

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

City of Bristol College

August 1997

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

College grade profiles 1993-96

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 106/97

CITY OF BRISTOL COLLEGE

SOUTH WEST REGION

Inspected September 1996-May 1997

Summary

City of Bristol College was established in 1996 as a result of the merger of Brunel College of Arts and Technology and South Bristol College. The new college is successfully pursuing its mission to increase the range of educational opportunities available to the communities it serves. It provides a wide range of courses and many opportunities for students to make progress on to more advanced courses. The college is effectively governed and managed. In some subjects, pass rates for students who complete their courses are good. Teaching in many subjects is effective; particularly so in hairdressing. Many students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are taking a wide range of courses and are well supported on them. Arrangements for managing budgets are clear and effective. Links with local communities, employers and the local TEC are productive. There are effective arrangements for the internal verification of assessment standards and the validation of new courses. The college's self-assessment report is a frank and useful document. The college should; improve retention rates and pass rates; strengthen the links between curriculum areas; improve the management and monitoring of tutorial support; provide more accurate and complete data on its students and their achievements; ensure governors are more involved in monitoring college finances; strengthen the procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of college policies; improve co-ordination between student services and college faculties; continue to develop quality assurance procedures; and address the underuse of teaching accommodation in some areas.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Mathematics, science and information technology	3	Health and social care	2
Construction	3	Hairdressing	1
Engineering	3	Art, design and the performing arts	3
Business studies	2	Humanities	2
Catering, leisure and tourism	2	Adult basic education	3
		Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2

INTRODUCTION

1 City of Bristol College was inspected between December 1996 and May 1997. Business studies was inspected in March and April 1996. Enrolment and induction procedures were inspected in September 1996. The remaining curriculum areas and aspects of cross-college provision were inspected between March and May 1997. Twenty-five inspectors spent 123 days in the college. They observed 404 classes and met: students, parents, teachers, support staff and managers; governors of the college; representatives of the Western Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), Careers Service West, the University of the West of England and community organisations; staff from partner schools; and local employers. Inspectors inspected students' practical and written work and observed meetings of governors, college managers and staff. An auditor from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) joined inspectors for the inspection of governance and management.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 City of Bristol College, one of the largest in the south west, was formed in August 1996 as the result of the merger of Brunel College of Arts and Technology and South Bristol College. The college operates on three main sites. The Brunel centre at Ashley Down is the largest, based on a 32 acre site two miles north of the city centre. In the south of the city, the college has centres in Bedminster and Hartcliffe.

3 On 1 November 1996 there were 14,498 students enrolled at the college, of whom 81 per cent were over the age of 18 and 74 per cent were studying part time. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3. There are 622 full-time equivalent staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents is shown in figure 4.

4 The city of Bristol and its surrounding urban area have a population of approximately 600,000. The unemployment rate in the Bristol travel-to-work area in November 1996 was 5.5 per cent, 1.2 per cent less than the national average. Unemployment rates are significantly higher in some inner city and outer housing estate areas. Many jobs in the city are in the financial services sector. Developments on the northern edge of the city, including the relocation of the Ministry of Defence procurement service, have provided many new jobs. The number of clerical, secretarial, skilled manual and machine operator posts is expected to decline in the next few years. In 1995, 73 per cent of school-leavers remained in full-time education. The number who continued their studies in schools and the number who entered further education were approximately equal.

5 The college is the largest of the five FEFC-funded colleges in the Bristol area. The other colleges are Filton College, Soundwell College, the College of Care and Early Education and St Brendan's Sixth Form College. There are also further education colleges in Bath (12 miles away), Norton

Radstock (16 miles) and Weston-super-Mare (25 miles). City of Bristol College has particularly close ties with five schools for pupils aged 11 to 16 in the South Bristol Federation. In 1995-96, school-leavers from 61 secondary schools were enrolled. Eighty-two per cent of students come from Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset.

6 The senior management team comprises the principal, two vice-principals, and the finance director. The vice-principal (operations and curriculum) manages the heads of the 14 teaching faculties, learning resources, staff and curriculum development. The vice-principal (marketing and client services) manages the head of faculty of corporate training and the heads of student services, training services, marketing services and schools liaison. The finance director manages the heads of information systems, student data management, and finance. Managers with responsibility for human resources, corporate services, quality assurance and estates, report directly to the principal.

7 The college's mission statement refers to 'a comprehensive range of learning opportunities which will promote educational opportunity and equality to enable individuals and their communities to shape a better future'. An important part of the rationale for the merger which created the college was to build on the existing specialisms of Brunel and South Bristol colleges and to extend the range of opportunities for education and training offered to the people of the city.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 The college effectively pursues its mission to promote educational opportunity and equality. It offers a wide range of courses and a growing choice of study methods to suit people of different ages and abilities. The established specialisms of the former Brunel College of Arts and Technology in vocational and technological provision and those of the former South Bristol College in community education are being built upon in order to meet the needs of local communities and school-leavers. The college does much for people from groups which are sometimes under represented in further education. A high proportion of students are studying at foundation level (24 per cent) and at intermediate level (44 per cent). Seventy-eight per cent of students are over 19 years old. There are many students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on a wide range of courses. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups reflects the multi-ethnic nature of the community served by the college.

9 There are opportunities for students to progress through courses at different levels in all the FEFC's programme areas. The college is a major provider of courses in engineering, care, catering, construction, design, hairdressing and beauty therapy. There are 12 advanced, nine intermediate and eight foundation level general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) programmes. National vocational qualifications (NVQs) are offered in 39 subjects at levels 1 to 3. They can be pursued in

various ways and may include assessment in the workplace. There are 18 Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diplomas and certificates and three BTEC first diplomas and certificates. Many other courses leading to vocational awards at various levels are offered in subjects ranging from aero-engineering to innkeeping. There is little formal accreditation of the knowledge and skills gained by students prior to joining the college.

10 The college has a good range of general certificate of education advanced supplementary/advanced level (GCE AS/A level) courses which can be studied full time or part time. Thirty-one subjects at GCE A level were offered for full-time study in 1996-97, several with the option of modular syllabuses. Part-time and one-year intensive GCE A levels were offered in 22 subjects, through day or evening classes or by distance learning. Eight GCE AS subjects are being studied in 1996-97. Some GCE A level groups are small. General certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects may be studied full time or part time in 16 subjects. The college's learning centres provide materials for students to study on their own, with tutorial support.

11 Some higher education courses are offered which reflect the curriculum strengths of the college and complement those available at the two universities in the city. Seven higher national diploma and nine higher national certificate courses are available. Subjects include hotel and catering, computer graphics, applied biology and aeronautical engineering. The college is a partner college of the University of the West of England which validates four of the college's higher national diplomas. Professional qualifications are available to part-time students through NVQs at levels 4 and 5. A certificate in education programme is franchised from the University of Wales. Access courses for adults to prepare for higher education are offered in 11 subjects including art and design, environmental studies, law, technology, women's studies and science.

12 The college makes extensive provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Effective liaison with external agencies ensures support for such students when they join courses and when they leave the college. Link courses have been established for students from special schools which allow them to spend part of the week on vocational work in the college. Many such students later take courses at the college. The college's commitment to students with disabilities is demonstrated by its work with deaf students. At the time of the inspection, 59 deaf students were studying on a range of different courses.

13 The college, in collaboration with eight community organisations, provides many educational opportunities for adults and young people in local communities. For example, an information technology programme recruits well at a social centre on a large housing estate. Adult basic education and other classes for adults are run at over 30 venues. Approximately 500 unemployed adults attend accredited courses, for

example in construction, catering and engineering. A college bus tours the area to provide guidance on educational opportunities. There are childcare facilities available at Bedminster and Brunel.

14 The college's marketing strategy clearly supports its strategic plan. Labour market information is used effectively to inform curriculum planning. There has been a gradual change in the style and content of publicity material aimed at familiarising the community with the new college. This strategy is proving effective. Publicity materials are attractive and informative. Advertisements appear regularly in the cinema and on radio. The college participates in exhibitions and promotional activities in Bristol throughout the year. Data on the college's current students are not used effectively to support marketing. For example, there is no systematic analysis of initial enquiries and of the destinations and success rates of students as a means of informing course planning.

15 The college's relationships with local schools are generally good despite considerable competition for students in the Bristol area. The links are closer with the 11 to 16 schools in the south of the city than they are with schools in other areas. There is an extensive programme to inform local school pupils about college courses. The college is a partner in the city's planning group for education and training for those over the age of 16 and it is represented at many careers events, conferences and parents' days throughout the year. College students visit their former schools to describe their courses. There are joint projects with seven local schools to introduce students to vocational programmes such as NVQs. The emphasis is on vocational choices as GCE A levels are widely available elsewhere in the city. Last year, 180 students from local schools participated in link programmes. A small number of students attend the college before the age of 16, with the agreement of their schools and the local education authority (LEA).

16 The college has effective links with employers. These links are stronger in some curriculum areas than in others. Several of the college's vocational areas have advisory boards which enable employers who are members to comment on provision. The provision of short courses leading to qualifications for employees has been a catalyst for longer-term links with employers. For example, a large catering company guarantees to employ six students from the college each year and offers weekly work experience to catering students. Catering staff work closely with the licensed trade to provide innkeeping training. Specialist courses related to working in confined spaces have been developed with a manufacturer of large diameter pipes. Business courses are provided for local clients. These are often adapted to meet specific requirements and training and assessment are frequently conducted in the workplace. The college has recently made a successful bid to the government's competitiveness fund for £500,000 to set up a new integrated engineering centre. Employers have been closely involved and have made substantial contributions to the project.

17 The Western TEC, sees the college as a responsive partner. Its surveys show that trainees are positive about their college experiences and that the college is well regarded by local employers. The college has responded promptly to the modern apprenticeship initiative; there were approximately 100 trainees involved on modern apprenticeships at the time of the inspection. TEC funding has been obtained to set up a computerised data network between college sites and to support the college's business training centre.

18 Students are able to take courses such as information technology, GCSE subjects, art or languages, in addition to their main programme. However, the college does not ensure that all full-time students have access to work experience or to a wide range of enrichment opportunities, nor does it adequately monitor the take-up of such opportunities by students. There is an established pattern of European links in some subjects. Students in France, Italy, Spain and Germany were involved with college students in a major project on social integration and multiculturalism in Europe. The results of the project were published throughout the European Union.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

19 There are 20 governors: 12 from business, a TEC nominee, three co-opted members, two members of staff, one student and the principal. Twelve of them previously served South Bristol College or Brunel College of Arts and Technology and this has helped to provide continuity during the merger and subsequently. Members of the board have experience of business, estates, personnel, law, finance, media, education, and technology. Three are women. There are currently two vacancies. The search committee has identified the skills and experience required of new members. Two accountants who are not governors have been co-opted to assist the audit committee.

20 Meetings of the full board take place regularly, are well attended and effectively minuted. The distinction between governance and management is clearly understood. In addition to formal meetings, the chair of the corporation meets regularly with the principal. There is a code of conduct and a register of members' interests. Training events have been held to inform members about matters relating to the college. A formal procedure for evaluating the board's performance has been established. Governors monitor the college's performance by receiving reports and statistical data from college managers. They do not, however, monitor students' achievements against agreed performance indicators.

21 There are committees for finance and general purposes, audit, search and remuneration. At the time of the inspection, the finance and general purposes committee had met only twice since the merger. It had not had sufficient opportunity to comply fully with its terms of reference. More regular meetings are now scheduled. Although governors take seriously

their responsibilities for overseeing the college's financial strategy, they have not been considering the college's financial performance in sufficient detail.

22 The process for developing the college's new strategic plan is consultative and effective. The framework is established by the governors. The heads of faculty and of support units meet with senior managers to decide the programme of courses they will offer, and on which their budgets will be based. Senior managers then draft the strategic plan which is subsequently reviewed and approved by the governors. All staff contribute to operating plans through course, subject and support unit reviews. The operating plans are linked to the college's strategic objectives. Although there is a common format for these plans, their quality and the amount of detail they contain varies.

23 The college has appropriate policies on a range of issues, including equal opportunities, health and safety and various aspects of the curriculum. Policies are approved by the academic board and the governors. Procedures for monitoring and reviewing their effectiveness and for reporting to governors on their implementation are not yet fully effective.

24 The senior managers provide open and supportive leadership which inspires confidence among staff, students and governors. Considerable changes have been managed effectively. An interim management structure was established for 1996-97 pending the creation of a new structure for September 1997. An organisational review took place in December 1996 and the proposals generated were revised following consultation with staff. The new structure was approved by governors in February 1997. The reorganisation began in March 1997 when 18 faculties were reduced to 15. The reorganisation of support units was nearing completion at the time of the inspection. The primary responsibilities of each faculty and support unit are clearly identified. The college is committed to devolving responsibility for decision making and control to the lowest level in the organisation that can effectively discharge that responsibility. At the time of the inspection, the organisational structure below head of faculty was being determined, in consultation with staff.

25 Senior and middle managers have clear roles and responsibilities which others within the college understand. They meet regularly. A management team comprising senior managers, managers of faculties and support units and administrators meets once a term. Heads of faculty meet formally once a month with the senior management team, and monthly on their own. The curriculum support group meets fortnightly and is chaired by a member of the senior management team. The regular discussion of academic, financial and strategic matters at these meetings is effectively fostering a shared understanding of many issues.

26 Information and management decisions are communicated to staff effectively. The principal and other senior managers are accessible to

staff. There is a sense of common purpose and direction. Communications are a regular item on the management team agenda. Most of the staff interviewed by inspectors said they were well briefed and understood the reasons for decisions even when they did not agree with them. A bulletin is produced fortnightly, and has contributions from staff across the college. It is valued by staff as an effective means of communicating policy and staff views. There is a new telephone system, incorporating voice mail. Staff working on different sites find this facility particularly useful.

27 Faculties vary considerably in size and in the style and effectiveness of their management. In many respects, courses are managed effectively. Some of the weaker aspects of curriculum management are related to working across two or more sites which have different traditions. They include a lack of communication between staff on the different sites, a failure to work together on curriculum development and a failure to share good practice in methods of teaching and learning. Some heads of faculty have already begun to address these weaknesses.

28 The academic board is developing into a valuable forum for the discussion of academic policy issues. Its termly meetings involve open and sometimes spirited debate. For the first year of its operation, the academic board has been unusually large, with 35 members who were formerly members of the academic boards of Brunel College of Arts and Technology or South Bristol College. The board was due for reconstitution soon after the time of the inspection. Academic board minutes are received by the corporation.

29 There is an effective system of budget management. Approximately two-thirds of the college's income is devolved to faculties. Faculty budgets are directly related to student numbers. The system of financial allocation is well understood by budget holders who receive clear monthly accounts. They have received useful written guidelines and training. Budgeting issues are a regular agenda item at management meetings, and the principalship monitors the monthly accounts with budget holders. The governors receive financial reports every two months. Managers know the cost of staff for whom they are responsible and there is a growing awareness of the cost of provision among course and subject leaders.

30 The computerised management information systems used at Brunel College of Arts and Technology and South Bristol College were incompatible. The college is in the process of developing a co-ordinated system which should simplify the production of data and make them more reliable. At present, the information on students is incomplete. Data held by course teams on enrolment, retention rates, achievement and progression sometimes conflict with those held centrally. Difficulties have been mitigated by the fact that managers have been keeping their own records which have been used to generate agreed enrolment targets.

31 No targets are set for retention rates. They are monitored at faculty level and were last reviewed in December 1996 when it was discovered

that the information on record was insufficiently accurate. Improving retention has been identified as a strategic priority by senior management. The college collects information on the destinations of its full-time students and some of its part-time students.

32 In 1995-96, South Bristol College achieved 99 per cent of its enrolment target and Brunel College of Arts and Technology exceeded its enrolment target by 29 per cent. Following the merger of the two colleges, City of Bristol College expects to achieve its overall target of FEFC-funded units in 1996-97. Brunel College of Arts and Technology average level of funding for 1995-96 was £23.27 per unit. South Bristol College's average level of funding for 1995-96 was £18.50 per unit. In 1996-97, the City of Bristol College's average level of funding is £20.64 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges for 1996-97 is £17.97 per unit. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

33 Prospective students are given accurate information about courses by qualified guidance staff at each centre. There are many advice and information events at the college and elsewhere. Curriculum specialists and guidance staff are generally present at such events. Enquirers are referred by student services to guidance staff, the Careers Service West or faculty staff as appropriate. Enquiries are recorded, but no consistent analysis is made of referrals for guidance or other services. At each centre, there are guidance staff with particular expertise in the concerns of adult students.

34 Applications are promptly acknowledged. For September 1996, students were recruited to the two separate colleges to which they had applied before the merger, in order to avoid confusing applicants. The process of application varied according to the faculty, the centre or the course and in some instances applications were not centrally recorded. A working party has reviewed systems and devised common standards for admissions. A detailed admissions policy and guidelines for interviewing have been agreed.

35 Most students receive an adequate introduction to the college, its services and their courses. There are detailed guidelines for college induction which the faculties supplement with their own material. A common checklist is included in the full-time and part-time students' learning agreements. In September 1996, induction to the new City of Bristol College generally proceeded smoothly and effectively.

36 All college centres offer an appropriate range of student support services, including vocational adult guidance, financial advice and general careers information. Referrals are made to specialist careers advice as necessary. At the Bedminster and Hartcliffe centres, student services staff assess students' guidance needs and arrange interviews with specialists.

At Brunel, specialist staff are on hand in the advice and guidance centre, which is located in the main reception area. It is intended that these central services should meet the needs of the increasing number of part-time students, who do not generally have the same level of regular tutorial support as full-time students. It is difficult to assess whether or not this is happening, as the staff concerned do not have a common system of record keeping, and do not identify the age or mode of attendance of their clients. The accommodation service deals with approximately 700 students every year. A member of the team specialises in the needs of students from overseas.

37 Learning support is provided by the faculty of learning services. All full-time and some part-time students complete initial assessments in literacy and numeracy and the results are passed to the learning support team for action. Students may also refer themselves for support. Support is provided at Bedminster mainly by allocating support tutors to work with students in their classes, and at Brunel mainly through additional individual tuition. The process of identifying needs has worked well, but large numbers of students, particularly at Brunel, have not taken up the learning support which their assessment suggests they require. Support for students of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and for adult basic education students at Bedminster is well co-ordinated. At Brunel, however, there are different approaches to assessment for these two groups and ESOL students do not have individual learning plans.

38 Many students appreciate the support and guidance they receive from their tutors, but tutorial support is more effective in some areas than in others. All full-time students are entitled to a minimum of one timetabled hour each week for tutorial support and to individual tutorials for reviewing progress at least twice a year. However, progress reviews do not always take place as they should. Personal tutors are managed by the faculties. Senior tutors, one for each faculty, meet once a term with the head of student services to discuss tutorial matters. Subsequently, senior tutors are expected to feed back the outcomes of these meetings to tutors in their faculties. There is no requirement for meetings of tutors to take place and there is no formal process for overseeing tutors' performance. Part-time students receive varying degrees of tutorial support: on some courses, teachers set aside time for tutorials and learning support; on other courses, the senior tutor is identified as the point of contact for part-time students. In some cases, individual teachers respond informally to part-time students' tutorial needs. The degree of co-operation between the faculty-based tutorial provision and the central student support services varies. For example, careers guidance staff have regular contact with tutors in some subjects, but little contact with others. The learning support team has experienced difficulty in retrieving the results of the initial assessments of literacy and numeracy skills from some tutors.

39 School-leavers applying to the college are asked to bring their record of achievement with them to their admission interview. During their time

at the college, students are encouraged, with varying degrees of success, to maintain their records of achievement. Access to higher education and GNVQ students record their progress in a portfolio; GCE A level students receive twice-yearly reports. The college procedures for recording achievement are not followed rigorously by all staff.

40 Careers education is the responsibility of course teams. In some areas it is not being delivered, either by course teams or through tutorial meetings. Five careers advisers offer interviews at Bedminster and Brunel on each day of the week. Many more students take up the offer of careers interviews at Brunel than they do at Bedminster and careers advisers at Bedminster also meet with proportionately fewer classes or tutorial groups. Nevertheless, a short course for adults, accredited by the Open College Network, has been run at Bedminster, to promote effective careers choices. Careers and higher education references are written by tutors, using guidelines provided by student services. There is no systematic checking of references or monitoring of their quality.

41 The college has a commitment to the inclusion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in all aspects of its provision. Students receive assistance during lessons and there is attention to individual learning needs. Support is particularly evident on GNVQ foundation and vocational preparation programmes. A useful staff guide has been produced by the learning support team. The teams who provide support for students with disabilities are particularly effective.

42 The college provides a confidential counselling service and there are clear procedure for referral. Although the waiting list for appointments is sometimes as long as two weeks, emergencies are usually accommodated within two hours. The welfare counsellors combine general welfare advice with personal counselling. Records of counselling interviews are not kept and this makes it difficult for the college to analyse levels or types of demand.

43 Low attendance is a significant cause for concern on some courses. The college does not have a uniform policy for monitoring attendance or for reporting absences to course tutors. The effectiveness with which attendance is monitored varies between faculties.

44 The students' association is well supported by the college. However, some students feel that the current system of course representatives does not provide them with adequate opportunities to express their concerns, such as the lack of common room space. The college provides a programme of support for overseas students, which operates mainly at the beginning of the academic year. Some students and parents expressed their disappointment at the lack of a social dimension to college life.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

45 The strengths outweighed the weaknesses in 62 per cent of the lessons inspected. This compares with 63 per cent for all colleges inspected during

the 1995-96 academic year according to the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. In 8 per cent of classes, weaknesses outweighed strengths. Average attendance at the lessons inspected was 75 per cent, compared with an average of 76 per cent for all colleges inspected in 1995-96 according to the same report. The following table shows the grades awarded to the sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	4	25	17	3	0	49
GCSE	0	9	4	0	0	13
GNVQ	17	32	27	6	1	83
NVQ	25	24	14	5	1	69
Other vocational	13	47	28	6	0	94
Higher education and access	6	12	7	1	0	26
Other*	10	26	24	8	2	70
Total	75	175	121	29	4	404

* includes adult basic education, access to further education and some of the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

46 In science, some of the lessons were well structured and made clear the links between theory and laboratory work. In general, however, the range of teaching methods was narrow and little use was made of audio-visual aids. The criteria for assessing students' work were rarely explained to them. Insufficient attention was given to safe working practices in laboratories. In computing, there were useful schemes of work. Students understood the objectives of most sessions. However, the pace at which some lessons were taught was unnecessarily slow and most teachers gave insufficient guidance to students on the design of computer programmes. In mathematics, there was a suitable range of investigative practical work. Teachers provided good feedback to students about their homework and coursework. In one good GCE A level mathematics class, a short review of theory was followed by a well-organised session in the computer room. The teacher provided a useful assignment sheet which guided students through the work without denying them a sense of discovery. In a number of sessions, the late arrival of students attracted little comment from the teacher.

47 In practical sessions in construction, teachers provided effective demonstrations. Carefully-prepared guidance notes and instructions were issued to the students. Teachers drew on the vocational experiences of older students. Much of the teaching was carefully pitched to meet the varied needs of the students and good use was made of the learning resource centre and other learning resources in the faculty. Teachers

were careful to check what students had learned. Some theory lessons lacked variety. For example, there were lengthy periods when students did nothing except copy down notes from the board and students' concentration often lapsed. The presentation of assignments was inconsistent. Assessment criteria were often not clear.

48 In engineering, students clearly enjoyed the practical elements of their courses. Teachers' experience and enthusiasm, and their use of varied and appropriate teaching methods also helped to maintain students' interest during theory lessons. For example, in one lively and effective presentation the teacher introduced several small items of electrical equipment and encouraged students to speculate about the likely output from the equipment. In aero-engineering, theoretical work was effectively supported by practical work in laboratories, in workshops and on the college's aircraft at Bristol airport. Some good-quality teaching materials were used in computer-aided design and electronics. In some of the less successful sessions, there was too much dictation and not enough checking on what the students were learning. The assessment criteria for students' assignments were not always clear and teachers offered little comment or guidance on some of the written work produced by students.

49 Most sessions in business studies were well organised and managed. Teachers put their specialist knowledge to good effect. Their explanations were clear. Students' attention was kept firmly focused on the knowledge and skills needed to gain the qualification. Students were given valuable opportunities for work experience. In much GNVQ work, the teaching of key skills was effectively integrated with other elements of the course. Many teachers were alert to the individual needs and progress of their students. However, in a few sessions the pace of the work was too slow and teachers did not give enough attention to checking students' understanding and progress.

50 In leisure, tourism and catering, many teachers were skilled at dealing with the varied needs of students. Some practical catering lessons were outstanding, especially at foundation level. Key skills activities were closely related to the students' main areas of work. In the most effective sessions, teachers provided clear, effective explanations and made good use of the overhead projector and other visual aids. Students on navigation and seamanship courses were being well prepared for their examinations. In many food service lessons, the work was not sufficiently demanding and students were failing to develop their abilities. Some teaching, including some team teaching, on leisure and tourism courses was very effective. However, teaching and course organisation on some of the advanced level courses was unsatisfactory. There was a lack of collaboration between the two centres running courses at this level. Key skills achievements were not properly recorded.

51 Health and social care teachers used a wide variety of teaching methods, principally involving students working individually and in small

groups. Individual research by students was encouraged. Small group discussions were observed and supported by the teacher. Role-play was well used, for example to simulate employment interviews and social care case conferences. The work in many of these sessions was stimulating and purposeful, challenging students' existing knowledge and attitudes. Many of the work experience placements were well organised and well managed. A few lessons were less successfully managed, or lacked a clear focus. Learning support needs were assessed, but some of the younger students were reluctant to accept assistance and thought that attendance at learning support sessions would identify them as failures. Learning support was neither integrated with the rest of their work nor included within tutorial activity.

52 Teaching in hairdressing and beauty therapy was very effective at extending students' skills and knowledge. Sessions were well planned and closely related to the needs of the industry. Teachers set high standards. Students were well informed of their progress, and clear targets were established for further improvement. Key skills work was closely related to hairdressing and beauty studies. Some courses were organised into modules which made it easier for adults to join at times of the year which suited them. Students on these courses were helped to devise individual learning plans.

53 In art, design, media studies and the performing arts, the quality of teaching varied widely between different centres, and between different specialist areas. Many teachers used an appropriate variety of teaching methods. In the better practical sessions they helped students while still encouraging them to develop their own ideas. In the visual arts, contextual and historical studies were generally well integrated with practical work. Some effective assignments gave students the opportunity to develop their specialist skills to a professional standard. Part-time lecturers made a valuable contribution with their up-to-date specialist skills. For example, a large music technology project had been moderated by visiting studio professionals. In less successful sessions, students had little idea of the professional standards they should be achieving. A few intermediate level sessions were poorly managed. Some GNVQ teaching and assignment setting was too directive and left little room for students to develop their own ideas. In the performing arts, there was some good work by students, but staff and students' morale was low. This area of work is being discontinued. The college collaborates with another organisation to offer dance and movement therapy qualifications for those working with people who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This work is well-organised, appropriately accommodated and well taught.

54 Humanities students experienced a variety of learning activities which helped them to develop wider skills. Teachers took account of their individual needs and experiences. Teaching and learning were supported by well-chosen resources including visual aids. Written work was set regularly and marked carefully. Teachers gave detailed written comments.

In some cases, students were given opportunities to assess themselves. In some of the weaker sessions there was too much dependence on teachers' inputs; there was too little questioning of students and not enough checking on their progress and understanding. Access to higher education courses included opportunities for individual and group presentations which developed students' self-confidence, teamwork skills and oral expression. In foreign languages, work was consistently conducted in the language being taught, and students benefited from listening to, and talking with native speakers. Many of the teaching materials were challenging and interesting. In some carefully-planned sessions for students of English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers succeeded in creating a high level of interest and an enjoyable learning atmosphere.

55 There was some effective teaching on courses in basic education and ESOL. Teachers showed sensitivity towards the varied economic and social difficulties of students. Basic education teachers valued and built on the experiences of adult students. Some students had developed useful individual learning plans, especially for literacy and numeracy. Most students were given opportunities to review their progress regularly. However, records of students' progress, particularly those of ESOL students, were sometimes inadequate. At one centre, there were too many workshop sessions, in which students were expected to work on their own or in small groups, and too few opportunities for students to work as a whole class. This limited the opportunities for ESOL students to practise and develop listening and speaking skills. Some sessions were not well planned. As a result, students were occasionally set inappropriate tasks.

56 In line with college policy, many students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities join various mainstream courses. Inspectors observed many examples of successful integration. For example, students with physical disabilities, students with learning difficulties and deaf students were working effectively as integral members of computing classes. Deaf and partially-sighted students and students with other disabilities were well supported on sports studies, and leisure and tourism courses. In one adult literacy lesson, a group of students with physical disabilities, who were preparing for a survey of facilities in local public buildings, held a productive discussion on barriers to physical access. The centre for deaf students provides a high-quality support service. All hearing-impaired students have signing communicators. The policy of 'inclusion' was not effective in sessions where the teachers lacked appropriate experience or training. They found it difficult to manage demanding and varied groups which included students with learning difficulties. Sometimes teachers had not been sufficiently consulted about the make-up of classes or given advice on how to prepare for, or manage them.

57 There is some provision specifically designed for students with learning difficulties. This includes pre-vocational preparation courses and courses to develop the skills of independent living. The views of students on such courses were valued and interpersonal skills were

fostered constructively. All vocational work was carried out in the college's specialist accommodation, and students' practical skills were being developed to appropriate standards. Learning programmes were suited to individual students' abilities and aspirations. The analysis of individual needs in some basic skills classes was not always sufficiently detailed to promote effective learning. Teaching methods allowed teachers to be supportive whilst making appropriate demands of the students.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

58 Inspectors observed much good practical work. For example, engineering and catering students' practical work was often of a high standard; social care students were making effective use of their practical work placements; media, audio-visual, radio journalism and design students were developing appropriate knowledge of production techniques. Students on some other art and design courses, however, produced less accomplished practical work. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities often achieved good practical vocational skills.

59 Many students were developing good interpersonal and communication skills. Students worked well in groups on, for example, social care and access to higher education courses. Some students on foreign language and EFL courses spoke fluently and confidently during lessons. Hairdressing students demonstrated effective customer care and communication skills. Some younger students were less effective at oral communication or group work; for example, in humanities subjects.

60 Standards of written work and competence in information technology skills varied widely. Despite having convenient access to computers, GNVQ and GCE A level science students made insufficient use of information technology. The written work of some engineering students was not of a sufficiently high standard for their level of study. Students on administration courses had well organised and neatly presented portfolios of work.

61 In 1996, a total of 825 students at the former Brunel and South Bristol colleges, many of them studying part time, were enrolled on the final year of vocational courses leading to NVQs at levels 1 to 3. Sixty per cent of these students achieved the award. Pass rates were better at levels 2 and 3 than they were at level 1 and varied widely between curriculum areas. For example, 93 per cent of students enrolled for NVQs at level 2 in health, social care and protective services achieved the award, while only 33 per cent of students enrolled for NVQs at level 1 in the provision of goods and services achieved the award.

62 A total of 2,606 students, many of them studying part time, were enrolled on the final year of other vocational awards in 1996. These awards are not NVQs but are recorded on the National Council for Vocational Qualifications database by subject area and at the notional

levels 1 to 4 corresponding to NVQs. Sixty per cent of these students achieved the award. The students aged over 19 achieved a higher pass rate (63 per cent) than those aged 16 to 18 (40 per cent). As with NVQs, pass rates varied widely between curriculum areas and levels. For example, students of all ages enrolled for awards in transport, services and vehicle engineering at notional level 2 achieved a 39 per cent pass rate, whilst those aiming at level 2 awards in the area of languages, communication and self-help achieved a 66 per cent pass rate. Computing, electric and electronic engineering students achieved a pass rate of 81 per cent at level 4. Students enrolled for awards in engineering, production and design at level 3 achieved a pass rate of 32 per cent.

63 In 1996, 73 per cent of the 353 students aged 16 to 18 enrolled on their final year of study of advanced level vocational courses included in the Department for Education and Employment's (DfEE's) 1996 performance tables were successful. This figure is an aggregation of the results for South Bristol College and Brunel College of Arts and Technology. This information was submitted as required to the DfEE, but was not published because of the merger. Had the figure been published it would have placed the City of Bristol College in the middle third of colleges on this performance measure. There were pass rates of over 90 per cent on the advanced GNVQ in information technology and the national diplomas in audio-visual studies and nursery nursing. On the advanced GNVQ hospitality and catering, and the national diploma in electronics and communication, pass rates were below 55 per cent.

64 At intermediate level, 48 per cent of the 138 students aged 16 to 18 who completed their courses of study were successful. If this aggregated figure for South Bristol and Brunel College of Arts and Technology had been published it would have placed City of Bristol College in the bottom third of colleges on this performance measure.

65 At foundation level, 51 per cent of the 145 students completing GNVQs were successful. This compares with the national pass rate of 31 per cent, according to figures available from the National Council for Vocational Qualifications. The highest pass rates were in hospitality and catering, and leisure and tourism (62 per cent); the lowest were in engineering (40 per cent), art and design, and business (33 per cent).

66 In 1996, 245 students aged 16 to 18 entered for at least one GCE A level subject at Brunel and South Bristol colleges. The average points scored per subject entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2) was 3.2 at Brunel and 3.0 at South Bristol. If the figures had been published, Brunel would have been in the middle third and South Bristol in the bottom third of colleges in the sector according to the DfEE's performance tables. Pass rates for individual subjects varied widely. For example, students entered for law, business studies, English, mathematics and psychology all achieved above the national pass rates for general further education colleges, whilst the pass rates for modern languages, English language, history, computing, biology and chemistry were below national averages.

67 In 1996, many students on the access to higher education courses gained their qualifications and entered higher education. Of 158 students completing various full-time and part-time access courses last year, 80 per cent gained the qualification. Destinations are recorded for only 97 of the access students. Of these, 89 per cent proceeded to higher education.

68 The college is a large centre for GCSEs. Last year, 53 per cent of the 650 full-time and part-time students who entered for GCSEs gained grade C or above, in all subjects entered. This compares with the provisional national average for general further education colleges of 39 per cent for students aged 16 to 18, and 62 per cent for those aged 19 and above. Students in some subjects, for example in English, achieved pass rates above the national average. For candidates aged 16 to 18, 69 per cent of those who took English gained grade C or above. This result is well above the provisional national average for general further education colleges of 52 per cent. Several subjects had poor pass rates. For example, only 30 per cent of students aged 19 and over who took psychology gained grade C or above, which is less than half the national average.

69 A large number of students leave their courses before completing their studies. Withdrawal numbers vary widely between courses. When pass rates are expressed as a percentage of those who were enrolled in the previous November, many are low. For example, between 1994 and 1996 only 51 per cent of students who began a two-year GCE A level humanities course completed it. Retention rates on performing arts and media courses were not above 65 per cent on any course inspected, although some achievement levels were good for those who completed their courses. The 86 per cent pass rate for those students who completed the advanced GNVQ in health and social care was well above the national average. However, the success rate, which is the number of those achieving the award as a proportion of those originally enrolled on the course, was only 38 per cent.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

70 During the year before the merger (1995-96) the Brunel and South Bristol colleges jointly developed similar procedures for some aspects of quality assurance. These interim procedures formed the basis of the quality assurance practices in use at the time of the inspection. Since the merger, the college has developed a new quality assurance policy and associated procedures, following extensive consultation. There are clear lines of responsibility. A head of quality assurance and improvement has been appointed, reporting directly to the principal. The principal carries overall responsibility for the quality of the work of the college. The vice-principal (operations and curriculum) is responsible for the quality of teaching and learning. Through its quality assurance subcommittee, the academic board has an active and effective role in the new developments. New documents for course reviews will be introduced. Existing good practice is being built upon. The profile of quality assurance

in the college has been raised. Although a potentially strong framework has been established, some key requirements are still to be implemented and it is too early to judge the effectiveness of the new system. Governors have recently considered some indicators to measure their own performance, but they have yet to take an active role in setting and monitoring targets and standards for the college.

71 The concept of setting and reviewing quality improvement targets is not yet fully established. Some cross-college services are developing statements to describe the standard of the service they intend to offer. In the student services section, standards have been identified for counselling, adult guidance, the work of reception and administrative staff and for learning support. These standards have still to be refined, agreed and supported by a suitable system of monitoring. Staff dealing with finance and data management have received training in setting standards. Reports on quality have not been produced by all cross-college services and there is no formal mechanism for monitoring the improvements which might result from the implementation of the quality assurance procedures.

72 Curriculum quality assurance procedures are based on surveys of students' views and on annual course reviews. A survey of students' views soon after entry to the college, about their course, admission procedures and induction produces information on a narrow range of issues. As a result, analysis and evaluation of the responses is of limited value. In 1996, the questionnaire given to students at the end of their course was comprehensive and could have provided useful feedback to course teams. However, only a small proportion of the sample of students chosen actually responded and the survey was not effectively administered. New procedures have been introduced to ensure that future surveys are more effective.

73 Interim documentation was developed by the two colleges for the course reviews which took place in 1995-96. Review forms were used to standardise the collection of statistical data and to introduce performance indicators for students' retention and success rates. Helpful guidance notes were provided for staff. The completed reviews were submitted to heads of faculties for checking and comment. The quality of the reviews varied. Generally, there was a lack of critical evaluation, particularly relating to teaching and learning and students' achievement. Some reviews did not comment on retention and pass rates, even when these were low. Recommendations for action were sometimes imprecise and, in a minority of cases, data were incomplete. There was no formal monitoring of students' destinations on a majority of courses. Revised report forms and procedures are to be introduced in 1997.

74 An evaluation of course reviews was introduced in the current academic year. Members of the quality assurance committee, appropriately trained, worked in teams to scrutinise samples of reviews. Ten curriculum areas were evaluated. Detailed reports on the outcomes of the evaluation were circulated to faculty staff and the academic board.

This is an example of good practice which is to be included in the new quality system.

75 Some evaluation of teaching and learning has been undertaken at the Brunel centre. It involved observation of classes by teachers who were not from the same faculty as the teacher being observed. Training was provided for assessors. Detailed written feedback of observations was provided to the groups of teachers who had participated. The standard of reporting was good. As yet, there has been little dissemination of the outcomes.

76 Internal assessment and verification are well co-ordinated. Policy and procedures are understood and welcomed by staff. They help to promote consistency in the standard of assessments across the college. Procedures are managed for the academic board by a committee of senior internal verifiers from each faculty. The committee provides a forum for discussing issues raised by external verifiers and good practice is disseminated.

77 There is an effective system of internal validation of new courses. The first stage is to test the viability of a new course, its market potential and the availability of resources. The second stage results in a detailed review of all aspects of the course, including content, delivery methods, assessment, methods to be used for monitoring and evaluation and feedback from student and employers. Internal validation teams are drawn from across the college.

78 Staff development is partly co-ordinated centrally, by a staff and curriculum development manager, and partly delegated to the faculties. A staff-development plan for the whole college has been produced for the current year. The plan effectively addresses training needs associated with the college's new structures and policies. Training records are kept and a half-year report has been produced. The budget for cross-college activities is approximately 1 per cent of the staffing budget. Dissemination of training outcomes is achieved through briefings from participants, college conferences and a programme of internal training courses. The management of staff development within faculties varies in its effectiveness. Some faculties have produced budgets and development plans, but others operate on a more informal basis. Liaison between faculties and the staff and curriculum development manager is not always effective. The college provides an adequate induction programme for new staff at the institutional level, but there are no formal measures to provide induction within faculties.

79 Staff appraisal is linked to staff development. There are two appraisal systems currently in use, based on those used by the two former colleges. Some staff, particularly support staff, have not been appraised in the last year. There has been little observation of teaching, until recently. New policies and procedures have been developed by the college which address the weaknesses of the earlier systems.

80 The college is developing a new charter to replace the two charters belonging to the former colleges. Following some preliminary discussion, a small group of staff has produced a draft version of a new charter. Of the two existing charters, one makes more explicit commitments to standards of service than the other. At present, there are no formal arrangements to monitor the college's compliance with its charter commitments.

81 The college has a small programme of provision operated in collaboration with other organisations away from the main college sites. This programme accounts for approximately 2 per cent of its enrolments. The contracts with the partner organisations follow the guidelines recommended by the FEFC and the provision was approved by governors. College quality assurance procedures are used by the partner organisations. Oversight and management of schemes is assigned to faculties. All the centres used for collaborative work have been visited by one of the vice-principals. Arrangements for these centres to refer students to the college's student services are satisfactory.

82 A large number of staff were involved in the production of the college's self-assessment report. The report draws on 19 separate self-assessment reports from faculties and support services. Each section of the report is concise, includes strengths and weaknesses, and a grade. There are no specific references to the evidence on which the judgements are based. The action plan is underdeveloped, but the report provides a frank and useful assessment. In the great majority of cases the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report matched those identified by inspectors.

RESOURCES

Staffing

83 There is a high level of commitment amongst staff at all levels to the new college and its students. Teaching staff are generally well qualified for the courses on which they teach. A high proportion have appropriate vocational qualifications. Approximately 80 per cent of full-time teachers and 51 per cent of part-time teachers have a teaching qualification. The college requires new staff who do not have a teaching qualification to study for one. Many staff, for example those who teach adults or students with learning difficulties, have relevant specialist teaching qualifications. Approximately 52 per cent of full-time and part-time teachers have degrees or equivalent qualifications. An appropriate proportion of staff teaching vocational subjects has assessor and verifier awards.

84 Most teaching staff have relevant industrial experience. For example, in health and community care there are several qualified social workers and nurses. Staff teaching journalism courses have recent professional

experience. In aero-engineering, close links with industry help to keep staff up to date. In some areas, for example electronics, construction, catering and leisure, the industrial experience of some staff is less up to date.

85 Approximately 30 per cent of teaching is undertaken by part-time staff. In many subjects, for example avionics, navigation and business administration, they contribute valuable current specialist knowledge and experience. In most subjects they are involved in team meetings and course development. In a few subjects, part-time staff who have substantial responsibilities are not well integrated with other staff.

86 There are sufficient support staff. They are well qualified and have appropriate experience. Managers of professional functions, such as finance, personnel, estates, learning resources and health and safety, are also well qualified. Many technicians have degrees and teaching qualifications. In several subjects, for example engineering, computing, and art and design, they work closely with teaching staff to support students. In a few areas of work, technicians are not as effectively deployed as they might be. Consequently, they are unable to offer teachers and students the level of support they require.

87 In some subjects, for example business and health care, work placement officers provide good support to teachers and students. Many staff are employed to assist students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This includes, for example, individual support in class for students with cerebral palsy, and the provision of communicators for deaf students.

Equipment/learning resources

88 There is sufficient up-to-date specialist equipment in most curriculum areas. For example there is good specialist equipment in art, design, photography, printing, wood machining, sound recording and editing. There are new machines and software for computer-aided design in engineering, and a new business technology suite at Brunel. Good industry links have helped the college to maintain well-equipped facilities for aero-engineering, including a jet engine and several aircraft. The college is generally well equipped for catering and bakery, and one kitchen is specially equipped for students with disabilities. Hairdressing and beauty salons have modern furniture, fittings and equipment. Some curriculum areas, for example science and engineering, have adequate, though ageing equipment. In leisure and tourism there is a lack of travel industry equipment and software. Some areas lack clear plans and priorities for the replacement and updating of equipment.

89 The majority of general teaching rooms are equipped with suitable furniture, whiteboards and overhead projectors, although few rooms have overhead projector screens. There are sufficient televisions, video recorders, video cameras and items of audio equipment. Teachers

generally have enough consumable resources. College photocopying services meet their requirements.

90 The college's library facilities are based in learning centres on each of its three main sites. There are adequate bookstocks in most subjects, good compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database facilities and access to the Internet. At Hartcliffe, the learning centre is spacious and well laid out. It is effectively used for timetabled classes as well as individual learning. At Brunel and Bedminster, the learning centres consist of several adjoining rooms which create an unsatisfactory learning environment for some activities. The centre at Brunel is small for the number of students using the site and is supplemented by specialist resource centres in the faculties. The college is committed to developing the three main learning centres. However, the delegation of budgets to faculties, combined with the location of the Brunel learning centre at one end of the site, has led to the continued use and development of faculty resource centres on that site.

91 The college is well equipped with information technology resources. There are 1,086 modern computers to which students have good access, both in timetabled sessions and at times of their own choosing. This gives an approximate ratio of one computer for every five full-time equivalent students. There is a good range of computer software including several packages designed for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. An increasing number of students are using the computers in the learning centres. However, in mathematics, science, construction and catering, students would benefit from more computers located in their teaching areas. There is an information technology policy for the college which includes appropriate standards and procedures covering, for example, hardware acquisition and disposal, equipment standards, software standards and licensing, and physical security. There is a replacement programme for the computers in the learning centres.

Accommodation

92 Approximately 70 per cent of teaching takes place at Brunel. The main feature of the 32 acre site is five substantial and imposing buildings, built in the 1850s as an orphanage. The site also includes a number of smaller buildings. The age, structure and layout of the buildings makes them difficult to adapt to the wide range of courses for adults and school-leavers. Considerable expenditure is currently needed to maintain the buildings. The accommodation is situated on either side of a busy road. The main entrance and reception area are not clearly signposted. Interior signs on the site are also inadequate. The site is well served by refectories, but it lacks social areas for students. There are few sports facilities. However, the college hires a sports hall and facilities at the neighbouring county cricket ground.

93 The Bedminster centre is on a six acre site surrounded by a housing estate a mile and a half from the city centre. The accommodation is well maintained and attractively decorated. The Hartcliffe centre is shared with a secondary school, built in the 1960s to serve a large housing estate three miles south of the city centre. There is a spacious and welcoming reception area, situated next to the learning centre. The site includes the Helen Bloom building, an attractive, purpose-built, art and design centre opened in 1989. Not all the accommodation at Hartcliffe is up to the standard of this building. Some teaching takes place at Custom House, a rented city centre site. There are college nurseries on both the Brunel and Bedminster sites.

94 Classroom and specialist accommodation throughout the college is spacious, and sometimes underused. Some general classrooms, particularly at Brunel, are bare and unwelcoming and have only basic furniture. Some need redecoration. There is some high-quality specialist accommodation; for example for art and design at Hartcliffe, for motor vehicle engineering at Bedminster and for business administration, hairdressing and beauty therapy and languages at Brunel. Some teaching rooms at Hartcliffe and some rooms in art and design, science, construction and engineering at Brunel are inappropriate in terms of size and layout, poorly maintained or untidy.

95 The college is committed to improving access to its accommodation for people with restricted mobility. Hartcliffe is fully accessible to wheelchair users. At Bedminster, wheelchair users can gain access to almost all of the site. At Brunel they can gain access to the common areas, but some buildings do not have lifts, so wheelchair users cannot reach some specialist facilities. Overall, about 80 per cent of accommodation at Brunel is accessible to wheelchair users. At the time of the inspection, a new lift was being installed in one of the buildings.

96 The college is currently reviewing the accommodation strategy prepared as part of the merger. Options are being considered which will enable the college to address several major issues, in particular the poor condition of many of the buildings, the high operating costs and the underuse of the Hartcliffe site.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

97 The main strengths of the college are:

- the wide range of courses and progression routes at most levels of study
- effective teaching in many subjects and particularly good teaching in hairdressing
- good pass rates in some subjects for those students who complete their courses

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- the inclusion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on a wide range of courses and the effective support offered to them
 - the commitment of governors and college staff to the development of the new college
 - effective leadership from senior managers
 - effective management of budgets
 - productive links with community organisations, employers and the local TEC
 - effective arrangements for the internal verification of assessment standards and the validation of new course proposals
 - a frank and largely accurate self-assessment report.

98 In order to develop further the quality of its provision, the college should:

- improve retention rates
- improve pass rates in some subjects
- provide more accurate and complete data on students and their achievements
- develop closer links between curriculum areas
- further develop the monitoring and management of tutorial arrangements
- improve co-ordination between student services and the faculties
- ensure governors are more involved in monitoring college finances
- continue to develop its quality assurance procedures
- strengthen the procedures for the monitoring the effectiveness of college policies
- address the underuse of teaching accommodation in some areas.

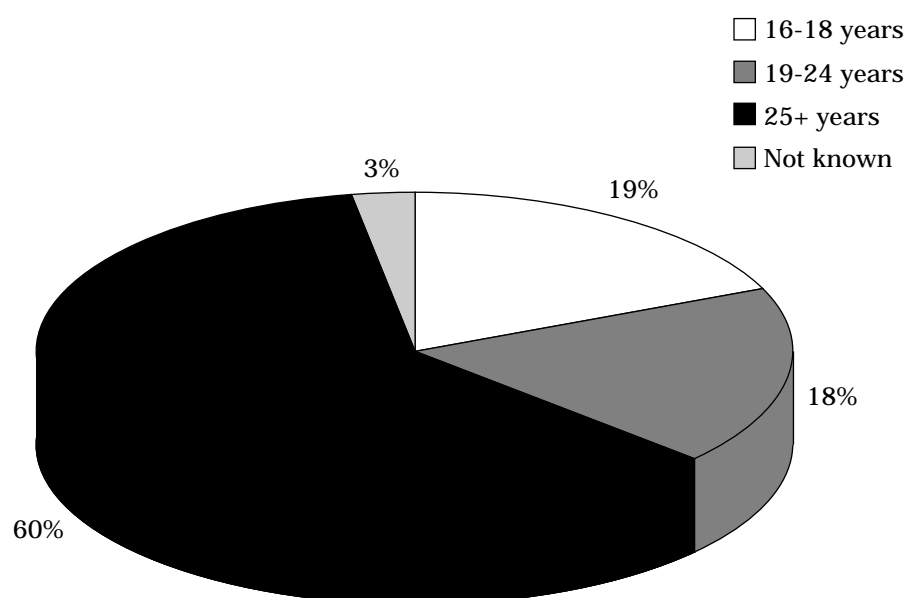
FIGURES

1	Percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)
2	Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)
3	Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)
4	Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1996)
5	Income (for 12 months to July 1996)
6	Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

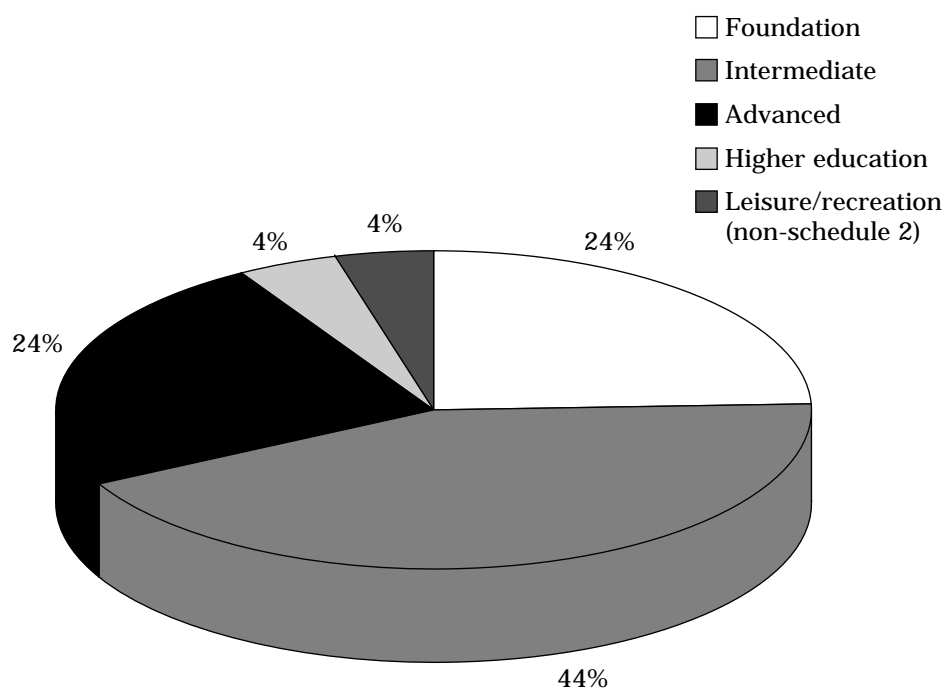
City of Bristol College: percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 14,498

Figure 2

City of Bristol College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 14,498

Figure 3

**City of Bristol College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area
(as at November 1996)**

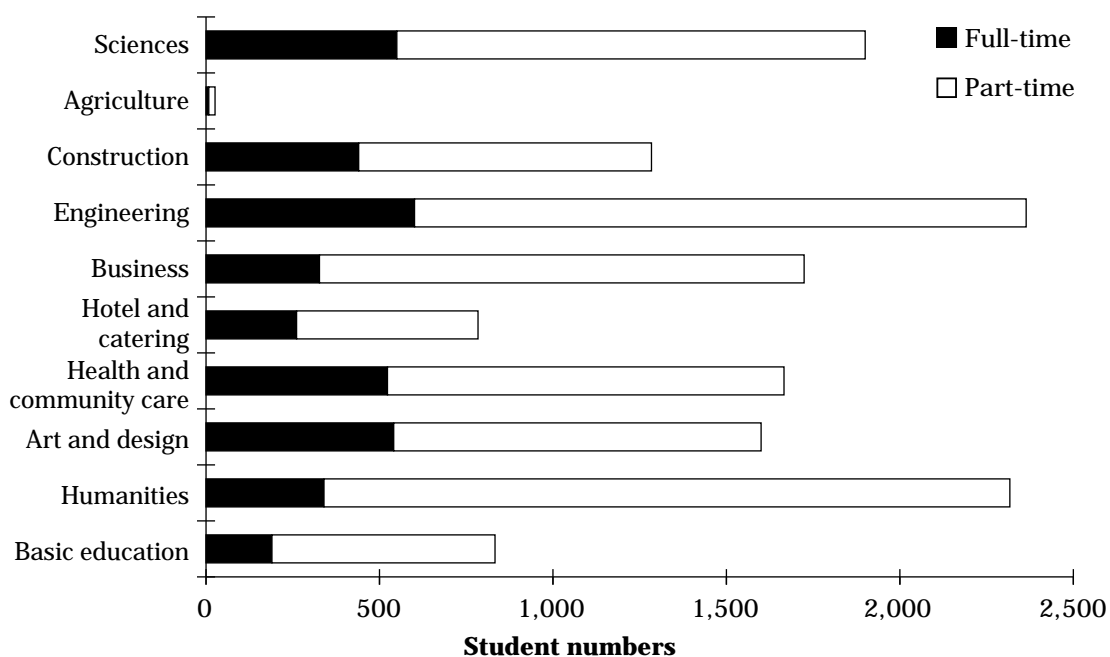


Figure 4

**City of Bristol College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents
(as at November 1996)**

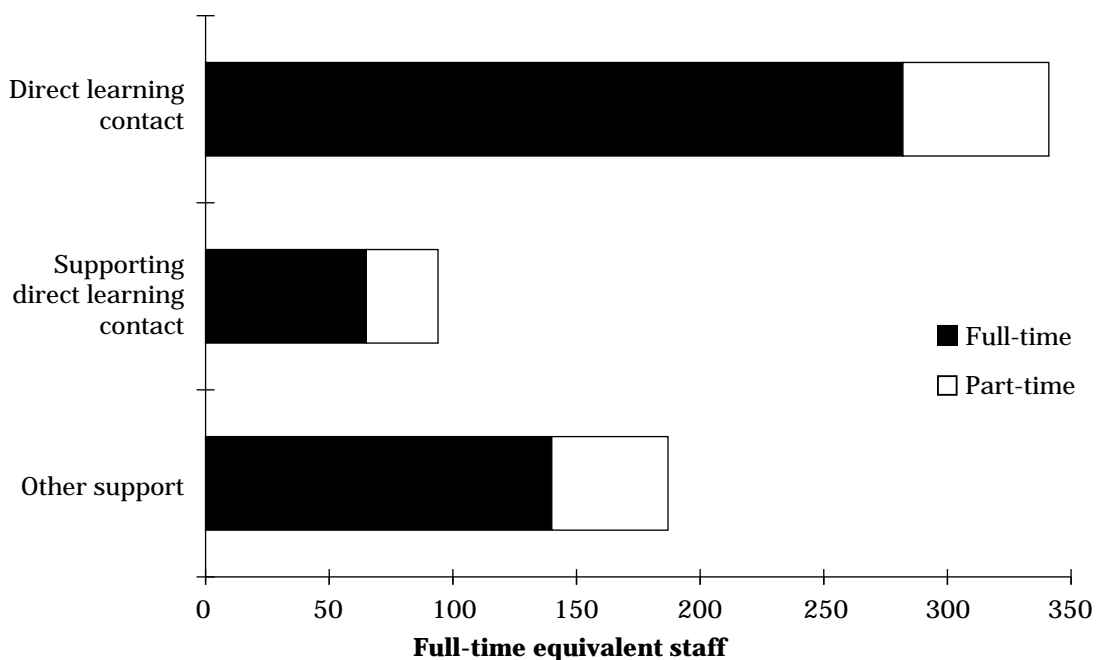


Figure 5

City of Bristol College: income (for 12 months to July 1996)

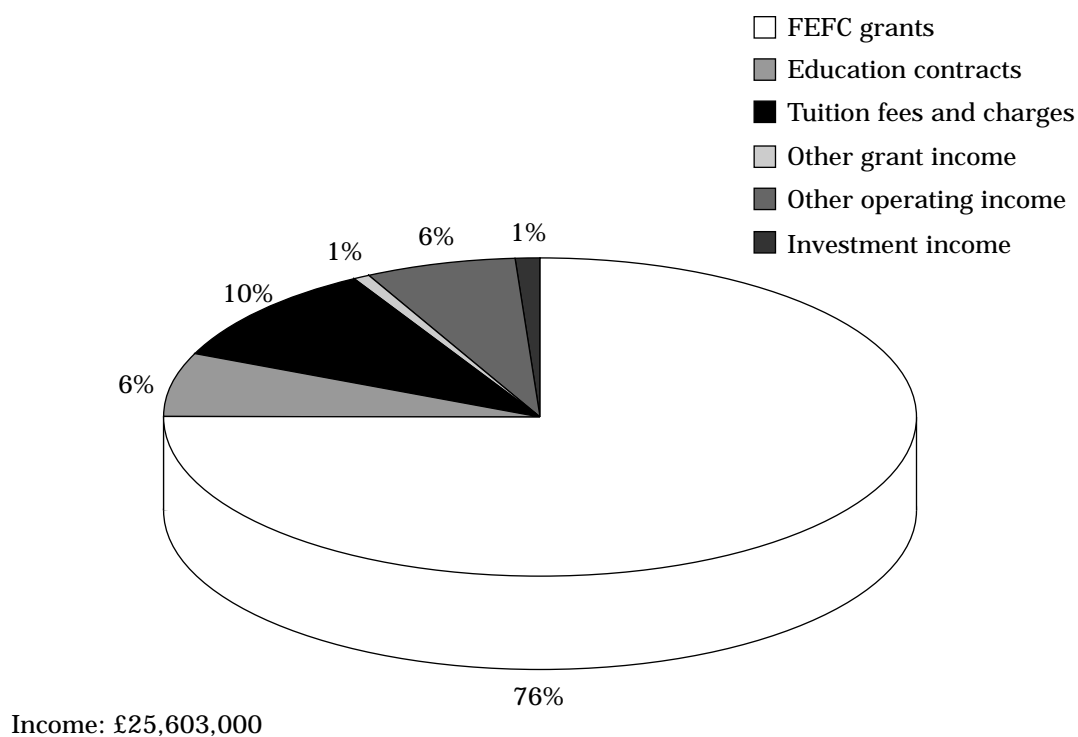


Figure 6

City of Bristol College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

