

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

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# **City of Bath College**

**July 1995**

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**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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## **THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

### **GRADE DESCRIPTORS**

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

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

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# FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 93/95

## CITY OF BATH COLLEGE

### SOUTH WEST REGION

Inspected January – March 1995

#### Summary

City of Bath College is a general further education college located in the centre of the city. It has a clear strategic vision to develop as an international centre for learning. It offers a wide range of courses to a variety of clients, including school leavers, employers and adults returning to education. Staff are well qualified and many have relevant industrial and commercial experience. On most courses the quality of teaching is good. Governors have a clear understanding of the issues facing the college and fulfil their role effectively. The college has taken a number of steps to increase enrolments and these have already had some success. The college should ensure that any new initiatives are systematically monitored and reviewed. Students achieve good results on some courses but on others attendance, retention rates and examination results are poor. The college should develop further its quality assurance procedures and management information systems. A new open-learning centre is an outstanding resource and some of the recently-developed accommodation is of a high quality. Much of the accommodation, however, is drab and uninviting; access to several buildings is inadequate for students using wheelchairs. The college should reconsider the role of the academic board, implement and monitor its equal opportunities policy and improve the level of information technology equipment and some specialist equipment.

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		2
Governance and management		2
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		3
Quality assurance		3
Resources:	staffing	2
	equipment/learning resources	3
	accommodation	4

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Science, mathematics and computing	3	Health and community care	2
		Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2
Construction	2	Art and design	3
Engineering	3	Humanities	3
Business, management and administration	3	Basic education	2
Hotel and catering	2		

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1 City of Bath College was inspected during January and March 1995, its recruitment and induction procedures having been inspected in the previous September. The inspection team of 19 inspectors spent a total of 82 days in the college. Inspectors visited 259 classes and spent a total of 157 hours observing teaching and learning. A representative sample of students' written and practical work was inspected. Meetings took place with governors, college managers, teaching staff, college services staff, students, parents, representatives from local schools, members of local community groups, employers and representatives from Avon community education, Western Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and a local higher education provider. The inspectors also had access to extensive documentation relating to the college and its courses.

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

2 City of Bath College is a medium-sized general further education college, established in 1892 when it was funded by the city of Bath from taxes levied on spirits which were known as 'whisky money'. The college is located on five sites in the city, all within a radius of one mile. The main campus, which includes a theatre, comprises five buildings in close proximity to each other near the centre of the city and less than half a mile from the main bus depot and train station. The other four sites house the provision for community care, art and design and the college's playgroup.

3 The city of Bath has a population of approximately 80,000 with 16 and 17 year olds accounting for 2 per cent of the population. Twenty-three per cent of the population is of pensionable age. Minority ethnic groups form 2.6 per cent of the city's population. The local economy is dominated primarily by the service sector, which provides employment for 75 per cent of the workforce in the county of Avon, and by the defence industry which accounts for approximately 18 per cent of all jobs in the Bath area. Unemployment stands at 8 per cent in Avon and 5 per cent for Bath, although the rate of unemployment in Bath is currently falling. In addition to providing education and training for the local population, the college has developed relationships with other European countries. These include staff and student exchanges and consultancy work for the Romanian government.

4 There are seven secondary schools within the city, of which two are grant maintained and six have sixth forms. Other further education providers in the area are Norton Radstock College, Chippenham College, Trowbridge College and Soundwell College, all of which are less than 15 miles from Bath. In 1994, the post-16 full-time participation rate for students in the city was 76 per cent. There is a large higher education community in the city associated with a college of higher education and a university.

5 Of the 173 full-time equivalent teaching staff, 53 full-time equivalents are part time. These part-time staff support 30 per cent of the total

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teaching. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 1. Teaching staff are based in nine schools: engineering technology, built environment, educational innovation, hospitality and leisure studies, business and management, information technology, community studies, creative and performing arts, and languages and humanities. For some tasks such as marketing, schools are grouped into three faculties and heads of school take on the role of deans of faculty for one year in a representative, co-ordinating but non-executive role. College services staff are organised in seven divisions: premises, finance, personnel and secretariat, computer services, marketing, student services, and curriculum and staff development.

6 The college provides courses ranging from foundation level to higher education programmes franchised from the University of the West of England. Qualifications include National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1-5, General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) or their equivalent, General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level), Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) higher national certificates and a range of professional programmes. The college is one of a small number of colleges in the country offering full-time and part-time courses in stonemasonry, stonecraft and lettering in stone.

7 At the time of the inspection there were 1,599 full-time and 10,633 part-time students. Enrolments by age, level of study, and mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 2, 3 and 4 respectively. The college failed to meet its growth target in 1993-94 but has seen a significant increase in applications during 1994-95 and anticipates that it will achieve the target for this year.

8 At times since becoming incorporated in 1993, the college has been the focus of national attention. There have been wide-ranging negotiations regarding the conditions of service for staff which have resulted in strike action and public demonstrations by staff. These negotiations are now complete and, with one exception, staff are now working to new contracts of employment.

9 The college has a wide-ranging mission which includes developing as an international centre for learning, making the fullest contribution to the economic and cultural life of the local community, meeting the needs of individual students and managing resources in a professional, enterprising and businesslike way.

## **RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION**

10 The college offers a good range of courses which provide education and training opportunities for a wide variety of clients including school leavers, those in employment, and adults returning to education. The college prospectus for 1995-96 describes 35 GCE A level courses, 10 GCE advanced supplementary (AS) courses and 24 GCSE subjects. The vocational curriculum of the college covers 9 out of the 10 Further

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Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) programme areas at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. There are GNVQ programmes in art and design, business, health and social care, and leisure and tourism. There is an extensive range of NVQs ranging from level 1 through to level 5.

11 The college faces strong competition for students from schools with sixth forms and from other colleges and this has influenced the nature and scope of links with schools. Relationships with some have proved difficult and resulted in the college having only limited opportunities to publicise its courses to students in their final year of compulsory schooling.

12 The college is an associate college of the University of the West of England and provides, in conjunction with the university, a foundation engineering programme and a BTEC higher national diploma in community arts. Links with Bath College of Higher Education and with the University of Bath are also well developed with progression for access course students and the teaching of elements of degree programmes acting as the main focus for these links. Access courses, for students wishing to progress to higher education, are offered in social studies and teacher education. The college also has its own higher education provision in business and management, engineering, construction, information technology and art and design.

13 The college provides for 25 students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and has a link course for 15 and 16 year olds from local special schools. As yet, there is no policy or action plan for this work although reference is made to its development in the college's strategic plan.

14 The Avon community education officer is located in the college and works closely with staff on a number of projects. The college sponsors courses providing training for women in carpentry and joinery and basic skills training for the homeless. Through this partnership the college is involved in the Bath black student support scheme which employs a worker to provide advice and help to black students. The numbers of minority ethnic students enrolled on college courses reflect the minority ethnic population of Bath.

15 The City of Bath open-learning development unit has produced a development package for its staff to support the introduction of resource-based learning materials. Staff-development funds have been made available for this initiative. The college is planning that a part of all courses will be delivered using resource-based learning materials. There are already examples of the successful use of such materials in the college. The design and use of packages to support training for road technician (highways) has given the college significant expertise in this area of work.

16 The college is currently engaged in a consultation exercise with staff, local industry and other educational institutions regarding the 'intelligent college initiative'. This is an initiative to ensure that advances in telecommunications and information technology result in easier access for students to a wide range of information and tutor support. The initiative is

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far-reaching, but will require substantial improvements in the information technology systems currently available in the college if it is to meet its aims.

17 A central focus of the college is to develop as an international centre for learning, building on the popularity of Bath as a centre for tourism. The college is involved in a number of enterprises involving co-operation with higher education to develop training opportunities in the United Kingdom and overseas. Work is currently taking place with Ireland, Denmark, Poland, France and Romania and there are plans to develop courses for Japanese clients. The college has a forum which meets regularly to discuss international issues.

18 There is a good range of formal and informal links with local employers some of whom send students on block-release and day-release courses, receive students on work experience placements or sit on the college's advisory committees. Some advisory committees are poorly attended and do not provide constructive feedback to the college's schools. A series of business lunches and breakfasts have been initiated to enable senior college staff to improve communications between the college and local employers. The college provides some full-cost courses for industry, although the income generated by this activity is currently only a small percentage of the total college income. The longer term strategic plan for the college envisages a move towards more income-generating activities. The target is that about half of the college's income should be derived from sources other than the FEFC. The college lacks a clear view of its relations with employers and there is no central system to pull together the substantial information available through the broad range of its contacts.

19 There is a good working relationship with the local TEC. The college is involved in Skill Plus, a training programme for adults, and in youth training. National targets for education and training are reflected in the strategic planning process. Schools include these in their annual plans.

20 Marketing is managed by the head of marketing and two deputies. Fortnightly meetings with the deans of faculty and the head of student services ensure that a college-wide focus is given to marketing activities and that close liaison takes place with the schools to oversee the publication of the prospectuses. The full-time and part-time prospectuses are informative and detailed. Students, parents and representatives from local schools were complimentary about the new college literature, commenting on its availability and the accuracy of the information on course provision and college services. Currently some public relations work is contracted out to an external agency. The college has a vigorous marketing campaign to recruit students for 1995-96 and, at the time of the inspection, there was a significant increase in applications for full-time courses commencing in 1995, compared with the same period in 1993 and 1994.



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## **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

21 The corporation has 16 members including the principal. There are two staff members and one student member. At the time of the inspection, there was one vacancy which may not be filled as the college intends to reduce the size of the governing body. Members understand their statutory duties, are aware of the distinction between governance and management, and use their expertise and experience in the interests of the college as a whole. The corporation has established three main committees that meet regularly: finance and general purposes, remuneration, and audit. Committees for recruitment and selection, and grievance and disciplinary matters meet as required. Meetings are well attended and there are good-quality minutes and supporting papers. The finance and general purposes committee has a wide remit, including matters relating to personnel, buildings and finance. This committee has authority delegated by the corporation to make decisions. It keeps all members informed of its decisions by regular distribution of minutes and by reporting on issues at the full corporation. Staff governors feel that they are excluded from a number of important discussions to which they would wish to contribute.

22 There is a clear understanding of the separate roles of the governing body and the executive with appropriate delegation to the principal and clear lines of accountability. Board members carry out their duties effectively without trespassing on the functions of the executive. The strength of this understanding has been tested through difficult periods since incorporation although the board has yet to develop and institute a formal system to monitor its own performance.

23 Senior managers have succeeded in communicating the college's mission and strategic plan so that both are well understood by staff. The plan was drawn up by the senior management team and approved by the corporation. Staff have contributed to the aims and objectives in the plan by the production of school plans developed in line with guidelines issued by the senior executive.

24 The senior executive of the college consists of the principal, the two deputy principals (curriculum and resources) and the registrar who is also clerk to the corporation. This team has a shared sense of purpose and strong leadership from the principal who has a clear vision of how to achieve the aims of the college and who delegates large areas of responsibility. They meet weekly to discuss, develop and review strategic policy and operational matters. The recording of these meetings is limited to a list of the agenda items discussed and, as a result, there is no indication of the discussion that has taken place, the matters resolved or the actions agreed. The college executive committee consists of the senior executive together with the seven heads of division and nine heads of school. This team also meets weekly. Minutes of these meetings show that members have a clear understanding of their roles and a commitment to the objectives the college has set in its strategic plan. There is a wider group, which includes the assistant heads of school, which meets as required.

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25 The management structure gives responsibility for operational management, curriculum development and the management of students to the heads of school. There is a commitment from senior managers to delegate responsibilities to heads and to hold them accountable for the actions they take and the performance of their schools. Delegation includes responsibility for the achievement of enrolment and financial targets, the deployment of staff, cost of space and central services, and consumables. Budget holders are required to balance their budgets and prudent financial management forms part of the appraisal system.

26 Responsibility for financial administration is delegated to the deputy principal (resources) who is responsible for maintaining the college's financial records and procedures, preparing and monitoring the budget. Financial responsibility is set out in the college's financial regulations. There are formal procedures in place for the key financial activities, but some budget holders are unclear about some of the arrangements, including whether or not money can be moved from one budget heading to another and how adjustments are made to the budget to reflect additional students. Few heads of school have confidence in the accuracy of the reports they receive from the central management information system and many keep their own records.

27 The college has an academic board which has a responsibility to advise the principal on academic matters and to act as a forum for consultation. The aim is that all areas of the college are represented on the board but currently some schools have not put forward representatives. Attendance has been variable and there is little evidence to show that this body has had any impact on curriculum matters or on other issues relating to the development of the college's work. Two other committees, for academic standards and curriculum review and development, are chaired by the deputy principal (curriculum), and fulfil some of the responsibilities often considered to be those of the academic board. While the academic board receives some reports from these committees, they are not subcommittees of the academic board and have no formal relationship with the board.

28 The college's average level of funding for 1994-95 is £18.54 per unit compared with the median of £18.17 for general further education colleges in the sector. The college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

29 The college's management information system is not yet providing sufficient support to inform management decisions. There is significant effort put into monitoring student attendance and withdrawal from courses at school level and a system exists which enables information about students who have left to be entered on the college management information system. This centralised entry of data does not provide staff with rapid and up-to-date reports and is not used systematically by senior staff to identify and monitor trends. Enrolment data are provided by a

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separate database and are sent to schools, but again much time is spent checking the accuracy of this data. There are some courses which have unacceptably low student attendance and retention. The analysis of this data in order to determine strategies to correct these problems is overdue.

30 Responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the health and safety policy is allocated to the deputy principal (curriculum). There are clear guidelines and a committee is in place to monitor this work. A new policy on equal opportunities is being developed. The college has yet to consider how it will demonstrate commitment to this work, develop standards to guide practice, and produce action plans and monitoring arrangements to measure performance.

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

31 The college has made a number of improvements to the recruitment and admission of students. There is some evidence to show that these are proving beneficial, although no formal reviews have taken place. The lack of systematic monitoring and review has meant that the college has only limited early indications of the strengths and the weaknesses of the new arrangements.

32 The college has recently opened a reception services area called 'the shop', in a main thoroughfare in the town centre. This facility, open all week and on Saturday mornings, is the first point of contact for many potential clients and provides an attractive and friendly environment. Some monitoring of the use of this facility has been carried out and this shows that the new reception and information centre is proving to be a successful means of encouraging public access to both oral and written information about college courses and activities.

33 The college held a series of open days during August and September 1994. These were well publicised, well supported and well organised. Staff from all schools in the college were available to give advice to prospective students and their parents in a comfortable environment. The college careers advisers were present.

34 Students are admitted to the college through a central admissions unit. This is based in newly-created and comfortable accommodation. Full-time students are interviewed by a member of a college interviewing team. The team consists of staff from the student services division and teaching representatives from each school. This new approach has received support from students, parents and school representatives and is seen as a significant improvement on the previous system. The effectiveness of the new system is not due to be formally evaluated by the college until the end of the academic year.

35 As part of the admissions process for NVQ and GNVQ courses, students can request accreditation for aspects of the course that they feel they have previously covered through experience or prior study. This claim for accreditation is assessed by staff teaching the course. On some courses

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students can prepare a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate their prior experience.

36 All full-time students have a clearly-structured induction programme during their first week in college. A number of induction sessions were observed by inspectors during September. Not all the sessions were effective and some suffered from simple problems such as the size of the room not matching the size of the student group or the inappropriate amount of detail on some of the handouts issued. Some students commented on the poor quality of their induction programme.

37 As part of their induction, full-time students completed the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit numeracy and literacy test. Tests were administered and marked by tutors. Not all tests were administered consistently; for example, there were variations in the methods, approaches and time spent doing tests. Students who were identified as needing support were referred to tutors with specific responsibility for providing support to learners. Only a small number of students have taken advantage of the support offered and the college is considering alternative strategies that are likely to be more attractive to students.

38 Tutorial support for students varies in quality. Full-time students' experience of tutorial support depends upon the school in which their course is based. These experiences vary from well-structured programmes of tutorial activities involving the whole group to individual sessions to help with course or subject-related problems. The college has recognised the variability and has, since September 1994, introduced a new tutorial system for GCSE and first-year GCE A level groups. Five staff have been appointed to the role of tutor with responsibility for providing tutorial support to approximately 40-45 students each. While there is evidence to suggest that this arrangement is more effective, some students are confused as to the actual responsibilities of tutors. Part-time students receive little tutorial support.

39 The college counselling service includes two part-time counsellors who are well qualified and who are supported by approximately 10 volunteer counsellors. There is an emergency service and students who have used the service speak positively of it. However, the accommodation provided is noisy and unattractive.

40 The college has produced a charter, a brief outline of which is published in the students' diary. While the diary is an informative and helpful publication, students had only a limited awareness of the charter.

41 There is a college chaplaincy and a Christian union which meets weekly. A range of sporting activities is available in the college. The students' union is currently amending its constitution. The student affairs committee meets four times a year and meetings are minuted. New office space has been designated for the students' union. There are several refectories in the college and two student common rooms. The college has

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a day nursery available to children aged between 18 months and five years. Children of students are catered for at reduced rates.

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

42 Inspectors observed 259 teaching sessions. The strengths outweighed the weaknesses in 63 per cent of the sessions. The weaknesses outweighed the strengths in 7 per cent of sessions. The following table summarises the grades given by inspectors.

#### **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		5	23	21	3	2	54
GCSE		1	6	8	4	0	19
GNVQ		5	5	5	0	0	15
NVQ		3	19	8	4	0	34
Other vocational		16	39	21	2	0	78
Access to higher education		1	6	1	0	0	8
Basic education		1	7	1	0	0	9
Higher education		2	4	3	1	0	10
Other		4	15	11	0	2	32
<b>Total</b>		<b>38</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>259</b>

43 The planning and structuring of learning for students is generally thorough. The majority of the classes seen were supported by detailed schemes of work which were shared with students. Humanities and languages teachers, for example, translated their syllabuses into effective work schemes and lesson plans which were used by all teachers to ensure a consistent approach. Staff teaching separate specialist courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have produced schemes of work which use clear language and structure the learning into achievable steps. Course documentation in business is also well planned. Some poor schemes of work merely listed the topics from the examination syllabus. A newly-developed lesson plan was widely used throughout the college during the inspection and offered the opportunity for teachers to evaluate their own work.

44 Relationships between staff and students are good. Teachers demonstrated an understanding of students' needs and were generally able to meet them. For example, during basic education classes for adults there was appropriate use of group activities as well as support for individual students. In food production and food service sessions, suitable emphasis was placed on developing the skills needed to work as a member of a team.

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45 Students' exposure to, and experience of, the world of work varies significantly across the college. There are modern and well-equipped realistic work environments in hairdressing and catering which offer students the chance to work at commercially acceptable standards. Students in catering are also supported and encouraged to enter cookery competitions and to obtain work in industry. In contrast, the training office for business students does not promote the acquisition of office competencies to NVQ standards or the development of practical office skills such as reception and telephone techniques. A range of work placements in local schools and day nurseries is a positive element of the nursery nurses courses. Engineering students undertake two weeks work experience as part of their BTEC national diploma course. Some students on performing arts courses have undertaken valuable work experience, but there is no formal link through advisory bodies or committees to ensure that students can experience the full range of opportunities which this culturally-rich city could provide for them. Students on GCSE and GCE courses have no entitlement to work experience, although some of them gain placements.

46 The college is providing a high-quality resource to support the development of information technology skills for its students in the newly-created open-learning centre. With the exception of engineering, other areas of the college providing information technology training are of a lower standard. In construction the facilities are outdated and were not in use at the time of inspection. Students on secretarial courses are frequently working with outdated wordprocessing machines which cannot reach commercial standards. Not all students are required to use information technology in the presentation of their work.

47 Assignment and assessment briefs are generally clear and well structured. In most schools students are clear about the awarding of marks for their work. Generally, students' work is thoroughly marked and returned in a reasonable time with detailed written feedback including supportive comments. The correction of spelling and grammar varies across the college. In some schools the systems used to track students' progress through their course do not lead to agreed action by staff and students.

48 Teaching rooms were generally provided with appropriate learning aids in the form of whiteboards, chalkboards and overhead projectors although there were classes observed where this was not the case. Staff teaching students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities often had to carry their resources into classrooms. The effective use of teaching aids varied markedly across the sample of classes observed during the inspection. For example, several classes were seen where the use of poorly-prepared transparencies adversely affected the teaching. Similarly, the quality of handouts varied across the college.

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## STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

49 There was limited evidence of regular use of information technology in the samples of students' work inspected. For example, secretarial students were preparing portfolios which contained insufficient evidence of their familiarity with information technology. Some of the work included in these portfolios did not come up to commercial standards. Students on hairdressing courses were receiving insufficient encouragement to use information technology. However, assignment and project work was a strength of students' work on computing courses. Students were producing work to professional standards.

50 Students were achieving high levels of practical skills in several schools. The practical sessions inspected in art and design, stonemasonry, catering and hairdressing enabled students clearly to demonstrate their expertise. Students on language courses were willing and encouraged to use the language they were studying and generally showed a high degree of oral skills. In a higher level Spanish class, for example, part-time students were given written materials on topical issues in Spain. Each group was required to discuss the topic, take a stance on the issue and report to fellow students in a different group. Lively discussions were generated, all of which took place in Spanish.

51 The college's self-assessment report identified that there is, in general, a need for achievement data to be more vigorously evaluated at programme, school and college level as part of the drive for improvement. There are wide variations in retention rates, attendance and examination passes achieved by students.

52 There are several vocational programmes in the college where examination pass rates are high. In the school of community studies, 93.5 per cent of the 188 students on the school's five full-time courses achieved their qualification. All students on nine of the part-time health and community care courses were successful in gaining their qualification. In engineering 80 per cent of students on the BTEC first diploma in technology gained their award. Pass rates are generally good across the range of courses in construction and one student gained the runner-up place in a national competition for BTEC students. Stonework students were placed first and third in the individual placings for the national Skillbuild competition. Pass rates in BTEC national diplomas in hotel and catering and travel and tourism are also high. In some of the professional courses and the advanced GNVQ in the business school there are pass rates in excess of 90 per cent, including the BTEC higher national certificate in business studies.

53 Eighty-nine per cent of the 210 students aged 16-18 in their final year of study were successful on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education's 1994 performance tables. This places the college in the top third of colleges in the further education sector using this performance measure.

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54 Some achievements are less than satisfactory. For example, in engineering, of the 31 students who enrolled on the BTEC national diploma in mechatronics in 1992 only 12 gained their award in 1994. Of the nine students who started the BTEC national certificate in computer engineering only four students completed the first year. On some GNVQ programmes, pass rates have also been poor. Of the 25 students who enrolled for the intermediate GNVQ in business only 11 gained their qualification. Pass rates in City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) courses in recreation and leisure, cookery and general catering have shown a substantial decline over the past three years. Retention rates on the BTEC national diploma in performing arts are poor. Fifty per cent of the first year students did not transfer to the second year. Similarly, there have been significant numbers of students who have left the first year of the advanced GNVQ programme in art and design.

55 GCE A level results are also mixed. Results fluctuate from year to year and there is little consistency between subjects. For example, theatre studies GCE A level results have varied from a pass rate of 75 per cent in 1994 to 93 per cent in 1993 and 66 per cent in 1992. In languages, pass rates and numbers of students gaining higher grades are good. High pass rates in Italian, Spanish, French and German have been consistently obtained over the past three years. However, there are subjects where pass rates and grades are low. In psychology and sociology percentage pass rates have declined over the past three years from the middle sixties to the middle to low forties in 1993-94. In business studies, economics and law pass rates in 1993-94 were around 60 per cent. The 168 students aged 16-18 who were entered for GCE AS and GCE A level examinations in 1993-94 scored, on average, 3.2 points per entry (where A=10, E=2). This places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education.

56 There were 144 students enrolled for the full-time GCSE course in 1993-94. Of these only seven achieved four or more passes at grade A-C, while 58 did not pass in any subject. In general, adult students were more successful in GCSE examinations than students aged 16-18. Results in GCSE mathematics are above the national average for general further education colleges. The results in GCSE languages are consistently good: 90 per cent or more students frequently achieve grades A-C.

57 Retention rates supplied during the inspection by school staff show that a significant number of students have left courses prior to completion. In some, but not all, cases, detailed reasons were available for students' withdrawals. The pattern of retention varies across the college and most schools have at least one course where there is a retention problem. Courses specifically designed for adults and those in the school of community studies do not follow this trend.



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58 Patterns of student attendance also vary widely across the college. Attendance is poorest in GCSE and GCE A level classes where small classes and student absence is common. The attendance of students on some vocational programmes was also poor.

59 The collection of data on the destinations of full-time students is only partial in some schools. Of the 939 full-time students recorded as leaving the college in July 1994, there are intended destinations recorded for 382 and actual destinations for 267. The data are aggregated into appropriate categories. However, the low rate of returns means that the information is insufficiently comprehensive to be effective in course planning or marketing.

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

60 Course review, academic audits of courses and an internal validation process for new courses are the three main elements of quality assurance. A total quality management initiative three years ago involved training for senior and middle managers in problem solving and team building. This initiative has lapsed and the college is considering relaunching it. With the exception of senior and middle managers, staff have little awareness of what is meant by total quality management as a concept despite the college's declared adherence to it. They are much more aware of the standards stated in the college charter, of the long-established course review process and of the more recent academic audit system.

61 The college quality policy, which is intended to cover existing and new developments, was about to go to the college executive for approval at the time of the inspection. It describes quality assurance and development processes which are either already in use or are proposed. The policy statement has considerable potential for quality development throughout the institution. However, it does not address the way in which the college will set and review performance indicators such as student attendance, retention and examination pass rates.

62 The course review process is based on full-time and part-time students' views of the quality of provision. These are collected three times each year. At the end of the year, course leaders collate these views and the responses of staff into a report for the head of school, who subsequently produces one report for the whole school. All school reports are summarised into one report which is presented to the curriculum review and development committee, chaired by the deputy principal (curriculum). The college executive and academic board also receive the report.

63 The course review process, and in particular the end-of-year review, generate action plans. Heads of school and course leaders take action throughout the year on issues raised. However, some end of year course reviews do not identify who is responsible for action and the outcomes expected. The review process has yielded some improvements such as the relocation of an engineering course, better assignment planning in built

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environment courses, practical tutorials on the holistic therapies course and a thorough review of course publicity material by schools. The application of the review process, as well as the thoroughness of subsequent action planning, varies from course to course and school to school. Some end-of-year reviews and action plans do not provide a substantial enough basis for course evaluation or for quality improvement.

64 While course reviews include data on enrolments and examination pass rates, these figures are not included in the summary report that is presented to senior managers. A summary of examination results is reported to the academic board and the governing body.

65 An academic standards committee established in September 1994, selects courses for a day-long audit process. The audit team includes staff from other curriculum areas. The audit reports are a useful summary of aspects of the quality of provision, graded on a 1-5 scale modelled on the FEFC's quality assessment process. Audit reports are received by the curriculum review and development committee and academic board. Standard course or programme logs that include all the necessary documentation to manage a course or programme are being developed in some schools as quality management tools.

66 Some quality standards are stated in the college charter. For example, the complaints procedure commits the college to a response within 10 days and assignments are to be returned within two weeks of being handed to teaching staff. Some administrative staff are working to quality standards which they have set themselves. Apart from areas covered by the charter, other targets or benchmarks are mostly informal and are not being used to monitor quality improvement. No value-added calculations are currently being used on GCE A level courses.

67 New course proposals are submitted to the academic standards committee which assures itself that the proposed course has a potential market and the resources to support it before allowing it to proceed. The academic standards committee also receives external moderator and verifiers' reports from the deputy principal (curriculum) and attends to common issues. Procedures for internal verification of NVQ and GNVQ programmes vary but are being strengthened by the introduction of a college-wide standard process.

68 A staff-appraisal system is still under discussion. The principal has appraised heads of school and members of the senior executive. Each year staff members are required to complete a form identifying their training needs for the following year and an annual interview is undertaken, at which training needs are discussed. Heads of school and heads of division draw up training plans for their areas which are passed to the head of curriculum and staff development. These are used to complete the college's staff-development plan. This plan is a detailed, costed and prioritised account of proposed training based on the analysis of training needs in each school and division. There is a high level of

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staff-development activity for both academic and non-academic staff. The log of staff-development activity shows 500 individual entries for the first term of 1994-95 involving 284 separate staff. For the previous year the log shows over 2,000 entries.

69 The college strategic plan identifies eight priorities for training. However, the current training plan was drawn up before the strategic plan was produced. All applications for expenditure on staff training must be signed by the head of school and by the head of curriculum and staff development, who judges the application in the light of the college's strategic objectives. Heads of school are asked to declare whether or not the proposed activity is in their schools' staff-development plan. This general check on applications helps to link individual training needs to institutional priorities but is being hindered by the lack of a college-wide appraisal system. The staff-development policy, its detailed training targets and the appraisal scheme are still under consideration by the executive.

70 A modular induction programme which can be taken up at different times of the year is offered to all new full-time and part-time teaching and support staff. Induction is monitored and evaluated by questionnaires. New teaching staff are observed teaching but a system whereby experienced staff act as mentors to staff new to the college has lapsed.

71 The college is committed to the achievement of the Investors in People award and has conducted appropriate initial surveys, with a target date some time early in 1996. Staff interviewed showed a patchy knowledge and understanding of the nature and purpose of Investors in People.

72 The college provided the inspection team with a copy of its self-assessment report prior to the inspection. The report is clearly written and gives comprehensive coverage of the relevant areas of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Much of the report is descriptive rather than evaluative, although there are clear judgements made, for example, regarding the success of the new induction programme for full-time students. The section titled 'Students' Achievements' is the most evaluative section of the report and one which shows a high level of agreement with the judgements reached by the inspection team. The inspection findings generally supported the accuracy of the details and data included, but overall the report was insufficiently self-critical and there was limited reference to detailed supporting documentation.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Staffing**

73 The teaching staff are well qualified and experienced for the work they carry out. The majority have a degree or equivalent professional qualification and a teaching qualification. Many staff have relevant recent industrial or commercial experience across the range of disciplines.

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Thirty-five per cent of the teaching staff have been in post for less than five years. In general, part-time teachers are well qualified and bring substantial industrial or commercial experience to the various subject areas they support. The proportion of part-time teaching varies considerably across the schools from 1 per cent in engineering to close to 60 per cent in creative and performing arts and community studies. The high level of part-time teaching staff in some schools is adversely affecting the operation of course teams as some part-time staff are unable to attend course team meetings.

74 The college employs a range of well-qualified professional staff and technicians. Almost 50 per cent of college support staff have been in post for less than five years. There is technician support for the information technology equipment in engineering and in the school of information technology. A technician in the open-learning unit also provides support for its facilities. Outside these areas there is only one other technician to provide support for the rest of the information technology provision across the college. This is inadequate, particularly given the age of much of the equipment. Levels of technician support are also inadequate in art and design and performing arts. Staff in the open-learning centre provide an efficient and supportive service to students but the extent of the activity in the centre places considerable demands on them.

75 The personnel section operates a clear, well-documented policy for recruitment and selection. It also provides good guidance and support for the process of reviewing job requirements and producing job descriptions. The section is developing an effective computer-based personnel records system but as yet there is no link to staff-development records. The personnel section carries out detailed monitoring of ethnic origin, gender and disability.

#### **Equipment/learning resources**

76 The provision of equipment is adequate in the majority of specialist areas and good in hotel and catering, hairdressing and beauty therapy and in performing arts. Hotel and catering and hairdressing and beauty therapy have benefited from the move into the new Ralph Allen building where major capital investment in new equipment has resulted in outstanding facilities. The college has invested most of its capital funding for equipment over the past two years in central college provision such as the open-learning centre. There remain significant equipment deficiencies in engineering, business and management, information technology, art and design and adult education.

77 The development of college-wide provision in information technology has been slow and there is considerable variation in the quality of provision between different areas. The open-learning centre has good provision. The 500 computers in the college results in a student to workstation ratio of 7:1 although less than half of these could be described as being of a high

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specification. The college now has a comprehensive strategy for the development of information technology. A considerable amount of the infra-structure needed for the communications network is in place.

78 The open-learning centre is part of the school of educational innovation which has produced some user guides and introductory booklets of high quality. The centre has 21,000 users per month. It has been developed over the last two years on the ground floor of the William Herschel building and is an outstanding resource. It combines traditional library study support with a range of media and information technology services, including compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database and reprographic facilities. Careful organisation of the space has provided a careers area, a key skills area and a mathematics workshop in a pleasant spacious open plan setting. The financial resourcing of the open-learning centre has, to some extent, been at the expense of the bookstock and the furniture for general study space. The current bookstock is low, at less than half the Library Association's recommendation, and much of it is dated and in need of review. There is a need for the open-learning centre to develop more formal links with the academic sections to develop a long-term strategy to improve the general bookstock. The current furniture provides a total of 158 user spaces, about half the provision needed. There is scope for a considerable increase in the number of study spaces without detracting from the overall quality of the environment.

#### **Accommodation**

79 The college is located on five sites. The quality of accommodation on these sites varies between extremes. The redeployment of accommodation on the ground floor of the William Herschel building has resulted in an open-learning centre development of first class quality and the new gallery in the original technical college building, jointly developed with the city council, provides another outstanding space. The computer-aided design suite on the top floor of the John Wood building and the reception services 'shop' are good examples of imaginative development of space.

80 The great majority of the accommodation is, however, of an indifferent standard. Entrances, corridors, communal spaces and many of the computer rooms are drab and uninviting. Many teaching and specialist rooms are in need of redecoration and refurbishment. In some areas inadequate cleaning and general maintenance worsens the situation.

81 During the inspection, effective teaching was often hindered by the accommodation provided. In engineering, specialist accommodation was often bleak and poorly furnished and in science laboratories were functional rather than welcoming. Some rooms used for business courses and classrooms used for courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for some basic education courses, were poorly decorated and inadequately heated. The college theatre, in its present form, does not meet any of the teaching or other requirements well. It is the subject of a consultant's report on the future of the facility.

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82 Access for students with restricted mobility is difficult on all sites. There is no wheelchair access at some of the annexes.

83 The college is well aware of the problems inherent in its buildings and has devoted a great deal of effort to producing a comprehensive accommodation strategy. This is based on four detailed studies completed with professional advice from external consultants and is closely linked to the overall college development plan.

#### **CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES**

84 The college is making good progress towards achieving its overall aims. The strengths of the college are:

- a committed governing body fulfilling its role with a clear understanding of the issues facing the college
- a well-communicated strategic vision resulting in consultative strategic-planning processes
- well-qualified and experienced staff with relevant industrial and commercial experience who generally provide a good standard of teaching
- a wide range of courses and a broad range of client groups including international links
- positive steps taken to improve enrolments
- generally satisfactory information, admissions and interviewing procedures
- the establishment of an open-learning centre as an outstanding resource
- some recently-developed accommodation of high quality.

85 In continuing to raise the standards, the college should address the following:

- the poor management information system
- unsatisfactory attendance, retention and examination pass rates in some courses
- the further development of quality assurance policy and procedures to provide a more consistent and comprehensive approach
- the implementation and monitoring of an equal opportunities policy which addresses the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- the role of the academic board
- the education and training needs of employers and the role of advisory committees
- the assessment and monitoring of a number of the college's new initiatives

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- the deployment of some part-time teaching staff and college services staff
  - the level of information technology equipment and some poor specialist equipment
  - much poor accommodation some of which is drab, uninviting and lacks adequate cleaning
  - wheelchair access to several buildings.

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## FIGURES

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- |   |                                                                    |
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| 1 | Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95) |
| 2 | Percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)                             |
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| 4 | Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)     |
| 5 | Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995)                      |
| 6 | Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)                 |
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**Note:** the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.

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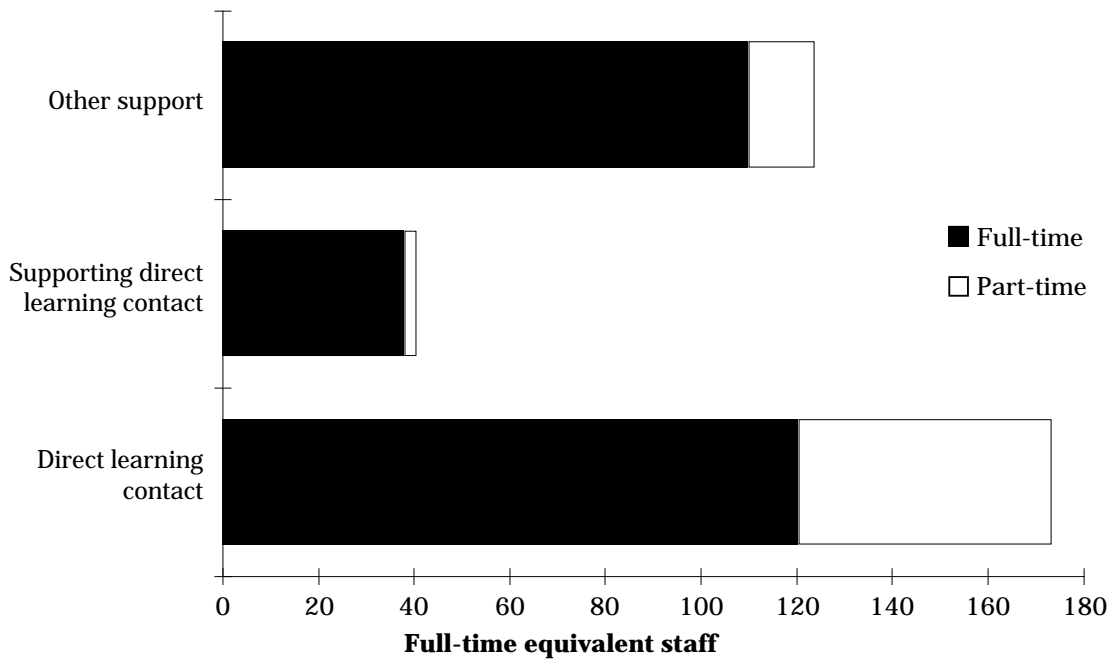


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**Figure 1**

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**City of Bath College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)**



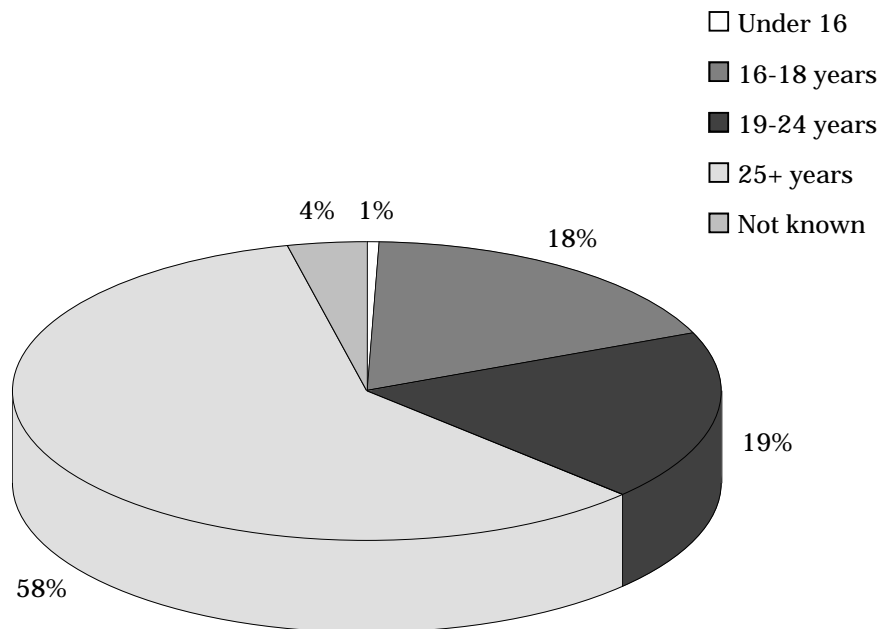
Full-time equivalent staff: 338

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**Figure 2**

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**City of Bath College: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)**



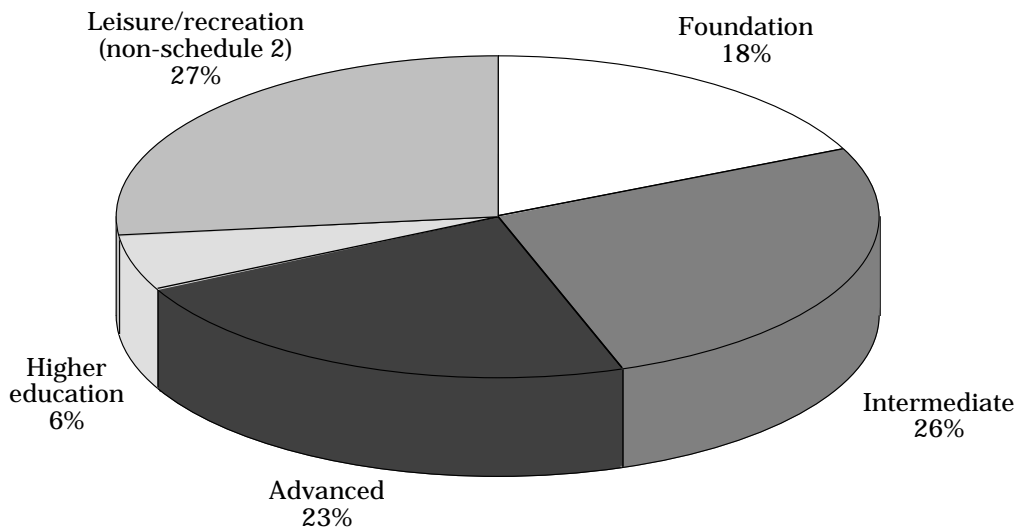
Enrolments: 12,232

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**Figure 3**

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**City of Bath College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)**



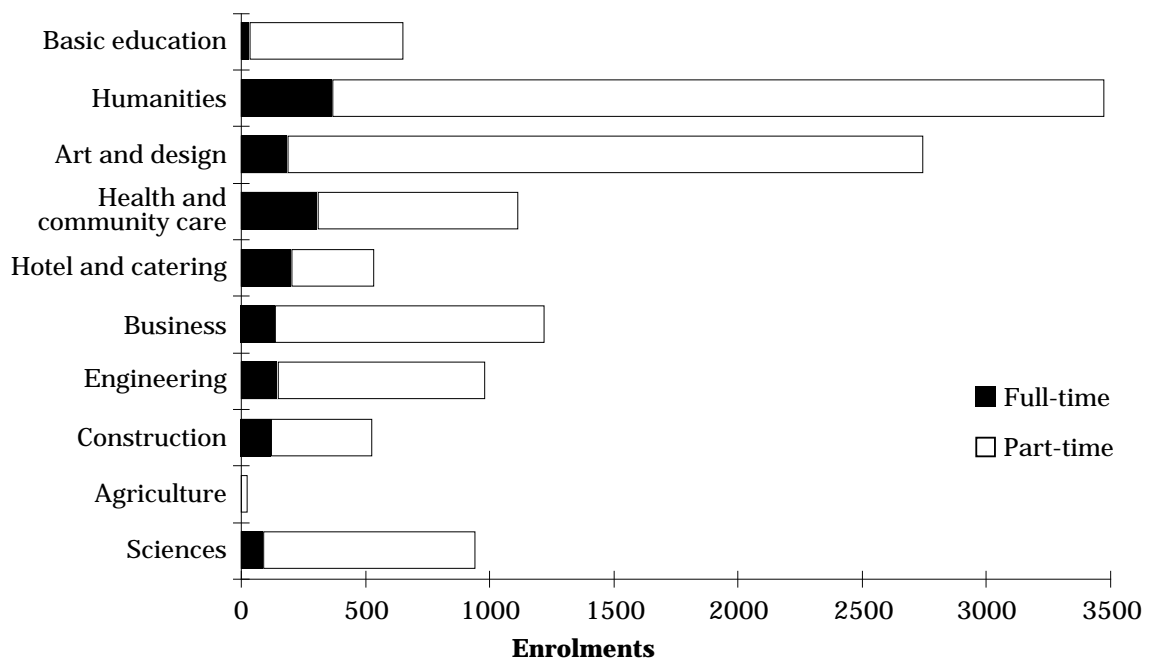
Enrolments: 12,232

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**Figure 4**

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**City of Bath College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)**



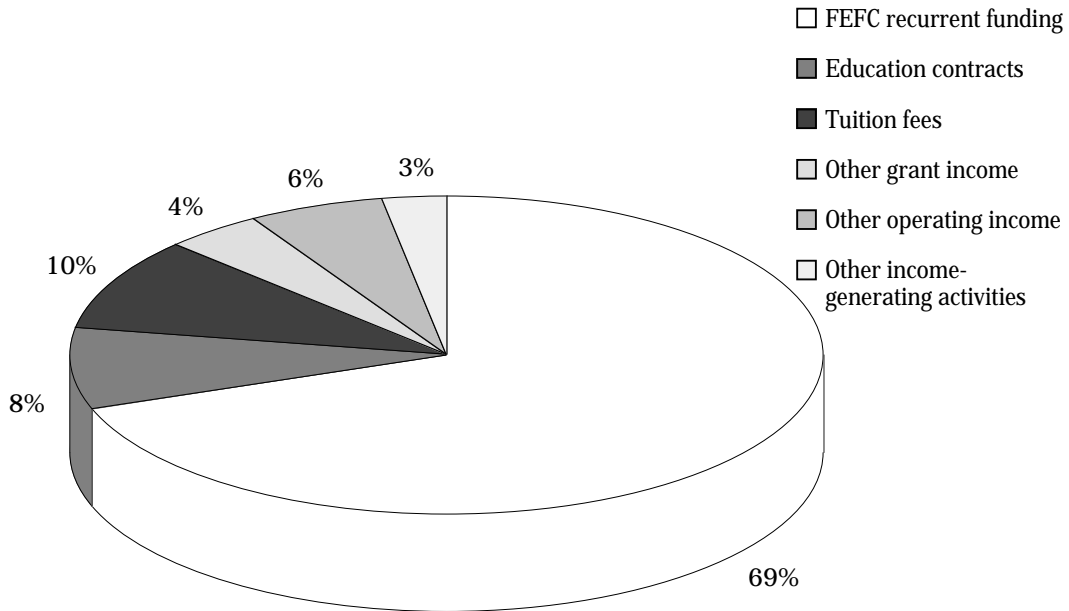
Enrolments: 12,232

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**Figure 5**

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**City of Bath College: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995)**



Estimated income: £12,746,000

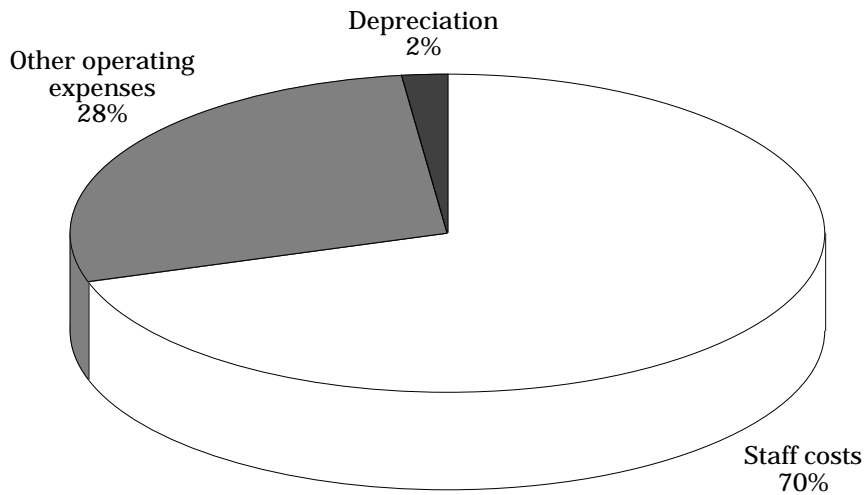
*Note: this chart excludes £63,000 capital grants.*

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**Figure 6**

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**City of Bath College: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)**



Estimated expenditure: £12,540,000

*Note: this chart excludes £41,000 interest payable.*

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