start has been made in cataloguing these resources and there are regular contacts with section leaders. The college does not have an effective mechanism for involving teaching sections in planning library developments.

93 A cross-college information technology co-ordinator has recently been appointed and a working party is producing a three-year development plan to upgrade and improve hardware and software. There are approximately 250 computer machines available to students and teaching staff, of which approximately 50 per cent are recent models. There are significant differences in the software available on each of three networks and this limits the freedom students have to transfer between rooms and machines.

94 Students' access to computer terminals outside formal contact hours are limited. The library has 12 machines, 10 of which are on one of the older networks, but there is no other permanently-designated open-access facility. Although there is a general college policy for students to have open access to information technology when workstations are free, in practice the rooms are locked when they are not in use. A former open-access information technology room is currently used only on a timetabled basis.

Accommodation

95 Accommodation consists of a new teaching and administration block, commissioned in 1993, significant older permanent accommodation some dating back to 1899, and a range of mobile accommodation. There is a separate conference centre a short walk from the main site and a catering building, housing the Tynings training restaurant. Well-maintained small annexes at Calne, Corsham, and Melksham provide a total of 10 teaching spaces and the college also makes use of accommodation in Malmesbury and at Lyneham. The college is in the process of completing further

building works at Chippenham to include a sports hall and upgraded hair and beauty facilities. The accommodation strategy includes proposals for further extensions to teaching facilities on the main site. With the exception of two rooms, wheelchair access is possible to all parts of the main site.

96 Teaching rooms in the new block on the main site are furnished and equipped to a high standard and provide an excellent environment for learning. Elsewhere, the permanent general purpose accommodation is adequate. There has been investment in redecoration and in upgrading some fixtures, but much of the furniture is dated and sometimes unsuitable. The quality of specialist accommodation is variable. The largest computer room houses only 19 terminals. Innovative work is taking place with visually-impaired students, but the potential for this area of provision is being hindered by its poor location. There is limited accommodation for the assessment of some NVQ competencies in secretarial work and no craft or music practice spaces for performing arts. The specialist accommodation for media, drama and motor vehicle engineering is generally of good quality.

97 At the back of the main site are 17 mobile units which make up some of the teaching accommodation for most sections. These mobiles also provide accommodation for the marketing unit and the playgroup as well as some staff accommodation. Much of the teaching accommodation in the mobiles, including some specialist computing, science and art rooms, is satisfactorily maintained. Nevertheless, it provides a poor learning environment for students.

98 There are examples of effective wall displays, for example in engineering, science and the mathematics workshop but some teaching areas are bare. Some of the staff accommodation is of an inadequate standard. Generally, the college's buildings are clean and well kept.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

99 The college is making progress towards achieving its objectives. Its strengths include:

- a committed and enthusiastic staff
- an experienced and supportive board, actively involved in the life of the college
- effective leadership and management by the executive
- a well-managed strategic planning process
- an expanding range of provision designed to meet the needs of the community
- high levels of responsiveness to local employers and to the local TEC
- some good teaching in all subject areas
- strong links with local schools and the careers service
- an effective and well-managed appraisal scheme.

100 In order to improve further the quality of its provision the college should:

- continue to develop the management information system
- establish a strategy for adult learners
- produce a college marketing plan and make more effective use of market research data
- develop a systematic approach to learning support
- extend the range of teaching methods used in some subjects
- extend the quality assurance framework
- institute college-wide planning of learning resources, including access to information technology
- improve examination results in those subjects where achievements are low.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1993-94)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)

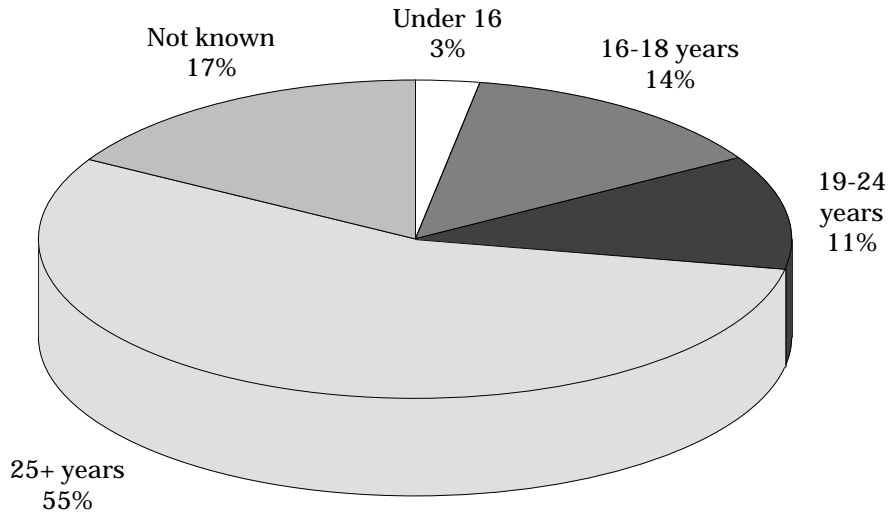
 - 5 Income (for 16 months to July 1994)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

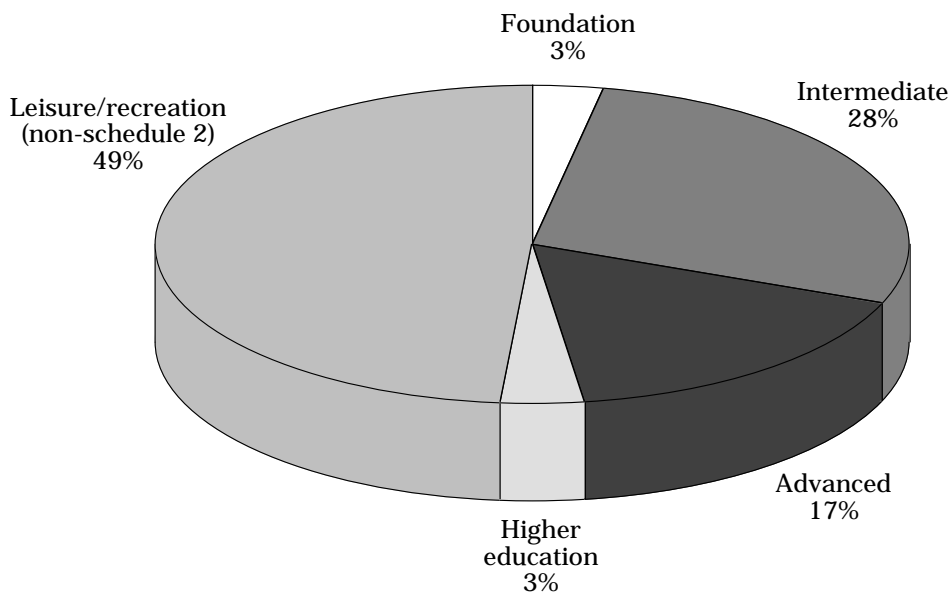
Chippenham College: percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)



Enrolments: 10,375

Figure 2

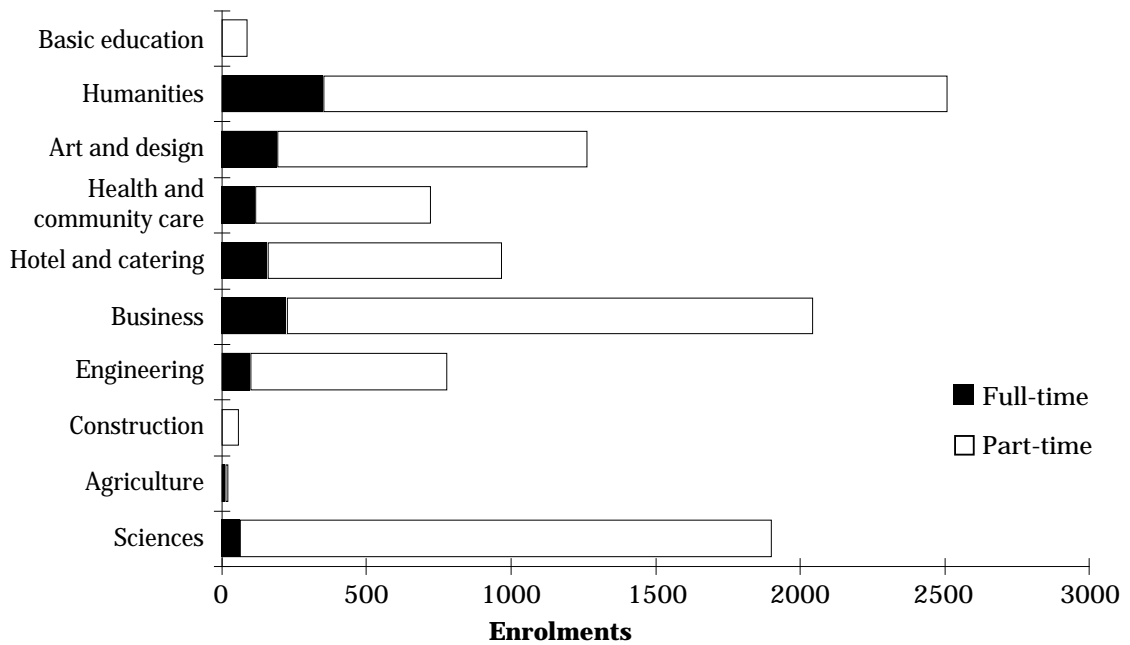
Chippenham College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1993-94)



Enrolments: 10,375

Figure 3

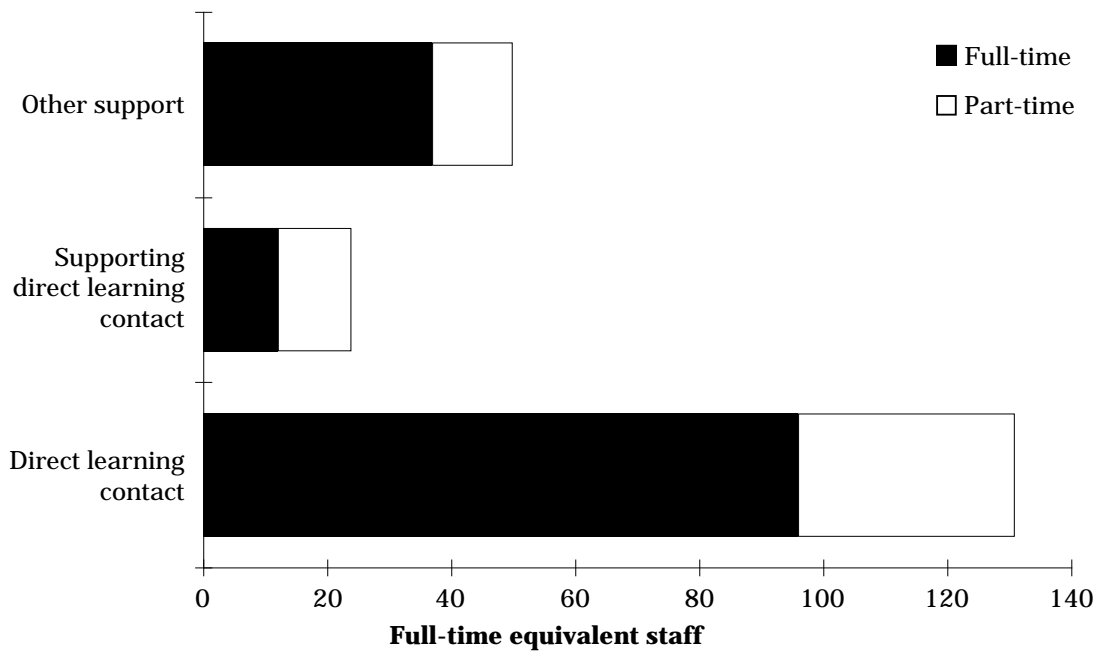
Chippenham College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)



Enrolments: 10,375

Figure 4

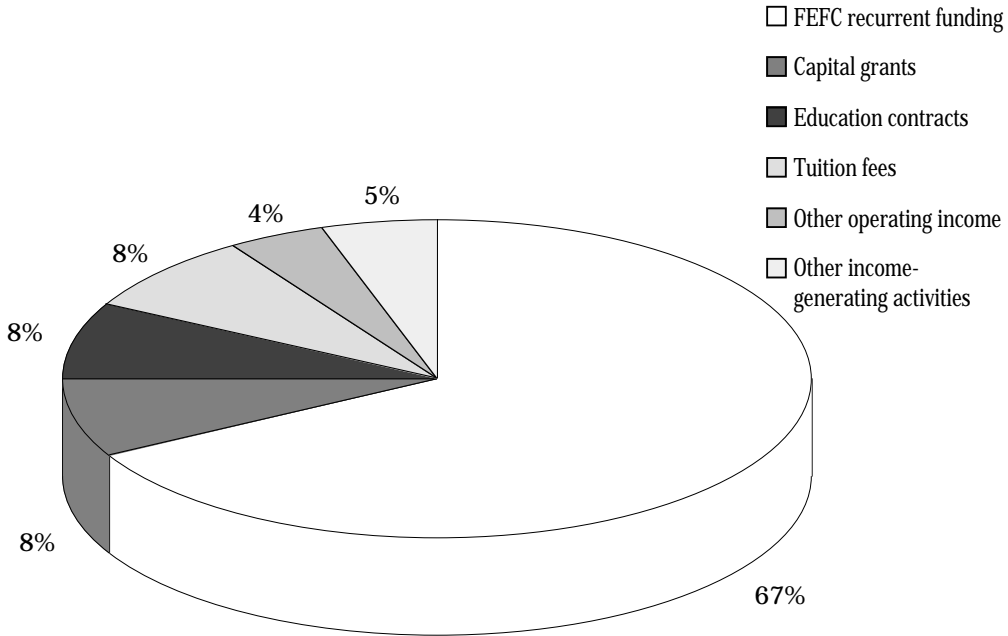
Chippenham College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)



Full-time equivalent staff: 205

Figure 5

Chippenham College: income (for 16 months to July 1994)

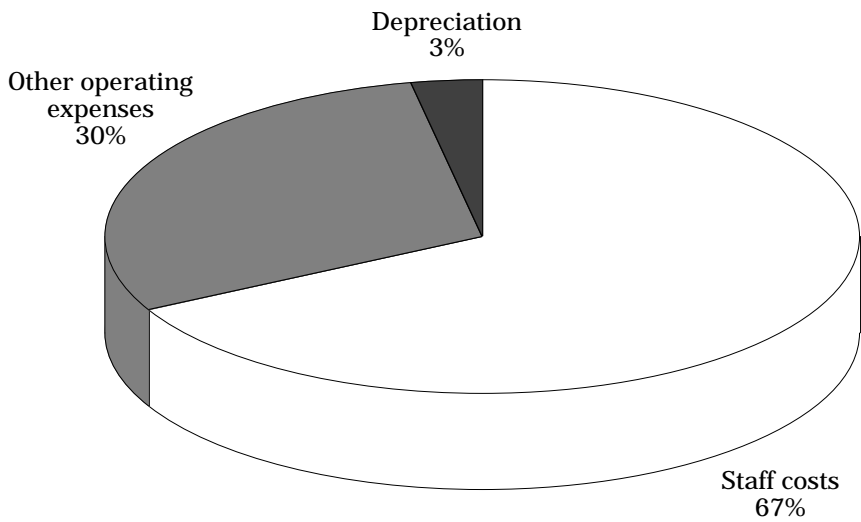


Income: £7,831,000

Note: this chart excludes £2,000 other grant income.

Figure 6

Chippenham College: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)



Expenditure: £7,883,000

Note: this chart excludes £1,000 interest payable.

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