

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Cordwainers College

March 1996

**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 FEFC's quality assessment committee.

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

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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

College grade profiles 1993-95

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 40/96

CORDWAINERS COLLEGE
GREATER LONDON REGION
Inspected September-December 1995

Summary

Cordwainers College is a small designated college which provides further and higher education courses in footwear, accessories, leathercrafts and saddlery. It is the only specialist college of its kind in the United Kingdom. The college is governed by a charitable trust which is representative of the leather industry. It receives a high level of support from the footwear and leather trades, particularly the associated City Livery Companies. The college has recently diversified its further education curriculum to include general art and design. Senior management provides positive leadership. The governors are supportive and provide an important link with the leather industry. Dedicated and caring staff provide a high level of specialist expertise, a good standard of teaching and strong pastoral support for students. Standards of achievement on vocational courses are high. There is a comprehensive range of specialist footwear and leathercraft equipment. Senior staff are committed to improving quality. Quality assurance procedures have been introduced but are not fully established. Systematic student services are being developed but are not yet in place. Management information systems are at an early stage of development. Retention rates are poor on some courses. Support for students with basic learning needs is inconsistent. There is no coherent strategy for marketing the college's further education provision. Equipment for general art and design is inadequate. Most of the college's accommodation is of a poor standard.

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

| Aspects of cross-college provision | Grade |
|---|--------------|
| Responsiveness and range of provision | 2 |
| Governance and management | 3 |
| Students' recruitment, guidance and support | 3 |
| Quality assurance | 3 |
| Resources: staffing | 2 |
| equipment/learning resources | 2 |
| accommodation | 4 |

| Curriculum area | Grade |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| Footwear and accessories | 2 |
| General art and design | 2 |
| Saddlery | 2 |

INTRODUCTION

1 Cordwainers College, Hackney, was inspected during the autumn term of 1995. Eight inspectors spent a total of 26 days in the college. Enrolment and induction procedures were inspected in September. Specialist subjects were inspected between 14 and 16 October 1995. Aspects of cross-college provision were inspected in December 1995.

2 Inspectors visited 28 classes, involving 349 students, and examined a sample of students' practical and written work. They held meetings with governors, college managers, teaching and support staff, students and with representatives from industry, local schools, the community, higher education and the local training and enterprise council (TEC). Inspectors examined a range of documentation relating to the college and its courses.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 Cordwainers College was established in 1887 as a leather trades school by the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G), the Boot and Shoe Manufacturers Association and the Worshipful Companies of Cordwainers and Leathersellers. The school trained apprentices in basic footwear and leathercraft skills. In 1913, the Cordwainers Company took sole control and, with financial support from the London County Council, established the Cordwainers Technical College as an independent registered charity incorporated under the Companies Act. For the next 70 years, the college maintained its tradition of providing technical training. The curriculum was primarily certificated by C&G. As its reputation grew, students from across the country and overseas were attracted to study at the college.

4 In 1988, the college changed its name to Cordwainers College and entered a period of transition and rapid growth. From its strong base in the teaching of craft skills and production technology the college developed higher and further education programmes in design, product development and commercial management. The introduction of a range of general art and design courses increased recruitment from the local community.

5 Since incorporation in 1993 the college has had the status of a designated college within the further education sector. The college is controlled by the Cordwainers College Association Limited and has a large governing body drawn mainly from the leather related livery companies and senior members of the leather industry. Over 50 per cent of the college's funding is from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Funding is also allocated by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. Additional financial support is provided by City Livery Companies, particularly the Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, charitable trusts and foundations, individuals and commercial sponsorship. The designation of the borough of Hackney as a European Objective 2 area has given the college additional funding opportunities.

6 The college recruits students locally from Hackney and surrounding boroughs, and nationally and internationally from leather industry employers and designers and their employees. The college has a good

reputation. Many well-known footwear and leathersgoods designers and manufacturers trained at Cordwainers College. The college has strong links with a range of leather trade associations. Part of its mission is to support and develop the leather related industries. It actively promotes product development and new technology. A significant development in 1996 will be the opening of a Leather Industries Support Centre on the college site. The centre will provide display space, a computer-aided design and manufacture bureau, and a fashion forecasting and materials information service.

7 At the time of the inspection there were 513 enrolments. Since September 1995 the college has enrolled 470 students. The number of higher education students has increased; the 153 students enrolled exceeding the college's target of 121 by 25 per cent. The number of further education students has decreased; 166 students are enrolled on full-time courses, 22 per cent short of the target of 212. Part-time further education courses have also under recruited with 153 students, 14 per cent short of the target of 178. Recruitment for general art and design courses has been poor owing to intense competition from other institutions. The Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate enrolled 20 students against a target of 30, and GNVQ advanced enrolled 12 students against a target of 30. Approximately 50 per cent of the college's full-time students are over 19. The majority of students come from outside Hackney. Fifteen per cent are from overseas. Enrolments by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively.

8 In 1994 and 1995, a number of the college's long-term serving staff retired. This provided the opportunity for the principal, who was appointed in 1994, to reorganise the college's management structure for September 1995. He is now supported by six senior managers who have collective responsibility for resources, client services, curriculum, finance and administration. There are 22 full-time equivalent teaching staff, eight full-time equivalent staff supporting direct learning contact, and 20 full-time equivalent support staff comprising senior managers, accounting and other administrative and maintenance personnel. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

9 The college aims to provide a centre of excellence on a local, national and international basis for specialist education and training in design, technology, production and management for the footwear, saddlery, leathersgoods and allied industries, to support the industry, and to develop general art and design courses.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

10 There have been significant changes in the college's portfolio of full-time courses. To enable students to enter courses at the most appropriate level and to provide better opportunities for progression, the

college has extended its traditional core of specialist BTEC and C&G diplomas in footwear, accessories, and saddlery. New courses include BTEC higher national diplomas in footwear technology and saddlery technology, and a BA (hons) degree course in design and product development (footwear and accessories). From September 1996, a postgraduate level programme will be available through the MA in footwear and accessories offered with the Royal College of Art. To broaden the further education curriculum and provide local people with an opportunity to follow a broad introduction to art and design, the college has introduced BTEC foundation studies and GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses.

11 The provision of part-time courses is limited. There are seven part-time evening and two daytime C&G accredited courses in leatherwork, footwear, and saddlery that attract local residents and students from other courses. The college is conscious that its curriculum structure is not sufficiently flexible to provide a wide enough range of part-time courses. The college is committed to implementing a modular credit scheme across the curriculum in 1996-97. This initiative is being supported by the local TEC and will enable the college to develop more flexible, cost-effective part-time and short programmes for a wider client range.

12 The college has cordial and productive relationships with local primary schools and schools for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Workshops are held in primary schools to teach children shoe design and making skills. Children from a school for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities spend one day a week in the college learning design and leatherwork skills. These projects have increased the children's awareness of the history and culture of the local leatherworking industry. Links with local secondary schools are underdeveloped. Currently, only 35 per cent of the college's further education students are local. A review of the college's liaison with secondary schools may result in more school leavers taking advantage of the broad introduction to art and design offered by the diagnostic GNVQ and foundation courses.

13 Links with industry are strong. There is an active Trade and Industry Advisory Committee. There is a well-developed network of business contacts through employers, staff, former students and governors. Students benefit from involvement with industrial projects set and evaluated by employers, visits out of London to other leather industry centres and work placements. The college benefits from gifts of materials and long-term loans of specialist equipment. An enterprise unit answers trade enquiries and organises projects, seminars and open days for business. Joint industry and college projects include the development of computer software for the footwear industry in association with the British Luggage and Leathergoods Association. The leather industry is working with the college to develop National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in saddlery, footwear and accessories production. These are planned to be introduced in 1996-97. The college-based Leather Industries Support Centre will provide a focus for the college's industry-related activities.

14 International links are well developed. Many former students occupy important positions in the leather industry throughout the world. The enterprise unit is involved in a range of European initiatives organised by the European Association of Technological and Training Institutes in Leathergoods. Lecturers and students regularly visit the major centres of the leather industry in Italy and Germany. Effective links are made with educational organisations in Japan, Pakistan, India and Ghana. With the help of two trainees from Ghana, textbooks are being developed on leatherworking that will be used in training centres throughout Ghana.

15 The college is an active member of a local community network dedicated to regenerating the local area. Network members include the borough of Hackney, the TEC, Hackney Task Force, the Dalston City Partnership and Heart of Hackney. A 'support for local industry' programme, financially assisted by Hackney Task Force, enabled the college to develop the materials reference database and fashion forecasting facility that will be housed in the Leather Industries Support Centre. A leathergoods course for refugees, run in co-operation with the TEC, has provided new Hackney residents with access to the college's full-time specialist courses. More programmes should be developed for local minority ethnic groups. Basic skills support should be increased to meet the needs of students.

16 The college benefits from a high level of local, national and international media coverage. Newspapers and fashion and trade magazines report on industry projects and the work of current and past students. The college is well represented at key promotional events including the Clothes Show Live, Premier Collections, New Designers, and equine events. There is an active overseas marketing strategy. Staff attend trade fairs in Germany, the United States of America, Japan, Malaysia, Hong Kong, China and India. Publicity material is professional and well designed. Promotion of the general art and design programme has been inadequate. Local parents and pupils have limited understanding of what the college's GNVQ courses have to offer; this is reflected in low recruitment. There is no consistent press release policy and no bilingual publicity. Customer enquiries are not monitored or recorded. A more systematic approach is needed to convert enquiries and applications into enrolments.

17 The college recruits a broad range of students in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, educational and social background. It takes seriously its commitment to promoting equality of opportunity. Thirty-five per cent of further education students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The gender of students and staff has changed significantly since the college was a male-orientated technical college. The introduction of design courses has led to a marked increase in female students; 60 per cent of students are women.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

18 Arrangements for governance are largely determined by the college's historical links with the Worshipful Company of Cordwainers and Leathersellers. The board has 20 members. These include the master, senior warden, and six nominees of the Cordwainers Company, three representatives from trade and industry, one from Hackney Borough Council, three from associated livery companies, one from the TEC, the principal, two staff nominees and one student nominee. Apart from staff nominees there are no female members to reflect the changed student gender balance of the college. Membership does not reflect the changing curriculum, for example, the growth of art and design provision.

19 The governors are kept well informed by the senior management. They show consistent support for the college. In recent years, they have been pre-occupied in dealing with changes in funding and have not focused sufficiently on the strategic planning process or developed performance indicators to assess whether they are fulfilling their mission. An appropriate range of subcommittees has been established but the recently-revised audit committee membership does not fully comply with FEFC guidelines. Committee minutes are thorough but resolutions are not identified.

20 There has been a major change in senior management in the last year. A new principal was appointed in September 1994. Following the early retirement of three managers, a new senior management team was established which will be complete in January 1996. It provides positive leadership. Job descriptions have been revised. Managers are clear about their roles.

21 Communications are satisfactory. There is a clear structure of meetings for course teams, course leaders and cross-college services. Meeting dates are identified in the college calendar. Working groups make considerable demands on a small number of staff. Consultation on new developments is not always comprehensive.

22 Many college procedures are only recently developed and are not fully established. The staff handbook is being updated. This should help to improve the staff's understanding of the new, more systematic way of working.

23 In the last year, significant progress has been made towards developing a coherent planning cycle. The 1994 strategic plan provided a lengthy commentary but was not well structured as a planning document. A system of annual review and development has been introduced. This includes a review of the year's progress, an analysis of strengths and weaknesses, and the setting of targets for the coming year. This process should eventually provide a valuable planning and review mechanism but implementation in the first year has been variable. Most staff involved understand its purpose and have found the process useful. However,

others whose work it affects have not been fully involved. Links between the annual review and development plan, course reviews and the strategic plan are not sufficiently clear.

24 Management information systems are at an early stage of development. The student record system is generating a small range of enrolment information. The college piloted the FEFC individualised student record system last year. Recently-purchased software should extend the range of information that can be produced. The system is only networked to finance and administrative staff. Most senior managers do not have direct access.

25 Student withdrawals and transfers are recorded on the central student record system. A termly enrolment check is made by programme leaders. Withdrawals are recorded in the annual course reviews. Retention information and reasons for withdrawal are not collated centrally.

26 Resource allocation is managed by the director of finance and administration and the director of resources. Budgets are devised on a largely historical basis. Budget holders receive monthly accounts. Staff understand the arrangements for resource allocation. Staff in each programme area are identified as resource leaders and liaise with a central resources co-ordinator who manages the allocation of materials and equipment. Unit costs are not calculated. Programme leaders are not involved in the budgeting process.

27 The college has a traditionally high cost base. In 1993-94 the average level of FEFC funding was £36.74. This has been reduced to £27.68 in 1995-96. The college recognises that it will need to continue to make efficiency gains. The recent appointment of a development director reflects the college's concern to maximise external sources of funding. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

28 Enrolment targets are set centrally each year. In the last three years there has been a significant increase in higher education enrolments. In 1994-95 the college did not meet its growth target of 7 per cent for further education funding units. In 1995-96 the college expects an under-achievement of 11.5 per cent on its growth target of 6.4 per cent.

29 Destinations information is collected and circulated according to statutory requirements. It is not yet presented in a detailed way that can be used to inform curriculum planning and support marketing.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

30 Until 1995, student support was provided by two enthusiastic teachers using a small amount of remission time from their teaching duties. The college recognised the need for a more extensive formalised service and in the past year has given high priority to the development of a systematic student guidance and support service.

31 A student services officer was appointed in January 1995 to provide students with a professional counselling service and advice and guidance on finances, health and accommodation. An additional counsellor is also available to provide a confidential counselling service. Students' comments indicate that this support is effective and valued. A director of client services was appointed in September 1995 to take responsibility for student services, financial support, catering and accommodation. Students' interviews and enrolment and induction processes are to be managed by the director of studies, in conjunction with the director of finance and administration. As the director of client services begins to evaluate current student services procedures, lines of responsibility will need to be clarified.

32 The student services and pre-entry guidance literature for students are not adequate. Guidance materials for overseas students are particularly poor. The prospectus, although attractive, is limited to course information. A student services handbook and individual course leaflets are being developed.

33 All full-time applicants are interviewed. There are written interview guidelines for staff to ensure candidates are treated consistently and given impartial advice. Students report that interviews were fair and helpful. Students are informed of opportunities for accreditation of prior learning in the prospectus and at application. To date, very few students have requested this service.

34 Screening, using Basic Skills Agency (BSA) materials, has been piloted with GNVQ students and, as a result, some students have been provided with numeracy support. Students on footwear and accessories and saddlery courses receive numeracy support for measuring and pattern cutting. Language support is available but attendance is voluntary and not monitored. Following consultation with the BSA, the college intends to appoint a part-time co-ordinator for basic skills support early in 1996.

35 All full-time, first-year students have a two-day induction. The induction for second-year students is less extensive. Students' experiences varied. Some enjoyed a productive exchange of information and the opportunity to develop a positive relationship with their tutors. Others suffered extended periods of passive information receiving in overcrowded rooms with inadequate facilities for writing. Induction arrangements should be improved and guidance given to tutors to ensure a more consistent approach.

36 The main support for students is provided by tutors. All full-time students have a personal tutor. Tutorials combine academic and pastoral support and are held in groups or individually. Group tutorials take the form of general reviews. Individual tutorials are used to monitor progress, inform and prepare students to meet the requirements of their course, give opportunities for feedback, record students' achievement and develop action plans with deadlines. Student tutorial forms are used to record progress and agreed action and are signed by tutor and student. Students

receive strong personal and professional support and most feel encouraged and valued. There are no formal arrangements to support part-time students.

37 Study skills support is offered to all full-time students. Almost all students are timetabled for six hours in the open learning information technology centre to learn basic information technology skills. Students gain a proficiency card that allows them access to the library resources room where personal computers can be booked for use during private study. Teacher time to support this learning has been reduced with a consequent increase in self-directed study time. Weaker students find self-motivation difficult and this affects their progress. The college should develop strategies to support students during self-directed study time.

38 Students receive valuable careers advice from their teachers, many of whom are active practitioners with professional and up-to-date knowledge of their specialist subjects in relation to higher education and employment. Visits from former students and links with industry through governors and employers also help students to gain knowledge of the market place. Careers guidance interviews can be arranged through Hackney Careers Service. The library has a reference section on setting up and running businesses and a job vacancy board.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

39 Most of the teaching is of a good standard. Of the 28 teaching sessions inspected, 79 per cent were judged to have strengths which outweighed weaknesses, and 21 per cent had a balance of strengths and weaknesses. The distribution of grades awarded is shown in the following table.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

| Programmes | Grade | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Totals |
|---------------------------|--------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|---------------|
| GNVQ | | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| Other vocational diplomas | | 2 | 15 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 21 |
| Total | | 4 | 18 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 28 |

40 A good range of teaching strategies is used including formal lectures, workshop and studio demonstrations, seminars and discussion groups. Students work well together and contribute to each other's learning during group work evaluation sessions. In saddlery, adherence to traditional methods of learning results in less variety and a slower pace of work. Long timetabled hours enable students and teachers to discuss the work as it evolves but, as a result, production tends to slow towards the end of the day.

41 Teaching staff are expert in their subjects. Most have industrial experience and are practising designers or craftspeople. Relationships between staff and students are good. Students receive a great deal of

individual attention and support. Teachers and students are ably supported by a team of knowledgeable technicians. Students respect and value the expertise of teaching and technician staff.

42 Courses are well organised. There is an appropriate balance of practical and theoretical work. Historical and contextual studies are successfully integrated with projects involving design and making. This ensures that students are able to place their work in a historical and contemporary context. Business, management and industrial studies are an important part of the footwear and accessories and saddlery courses. These studies help students to prepare for a career as an employee in the leather and fashion industries, or as a self-employed designer or craftsman. Footwear and accessories students, for example, study costing, estimating, accounting, distribution and retail.

43 Learning is mainly through practical projects that encourage students to experiment and develop creative skills. A carefully-structured process of research and ideas development underpins design and production. Aims, objectives, assessment criteria, deadlines and presentation requirements are clearly outlined. Sketchbooks are used on an everyday basis to record visual research and ideas. Footwear and accessories students, for example, develop ideas from working drawings and presentation boards which lead to viable product designs. Students compile technical note books from information given during formal lectures and demonstrations. Visual studies that include painting, drawing, photography and printmaking enable students to produce art and design work to a professional standard.

44 Standards of practical work are high. Students develop good manipulative skills using a wide range of equipment and materials. Saddlery students learn both traditional rural saddlery techniques and modern factory production methods. Footwear and accessories students learn pattern making and cutting methods by hand as well as machine and computer-aided manufacturing methods. Students explore many uses of leather from traditional handcrafted items to fashion products and experimental art forms. GNVQ and foundation studies students develop a range of practical skills in graphic design, three dimensional design, fashion and textiles design and fine art.

45 Assessment procedures are well documented. Clear guidelines on assessment are included in course handbooks. A variety of assessment methods are used including group and class discussion. Most of the students understand the assessment process and are able to apply assessment criteria. Assessment is fair and reliable. Staff encourage students to assess their own work individually and in groups. Most students are able to comment accurately and realistically on their progress. Students discuss their grades with their assessors and sign a record sheet to confirm their understanding and agreement. Students know what is required of them, and with their assessors, agree action plans and progress review dates.

46 Safe working practices are discussed and emphasised in studio and workshop sessions. Health and safety information sheets itemising safety procedures are provided and health and safety regulations are prominently displayed in workshops. Students are thoroughly inducted in the use of machinery and hand tools.

47 Work experience is an important part of the curriculum. Students benefit from the college's strong links with the footwear and leathers goods industries. Students' work placements are often with well-known designers, craftspeople or manufacturers. Practising designers and craftspeople visit the college to set and evaluate projects. Factory visits ensure students gain knowledge of current industrial practice.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

48 Students enjoy their studies and are enthusiastic and articulate when discussing their work. They speak highly of the quality of tuition. The good relationships between teachers and students create a supportive professional atmosphere in which learning can take place. Students work hard and are generally well motivated. The majority work effectively both alone and in groups. Students carry out practical work safely and competently.

49 Students' attainment is of a consistently good standard. Saddlery, footwear and accessories students strive to achieve a professional product and are prepared to start again if a piece of work is not up to standard. GNVQ and foundation studies students often produce imaginative, individual, well-executed and well-presented work.

50 Student retention rates are satisfactory on the GNVQ advanced, foundation studies, and saddlery courses. Retention on the GNVQ intermediate course during its first year of existence was poor with 27 students enrolling and only 17 completing the year. The majority of students who fail to complete their footwear and accessories studies leave in the first year; retention in 1994-95 was 75 per cent. The college should set retention targets for all courses and review its monitoring strategy.

51 The pass rates for all students who enter qualifications are good. Ninety-four per cent of the students who completed their final year achieved their primary qualification. Students also achieve additional qualifications. Saddlery diploma students, for example, take the intermediate and senior Lorinery Certificates, and may enter for the Society of Master Saddler's skills tests. Students are also encouraged to submit work for assessment by the Guild of Master Craftsmen.

52 Progression rates are good. Overall, 88 per cent of students completing their final year progressed to further study or employment. The one-year diploma in foundation studies has achieved a 97 per cent progression rate to higher education over the past three years.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

53 The college has made rapid progress in developing a framework for quality assurance. Senior managers have a good awareness of quality issues and have made quality improvement a high priority within the college. A curriculum quality assurance group, chaired by the principal, provides an effective forum for discussion of quality assurance developments. The framework for quality development is described in the strategic plan. Course and service area monitoring, and review and development procedures covering all the main cross-college functions, are documented in a guidance manual for staff. Although they are not fully established, these new procedures form the basis of a comprehensive framework for quality assurance.

54 The senior management team is collectively responsible for quality assurance with the principal taking the lead. Revised job descriptions for each director identify a particular responsibility for quality assurance. These new responsibilities have not been made clear to the rest of the staff. Service area reviews will be undertaken annually by associated managers who will report to the senior management team. Staff below the level of service manager and course leader have not been involved and do not have a good understanding of the new procedures.

55 A number of committees and groups have a remit covering issues associated with the quality of college provision. They have overlapping functions and, because of the small number of staff in the college, several senior managers are members of all of these groups and committees. This results in confusion about which group has responsibility for which issues. For example, four groups are involved with the quality of the curriculum. These are the curriculum quality group, a curriculum development group, an assessment committee and an internal validation group.

56 Student feedback is considered to be a key indicator of quality. Each course collects its own students' comments. This information is used by the course teams, but is not collated centrally. Students voiced dissatisfaction that although their views were sought on a variety of issues, those that were outside the control of the course team were not addressed. The college does not formally survey employer's views of provision.

57 Course monitoring takes place during tutorial meetings between course leaders and students, at course committee meetings attended by students, support staff and teachers, and through student questionnaires. Each course is reviewed annually and a report is presented to the academic committee. The course leader and director of studies meet to discuss appropriate action. There is no formal mechanism to check progress. No further written reports are required.

58 Plans for 1995-96 are intended to have targets and performance indicators but most have only priorities for action with no intended outcomes or measures of performance. No clear standards have been identified for course or service areas. Courses do not have agreed targets

for retention and achievement to assist review and evaluation. Staff, particularly part-time staff, do not feel involved in the process of setting priorities.

59 There are some examples of good practice. The library has its own charter and a plan with clear targets linked to curriculum developments. Library staff also survey library use annually. Some of the annual reports of the BTEC validated courses contain statistical data and summaries of staff and student evaluations.

60 The college has a charter that describes the service levels which students should expect. The charter has been revised following consultation with staff and students. It now has more precisely defined standards. However, there is no clear link between the standards described in the charter and the action required as part of the internal audit process or the targets identified in the course and service area development plans. These separate activities do not complement and support each other. There is no formal mechanism for ensuring consistency of standards.

61 Induction arrangements have recently been introduced for full-time staff and the college is committed to achieving the Investors in People standard. Set at 0.5 per cent of the college's income, the staff-development budget is small. Part-time staff are not formally inducted. Teachers are not yet appraised and do not work to individual targets. There is a scheme of appraisal for support staff but it is not implemented.

62 The college has produced a self-assessment report which follows the framework described in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The report is a comprehensive survey of the college's activities and priorities. It includes a number of judgements that were subsequently confirmed during the inspection. The college's assessment of strengths and weaknesses is not sufficiently rigorous in some areas and does not acknowledge that some of the new procedures and organisational arrangements are not yet fully effective.

RESOURCES

Staffing

63 Teaching staff are generally well qualified. Eighty per cent have design or technical qualifications. Many are practising artists, designers or craftspeople. A large number have industrial experience. Together they form an enthusiastic and committed team who provide a high level of specialist expertise to support the students' personal and professional development. Ten per cent of full-time staff hold the appropriate Training and Development Lead Body assessor and verifier awards. This number should be increased to support the development of GNVQs and NVQs.

64 The majority of full-time teachers have multiple roles. Over half have course leader responsibility. All have responsibility for a subject area.

Other responsibilities include NVQs, computer-aided design and manufacture, and work placement. The college is heavily reliant on associate and part-time teachers. They make an important contribution to the college with their up-to-date experience in the fashion and leathersgoods industries. Although full-time and part-time staff function effectively as a team, the growth in the number of part-time staff has created communication problems and increased growth in the administrative burdens on full-time staff.

65 Technicians provide strong support but are inadequate in number. This restricts student access to practical equipment that can only be used when a member of the teaching staff or a technician is available. The college has recently created an additional full-time technician's post. This has alleviated, but not solved, the problem. Administrative support staff provide an important service. Women make up 45 per cent of the teaching staff. Two-thirds of the support staff are women.

66 Changes in the college's staffing reflect the curriculum development that has taken place since 1988. Recent staff appointments have added new areas of experience and expertise to the college's traditional footwear and leathersgoods team. Staffing costs are set at 67 per cent of the college's total income. An annual audit of staffing is made by the director of resources and changes are only allowed within an existing quota.

Equipment/learning resources

67 Equipment is sufficient in quantity and quality for the college's specialist vocational courses. There is a comprehensive range of specialist footwear, accessories, saddlery and leathercraft equipment. This includes specialist sewing machines, cutting presses, splitting machines with cutting knives, skiving machines, a good selection of lasts and fully-equipped footwear making and closing rooms. Through its strong links with industry, the college benefits from an advantageous leasing agreement for footwear manufacturing equipment and regularly receives donations and loans of expensive equipment. Recent European funding has provided up-to-date computer-aided design and manufacture equipment. Equipment for general art and design courses, and particularly for textiles, is insufficient in range and quantity.

68 The newly-appointed director of resources controls the purchase of equipment centrally. There is no structured long-term strategy for equipment purchase or replacement. Limited funding has resulted in purchases being made in response to immediate, rather than long-term, needs. An experienced maintenance engineer has been appointed to maintain and ensure the safety of equipment and identify equipment at risk.

69 The open learning information technology centre offers pleasant and secure accommodation for 15 networked personal computers and associated scanner and printer equipment. The centre provides a desktop

publishing facility and information technology induction and training for staff and students. The extent of student and staff demand requires full-time rather than part-time technician support.

70 The newly-extended library occupies three adjacent rooms, one of which is a resource centre. There are 12,500 catalogued items, including a good supply of specialist books on footwear, leathergoods, saddlery, art, fashion and design. The number of management, marketing and company information books is small. The library is well provided with 110 periodicals. There is an adequate number of study places; 44 for 470 students. There is an information and research database and access to the Internet. The resource centre is equipped with six open access personal computers that students are able to reserve for their own use. There is no computerised library management system. The library staff have a close working relationship with the teaching staff. They provide a responsive service that supports the college's teaching and learning activities. In addition, library staff deal with a variety of external enquiries.

Accommodation

71 The college is on a single site. The main building is a two and three-storey former school dating from 1877. It does not easily adapt to the college's current course needs. The adjoining three-storey building, constructed in 1956, provides basic, outdated, and poorly-planned accommodation. A block of second-hand portacabins was erected at the rear of the building in 1993 as a temporary solution to provide additional studios.

72 Most of the accommodation is shabby and in need of decoration, particularly the common areas and design studios which are drab although they are fairly clean and tidy. Attempts have been made to improve the single entrance to the college by introducing display cases of students' work, but the area remains uninviting and does not reflect the professional nature and quality of the college's provision. The reception and administration offices are congested, unwelcoming and ill-equipped. Their ventilation and lighting is inadequate.

73 The footwear and leather accessories workshops have good lighting and are generally satisfactory. Baserooms for student groups, such as those in saddlery, enable students to carry on projects outside guided learning hours. The recent move of general art and design into a suite of adjoining rooms in the south block provides students with easier access to specialist accommodation. The lack in many rooms of storage for students' work and personal belongings creates a hazard and contributes to clutter and untidiness.

74 There is a canteen for staff and students in a former gymnasium at the rear of the main building. It is spacious but the decor and furniture need updating. The walkway to the canteen is obstructed with furniture. External bins need to be provided for students' litter. There are no facilities

for students other than one small combined student union and locker room. There is very limited access for wheelchair users.

75 During recent years, the college has progressively addressed the maintenance and repair needs of its buildings as well as servicing a changing and expanding curriculum. The college has had its buildings professionally surveyed and knows where improvements are required. Since opportunities for lateral expansion are limited, a policy of infilling and vertical expansion has been adopted. Two major building projects made possible by industry, the livery company and European funding are taking place in 1996 to provide students' residential accommodation and a leather industry support centre.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

76 The strengths of the college are:

- the high reputation of the college locally, nationally and internationally
- the unique range of specialist footwear and leathers goods courses
- strong links with the leather industry
- the positive leadership from senior management
- supportive governors
- the expertise and enthusiasm of the teaching staff
- good standards of teaching
- strong pastoral and academic support for students
- the high levels of students' achievements.

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

- continue the establishment of quality assurance procedures
- further develop the management information systems
- develop marketing strategies for further education courses
- develop systematic student services
- review the uneven support for students with basic learning needs
- address the poor retention on some courses
- improve the equipment for general art and design
- improve the poor standard of accommodation.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)

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

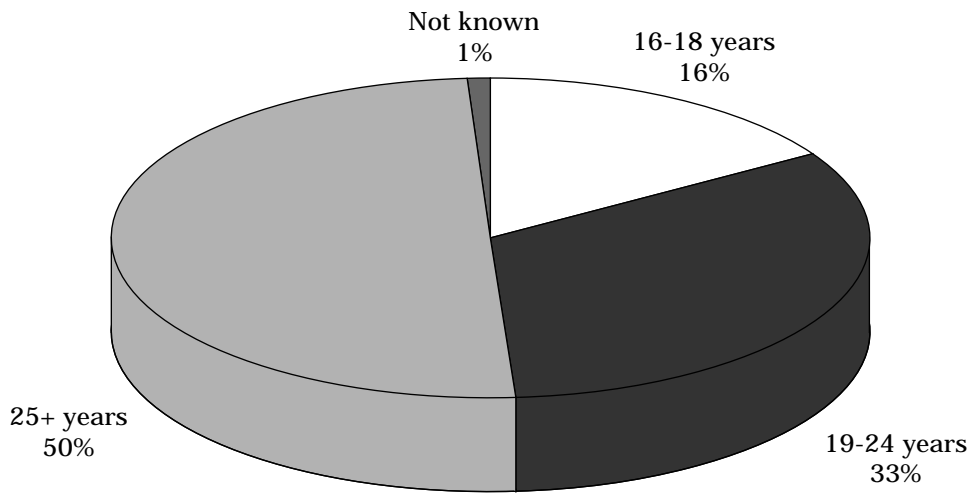
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1995)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

Figure 1

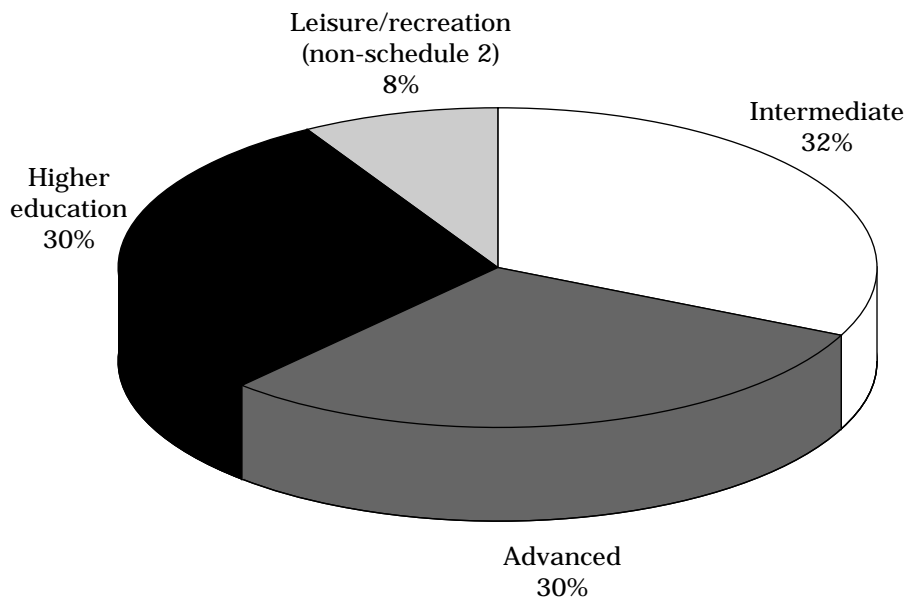
Cordwainers College: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)



Enrolments: 513

Figure 2

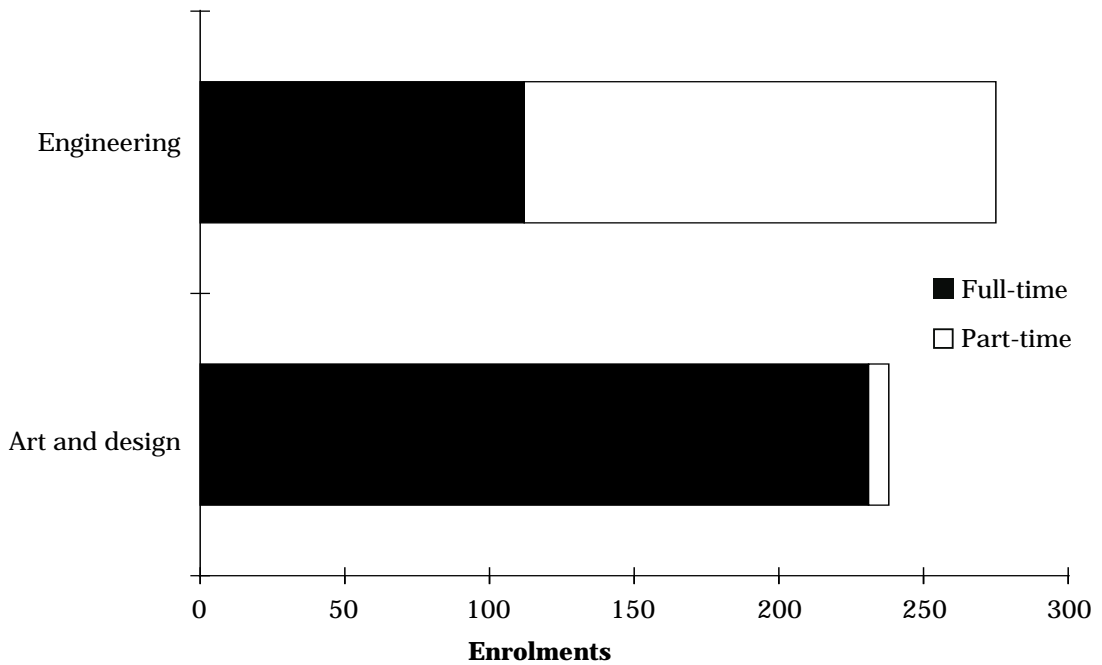
Cordwainers College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)



Enrolments: 513

Figure 3

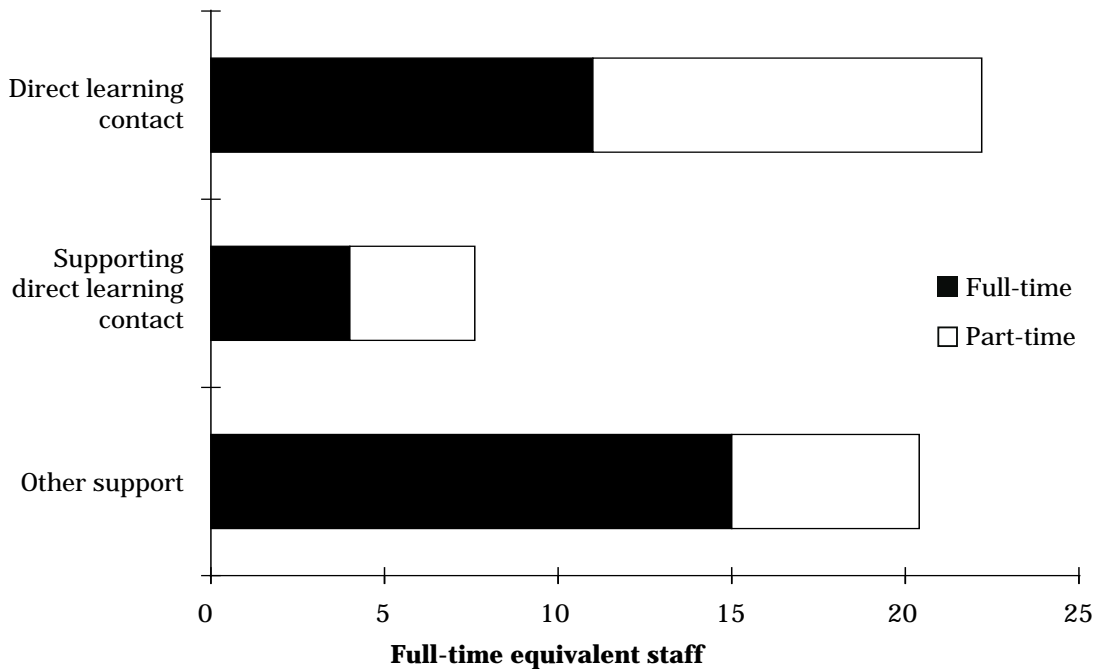
Cordwainers College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)



Enrolments: 513

Figure 4

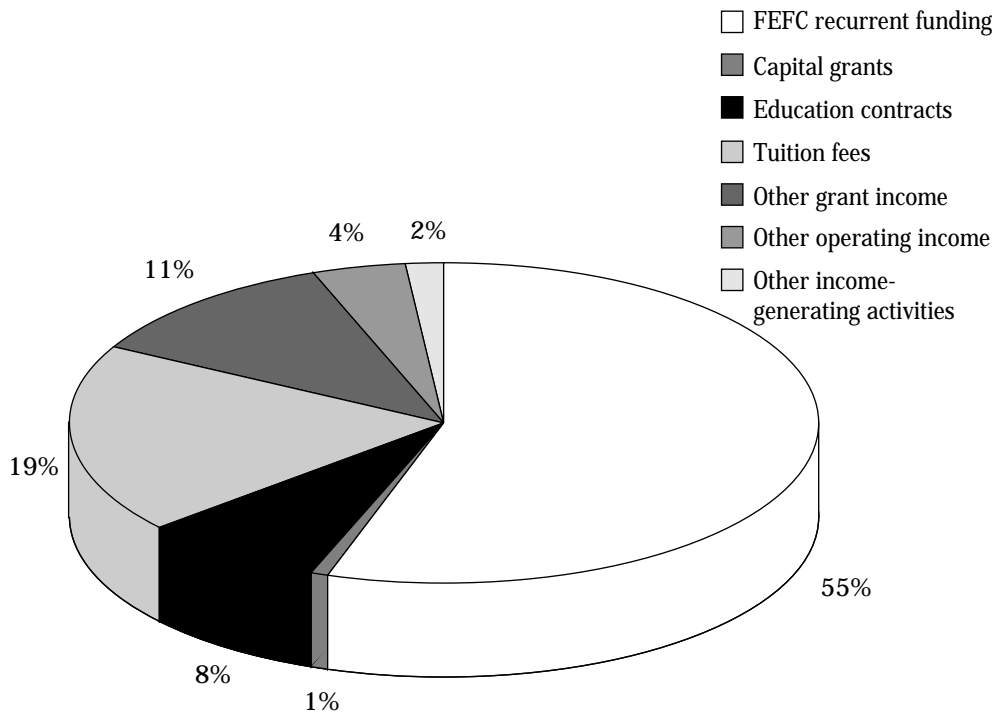
Cordwainers College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)



Full-time equivalent staff: 50

Figure 5

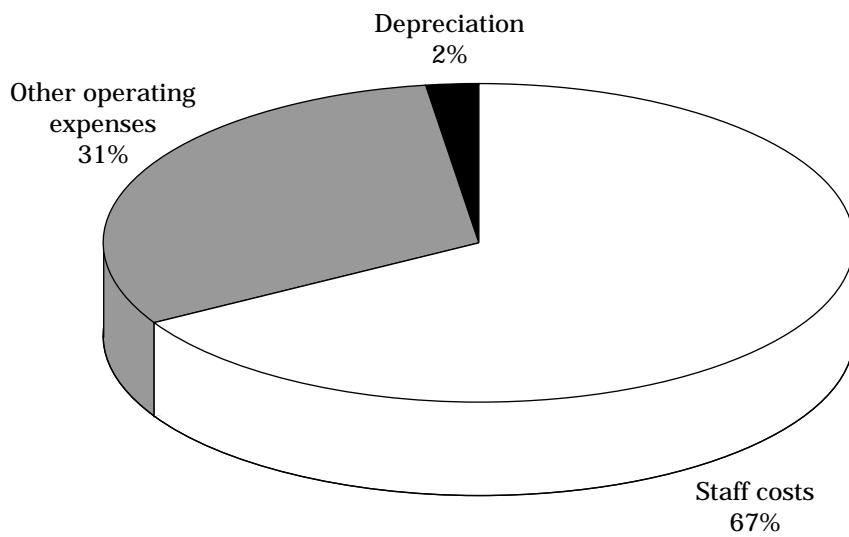
Cordwainers College: income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Income: £1,700,672

Figure 6

Cordwainers College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Expenditure: £1,689,710

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