

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

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# **City College, Manchester**

**May 1996**

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**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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## **GRADE DESCRIPTORS**

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

*The descriptors for the grades are:*

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

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

### **College grade profiles 1993-95**

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

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# FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 62/96

**CITY COLLEGE, MANCHESTER**

**NORTH WEST REGION**

**Inspected September 1995-January 1996**

## Summary

City College, Manchester responds well to the needs of many groups within the local community and to national initiatives in further education through the wide range of courses. Business and commercial activities are an important and successful part of its work. Corporation members are experienced and well qualified, and are fully involved in the strategic planning and development of the college. Strong leadership is provided by an experienced senior management team and there is a commitment to developing a united workforce. The promotion of equality of opportunity for students and staff is an important feature of the college. There are varied guidance and support arrangements for students. Teaching is effective in many areas although some aspects could be improved. With a few exceptions, students in the college are well motivated and satisfied with their courses. The college is well aware of the need to monitor and improve levels of retention, attendance and punctuality. There are good results on some GCE A level courses and vocational courses, and evidence that students are acquiring core skills. Results are poorer on GNVQ and GCSE courses. There is a clear policy and comprehensive procedures for ensuring quality although they are not yet implemented consistently across the college. Staff are hard working and forward looking. Students have access to appropriate equipment and materials to support learning. Most curriculum areas and the majority of students enjoy attractive learning environments.

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

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Science	2	Art and design	2
Mathematics/computing	3	Performing arts	1
Horticulture/floristry	2	Humanities	2
Business	2	Adult basic education/ESOL	2
Health and social care, childcare and counselling	2	Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2		

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1 City College, Manchester was inspected during the autumn term 1995 and the spring term 1996. Thirty-one inspectors visited the college for a total of 123 days. The enrolment and induction of students were observed at the beginning of term in September. Specialist inspections took place in the week commencing 16 October, including the reinspection of business studies which had first been inspected in December 1994. Aspects of cross-college provision were inspected in the week commencing 22 January.

2 Inspectors visited 304 classes and examined students' written and practical work. They read an extensive range of documentation, including the college's self-assessment report, strategic plan and operating statement, the college annual review and position papers giving the college's view of its provision in curriculum and cross-college areas. Inspectors held meetings with college governors, managers, teachers, students and staff responsible for support services. Meetings were held with heads of local secondary schools, local employers, representatives of the local community, a governor nominee of the Manchester Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and representatives of the Benefits Agency and the Prison Service. Inspectors attended routine meetings of academic and administrative staff, the governing body and a subcommittee.

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

3 City College, Manchester was established as The South Manchester College in 1990 following the reorganisation of further education in Manchester which created two city-wide colleges and a separate adult education service. It was renamed City College, Manchester in November 1993. The two further education colleges which were created during the reorganisation were each allocated different curriculum areas and these, with some newer areas which have been developed, still form the basis of the curriculum offered by City College, Manchester.

4 The college operates on four major sites, three to the south of the city (Wythenshawe, Arden and Fielden) and one to the north of the city (Abraham Moss). Each of the three centres to the south of the city concentrate in the main on different curriculum areas but, to satisfy the needs of students in the north of the city, the Abraham Moss Centre offers a wider range of curriculum areas. The college provides an open learning workshop at the Birtles Centre in Wythenshawe Civic Centre.

5 The Manchester conurbation has over 2.5 million people. The city has seen a major shift away from being a centre of manufacturing to one in which the service industries are increasingly prominent. City College, Manchester serves a few areas of relative prosperity but most of its students come from areas of moderate to high levels of social disadvantage. Unemployment rates in the city vary from 9 per cent to 30 per cent, with 41.5 per cent of the unemployed being out of work for 12 months or longer. Youth unemployment averages 24 per cent in Manchester but rises to

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46 per cent in the central, inner-city areas. The academic achievement of many school leavers in the Manchester TEC area is lower than the national average. Overall, 30.7 per cent of school leavers gained five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) passes at grades A to C compared with 41.5 per cent nationally. In some inner city areas of Manchester the figure is as low as 20.5 per cent. The percentage of pupils who proceed into post-compulsory education in Manchester dropped from 51 to 47 per cent in 1994, a figure which again is well below the national average. Over 9 per cent of Manchester households are occupied by one-parent families, accounting for almost 30 per cent of children under 15 years old.

6 The college operates in a highly competitive market. There are 25 sector colleges within a 12-mile radius of Manchester city centre, eight of which are key competitors, and over 80 private training providers operating within the Manchester TEC area. The college draws students from a wide range of groups within the local community. The provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has increased markedly over the last two years. The college has contracts to provide education services to twelve penal institutions across the north-west and for delivering training to Benefits Agency staff in two of its north-west regions. There are links with partner institutions in several other countries in the European Union, involving 11 curriculum projects, and developing international links with Russia and Hong Kong.

7 The college has achieved or exceeded its enrolment targets. It has met Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) growth targets in the last two years and since 1991-92, there has been a growth in enrolments of 74 per cent. In 1995-96 the college enrolled 9,988 students of whom 5,831 attend on a part-time basis. Over 75 per cent of the college's students are over 19 years of age and 64 per cent are women. About 22 per cent of students are from minority ethnic groups, compared with 12 per cent in the Manchester population. Students are drawn from 230 of the 366 local authority districts in England, from other parts of the United Kingdom and from abroad. 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. The college employs 314 full-time and 558 part-time staff having direct learning contact, representing 498 full-time equivalent staff. There are 396 (313 full-time equivalent) staff supporting direct learning, or providing business support in the college. The overall number of staff has increased to meet the needs of the curriculum, the requirements of the external contracts gained by the college and the new responsibilities of incorporation. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4. The college's curriculum provision is organised into 12 areas.

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8 The college's mission is to pursue 'excellence in education and training'. Three key objectives have been identified as the college vision:

- providing education training and guidance of the highest quality
- meeting the needs and requirements, both of individuals and the college's cultural, commercial and industrial communities
- supporting equality of opportunity in all aspects of the college's work.

The vision statement is prominently displayed around the college.

9 The key objectives give rise to strategic priorities and aims which in turn are interpreted in terms of seven priorities for 1995-96. The priorities form the basis for the college's operating statement and for the setting of targets at senior manager, middle manager, team leader and team level. The seven strategic priorities for 1995-96 are:

- embedding good practice with particular reference to teaching and learning strategies
- achieving financial viability through controlled diversification of the curriculum and maximisation of FEFC income
- establishing partnerships with external agencies, including franchisees, subcontractors, and the TEC
- ensuring student recruitment and retention to agreed targets
- establishment of an appropriate staff base to achieve strategic objectives
- implementing the revised marketing strategy
- enhancing equality of opportunity for both staff and students.

#### **RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION**

10 The college responds well to the needs of its local community and to national initiatives in further education. There are good links between strategic planning and further education initiatives. Staff understand how the curriculum offered within the college can contribute to meeting the national targets for education and training. They are clear about policies relating to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and aware of the need to broaden the college's curriculum to serve the interests of students who in the past may not have considered further education. Most college teams are effective in identifying and responding to the changing needs of their clients. Curriculum developments include new, flexible approaches to course delivery, the modularisation of the curriculum and courses offered away from the college, for instance in the community or on commercial or industrial premises. Such courses are becoming an increasingly important part of the college's work. Income-generating activities in the college have increased significantly. At the time of incorporation, only 10 per cent of the college budget came from non-FEFC



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sources but this had grown to 48 per cent for the 12 month period to July 1995.

11 There is provision in all of the FEFC programme areas except construction, though provision in engineering is small. The largest numbers of students are in health and community care, art and design, business technology and management, and general education, which also accounts for the largest numbers of part-time student enrolments. There are particular areas of work such as printing, horticulture and floristry, counselling and some aspects of performing arts where the college is an important regional, sometimes national, provider. Courses are offered in 25 General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects, six GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects and 30 GCSE subjects. There are 18 courses giving access to further and higher education, including access to law, humanities, science, and information technology. Popular and successful access courses are specially designed to cater for black students. Vocational courses, including General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) in seven areas, are available from foundation to higher national level. Pre-vocational studies at the college are accredited by the Greater Manchester Open College Federation. These are available at entry and level 1 for students with learning difficulties. There are courses leading to qualifications for teachers and communication support workers who wish to specialise in teaching students who have hearing impairments.

12 There has been a substantial increase in the courses offered by the college in recent years. They include courses in English for speakers of other languages, basic education, art and design, business, childcare and counselling. GNVQ courses are growing in all areas of the college except science. There are many opportunities for students to progress to higher education within the college as well as routes into higher education at regional universities. Some provision is available on Saturdays and the college runs an annual summer school. A six-week study skills programme is available for students who are considering returning to study and want to revise their skills before joining a full-time course. The college offers students the opportunity to accredit their prior learning and experience. Distance-learning courses are provided for students in this country and abroad. They include: the postgraduate diploma in training and development, some GCE A level courses and the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) continuing certificate in nursing studies.

13 Students are able to participate in a range of activities outside their main studies. These include sport and fitness training, projects with local employers and community groups, drama, music, European exchanges and work experience. Many of these activities can be accredited and nearly all are recorded in students' national records of achievement. Some activities have been supported by European funding. Students are given opportunities to visit industry, commerce and other places of interest outside the college. Many courses include contributions from a variety of

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visiting speakers. Humanities students, for example, have theatre trips, and attend revision conferences in sociology and psychology. Students speak enthusiastically about these opportunities to broaden their experience.

14 Links with other agencies are good. Links with secondary schools ease the progression of students from school to college. There is support for a variety of developments within schools, although curriculum links are still underdeveloped. The college liaises effectively with higher education, examining and validating bodies, and groups representing particular professional and vocational interests. The college has been chosen as a centre to offer pilot counselling courses for the Primary Care Trust. The other four centres are universities. The college is contracted by the Home Office to provide an education service in 12 penal institutions. It offers students in those institutions a wide range of accredited activities and effective routes for progression. A report by the inspector of prisons on the education service in one of these prisons said that it can 'boast of being a centre of excellence in its delivery of education ... the quality of education provided throughout the establishment was very good and in some cases outstanding'.

15 Links with groups working in the community are productive. One outcome of joint working between the college and a community group is the development of childcare courses based in community venues. Students demonstrate their achievements in their local community through roadshows and exhibitions. There are good links with specialist support agencies in the community to help students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

16 The college has strong links with local businesses. College advisory groups include 200 representatives from local commerce and industry. Education and training is provided on employers' premises and, in the case of two large contracts, in accommodation which has been specifically leased to meet the needs of the clients. Around 1,500 local employers are involved in providing work experience placements and students speak highly of these opportunities. Employers who provide placements are offered support by the college to ensure that all who are involved gain from the experience. There are good working relationships with Manchester TEC. For instance, 'fast-track' higher national certificate business courses are sponsored by the TEC and are successful in meeting the needs of mature students. The TEC also funds 'Skills Direct' and modern apprenticeship courses at the college.

17 The college has an effective and comprehensive marketing strategy which is linked to its strategic plan. A thorough analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is regularly undertaken and the findings taken into account in future planning. The college has established criteria for growth which ensures that quality is maintained. Some potential franchising contracts have been turned down by the college

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because these criteria were not likely to be met. Others have been successfully negotiated. Publicity for college activities and the achievements of its students is well managed. A college newspaper, 'Branching Out', which includes details of new courses and enrolment procedures, is regularly distributed to students and to homes in the catchment areas.

18 Equality of opportunity is a high priority for the college and the implementation of the policy is exemplary. Displays in corridors and classrooms give positive messages about equality of opportunity. They include references to appropriate role models, some of whom are the college's own students. The college monitors both student and staff data for all issues associated with equality of opportunity and has set itself challenging targets in this area. There are many equal opportunity initiatives in the college; their success is indicated by the fact that many courses do not reflect typical patterns of enrolment. Beauty courses, for example, contain male students and students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. In hairdressing, students are able to study modules on African-Caribbean hairstyles and hair types as part of their course. Staff have made a significant effort to encourage older students and those from minority ethnic backgrounds to enrol on childcare courses. Some computing courses have been specifically designed to be attractive to women and there is a higher proportion of female students than is usual on computing courses at all levels. Students on English courses for speakers of other languages come from many countries and cultures but they are well integrated with other students in the life of the college. Information on courses and students' rights are available in many of the languages used in the local community.

19 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are encouraged to participate fully in the life of the college. They are involved in many enterprise activities, such as organising and running a sandwich bar for their fellow students. The students are able to follow appropriate specialist courses and many progress from these onto mainstream courses, sometimes after only short periods of induction and assessment. Particularly good provision is made for these students in information technology. The college aims to become a centre of excellence for the education of students who have visual or hearing impairments after market research identified a need for such provision in the locality.

#### **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

20 The college is managed by a senior management team which comprises the principal, four vice-principals responsible for curriculum and planning, student support and equal opportunities, quality and marketing, and accommodation and resources, respectively, a director of human resources and a director of finance. The college benefits from strong leadership. The senior management team has a clear vision for the

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college. Members are committed to developing an integrated workforce. Staff are organised into 50 curriculum and 24 business support teams. Each team is a cost centre. Roles and responsibilities, job descriptions, lines of communication and accountability are all clearly defined. There are well-planned and timetabled arrangements for team and other meetings.

21 Corporation members are clear about their responsibilities and committed to the strategic planning and development of the college. They have taken part in training events to help them operate effectively in their roles. Meetings of the college corporation are planned annually to an agreed calendar. At an annual residential meeting, members address strategic planning, the setting of targets and budgetary issues for the coming year. Meetings are well attended and effectively managed. The documentation for meetings is of a high standard. It includes executive summaries. Relationships between the board and the senior management team are good. Senior managers and other staff regularly make presentations to meetings of the board and its subcommittees. Corporation members are provided with summaries of key public documents including FEFC publications. A newsletter is circulated between meetings to help governors keep up to date on college developments. A handbook for corporation members is regularly updated.

22 There are 17 members of the board, including nine independent members, a member of staff, a student representative and the principal. Other members are nominated by community organisations or are co-opted. One of the two co-optees is an elected member of the Manchester Local Authority. A local member of parliament, who is also in the parliamentary shadow cabinet, is one of the community nominees. The director of human resources is clerk to the corporation. There were two vacancies for independent members at the time of the inspection. An audit of governors' skills has been carried out to help the board consider its future membership needs. Governors have instituted a process to review and monitor the effectiveness of the corporation board and its subcommittees.

23 The independent members of the college corporation bring a range of appropriate professional and other expertise to the college, including legal, finance, management, personnel and estate management skills. They serve the college well, contributing to the work of the institution through the board's subcommittees as well as through their involvement in curriculum advisory boards and attendance at college events. There are five subcommittees of the corporation board: audit; employment policy; sales and marketing; finance and general purposes; and remuneration. All have agreed terms of reference and clear lines of accountability. The board receives reports on quality assurance from the academic board and managers. Financial accounts are received each term by the finance and general purposes subcommittee and there are regular meetings between the chair of the corporation, the principal and the director of finance.

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24 Senior curriculum managers are responsible for establishing the curriculum framework in their areas, encouraging new course development and ensuring that a coherent range of provision is available to meet needs. In art and design and performing arts, for instance, there is an initiative to develop linked GCE A level courses, including periods of work experience and residential study, to attract new students to the college in a curriculum area where there is increasing competition from neighbouring institutions. Senior curriculum managers are also involved in cross-college activities and many have significant responsibility outside their curriculum area including the management of accommodation, aspects of college finance, student services, health and safety or staff appraisal.

25 Each senior curriculum manager manages a 'cluster' of curriculum delivery teams. Curriculum delivery teams have devolved responsibilities for course development, the monitoring of quality assurance, and the identification and provision of staff development for teachers, technicians and other non-teaching staff. Overall, curriculum development is the responsibility of the vice-principal (curriculum and planning) and senior curriculum managers, including those with cross-college responsibilities such as flexible/open learning, access, vocational preparation and learner support. These arrangements help to ensure that curriculum development and the related resource and teaching needs are clearly identified and appropriately supported. Co-ordinating groups, working parties and project groups are regularly used to bring together the expertise of staff from across the college to respond to particular issues.

26 Curriculum managers have a good awareness of strategic planning and relate this appropriately to their areas of responsibility. In curriculum areas, team objectives are well developed and the co-ordination of activities at section and team level is effective. There are, however, some weaknesses in management at curriculum level. In a number of areas, the information provided by the computer management information system is not used effectively in course monitoring and review and the use of statistics and performance indicators is generally underdeveloped. There is a need for a more focused analysis of computer-based and other course management information, including information on the full and partial achievements of students. There is some overlap in senior management responsibilities for adult basic education and related areas where lines of communication are too diffuse and sometimes complicated. In humanities, which is provided across the college, management of courses relies too heavily on informal contacts. GNVQ courses in health and social care operate on two sites and, to some extent, independently of each other. In art and design, the rationalisation of some classes would improve efficiency and enhance the quality of students' learning experience. In science, although the vocational and general education course teams are well led, there should be clearer overall management of the curriculum area.

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27 The implementation and monitoring of college policies is carried out effectively. A standard form, linked to strategic priorities, is used to negotiate and set targets at senior management, middle management and team levels. Accountability is encouraged by the termly publication of a document containing the targets agreed for all managers. A published calendar provides details of the planning cycle. A key planning instrument is the activity schedule used by curriculum team leaders to identify new and existing courses, target enrolments, taught hours and the associated staffing and other resource requirements. This information is fed into the college's planning and budgeting processes and forms the basis for prioritising existing and new developments and resource allocations. A management review group, comprising senior managers, is responsible for the effectiveness of the quality management system, issues relating to customer service and outcomes of the monitoring of meetings concerned with the college's external contract work. It works in parallel with the academic board. Each of these bodies operates effectively. They report formally to the corporation board. The college is currently involved in an organisational effectiveness programme, advised and supported by an external consultancy.

28 There are detailed financial information and accounting procedures. Budget holders in cost centres undergo training and are supported by a strong management accounting team. Finance officers on each site provide day-to-day support. There is a clear and helpful financial manual for budget holders. Cost centre managers are provided with monthly updates of cashflow and expenditure. There are clear procedures for the processing of bids for resources. As part of its overall strategy for information technology, the college is currently piloting a system to allow managers to interrogate budget information through the computer network.

29 There is a well-developed computer management information system which includes information on student and staff records, finances and physical resources. The computer management information system provides regular reports for managers on students' recruitment, retention and achievement. The data access facilities of the network allow managers and team leaders to tailor information to their needs. They are supported by specially-produced training materials and a consultancy service. However, the accuracy and reliability of information on students' achievements produced by the computer management information system was an issue under discussion during the time of the inspection.

30 The college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college receives 56 per cent of its income from the FEFC. The total allocation from the FEFC for 1995-96 is £13,250,000 of which £12,978,280 is recurrent funding. The college has markedly increased its income from the European Social Fund and in 1995-96 it is expected to be £3 million. The average level of funding has increased from £15.83 per unit in 1994-95 to £15.95 in 1995-96. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges in the sector is £17.84 per unit.

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## **STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

31 There is good-quality guidance and support for students which is co-ordinated by a vice-principal and provided by a number of teams, each of which is led by a senior manager. Specialist support services include: the admissions and guidance team which offers a guidance service, including careers, welfare and educational guidance; the learning support team which co-ordinates provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; the mentor unit which provides support for African-Caribbean and Asian students; an access officer for access to higher education courses; a records of achievement co-ordinator; an accreditation of prior learning co-ordinator; an accommodation and international students officer; and an inter-faith chaplaincy. Students can be referred to these services by their tutors or they can contact the managers of the services directly. College support services also provide help and guidance to college students and staff who are not based on college sites, including those involved in the college's work with the Prison Service. The college provides creches on each site.

32 Enrolment and induction procedures have been developed by cross-college teams of teachers and administrative staff. The college's admissions and guidance team plays an important role in the process and has offices on each of the main college sites. The procedures for enrolment are thorough, consistent across the college and subject to regular quality assurance monitoring. They work well and students speak positively about their experience of enrolment. All full-time students undergo a Basic Skills Agency test to assess their need for support in literacy and numeracy. The arrangements for induction are sound and well documented. They ensure consistency in the arrangements across vocational areas and between sites of the college. Tutors attempt to meet as closely as possible the individual learning needs of students. Students are helped to transfer between programmes where appropriate. The induction material for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is particularly effective; it covers the relevant issues in an appropriate manner, often using illustrations to amplify brief textual statements. Students in the main comment favourably on their induction experience, including the guidance and support provided by tutors.

33 There are arrangements to accredit students' prior learning. These are being developed and used to good effect in many areas of the college, including beauty therapy, childcare, management, travel and tourism, printing, business administration, teacher education and training, hotel and catering, hairdressing and floristry. Of particular note are the accreditation of prior learning procedures for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in adult basic education and childcare. Teachers and support staff are undergoing training for the accreditation of prior learning. The college is offering accreditation of prior learning services to both public and private sector organisations.

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34 In 1994-95, the overall retention rate in the college was 87 per cent. This figure is an improvement on previous figures. This level of retention represents a positive achievement in the context of the areas from which it draws its students. The further improvement of student retention is a priority within curriculum and other teams. Staff are aware of the need to monitor the attendance of students and to seek reasons for persistent absence. In many areas, students' attendance is monitored every session and absences followed up. For students whose attendance suggests that they may be losing interest or finding it difficult to attend regularly, a follow-up procedure is initiated by the students' tutor or course team leader, and implemented by retention monitoring officers based in admissions and guidance units. Students are offered an appointment with a guidance adviser or a member of the counselling service, as appropriate. Those who require it are provided with information on new courses or on opportunities for learning other than through regular attendance at college classes. Records of actions are maintained and followed up. The outcomes of the process are evaluated. The college has commissioned consultancy work and introduced projects to look into the reasons for students' absence and withdrawal from courses.

35 There are effective arrangements for tutorial support. Full-time students have a timetabled weekly tutorial period; for part-time students the tutorial sessions are incorporated into normal teaching sessions. There is good-quality group and individual tutorial support in many curriculum areas, and a high level of tutorial support is provided for students with learning difficulties or other particular needs. Students speak favourably about the support they receive from staff. Tutorial time is used to varying effect. There is poor student attendance at tutorials in a few curriculum areas.

36 Records of achievement and individual action planning are being developed effectively in many areas of the college. A college co-ordinator has arranged with a regional university to accredit records of achievement. Accreditation has already taken place in hairdressing, health and social care, childcare courses, horticulture and floristry, beauty therapy, and leisure and tourism.

37 There are learning resource centres on each site and these fulfil a central role in meeting individual students' needs. Each learning resource centre provides a range of open learning courses, core skills support, mathematics and information technology workshops, a library service, access to computers, multi-media machines, the Internet, and the site audio-visual service and specialist equipment for the support of visually-impaired students. Learning resource centres are open mostly for the hours the site is open and all students have an entitlement to use the services. The results of a college survey show a high level of satisfaction with the service provided by learning resource centres.



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38 The college's learning support unit is managed by a senior curriculum manager. It offers individual and group support for students in core skills, and in English for speakers of other languages. There are appropriate arrangements and facilities to support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Many students with learning difficulties are progressing to mainstream courses and are integrated with student groups. The provision for students who are deaf, blind or partially sighted is a priority and the college intends in due course to become a centre for such provision. A well-planned development programme to support students who have visual impairments has involved substantial financial investment (£57,000 in 1994-95) to provide expanded course materials, multi-media computer systems on each site which have simulated voice output, facilities for scanning documents, computer systems with large text displays, and a Braille service for course materials. A range of specialist equipment is available for loan to students. Full-time specialist staff facilitate developments across the college. Visually-impaired students are referred to specialist staff by the college admissions and guidance unit and are assessed to ascertain their particular needs. Help and guidance is available to course tutors and other college staff working with these students. Clerical and specialist tutor support is available through a pool of part-time specialist workers. Communicators have been appointed to provide support to individuals. The co-ordinator is now working with the mentor service to develop a similar service for partially sighted students.

39 The mentor service, a notable development in the college, provides effective support for African-Caribbean and Asian students by linking them with 'role-models' drawn mainly from the college's black staff. It also draws on links with black professional people working in the locality. There are individual and group mentoring activities, including work with Asian and Somali women students. The service also works in the community and is now developing links with secondary schools in the area to offer support to black pupils. The mentor service has recently received significantly increased funding from the college's European Social Fund bid and target levels of support have been raised from 180 to 400 students, together with a structured programme of development for 30 mentors. A well-produced handbook and student guide contain useful information on what students can expect from their mentor, and case-studies of successful students.

40 The college has a well-developed counselling service staffed by 10 professionally trained counsellors and support workers, four of whom are site counsellors. The service provides support for all members of the college community and contributes to the induction programmes for students and newly-appointed staff. It also provides support for special interest groups and the mentor service. Counselling staff carefully maintain confidential records of their work; the annual report provides a useful analysis of the service provided and the general reasons for referrals to the counselling service. Efforts have been made to heighten tutors'

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awareness of the counselling services. External support and evaluation of the service is provided by independent supervisors who are employed by health authorities or in private practice and who are able to report on any weaker aspects of counselling practice in the college.

41 The well-established creches on each college site and the nursery at the Arden site provide a good service. Although there are now 140 full-time equivalent childcare places, the service is oversubscribed and the creche at the Wythenshawe site has recently been doubled in size to provide 48 full-time equivalent places. A registered childminder scheme is being introduced to supplement creche provision at the Abraham Moss Centre. College staff provide an 'after school' care service at one college site. There is at least one full-time member of the childcare staff at each creche and many more part-time staff are also employed. Overall staffing is 33 full-time equivalent workers. Childcare staff are well qualified and receive appropriate staff development. A clear policy and guidelines on childcare provision are based on the college's strategic plan and strategic objectives. There is close attention to equality of opportunity. A curriculum plan is used to guide children's learning and development. A play philosophy, with accompanying activities, has been developed. Parental involvement is highly valued.

42 Provision for careers guidance and support is exceptionally good. Each college site has a centre with a careers guidance officer and admissions officer and good levels of resources, including computer-aided programmes. Students can visit the centres at times of their own choosing. In one month in 1995, students made 11,000 visits to these centres. Students receive careers guidance and support through their courses and tutorials. Tutors are provided with a guidance checklist and support materials. Training is available where required, and careers staff are available to contribute to course sessions and tutorials. Careers-related activities include individual and group guidance, assertiveness training and help to students in writing letters, assembling curricula vitae and completing application forms. Students thinking about withdrawing from their course or changing to another are provided with careers guidance.

#### **TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING**

43 Sixty-three per cent of the sessions inspected had strengths which outweighed weaknesses. In about 5 per cent of sessions the weaknesses outweighed the strengths. The following table shows the grades awarded for the teaching sessions inspected.

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**Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Totals</b>
GCE AS/A level		2	8	13	2	0	25
GCSE		5	19	12	0	0	36
GNVQ		5	9	17	2	0	33
NVQ		8	22	12	0	0	42
Access to higher education		5	11	7	1	0	24
Basic education		10	21	8	3	0	42
Higher education		0	4	3	0	0	7
Other vocational		9	27	16	7	0	59
Other		13	14	8	1	0	36
<b>Total</b>		<b>57</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>304</b>

44 The average level of attendance at the teaching sessions inspected was 70 per cent of those enrolled. The highest average attendance was in classes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, at 94 per cent. The lowest was 54 per cent at open learning sessions in mathematics and computing; the next lowest was 58 per cent in health and community care (social care) classes. An average of 10 students were present at the lessons inspected.

45 In the better sessions, teachers use a variety of teaching methods and techniques and incorporate activities which improve students' core skills including information technology. Students' developing knowledge and understanding is regularly tested by teachers. When students are working on individual tasks, the teachers are available to provide help and support as required. There are well-documented schemes of work and activity plans, built upon a careful analysis of course and assessment requirements. Students are encouraged to set their own learning goals in consultation with their teacher. Handouts and other learning support materials are of good quality. The assessment of students' work is consistent and thorough and is used constructively to support students' learning. Relationships between teachers and students are good. Students are keen, enthusiastic and well motivated.

46 Where teaching is less successful it is often because lessons are poorly planned, teachers fail to follow college guidelines or fail to identify or share with students the objectives of the session. Other weaknesses include the failure to integrate core skills development with other aspects of the work. In some poorer classes the activities do not take into account the differing levels of students' abilities or the needs of individuals. Records are not always used to ensure that students undertake a balance of activities and continue to improve the standard of their work. Some classes provide few

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opportunities for students to contribute to discussion, to work independently at their own pace or to work with other students. In some instances, an appropriate strategy for marking students' work has not been developed. There is inconsistency in the way teachers feed back comments and criticism to help students improve their work.

47 In science, students are encouraged to develop their information technology and other core skills from an early stage of their course. Extensive use is made of handout materials, for instance, by providing partially-completed documents which include spaces for students to make their own entries or draw diagrams. Students' progress is recorded and monitored. However, students need more practice in taking notes. In some classes, there is little testing of students' knowledge and understanding of the topics taught. Students work safely in laboratories although some aspects of safe working practices relating to eye protection and fume extraction need attention.

48 In mathematics and computing, much of the teaching is undertaken in learning resource centres where students follow a flexible programme of study, working individually at their own pace with teachers present to help if required. These centres have appropriate computer hardware and software and extensive documentation to support students' learning. Teaching is generally good. A few of the sessions inspected were outstanding. Clear records are maintained and students are regularly informed of their progress. However, several groups include students with a wide range of previous experience and differing abilities and it is not always easy for teachers to meet their needs satisfactorily. In some groups, the students have to wait a long time before receiving attention.

49 The teaching of horticulture and floristry is well managed and takes place in a pleasant, well-resourced environment which adds to the quality of students' experience. Teachers have a good rapport with their students. The systematic use of a 'matching card' system helps students who have difficulty in learning botanical names to become proficient in identifying plants. Peer evaluation is used to good effect; some students on the BTEC national diploma in turf management had researched a topic and then presented their findings to the rest of the group, who used evaluation sheets to rate the technical content, personal and presentation skills. Students on NVQ courses are clear about the competence-based system of assessment and verification. However, the documentation for these courses does not specifically identify areas of core skill development even though these skills are intended to be a significant part of the course.

50 In business technology and management, there has been a marked improvement in the standard of teaching, the quality of learning support and accommodation since the inspection carried out in December 1994. At that time, the programme area was found to have weaknesses which outweighed its strengths. The quality of lesson planning across the programme area is still variable. Teachers use their commercial

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experience to good effect to provide practical illustrations and students respond well to this. In one good GNVQ class, covering aspects of financial services, students worked in groups on a carefully-designed task. They worked energetically to a tight deadline before reporting back to the whole class where the subsequent discussion demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of the topic. In office-based courses, students are often fully engaged in a variety of planned activities which are taken at an appropriately brisk pace. Students are encouraged to take initiatives in their work. Their information technology skills are being effectively developed and this is helped by good facilities in several of the resource areas recently established in the curriculum area which provide opportunities for students to work on their own. On GNVQ courses, action planning, which involves students in setting their own learning objectives, is well established. The planned integration of core skills with assignments has some way to go. When students encounter difficulties with some topics, teachers should review more carefully the teaching methods they are using.

51 Courses in health and social care provide a coherent and realistic experience for students. Students are helped to develop the skills of working on their own and co-operatively with others. On occasions, the language used is too difficult for some students to understand. Learning is adversely affected by the high rate of absenteeism. Students on GNVQ courses complete a personal statement as part of their record of achievement but little guidance is provided and some students are unable to carry out this important task properly. In childcare classes the activities are well planned. Classroom work is imaginative. There were stimulating class discussions about children and the development of their creativity, although in some of these teachers failed to draw in quieter, less confident students. Skills of observation are taught through watching and commenting on video recordings or observing children at play. These observations are then related to issues of child development. Teachers introduce students to wider reading by using recently-published texts and journal articles which are discussed in lessons. When students make oral presentations of their work they are usually too hurried. Courses in counselling help to develop students' confidence in their ability to work within professional counselling frameworks. The emphasis within courses on experiential learning encourages students to explore issues within a clear set of professional and ethical guidelines. However, teachers sometimes leave insufficient time for a proper summing up at the end of sessions. The marking of written work is consistently good. Students receive strong support, often with the involvement of outside agencies. Such support is a high priority on all courses.

52 In hairdressing, teachers work creatively to meet the individual needs of students on courses from foundation to advanced level. In most classes teachers provide a good mix of activities but some classes could be better planned. Good-quality learning aids and materials help students to develop

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their skills to a high standard. Students regularly discuss action plans with their tutor. The small size of some student groups inhibits effective learning. In beauty therapy, there is a flexible approach to learning and courses are scheduled to start throughout the year. There are clear progression routes and individual students' progress is regularly monitored. Teachers encourage students to meet professional standards and work responsibly. Insufficient account is sometimes taken of the differing abilities of students. Some do not always complete their assigned activity in practical sessions. In both hairdressing and beauty therapy, the feedback students receive on their completed work is not always enough to help them improve. Further work is required in the internal verification of standards to ensure a proper standardisation of assessment practice across courses.

53 Teachers of art and design demonstrate sound professional knowledge and good classroom management skills. They use a variety of teaching methods to stimulate students' creative work. In one exceptionally good critical studies lesson for GNVQ students, teaching aids such as slides, a printed handout and a video recording provided a stimulus for students' practical work in the studio. On occasions, course activities are pitched at an inappropriate level for students' abilities and so fail to elicit the best response. A well-planned programme of assignments is designed to meet the needs of all students. Assessment procedures are well defined and reflect standards which are in keeping with the levels of courses and the requirements of examining bodies. Although teachers routinely provide feedback on assessed work, GNVQ students do not always appreciate the relevance and importance of core skills, especially in information technology. Despite much good teaching, intermittent attendance and poor timekeeping by many students and the resulting small class sizes are detrimental to effective management of the curriculum.

54 Students of performing arts have a good working environment. Teachers provide effective support and are well aware of individual students' needs. Students value the professionalism of their teachers. In one class dealing with jazz theory, students appreciated the way in which the teacher was able to approach a difficult musical work from a number of differing angles. This ensured that all students understood the significance of the music. In sound recording, a teacher methodically led students through a complex routine using a sound mixing desk as preparation for a forthcoming assignment. The plan for a second-year class was to prepare students to stage a production during a forthcoming visit to Portugal. Assessment schemes fit well with overall course aims and objectives and proper attention is paid to the assessment of students' core skills. Adult students are well provided for and they speak positively about their courses.

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55 Much of the teaching and promotion of learning in humanities is of a high standard. In teacher education courses, access courses for higher education and many languages sessions, teachers use appropriately varied methods, draw students into the various learning activities, ensure that study skills are an integral part of the work and often present subject material in a broad context which relates to the modern world. On access courses leading to higher education, care is taken to maintain the academic rigour of the work being carried out by students. In preparation for an assignment, students on an access course for black students presented reports of a visit to an international conference. The teacher managed the session well to ensure it achieved the required objectives and the students were stimulated by their experience. There was excellent attention to the development of the students' study skills. The project involved them in note taking at the conference, oral reports to fellow students, 'brainstorming', and essay writing. In weaker lessons, teachers' preparation is inadequate or they place too much reliance on talking to the class and fail to allow students enough opportunity to think for themselves. In the weakest sessions in languages, there is little evidence of planning, the material used is not well matched to the students' abilities or sessions are conducted in English rather than the language being studied. In the better language lessons, teachers pay great attention to promoting students' accuracy in speech and writing and considerable emphasis is placed on developing students' pronunciation and intonation.

56 The teaching of adult basic education and English for speakers of other languages is generally effective and well planned. In a minority of sessions the work is not appropriately structured, teaching methods are inappropriate and sessions are not well controlled. Course documentation is thorough and the English for speakers of other languages resource base is well organised and stocked. The resource base is particularly important given the large numbers of part-time tutors involved in teaching students. Homework is regularly set and there are frequent checks on students' learning in lessons. Students of English for speakers of other languages are highly motivated and teachers make good use of peer group support to help learning. English for speakers of other languages sessions are generally well structured. Appropriate stress is placed on students developing correct pronunciation.

57 Separate specialist courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well planned. However, more attention should be paid to the planning of some options where students join mainstream courses. There are close links between the various aspects of the curriculum and most teaching is clearly focused on appropriate vocational or functional activities. A good opportunity for students to gain work experience is provided in the college's stationery shop. The shop is open each lunchtime and the students serve customers, manage the finances and stock control and order replacement items. The shop enriches students' experience and provides them with an opportunity to use

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information technology in a business environment. Students' needs are fully taken into account; their progress is recorded and targets are set and reviewed. Teachers do not always provide criteria for assessment.

### **STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

58 Many students enter the college with modest levels of prior attainment. A high proportion of new students have numeracy and literacy skills which are at or below level 1 of the Basic Skills Agency screening tests. Over 75 per cent of the college's students are adults and a significant proportion of these come from groups where there is no tradition of participation in further education and training. The staying on rates for 16 year olds at school or further education in the college's catchment areas are substantially below the national average. The entry qualifications of college students are often low. For example, of the 675 16-year-old students currently enrolled, only 358 have GCSE qualifications and, of these, only 32 have obtained five or more passes at grades A to C. The college provides study support, encourages students to develop to their full potential and to gain qualifications appropriate to their aspirations and ability. In this it is successful, and with very few exceptions the students comment favourably on their experience, with many developing their learning with enthusiasm and enjoyment. Surveys of student perceptions carried out by the college confirm students' high levels of satisfaction with their study programmes.

59 At City College, Manchester, the overall retention rate has improved from 85 per cent in 1994 to 87 per cent in 1995. Despite this improvement, the retention rates on many full-time two-year courses give cause for concern as a substantial number of students currently leave without formally recognised achievements. Some newer areas of the curriculum such as GNVQs are doubly affected by both poor retention and poor achievement. A college analysis of the reasons why students withdraw has found that many are unrelated to the college or their course. Students who have left are contacted and, wherever possible, are offered alternative programmes, including part-time and flexible study programmes.

60 Students make appropriate gains in knowledge and understanding given the wide difference in their abilities and educational backgrounds. Those who attend regularly and complete their programme of studies often achieve well. Many of the growing number of adult students in the college are either attending college for the first time or returning to acquire further training and skills and their confidence develops gradually. Students on non-vocational programmes such as GCE A level are able to relate their experience and knowledge to their theoretical studies and many use appropriate terminology with ease and fluency. On both further and higher education access courses there is clear evidence that students have progressively improved their knowledge and understanding, and achieved good academic standards.



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61 A wider range of standards of attainment is evident on vocational courses. Students produce high-quality work in performing arts and art and design. In health and social care, the oral and written work of students demonstrates an appropriate standard of attainment. In horticulture and floristry, students respond well to both the competence-based and written elements of courses and produce work of a high standard. However, in business studies some students on later years of courses still lack important skills. In beauty therapy, students did not always complete the activity assigned and in some classes they lacked commitment and motivation.

62 Generally, students on courses at all levels are making satisfactory progress in developing their information technology skills and some are using these to good effect, for instance, in recording information for their national record of achievement. Students of English for speakers of other languages on 'new start' programmes are making effective progress in numeracy and information technology. Students who have visual impairments are being particularly well supported with computer-based and other sophisticated new equipment to help them make good progress on their courses. Students of social science have appropriate levels of statistical and numeracy skills. With the exception of those on access courses, humanities students' information technology skills are not sufficiently developed.

63 Eighty-five per cent of the college's 47 students aged 16 to 18 years in their final year of study on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education and Employment's 1995 performance tables were successful. This places the college in the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. Most students on GNVQ foundation level courses take individual units but, for the few who take a full award, the overall pass rate is 64 per cent, with pass rates in the various subject areas being above national averages. Levels of achievement on GNVQ courses at intermediate and advanced level are more variable. In 1995, the pass rate on GNVQ intermediate level courses was 35 per cent, a slight improvement over the previous year but below national average pass rates in the various subjects. On GNVQ advanced courses the pass rate is 35 per cent, slightly lower than that for the previous year. Other than in art and design, results on GNVQ advanced courses are weak with only 20 per cent of students on leisure and tourism courses and 23 per cent on health and social care courses achieving their qualification in the normal course duration of two years. In childcare, there are good pass rates on the BTEC national diploma course. In horticulture, most students on one-year NVQ intermediate courses are successful. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on the NVQ foundation course in amenity horticulture are provided with many opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge and these students demonstrate good levels of achievement. In 1994, four candidates from the college were entered for an advanced award of the Royal Horticultural Society examination out of 11 nationally, and all were successful.

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64 Overall results at GCE AS/A level are improving. The 33 students aged 16 to 18 years taking GCE AS/A level examinations in 1994-95 scored on average 3.3 points per entry (where A=10, E=2) according to the 1995 tables published by the Department for Education and Employment. This places the college amongst the middle third of colleges in the further education sector according to this performance measure. Over 80 per cent of the 353 college students entered for GCE A level examinations are adults. The average pass rate at GCE A level (grades A to E) in 1995 was 66 per cent, slightly below the national average for all age groups for further education colleges of 69 per cent. This is an improvement on the previous year's figure of 62 per cent. In English, Spanish, chemistry, mathematics and history of art, results are above the national average for further education colleges. In humanities subjects such as law, sociology, psychology, politics and history pass rates, mostly at lower grades, were below national averages. In GCSE examinations, of the 800 examination entries in 1995, 48 per cent achieved passes at grades A to C, a percentage broadly similar to that achieved in the previous year. Good results were achieved in mathematics and Spanish although pass rates in English were below the national average. There are generally good results in modern foreign languages at both GCSE and GCE AS/A levels. The college is piloting analyses of the value added to students' qualifications during their attendance at college, based on a number of aspects of its academic and vocational work. These analyses do not yet provide a reliable measure of added value. Many students do not achieve their full primary learning goal and the college has made substantial progress in monitoring and recording students' partial achievements using its management information system.

65 In teacher education courses, students who complete their courses achieve well. Nearly 90 per cent of the first intake of students on the newly-established full-time course leading to the advanced diploma in therapeutic counselling have successfully completed their course. Most students on the wide range of access courses offered by the college progress to further or higher education. On the further education access courses, a high proportion of students completing their programme gain sufficient credits to progress to other further education courses or to join the college's higher education access programme. Most higher education access courses in the college have progression rates in excess of 70 per cent. Students progress to higher education courses at 13 different universities and other higher education institutions. One student who had followed the college's access science course gained a student of the year award at a regional university the following year.

66 The college's information on the destinations of full-time students shows that 7 per cent of those aged 16 to 18 years old progressed to higher education, 36 per cent continued in further education and 32 per cent gained employment. About 12 per cent of students were accounted for in other ways and the destination of the remaining 13 per cent of students

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were unknown. Fourteen per cent of adult students attending college on a full-time basis progressed to higher education, 41 per cent entered employment, 23 per cent progressed to other courses in further education and the destinations of the remaining 22 per cent of students were unknown. The highest percentages of students progressing to higher education occur in the programme areas of business studies (40 per cent), art and design (35 per cent) and computing (24 per cent). Areas where significant percentages of students enter employment are childcare and community care (17 per cent), art and design (25 per cent), business administration and leisure and sport (both 27 per cent) and horticulture (22 per cent).

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

67 The college's commitment to improving the quality of provision is incorporated in its vision statement. A succinct quality assurance policy, supported by a comprehensive set of procedures emphasises the respective roles of both people and systems for its successful implementation. Responsibilities for quality assurance are included in the job descriptions of all staff. The vice-principal for quality and marketing works closely with the vice-principal curriculum and planning and the vice-principal student services and equal opportunities on quality related issues. They chair the curriculum standards committee, the customer services committee and the management review committee, the three committees charged with monitoring quality across the college. The committees report regularly to the academic board and the senior management team and through them to the corporation. The quality policy and procedures are clear to staff and are applied to all aspects of the college's operation, including franchised courses in secondary schools, full-cost courses and contracted work for corporate and other clients. The college has developed a comprehensive quality assurance system in which the essential features are in place, although some aspects are not yet working consistently across all parts of the college.

68 The college has gained British Standards and International Standards Organisation (ISO) 9002 accreditation for different aspects of its work, including its educational provision in prisons and its work for the Benefits Agency. A comprehensive manual of procedures for managers and team leaders is updated and modified as a result of internal audits carried out by a team of trained auditors. The quality assurance procedures are seen as useful by managers and copies of these are widely distributed to staff. The quality unit monitors and deals with complaints from students and the subsequent remedial actions undertaken by staff. This system operates efficiently. Regular reports are presented at each meeting of the customer services committee. Reports from 1994 to 1995 show an increase in complaints from students relating to course organisation and the quality of rooms and a decrease in issues relating to health and safety and site maintenance. The college collects students' comments on its provision through surveys and questionnaires. The outcomes of these, and the

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college's response to particular issues, are displayed prominently on notice boards at each site. As a response to student's comments, the college has introduced further childcare places and other facilities for parents and their children, greater access to computers and improved car parking. In November 1993, the corporation made a formal commitment to the Manchester TEC to achieve accreditation for Investor in People status by July 1995. However, progress has been slower than anticipated and the college has revised the date of the final audit to March 1996.

69 Course reviews are well established and are effective. They make good use of feedback from examining and awarding bodies. Reviewing courses is delegated to teams and their managers and a large proportion of the staff-development budget has been allocated to develop team working skills. Students often attend course team meetings and there is a student representative on the curriculum standards committee. Students' comments are taken into account but comments from employers are not always obtained systematically or used effectively. Course teams review their courses annually and produce an action plan. Action plans and operating statements are then produced for each curriculum area, monitored by a senior curriculum manager. Curriculum area reviews in turn form the basis of the college review, a major aspect of quality assurance leading to the publication of a substantial document each November. This forms the basis of a report to the corporation. The course review process is underpinned by regular sessions in which managers meet with members of their team to discuss targets and negotiate action plans. Staff find these helpful. They provide an effective means of improving communication between staff at different levels, provide help and support for individuals and enable staff-development needs to be identified. Some aspects of the review process require further development. For example, although course and curriculum area teams identify targets which are clearly based upon the college operating statement, they are often general statements rather than specific, measurable targets. Consequently, the targets set are of varying effectiveness in helping teams to monitor progress. The college should encourage teams to identify how they can contribute to the achievement of college targets in areas such as student retention, and how they can further develop teaching and learning methods.

70 The aim of the curriculum standards committee is to ensure a progressive improvement in the quality of the college's curriculum. It places a particular emphasis on improving teaching and learning. The committee receives reports from all curriculum areas and in turn reports to the academic board. The role of the committee has recently been reviewed and extended and now includes the vetting and approval of new course proposals and the monitoring of course provision against key performance indicators. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these changes but the staff involved have found the new arrangements of value.

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71 The college has developed an innovative approach to internal verification which builds upon the experience gained in GNVQ and NVQ programmes. This has been extended to include all courses. Procedures are mainly concerned with the verification process itself; sometimes they do not focus sufficiently on course achievements in relation to national standards. In the system adopted, each course identifies a programme of verification leading to regular reports which are monitored by the further and higher education subcommittees of the curriculum standards committee. Reports from external verifiers or moderators are used to good effect. Following internal verification, managers are provided with a report and an action plan to remedy any weaknesses which may have been identified. The system operates most successfully for vocational courses.

72 Staff development is well organised and responsive to the needs of a growing college. The priorities for staff development are identified by individual members of staff, by teams and by managers. They clearly reflect the college's strategic plan and operating statement. The staff-development budget represents about 1.5 per cent of total staffing costs. About half the budget is linked to cross-college priorities identified by senior managers, such as team building and management development. The other part of the budget is delegated to team leaders to support the staff-development needs identified by their teams. All staff are included in the staff-development programme. College staff working mainly off college premises, for example in prison education, join in events such as those designed to promote equal opportunities and team building. The college considers that its staff development is generally effective. However, staff-development activities have not been evaluated consistently and new arrangements are now being introduced. The college appraisal system applies to all staff. It is closely linked to staff development and includes classroom or job observation. Although about 400 staff have been trained in the appraisal procedures, the implementation of the appraisal process has been delayed. At the time of the inspection only 30 staff had been formally appraised.

73 The college charter has been developed through an extensive process of consultation with staff, students, governors and employers. The charter document contains the student contract. It is attractively presented and is given to all students when they enrol. Students' rights, entitlements and responsibilities are explained in the charter and specified in the contract; discussion of these forms an important part of the induction programme. The charter is currently expressed in general terms rather than in measurable standards of service, although the admissions and guidance team have identified a number of challenging service standards which could be used by curriculum teams to monitor their provision. A group of staff led by a vice-principal is currently reviewing the charter and its usefulness to students, employers and members of the community.

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74 During the year preceding the inspection, the college set up a rolling programme of self-assessments in key curriculum areas. Five areas were identified for self-assessment in 1994-95 and six areas in 1995-96. These self-assessments were carried out by senior managers and teams of staff. Where the self-assessments identified weaknesses, management action plans have been effective in correcting them quickly. One area identified was business studies, which was also the subject of an early FEFC inspection in advance of the main inspection. As a result, the college made significant improvements to its provision in business studies. Future self-assessments will feed into the curriculum standards committee which will review the findings and, where necessary, propose remedial action. As part of its preparation for inspection, the college used a common format to produce a comprehensive series of well-written and informative position statements for all curriculum areas and major aspects of cross-college provision. These culminated in a self-assessment report which follows the framework of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The report is concise and clearly identifies a number of the college's strengths and the issues which are being addressed. Some weakness have not been described with sufficient clarity. However, the general conclusions of the self-assessment were in line with the findings of the inspection.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Staffing**

75 Many of the college's staff are hard working, forward looking and enthusiastic. They support the college's mission and corporate identity and take pride in the achievements of the students they teach. There are appropriate arrangements in place for the recruitment, selection, deployment, appraisal and development of staff. About two-thirds of staff, including middle and senior managers, are female. About 9 per cent of staff are from minority ethnic groups and 1 per cent have restricted mobility or other disabilities. Ninety-five per cent of full-time and part-time teachers have either a degree or higher national diploma/higher national certificate qualification, about 70 per cent are qualified teachers and over 65 per cent currently hold Training and Development Lead Body qualifications. Many staff have relevant vocational experience, some of which is recent. Increasing numbers of staff are taking the opportunities offered by the college to update their industrial, commercial and professional experience. The college structure is such that business support staff are becoming an integral part of teaching teams. In several areas, for example, printing, flexible learning and art and design, business support staff are also engaged as part-time lecturing staff.

76 The college has a human resources management strategy which is directly linked to curriculum and financial planning strategies. Curriculum staff establishments are formally reviewed on a termly basis. Teaching staff, many of whom teach on more than one site, are well deployed. The college has undertaken a staff audit to establish the range of skills,

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qualifications and experience available and ensure that these are appropriate to the courses being offered. All new posts are analysed to ensure that the job requirements meet team objectives and the overall management strategy. The college is recruiting new staff with appropriate skills and abilities. There are targets for equality of opportunity to ensure that, in due course, the workforce matches the profile of the local community in terms of ethnicity, gender and disability and that there is parity of esteem between curriculum and business support functions. The college is currently introducing a management charter identifying managerial responsibilities and accountabilities and the key competencies which managers should possess.

### **Equipment/learning resources**

77 In most areas of the college, the quantity and quality of equipment and materials to support learning are good. Teaching rooms on all sites are generally provided with appropriate chalkboards, whiteboards and overhead projectors. Furniture is usually adequate or good, although in a few instances there are insufficient chairs and tables for the number of students using a room. Most of the handouts provided by teachers are well presented and are a valuable resource for students. However, the range of printed materials to support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is insufficient. In business studies there are excellent training manuals with differentiated materials to support the needs of students of differing abilities, levels of work and rates of progress. The computer-based audio-visual equipment, which the college provides to support students with visual impairments, is of high quality. It includes enlargers for computer screens, computer speech synthesisers and data projectors linked to video and compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database facilities.

78 The specialist equipment available in many curriculum areas is good, although in some there is older, poorer equipment still in use. Equipment, including older items is usually well maintained and serviceable. The music technology equipment is of a high standard; it provides students with an opportunity to learn in a professional environment. In childcare, the resource rooms lack an appropriate range of materials. In art and design, access to some specialist equipment is restricted to teaching sessions. The library provision for students of English for speakers of other languages is inadequate.

79 The college has a forward looking strategy for the development of information technology which is supported by effective staff development. In 1994-95 the college invested over £600,000 in computer resources. There are almost 700 computers in the college, many located in the learning resource centres; most are modern machines linked to the college network. Currently, there is one workstation for every 7.44 full-time equivalent students. There is a good range of specialist and general purpose computer software to support courses.

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80 A particular feature of the college is the good-quality learning resource centres on each main site. The centres contain a wide selection of books, journals, periodicals and newspapers, and other non-book resources such as videos, audio cassettes and CD-ROMs. Each centre is provided with 10 computers fitted with CD-ROM drives, two of which are connected to the Internet. There has been an investment of about £60,000 in the bookstock across the four sites and the book collection is of a reasonable size. Students on taught courses can use the centres at times of their own choosing to gain additional support in literacy, numeracy and information technology. They are also used by students following more flexible patterns of learning. In addition to the college's learning resource centres there are dedicated curriculum learning centres for business studies, general education, care and critical studies in art and design. The college's annual expenditure on its learning centres is equivalent to £18.62 for each full-time equivalent student.

### **Accommodation**

81 The college has developed an accommodation strategy based on the priorities identified in its strategic plan. It has entered into discussion with the FEFC on this basis. The implementation of the strategy is currently in abeyance pending the resolution of ownership issues with the Manchester Local Authority.

82 The four main sites offer attractive, good-quality learning environments for most curriculum areas. The college's accommodation at the Abraham Moss Centre is part of a site shared with other users. Although the sections owned by the college have recently been upgraded, this site is of a generally lower standard than the other sites. The accommodation on all sites is managed flexibly and efficiently to meet the changing needs of learners and the curriculum. The standard of maintenance is adequate, although there are still areas which require repair and redecoration. Car parking is adequate at all sites except Fielden.

83 Teaching and specialist rooms are generally appropriate for their purpose. Classrooms are well decorated, clean, tidy and sometimes carpeted. Some curriculum areas, including gemmology, music technology, textiles, hairdressing and beauty therapy provide good-quality practical working environments for students. In childcare, teachers are aware of the importance of creating an ambience which encourages effective learning and some thought has been given to the best arrangement of furniture for particular activities. The communal and circulation areas in the college are adequate and some are good. The recently-improved foyer area at the Wythenshawe site provides a welcoming entrance to the college. Many curriculum areas have used their rooms and adjacent corridors to mount attractive displays of students' work which brighten the environment and celebrate students' achievements. A small number of rooms are not well suited for the purpose to which they are put. They have problems of ventilation, lighting or layout or they lack adequate



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fixtures and fittings. There is good access for students with restricted mobility throughout the college.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES**

84 The college is making good progress towards achieving its mission. Its strengths are:

- its response to both the needs of the locality and to national initiatives in further education through the wide range of courses on offer
- the range of successful business and commercial activities
- productive links with schools, higher education, business, groups working in the community and the Manchester TEC
- its promotion of equality of opportunity for students and staff
- the clear vision, shared commitment and leadership provided by the senior management team and the contribution which the well-qualified members of the corporation make to strategic development
- a wide range of guidance and support for students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- good teaching and learning in many areas
- improved average pass rates on GCE A level courses and good results on some vocational courses
- a comprehensive set of procedures for ensuring quality, which are applied to all aspects of the college's operation, are clear to staff, and are well used
- staff development which is well organised and responsive
- staff who are hard working, forward looking, well qualified, and well deployed across the college according to the needs of the curriculum
- significant investment in learning equipment and materials, and attractive environmental improvements.

85 If the college is to develop further the quality of its provision it should improve:

- the accuracy and reliability of information on students' achievements produced by the computer management information system, and encourage curriculum teams to use the system more effectively
- students' attendance in some areas and continue to reduce lateness and absenteeism generally
- some aspects of teaching and the promotion of learning

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- students' achievements in full-time and part-time courses, including GNVQ, by setting and achieving appropriate targets; improve examination results at GCSE; and raise retention rates, particularly on two-year full-time courses
  - the effectiveness of course reviews by strengthening procedures for obtaining employers' comments on aspects of provision
  - accommodation at the Abraham Moss Centre, which is generally of a lower standard than that on other sites.

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## FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1995)

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  - 2 Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1995)

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  - 3 Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)

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

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  - 5 Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1996)

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  - 6 Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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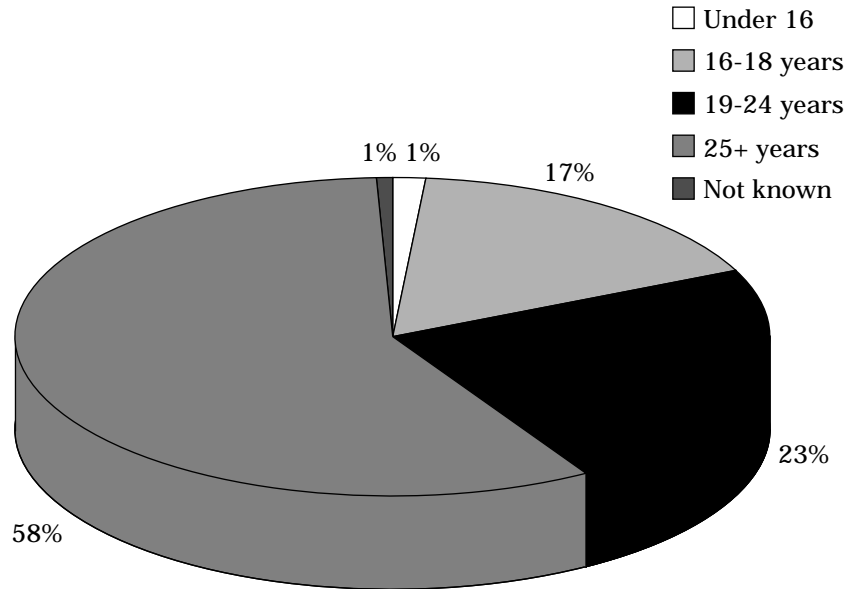
**Note:** the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.

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**Figure 1**

**City College, Manchester: percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1995)**

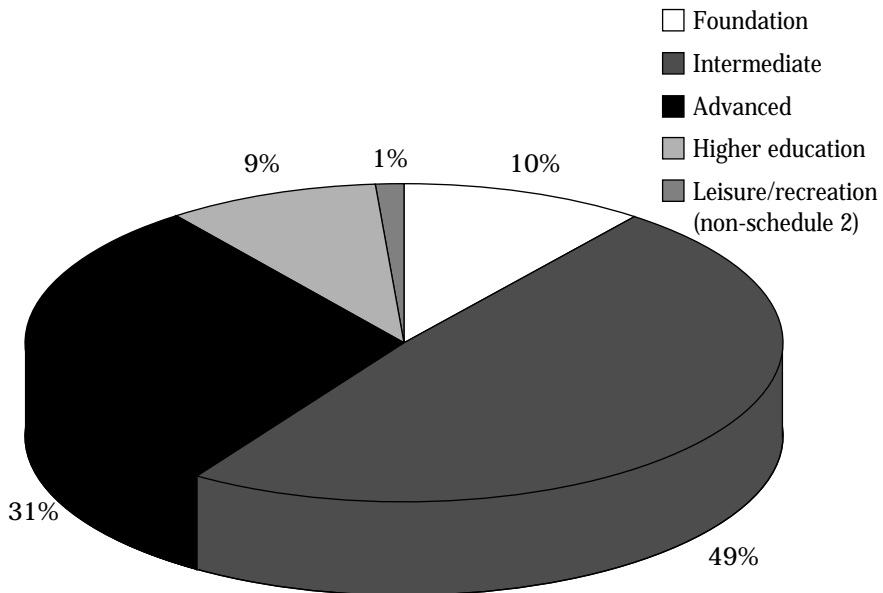


Student numbers: 9,988

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**Figure 2**

**City College, Manchester: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1995)**

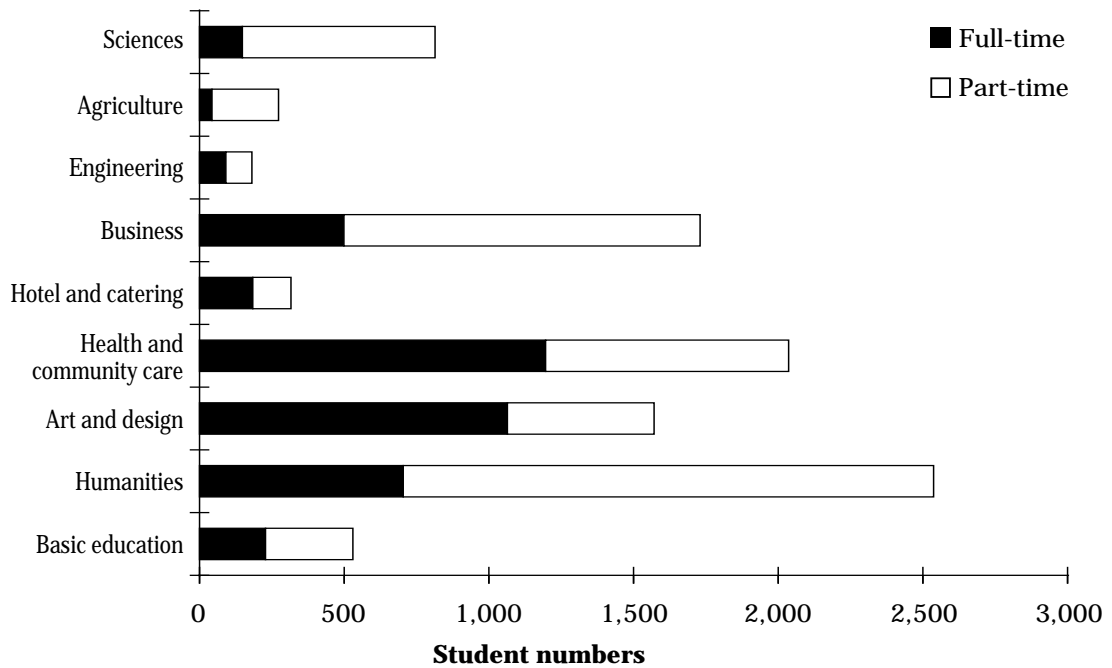


Student numbers: 9,988

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**Figure 3**

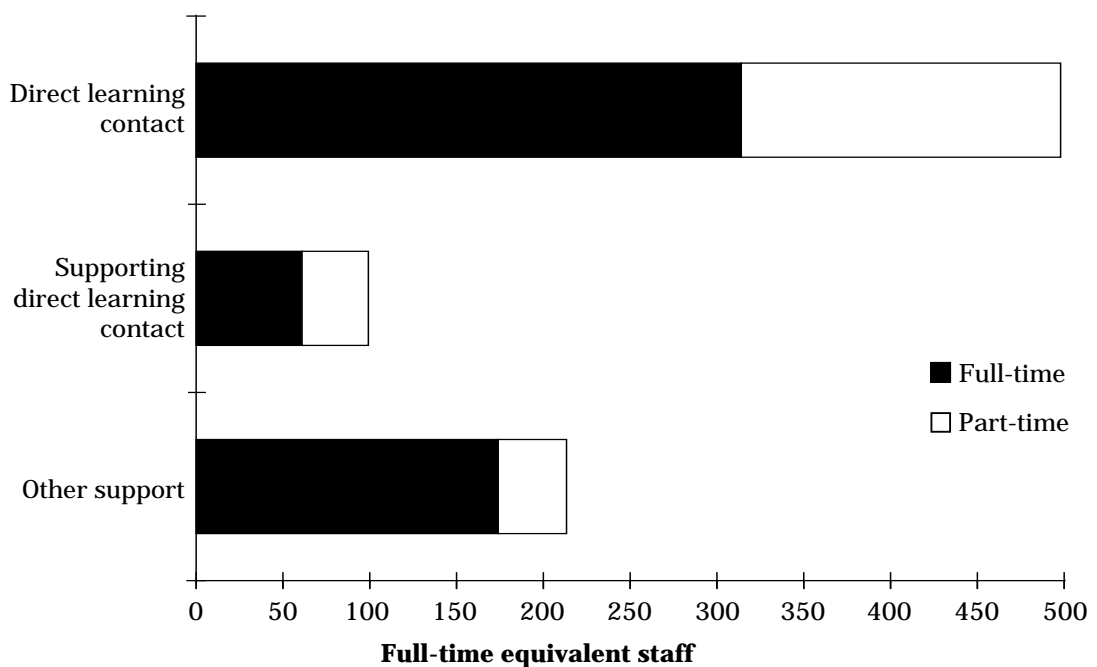
**City College, Manchester: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)**



Student numbers: 9,988

**Figure 4**

**City College, Manchester: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)**



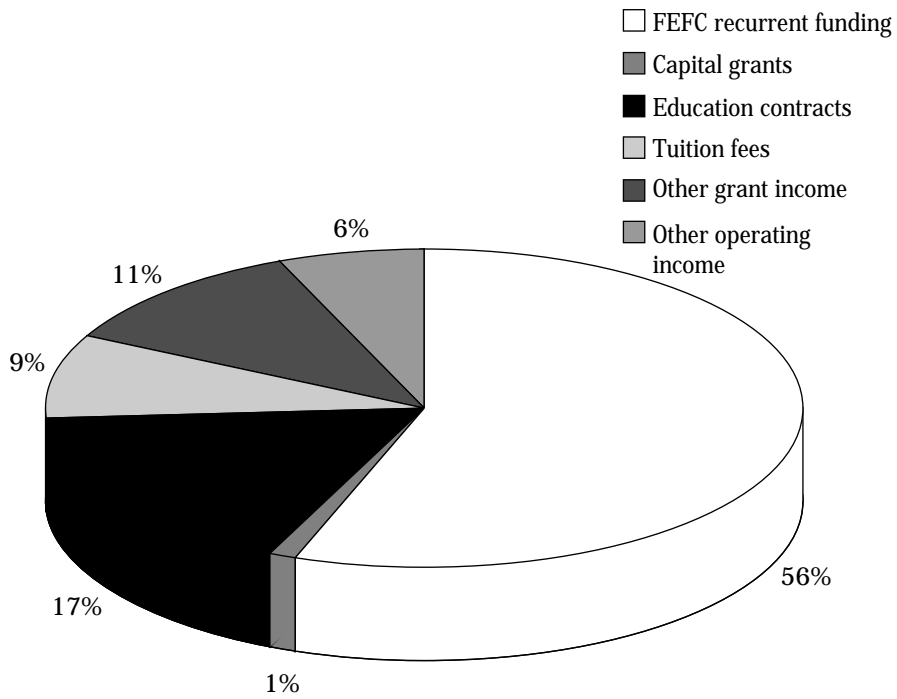
Full-time equivalent staff: 811

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**Figure 5**

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**City College, Manchester: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1996)**

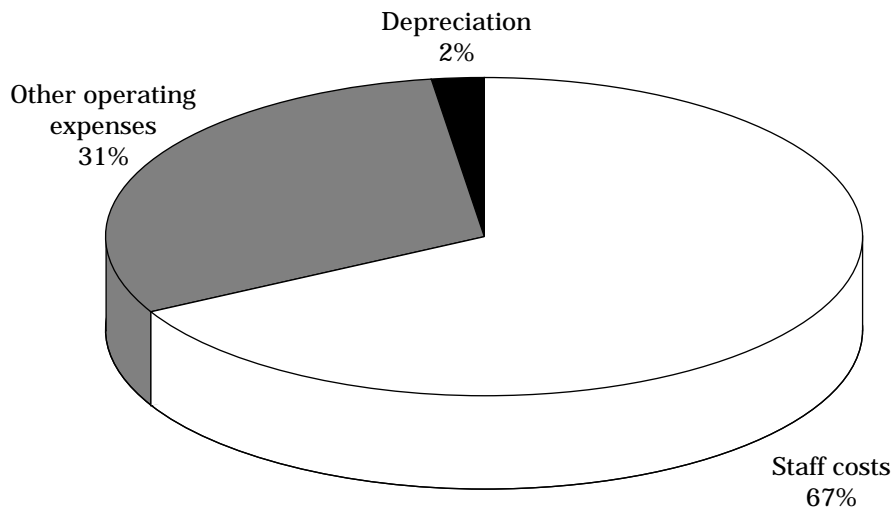


Estimated income: £23,371,000

**Figure 6**

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**City College, Manchester: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)**



Estimated expenditure: £23,325,000

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