Croydon College

THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL

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

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

CONTENTS

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

	Inspection grades				
Activity	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 26/96

CROYDON COLLEGE
GREATER LONDON REGION
Inspected May-November 1995

Summary

Croydon College is responsive and provides a wide range of courses which offers students good opportunities for progression. It is improving its links with local schools and developing good relationships with external agencies. There is a well-considered strategic planning process. The college is effectively governed. Courses and services are generally well managed. There are suitable arrangements for the recruitment and induction of students. On most courses the quality of teaching is good. There is an effective tutorial system on many courses and comprehensive arrangements for learning support and counselling. The monitoring of students' attendance and retention is variable. The flexible learning workshops, the libraries and information technology workshops, offer good support for students. The standard of specialist equipment is generally good. Students' attendance, retention and achievements are poor in some courses, particularly in hairdressing where remedial action is required. Quality assurance procedures are well established but their implementation is variable. The use of performance indicators in management and quality assurance is underdeveloped. Statistical information to support management decisions is inadequate and unreliable. The computerised management information system is not serving the college's needs for data on students' enrolments and achievements.

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	2
Quality assurance	3
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and mathematics	2	Health and community care	2
Computing and information technology	2	Hairdressing and beauty therapy	4
Construction	3	Art and design	3
Engineering	2	English, languages/English as a foreign language	3
Business studies	2	Other humanities	2
Hotel and catering, leisure and tourism	2	English for speakers of other languages, SLDD and basic education	2

INTRODUCTION

1   Croydon College was inspected between May and November 1995 by 22 full-time and part-time inspectors who spent a total of 86 days in the college. They inspected teaching and learning across the college as well as recruitment and induction procedures. Inspectors visited 293 classes involving about 3,000 students and inspected a broad range of students' written work. Meetings were held with governors, students, teachers, senior managers, support staff, parents, employers and a representative of the South London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). The inspectors also had access to extensive documentation about the college and its courses.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2   Croydon College is a large further and higher education college which celebrated its centenary in 1988. It occupies four buildings on three sites in the London Borough of Croydon. The Fairfield and Barclay Road buildings are situated in the town centre and the Heath Clark and Selhurst centres are in the south west and the north of the borough, respectively. The college lies in the area covered by the South London TEC. Competition for students is intense. There are two sixth form colleges in the borough and eight colleges within easy travelling distance of up to 10 miles, as well as schools which have sixth forms. One of the two local city technology colleges shares a site with the college at the Selhurst centre. Adult education in the borough is provided by the Continuing Education and Training Service which is partly funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC).

3   At the time of the inspection, there were 12,069 students enrolled at the college. Of these, 70 per cent were over 19 years of age. Enrolments by age and by level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2. The college attracts students from a wide catchment area. About 50 per cent of the full-time further education students come from the London Borough of Croydon and the remainder from the nearby boroughs of Lambeth, Sutton, Merton, Bromley, Lewisham, Southwark and Wandsworth, and adjacent parts of Kent and Surrey. Last year, about 40 per cent of the students came from minority ethnic backgrounds. Students attending higher education courses are drawn from all parts of the United Kingdom and some from the European Community. Part-time students are drawn from all parts of London and South East England. The college is well served by public transport.

4   In 1991, the London Borough of Croydon had a population of 313,510 and is the largest of the London boroughs in terms of numbers of residents. About 9,000 businesses are based in Croydon, including a range of multinational and national companies. There are also large government offices and major department stores. There has recently been a growth in the number of small companies in the service sector and in manufacturing

services. Employment is still mostly in the distributive trades, banking, insurance and other service industries, although these sectors have reduced in size in recent years. Many residents travel daily to work in central London. The unemployment rate in Croydon is 9.2 per cent compared with 6.4 and 6.0 per cent in the neighbouring outer London boroughs of Bromley and Sutton. The proportion of residents from minority ethnic backgrounds is 16.5 per cent in Croydon, 2.8 per cent in Bromley and 3.6 per cent in Sutton. The figures for Croydon's unemployment rate and the proportion of residents from minority ethnic backgrounds are similar to those for Greater London as a whole.

5   The college's work is organised into eight schools which offer a range of further education courses in nine of the FEFC's 10 programme areas. Courses are offered in art and design, construction, engineering, English, a range of humanities subjects, modern and community languages, business studies, computing, science, mathematics, health and community care, hairdressing and beauty therapy, hospitality and catering, and leisure and tourism. In addition the college has contracted with the Higher Education Funding Council for England to provide courses for which funding of nearly £3 million has been allocated in 1995-96. It has become a college of the University of Sussex. The college also provides courses for employers and other clients on a full-cost basis through the Croydon Education Business Enterprise. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3. The college employs 759 full-time equivalent staff of which 386 are full-time equivalent teaching posts. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

6   The college's mission statement states that: 'the college seeks to provide high-quality learning opportunities that are flexible and accessible and designed to enable individuals to realise their personal and professional potential'. The mission statement and the college's values are displayed in 50 locations throughout the college and are included in the staff handbook.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7   The college responds to the needs of the community and to industry by providing an extensive range of 175 full-time and 250 part-time and evening courses across most of the FEFC's programme areas. Vocational courses are available from foundation to higher education level providing good opportunities for students to progress to more advanced courses within the college. In recent years, courses in health, community and social care, hairdressing and beauty therapy, leisure and tourism and performing arts have expanded rapidly, whilst courses in construction, banking and insurance have reduced because of declining demand. Courses leading to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are offered in a variety of subjects including health and social care, hairdressing, beauty therapy, hospitality and catering, construction crafts, motor vehicle

engineering and administration. Full-time and part-time students on any course can gain an NVQ at level 1 or 2 in a modern foreign language. The college is also a major provider of courses leading to General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) at intermediate and advanced levels in science, business studies, information technology, health and social care, leisure and tourism and hospitality and catering. There are also foundation level GNVQs which provide appropriate courses for those students who are as yet unable to sustain intermediate level study. The college intends to offer an intermediate GNVQ in engineering in 1996 and an advanced GNVQ in engineering in 1997. The advanced GNVQ in art and design has been replaced by an equivalent Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma course because students and course managers considered that GNVQ students were at a disadvantage when applying for university places.

8   The college offers 29 General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects, 13 GCE advanced supplementary (GCE AS) subjects and 27 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects. GCE A levels can be studied full time or part time over one or two years and most subjects are provided at both the Selhurst and Heath Clark centres. GCSEs are available to both full-time and part-time students, mainly at Selhurst. The college has a wide range of language provision, including courses in Italian introduced in 1995 in response to demand from local Italian residents and GCSEs in Bengali, Gujerati, Hindi and Urdu.

9   Adults are well served by the college's access courses which prepare students for higher education. There are one-year full-time access courses in the built environment, in engineering and in primary education as well as a modular access programme with pathways in humanities, business studies, social studies, health studies and science. There is an evening access course in social science and a law access course which students can attend in the morning, afternoon or evening. Recruitment to access courses is buoyant; student numbers on the modular course have increased by 40 per cent since 1994. It is anticipated that during the year more than 100 students who are unable to attend a course at the college will be studying using flexible and distance learning materials.

10   Some 26 per cent of the college's provision is at the higher education level. The college offers 11 degree courses and three postgraduate teaching courses, including a part-time master's course. There are full-time and part-time higher education courses in art and design, business, law, construction, engineering, health, community care, social studies, hotel and catering and tourism management. The college is working towards having all its degree programmes validated by the University of Sussex within the next five years. Art and design programmes, now validated by Surrey Institute of Art and Design, will in future be validated jointly by the institute and the university.

11   The college's school of foundation and core learning provides a good range of specialist learning programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Wherever possible, they join in courses with other students. There are two, CENTRA accredited, one-year, full-time courses to prepare students to live and work independently. In addition, the school provides seven foundation GNVQ courses which focus on the development with vocational studies of students' skills in communication, the application of number and information technology. Adult students can attend 10 week preparatory courses, prior to entry to access or further education courses. There is also a programme entitled access for bilingual learners of English (ABLE) which enables students to concentrate on developing their English language skills before enrolling on further vocational or general education courses.

12   The college's schools liaison co-ordinators and teaching staff represent the college at schools' careers conventions and give talks to school pupils whenever the opportunity arises. School pupils visit the college to sample classes, to talk to students and to view the college's facilities. Some pupils attend the college to undertake project work using equipment that is not available at school. There are link courses with a local secondary school and with schools for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Over 50 pupils with disabilities attend the college for up to one day each week. The college is working with a local school on a TEC-funded project to evaluate the effectiveness of school link programmes. However, there are no courses franchised to schools or jointly designed courses. The college recognises the need to improve its links with schools and is exploring the possibility of forming partnerships.

13   Training for work programmes are provided locally by the borough's Continuing Education and Training Service. The college has worked closely with South London TEC on a number of other initiatives and, in association with other colleges in the area, it has made a successful bid for substantial funding to improve the competitiveness of small to medium-sized enterprises through the use of multi-media and computer communications. The college has also been successful in obtaining funds from a variety of sources, including South London TEC, to finance educational visits and staff and student exchanges with institutions in continental Europe.

14   The extent and nature of contacts with industry vary across the college. Some industrial consultative groups are effective but others have been discontinued because of poor support from industry. The college is reviewing the role of these groups. Many full-time students on vocational courses undertake some form of work placement ranging from one day each week throughout the year, to blocks of 1 to 12 weeks' duration. Commercial training services are provided by college staff and targets for income generation are set. The services provided include the analysis of training needs and consultancy work as well as training in specific areas. Last year, the turnover from commercial activities was about £500,000. Senior college staff take part in local planning groups such as the Croydon

and South London Chamber of Commerce and Croydon Council's Economic Development Forum.

15   The college has five groups concerned with the marketing and promotion of its courses, but their roles are not clearly defined. The college needs more effective ways of carrying out market research and advertising its courses.

16   The equal opportunities policy is widely published. There is a college committee chaired by a senior member of staff which has undertaken some monitoring of the implementation of the policy. The action plans arising from the policy are at an early stage of implementation and more systematic monitoring is needed.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

17   The arrangements for the governance of the college are effective. Governors understand their strategic role, which they distinguish clearly from the operational duties of the senior managers of the college. The corporation board has 20 members, a number chosen to provide a wide range of expertise for a large and diverse college. The membership comprises 12 independent members, one member nominated by South London TEC, one community member, two co-opted members who are both senior borough councillors, two staff members, one student member and the principal. Members have between them a substantial range of expertise upon which the college is able to draw including accountancy, education, industrial relations, insurance, marketing, personnel and property. There are seven women members, including one who is a member of a minority ethnic group. At the time of the inspection there were three vacancies. In seeking to fill them, the college is mindful of the gender and ethnic mix of members.

18   The corporation has four committees: audit, finance and human resources, remuneration and search. All are supported by timely and well-organised documentation. The corporation board meets three or four times a year primarily to examine college reports, budgets and accounts and to consider and comment on plans, policies and procedures. The finance and human resources committee meets some six to eight times a year and scrutinises rigorously the detailed financial statements prepared by the finance director. The board and its committees are working efficiently, although the level of attendance is variable, with the audit committee showing the poorest attendance with a maximum of 64 per cent.

19   Governors are informed about the college's work by hearing presentations from curriculum and service area managers and by visiting the college for special events such as awards ceremonies. Individual governors are assigned to operational areas of the college. The process of appointment and induction of governors helps new governors to move

smoothly into their role. Weekend training sessions are held to give members an opportunity to study issues in depth and to keep up to date.

20   The college has a carefully considered and well-documented strategic planning process. The governors define the college's mission, corporate objectives and values. They monitor the updating of the plan through the finance and human resources committee and the full governing body. The college's corporate and operational objectives are reflected in the plans of individual schools and service areas, which in turn respond to and exercise influence over the college plan. The first strategic plan was produced in a short space of time and was largely the work of senior managers. There was little opportunity for input from staff at lower levels in the organisation. Attempts have been made subsequently to involve staff more deeply, for example, by providing information and briefing sessions to help them understand how they can contribute to the process and why it is important. Deans of schools and heads of service now make a substantial contribution to the process, but not all staff are consistently involved.

21   The current annual operating statement contains 147 objectives prepared by schools and services in response to the strategic objectives. Staff who do not have close involvement with the planning process find them daunting and difficult to use as a guide for individual action. The document is widely known, but not widely owned.

22   The management of the college has been affected by uncertainty over the past two years. The outgoing principal was absent due to ill health for some time before his early retirement. Following the appointment of a new principal, a review of the college's senior management structure has been carried out and the governing body has decided to introduce substantial changes with effect from January 1996. The revised structure is intended to clarify the functions of senior managers, to achieve greater clarity in the lines of communication and accountability, to remove the divide between further and higher education courses and to place a greater emphasis on the curriculum. The responsibilities for the implementation and monitoring of all college policies will be more clearly identified in the new structure.

23   The academic board, which includes senior managers, representatives of teaching and support staff and of students, meets termly to discuss and provide advice to the principal on issues relating to courses and students. It has numerous subcommittees and standing committees as well as many working groups addressing various areas of interest to the board. Substantial changes to current arrangements, including a reduction in the number of committees and the establishment of an academic policy committee, an academic standards committee and a learning environment committee are being made to increase the effectiveness of the board.

24   Since 1994, related non-vocational and vocational work at all levels and across all sites has been managed by the same school. The management structure in each of the eight schools differs and each has been developed to suit the nature and the location of the work. The management of courses and services is generally effective, but in a number of areas there remains insufficient co-ordination to ensure good communications, the sharing of good practice and the development of consistent approaches within and between schools.

25   The college's average level of funding for 1994-95 was £20.44 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges was £17.97. The college's average level of funding for 1995-96 will be £20.12 per unit against a median of £17.84 for similar colleges. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6. There are sound arrangements in the strategic planning cycle for ensuring that resources allocated to teaching are effectively deployed. Deans of schools are required to show the budget implications of their plans and justify them to senior managers. Once approved, course hours, staff hours and consumables budgets are regularly monitored and closely controlled. The allocation of budgets to cost centres is, however, largely based on past practice. The college plans to introduce a new system of unit costing in 1995-96. Better financial management information will be needed if the college is to make well-informed and timely decisions.

26   At present, reliable, easily accessible and comprehensive management information is not readily available. Computerised systems of varying effectiveness have been developed to provide management information on finance, students, accommodation and personnel matters. The student information system in particular is inadequate, despite recent investment. The college recognises that it needs better management information if it is to meet the requirements of outside agencies and enable its senior managers and staff in schools and services to carry out their jobs effectively.

27   Projection of enrolment targets and the monitoring of their achievement are already well established. In 1993-94, the college met its target of 5,147 full-time equivalent students. Figures for 1994-95 are not yet finalised, but the college expects to have fallen short of a substantial planned growth of 13.7 per cent by only some 2.5 per cent. Much work remains to be done on the implementation of a set of performance indicators. Deans of individual schools monitor retention rates on their courses and some set specific targets, but practice is not uniform. The college has recently set a retention rate target of 80 per cent for implementation in 1996-97. Student destinations are monitored in order to fulfil the college's obligation to publish information about students' achievement, but information about intended destinations is not routinely followed up to establish actual destinations.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

28   The college provides substantial services for students, but to be fully effective they are in need of better co-ordination. The procedures for students' recruitment, guidance and support are set out in various statements; a policy for students' guidance is in its fourth draft, but it has yet to be approved by senior managers. Comprehensive surveys of students' views are not systematically undertaken to inform thinking on the services required. The surveys that have been carried out are limited in scope and the results have not been circulated sufficiently within the college to inform decision making. Staff providing services for students are supported by a range of guidance notes and checklists but practice is variable across the college.

29   Recruitment continues throughout the year. Prospective students learn about the college at open evenings held on each of the sites, at promotional events held on school premises and at educational fairs and exhibitions. Posters are displayed at railway stations and on local buses. Advertisements are placed in the local and national press and on local radio. Each course has a separate informative leaflet. There are attractive further and higher education prospectuses. The college information centre offers a comprehensive service by well-informed staff who deal with telephone and personal enquiries. Advisory interviews with staff from the Croydon Careers Service are available on all sites. Impartial guidance is offered to ensure students are placed on the best programme to suit their career ambitions or educational abilities and, in some cases, other colleges are recommended. Interviewers are given clear guidelines on procedures, including those for referring students to other college support services. Where students have an identified disability, specialist members of staff are available for guidance and consultation. Students expressed their satisfaction with the recruitment process.

30   Enrolment procedures in 1995 were generally well organised, but there were some delays for students, particularly at the beginning of the enrolment week. The required forms were not always completed correctly at enrolment and, subsequently, much time has been spent on completing this task. The views of students and staff expressed in questionnaires are being used to inform forward planning. The notification of students' absence is variable and the monitoring of attendance and retention is poor.

31   The process of accrediting students' prior learning is formally undertaken in NVQ administration at levels 2 and 3. In hospitality, catering, and leisure and tourism some of the assessment is carried out in the workplace; other schools have developed informal mechanisms to meet the needs of students. However, the accreditation of prior learning is underdeveloped in other areas.

32   The college has been successful in obtaining funding from the Home Office for three years to support the work of a community liaison and

outreach officer who helps to identify the educational needs of people from minority ethnic groups. She has already encouraged an increasing number of students to benefit from the services of the college.

33   Induction practice varies across schools. Procedures for full-time students are generally effective and provide an informative introduction to most aspects of college life. Numerous curriculum-related activities are undertaken. Teachers devise appropriate variations to suit their courses. The library and flexible learning workshops have developed materials for students on particular courses which are intended to increase students' awareness of the services and their motivation to use them. Copies of the college charter and students' handbook are distributed and discussed during induction. Understanding of the charter amongst students was high.

34   During induction, most full-time students completed tests produced by the Basic Skills Agency to identify their needs for support in language and numeracy. Testing is carried out by the schools. Students are counselled by their tutors and support from tutors is available or students can attend the flexible learning workshops. Students with hearing or visual impairment or physical disabilities are well supported. Awareness raising amongst teachers, training for course teams and individual support for the students has been provided by local specialist support providers so that students can be integrated into mainstream provision. An increasing number of students aged 16 to 19 are found to be dyslexic and the needs of these students are met through individual workshops.

35   The guidance and counselling services provide an extensive range of support and advice. Educational issues were raised by 29 per cent of the enquirers and financial difficulties by 20 per cent. At some points in the year there are waiting lists for appointments but special facilities are provided for urgent cases. About £49,000 is available for students suffering financial hardship; some 300 students have received help so far this year. The services of an inter-faith chaplaincy on each site are available one day each week. The provision of a quiet room has been supported by a donation from a charitable trust so that students have a place for reflection, meditation and prayer. The college has a nursery offering 46 places for children aged three months to five years. This service is available for staff and students. At the time of inspection there were a number of vacancies. It opens only for the 38 weeks per year of term-time and is in need of some renovation and redecoration.

36   In 1994, the college received the Queen's Prize for further and higher education for its flexible learning workshop provision. The citation states: 'This is an exemplary programme on a large scale to help individual students match their different learning speeds and needs with the demands and time constraints of courses and examinations'. It went on to describe the programme as innovative and capable of replication. Flexible learning workshops are now available on all sites near to the book and video stock

of the learning centres and libraries. They offer students the opportunity to receive learning support and to use a variety of learning materials for private study. Entry is by computerised identity cards and use of the learning centres is monitored. Materials have been developed by college staff and an evaluation of commercially-produced work is undertaken regularly. Sharing of common material between the sites is increasing. Information technology workshops are also provided and students can book sessions. Any remaining places are open to all students.

37   Full-time students are provided with regular personal tutorials which are valued by most students. The arrangements for part-time and evening students are not consistent across schools; good practice was observed in building services courses where a one-hour timetabled slot around lunchtime was used to review students' progress and to discuss any difficulties they might be experiencing. Tutors have been prepared for their roles, but practice is inconsistent across and within the schools. The recording of tutorial activities is patchy. The quality of tutorials would be improved by regular record keeping, the sharing of good practice and better monitoring and evaluation.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

38   The strengths of the teaching outweighed the weaknesses in 58 per cent of the sessions observed. In 11 per cent of lessons the weaknesses outweighed the strengths. The following table summarises the grades given to the teaching sessions observed.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	9	30	22	5	1	67
GCSE	2	14	4	3	0	23
GNVQ	5	17	15	8	0	45
NVQ	5	27	16	5	0	53
Other vocational	8	24	21	5	0	58
Higher education	1	10	8	1	0	20
Other*	4	14	6	3	0	27
Total	**34**	**136**	**92**	**30**	**1**	**293**

includes access to higher education, SLDD, ESOL and basic education.

39   The majority of courses are well managed, although poor liaison within some course teams diminishes opportunities for the sharing of ideas, good practice and the standardisation of assessment. There are schemes of work for most courses and many are of high quality. On the whole, students are clear about what they are doing and why. For example, in construction, psychology, sociology, health and social care, students receive detailed information about topics to be studied, assignments and

assessments and are given deadlines to help them organise their work. Plans given to students in government, economics and politics contain an assessment matrix, a schedule of topics to be covered, guidance on the study methods to be used and the contribution students will be expected to make. The range of learning opportunities in art and design, however, is narrow, aimed at technical competence and control rather than experiment. Lesson plans and schemes of work in computing and hairdressing do not always make clear what is expected of students.

40   On the whole, teachers have a sound grasp of their subjects and possess appropriate practical expertise. They have clear aims and objectives and employ a variety of teaching methods. In one good lesson in intermediate GNVQ information technology, students worked on a range of carefully-planned activities, from an exploration of the basic components of a personal computer to the design of a poster for the learning centre. Practical classes in hospitality and catering were of a high standard; briefings were thorough and students were allocated a range of tasks which allowed them to demonstrate acquired competencies. In health and social care, students working in small groups effectively presented the results of their research on psychological theories to the rest of their class. In a law class on strict liability, skilful questioning was particularly successful in drawing out a reluctant student.

41   Humanities teachers were particularly adept in leading discussions and managing classwork. In one GCSE English class, the teacher used an autobiographical essay by a previous student to stimulate discussion in small groups in preparation for the students' own autobiographical essays. In literature classes, teachers were able to draw meanings from texts in ways which students could understand and difficult modern work, including dialect poetry, was tackled. Students' comments in humanities classes were often mature and perceptive and teachers' enthusiasm for the subject matter was evident.

42   In a minority of classes there was too much reliance on long periods of exposition by teachers and note taking by students with little checking of students' understanding of the work. Classes in construction sometimes lacked sparkle and the pace of the work was slow. Although practical classes in engineering were interesting and stimulating, written materials given to students ranged from imaginative task sheets requiring significant thought and involvement to undemanding step by step guides. Some languages teachers set work at a level which was too high or too low for students and there was an overemphasis in some classes on drilling in grammar and functional language learning. Students were insufficiently challenged in some classes. The differing abilities and experience of students were not always recognised or catered for and this led to passivity and detachment on the part of some students in a number of courses. In others, teachers found it difficult to respond effectively to the very wide range of skills and levels of motivation amongst the students.

43   Good use was made of teaching aids and support materials in some classes. In engineering, computer-based simulations supported effective learning and video-taped materials were skilfully used in a first aid class to record what students could do. A teacher of English as a foreign language used the students' own language as a resource to stimulate the learning of English. Handouts were particularly well produced on some art and design courses. A programme of visiting speakers and outside visits, including an annual exchange with Spanish students, enhances the experience of hairdressing students. There are opportunities for languages students to make study visits to France.

44   The majority of students are well motivated, hard working and responsive. Good relationships between teachers and students are a feature of the college. Most teachers succeed in creating positive learning environments where students can work collaboratively and learn effectively. Construction students were responding diligently to questions and there was lively student participation in engineering classes. In business studies and computing, students were able to make good progress by themselves once a clear framework had been set by the teacher. GCE A level science and mathematics students enjoyed their work and were making good progress in solving the problems which had been set by their teachers. On some business courses, however, students were not always encouraged to participate sufficiently.

45   In basic education, teachers were both supportive and challenging. Effective and imaginative approaches successfully met the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities both on mainstream and separate courses. Most students spoke highly of the provision and valued the college's commitment to equal opportunities. There was a lack of variety and stimulus in some basic education classes, however, and examples of teachers using language with adults which was better suited to younger learners. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well integrated in hospitality and catering courses. Some students on a leisure course are developing a sports programme for people with learning difficulties.

46   The development and assessment of students' core skills in communication, the application of number and information technology are fully integrated within leisure programmes and basic education students are challenged with tasks that combine the core and vocational skills. One leisure class provided an excellent example of the reinforcement of previous learning followed by teaching which brought together the application of number, information technology skills and information gathering. In hospitality and catering, classes in information technology are carefully related to vocational work. In other areas, the teaching of core skills, especially information technology, remains underdeveloped. The development of core skills is the responsibility of the individual schools. The college should consider how the good practice in developing and

assessing core skills found in some of its courses could be disseminated across the whole of its provision.

47   In the classes seen in the autumn term, the average attendance rate was 76 per cent. Both attendance and punctuality are a problem in some classes, particularly those beginning at 09.00 hours. Attendance rates varied between 55 per cent in hairdressing and beauty therapy and 83 per cent in health and social care.

48   The quality of assessment varies both across and within subjects. Teachers' comments on students' written work range from a simple mark to helpful written comments. There is consistent good practice in health and social care, leisure and business, where teachers on GNVQ programmes have established rigorous systems and procedures for recording students' achievements. The regular setting and marking of work with constructive comments and positive feedback are features of some courses in humanities and leisure and tourism. In computing and construction, assignment schedules are agreed and shared with students. In basic education, science, mathematics, and hospitality and catering, carefully-maintained records are used to inform students of their progress. Students in art and design are informed of their progress but they would benefit from more detailed comments about their work against known criteria. Business studies students generally receive constructive written comments on their work, although there were undue delays in assessing some GNVQ advanced students' work in 1994-95.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

49   Students' achievements on GCE A level courses differ significantly at the two centres where they are offered. At the Heath Clark site, from 330 subject enrolments on full-time courses in 1993, there were 262 examination entries in 1995 resulting in 219 passes, an 84 per cent pass rate. The retention rate was 79 per cent and the pass rate, based on original enrolments, was 66 per cent. At Selhurst, of the 317 subject enrolments, the 214 entries resulted in 140 passes, a 65 per cent pass rate. The retention rate here was 68 per cent and the pass rate, based on original enrolments, was 44 per cent. In 1995, at Heath Clark, seven subjects achieved 100 per cent pass rates based on those students taking the examinations. At Selhurst, three subjects achieved 100 per cent pass rates. There were also some poor results: at Heath Clark in biology, computing and German; at Selhurst in accounts, French, law and physics. The college subscribes to the Advanced Level Information System which is a measure of added value based on GCSE entry qualifications. This shows significant value added for the two-year, full-time course at Heath Clark in six subjects. At Selhurst significant value added was not recorded in any subject. At both sites there were two subjects in which students failed to achieve the projected results based on their entry qualifications. The variation in value added and results for the same subjects at the different sites is a matter the college could, with benefit, address. In particular, the

good results in accounting at Heath Clark over the last three years and the poor results at Selhurst over the same period is a matter worthy of attention.

50 There have been some overall improvements in GCE A level examination results in mathematics and sciences in recent years, but in 1995 there were poor achievements in physics and chemistry, while the full-time students completing mathematics at Heath Clark achieved a 100 per cent pass rate. There were some very good GCE A level pass rates in English in 1995 for full-time students, with a 100 per cent pass rate in English literature at Heath Clark, and 100 per cent pass rates in English language and literature at Selhurst. There are some poor retention rates on English courses at Selhurst. Overall, few students took modern languages at GCE A level and results were average. Results in English as a foreign language are above national figures at most levels. In history, economics, government and politics, psychology and sociology there are some good pass rates at GCE A level: in government and politics there have been 31 passes out of 33 entries over the last two years, although the proportion gaining grades A-C were lower than national figures in some subjects. In 1995, two students at the college were amongst those who achieved the top five marks in accounting of all the students sitting the Associated Examination Board GCE A level examination. In 1994, another was one of two students who obtained the highest overall mark in GCE A level law from the University of London Examinations and Assessment Council and, for this achievement, jointly shared a prize awarded by the Chartered Institute of Secretaries and Administrators.

51 The 352 students aged 16-18 entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1995 scored, on average, 3.5 points per entry (where A=10, E=2). This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure based on the data in the 1995 performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment.

52 GCSE is offered as a one-year course at the Selhurst site. In 1995, there were 469 subject enrolments by full-time students in 22 different subjects. A pass rate at grades A-C of 31 per cent was achieved by those sitting the examinations. The wastage rate was 15 per cent. There were good results in art and design, drama, English literature, French and Urdu but poor results in 13 subjects, including biology, economics, history, information systems, law, mathematics and sociology. Part-time students achieved good results in art and design, drama, English literature, French, Urdu and Italian but had poor results in eight subjects, including accounts, biology and human biology. The pattern was not dissimilar in 1994 and 1993. Some subjects for example economics, biology and human biology and sociology have produced poor results over the last three years and law, accounts and physics in two of the last three years. The computing results at GCSE in 1995 were particularly poor with only five students from an enrolment of 41 gaining grades A-C. The GCSE results in English

language since 1994 have worsened dramatically with the introduction of a new syllabus which reduced the contribution of coursework to the final grade achieved. At the Heath Clark site GCSE subjects are offered in English and mathematics. In 1995, 12 of the 14 entries for English and 15 of the 46 entries for mathematics obtained grades A-C. The few students taking either sociology or media studies were successful in achieving grades A-C.

53   Seventy-two per cent of the 16-18 year old students on their final year of study on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education and Employment's 1995 performance tables were successful. This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. However, large numbers of the college's students are aged 19 and over and do not feature in this performance measure.

54   In computing, results for those who complete vocational courses are good with pass rates in excess of 80 per cent, although completion rates are low on some courses. In 1994-95, the intermediate GNVQ in information technology enrolled 60 students. There was a 92 per cent pass rate for those who completed, but of those originally enrolled only 55 per cent achieved a pass. Of the 16 students registered for advanced GNVQ in information technology in 1993, 10 completed and eight achieved the full award.

55   Overall, the examination pass rates in engineering are satisfactory with most vocational courses in 1995 having pass rates of about 65 per cent. All courses are unit based and on the basis of units successfully completed the rate was 76 per cent. There have been some low pass rates for electrical craft courses and on the first diploma and national certificate courses in motor vehicles which require careful investigation as to their cause and appropriate remedial action. The first diploma and national diploma in engineering would also benefit from such scrutiny. There is a substantial number of higher education courses in engineering with pass rates significantly better than those for the further education courses.

56   Assignment work was of a good standard in construction. Students were diligent in practical work and generally produced work of a good standard, giving proper attention to health and safety issues. Outcomes, in terms of qualification success have had a downward trend in some craft and higher national certificate areas over the last three years. However, there has been an upward trend in the results for the national diploma and certificate in construction and for the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) 236 electrical installation certificate at both parts 1 and 2. Most of the provision at higher levels, such as the examinations for the higher certificate in building and civil engineering, the Chartered Institute of Building, and the foundation course for the degree in built environment, have good pass rates.

57   In art and design the results for vocational courses are average. There were high standards of achievement in surface pattern and design and also in photography. The quality and range of drawing was weak. There was little evidence of students working well in group work except for some media video work and the video recordings of the fashion shows for 1994 and 1995.

58   There are, in hairdressing and beauty therapy, some very low retention and achievement rates. Appropriate practical skills were not being developed to a sufficient degree to prepare students for the workplace. Many full-time students left without completing the course but returned sometimes as part-time students to achieve their award. For example, in the full-time NVQ level 2 course in hairdressing of the 48 students enrolled in 1993, 39 completed the year and none were successful. In 1994, of the 62 enrolled, 26 completed and two achieved the award. The part-time courses in manicure and make-up had better retention rates but only in one year did more than 66 per cent of students achieve the qualification.

59   The work in hospitality and catering is primarily focused on NVQ qualifications; students on GNVQ programmes also work towards NVQ qualifications. Realistic work environments have been created to enable students to develop appropriate competencies. Personal effectiveness, with an emphasis on team building, problem solving and decision making, is a feature of much of the work. The pass rates for the full-time national diploma in hotel, catering and institutional operations, and for the NVQ catering and hospitality course at level 2, have been good over the last three years, averaging 85 per cent. Wastage rates have been very low from these courses. Results and retention rates for GNVQ programmes, especially at intermediate level, are a cause for concern.

60   The pass rates on national diplomas in travel and tourism and leisure management have been satisfactory over the last three years. Students' achievements were poor on the intermediate GNVQ in leisure and tourism in 1995 and significant numbers of students who commenced the advanced GNVQ in the same programme have not progressed into the second year. Only 48 per cent of the original intake remain.

61   Business studies is a substantial area of work in the college, embracing both further and higher education courses. On the GNVQ courses there was a clear link between the evidence provided in portfolios and the grades awarded. Students' achievements were good on most business courses in 1995. The pass rate for the advanced GNVQ offered at Selhurst was 95 per cent with retention at 66 per cent over the two years of the course. The national diploma at Heath Clark had a pass rate of 100 per cent and a retention rate of 72 per cent; at Selhurst the pass rate on the same course was 88 per cent.

62   For students on courses in social care, childcare and health subjects, pass rates are generally good. For example, over 85 per cent of students

on the National Nursery Examinations Board (NNEB) diploma in nursery nursing complete the programme successfully and the success rate on the advanced GNVQ in health and social care was 85 per cent in 1994 and 62 per cent in 1995. These figures compare well with national figures. Seventy per cent of the students on the new certificate in childcare and education course have completed the qualification successfully. For the past three years the pass rate on the school nurse certificate has been at or near 100 per cent. In contrast, only 37 per cent of students on the intermediate GNVQ were successful.

63   Provision for students with learning difficulties, courses in English for speakers of other languages, return to study and GNVQ foundation courses are provided by the newly-created school of foundation and core learning. Achievement in most areas of the work of the school is good and is continuing to improve. Systems are being developed to monitor partial achievement. In 1994-95, 96 students enrolled on a programme of five foundation GNVQs. Many of these students had social problems which were reflected in weak learning skills, difficult patterns of behaviour and, in some cases, poor motivation. The overall pass rate achieved was 24 per cent which was better than the national average but still too low. A further 46 per cent had achieved some partial success. There were good results in foundation GNVQ in hospitality and catering and health and social care. Students on courses in independent learning and work preparation may take more than one year to achieve certification. However, some students from the work preparation course progressed to the foundation GNVQ programme. The return to study programme also demonstrates success in enabling students to progress to further study in both further and higher education.

64   Destinations of students after completing their courses are collected on a course-by-course basis. The college has no consolidated data other than that assembled for the publication of information about student achievements required by the Department for Education and Employment which is based on intended destinations of full-time students collected in May and June. Since many job offers and places in further and higher education depend on actual achievements, the actual destinations may differ considerably from those intended. In 1994, of those completing foundation and level 1 qualifications, almost all intended to continue in further education. The same was true for many of those completing intermediate courses, although about 20 per cent of the 367 completing were hoping to find employment. At advanced level, of the 539 students completing the course, higher education was the hoped for destination of 67 per cent, further education 7 per cent, employment 19 per cent. The intended destinations of the remaining 7 per cent were unknown. The overwhelming proportion of those completing level 4 qualifications were hoping to proceed to higher education whereas at level 5 the majority intended to remain in employment.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

65   The college has a long-standing policy on quality assurance and a system of annual reporting on the quality of courses has been in place since 1986. In the future, the college plans to use the model of the United Kingdom Quality Award which provides for self-assessment against stated criteria. This should help the college to meet future requirements of validating bodies, including TECs. The director of quality takes a lead in quality matters, participating in working groups and co-ordinating the work of the academic quality assurance committee of the academic board. Reports are regularly made to the governors on quality matters. An implementation group is charged with the audit and promotion of the quality system. The recently-introduced quality files contain all relevant documents including annual reviews.

66   The annual report is the main course review document.   Its preparation lies at the heart of the college's process of academic quality assurance. Compiled by each course team, the format has a place for recording the views of students, staff and employers. The report is potentially a powerful aid to quality improvement, but the level and rigour of completion is variable across programme areas and this weakens the effectiveness of the system. Although students had been involved in many course reviews, there was no record of employers being present at last year's review meetings. Where action had been identified as a result of the review, responsibilities for action and target dates had not always been entered. The system requires users to report performance targets and achievements each year, including service level statistics for service support teams. However, figures are not readily available through the college's information systems and some course teams devote disproportionate time to collecting data. The director of quality has only recently had direct access to the college information networks. The quality system will remain incomplete until it becomes possible to focus with certainty on issues of attendance, retention and achievement and to evaluate performance, comparing year on year. At the course level, students' views, gained through questionnaires and contact with tutors, are often taken into account by course teams, resulting in some clear improvements to course quality involving, for example, changes of teacher, variations in teaching style and timetabling adjustments. Most staff welcome the reporting process as contributing to the quality of students' learning, although some remain sceptical of its value. The college considered that the annual report proforma was too lengthy and it has now been adapted. A simpler, progressive programme quality review report, retaining the most helpful aspects of the annual review, is to be completed every term. Improvements to courses have been made as a direct result of the quality assurance process but the system needs further adjustment and more consistent application.

67   The annual reports made by the course teams identify action which may be needed. These reports are considered by the schools' boards of

study. Action can be taken by course teams and deans of school who give particular support to proposals which match the objectives stated in the corporate plan. Some matters which can not be dealt with are passed to the academic board for consideration in a report prepared by deans of schools. The academic board makes recommendations for action and is responsible for monitoring outcomes. This system has not always been effective. Issues raised through the boards of study have been noted but not always considered fully or reported on by the academic board. In many cases, recommendations have not been made and staff have had no information about the progress of their proposals. The procedure has been improved this year and at its next meeting, the academic board will be presented with a report from the academic quality assessment committee on more than 60 issues which came before the board last year and which were passed to the committee to consider and make recommendations for action.

68   Reports from external moderating and validating bodies are important to the quality assurance process. Copies are generally filed in the quality file and it is evident that their recommendations are influential in the review process. The requirements of the college's higher education partners command particular attention and are held by the vice-principal (higher education) who makes copies available to key individuals and committees in the quality system. The University of Sussex and Surrey Institute of Art and Design, the principal higher education validators, value the efforts of the college to ensure appropriate standards for their courses.

69   The academic board requires all new courses to be internally validated before they start and at regular five-yearly intervals thereafter. No new course documentation is sent to any external validating body until it has successfully passed the college's rigorous internal procedures. This year's target for the review of courses, other than those which require external validation, is unlikely to be met due to other commitments of staff.

70   The students' entitlement to high-quality education, training and support is set out in the college charter which is circulated to all students. The charter prominently emphasises the college's equal opportunities commitment and the rights of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Surveys are conducted to assess students' attitudes to services provided under the charter, such as admissions procedures. The results of the surveys are used to consider improvements. Students are aware of the charter and the students' handbook, which gives additional information, but few are familiar with their detailed contents although most were confident that key information can be obtained if needed. The charter sets out standards to be expected but few are expressed in quantitative terms and the interests of employers and the community are not yet included.

71   Staff training needs, related to course delivery, are identified through the quality review. In addition, there is a well-developed policy for staff development to meet the corporate objectives which responds to requirements identified through the professional development and appraisal scheme, as well as individuals' aspirations. The college is committed to gaining, for the whole college, the Investors in People award already achieved by the enterprise unit alongside BS/EN/ISO 9000, with a target date of 1997. In recent years there has been an emphasis on assessor and verifier awards to meet the needs of new NVQ and GNVQ programmes, but many other needs have been identified. Records and feedback on training are kept, linked to the well-documented staff appraisal scheme. As yet, workplace observation does not form part of the appraisal process. Professional development and appraisal is accepted as essential to the college's corporate development plan. There have been some delays in the process but, to date, more than 60 per cent of staff have taken part in appraisal.

72   There are in-house training programmes for new managers, induction programmes for all new staff and training in finance systems for all staff who might benefit. Staff are encouraged to gain NVQs in administration and they can gain accreditation for their prior learning and experience. Regular evaluation of all continuing professional development is well established to ensure suitability and cost effectiveness. Members of the educational development team also have cross-college curriculum roles which originated with GNVQ approval requirements. They work closely with the director of quality although the team is placed, unusually, in the college's enterprise unit. A benefit from this is that the college enterprise unit is able to generate income from undertaking NVQ assessment. Staff development contributes to the effectiveness and efficiency of the college and involves a high proportion of academic as well as support staff. Some staff consider that limited funds restrict the scope of training but 595 staff spent a total of nearly 5,000 training days and a total of some £300,000, 1.25 per cent of the college's total budget, on staff-development in 1994-95. A strong staff development and appraisal system is developing but the college recognises the disadvantage arising from the separation of the quality and staff-development functions.

73   The college's internal assessment report followed the general pattern and subheadings used in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The report gave a fair description of college activity, made some judgements and assigned grades to each cross-college aspect using the same scale of one to five as inspectors. Other than the grade for accommodation, these grades coincided with those awarded by the inspection team. While strengths were acknowledged, many areas for improvement identified by inspectors were not addressed in the report. The text of the report was not sufficiently evaluative. For example, there was no comment about the effectiveness of the system for monitoring students' unauthorised absences.

RESOURCES

Staffing

74   All staff are generally well qualified for the work they undertake. About 62 per cent of teachers have degrees and 16 per cent also have higher degrees. Teachers on vocational courses have appropriate qualifications, ranging from higher national diplomas through to C&G advanced crafts. In languages, there is a wide range of staff available, including a number of native language speakers. It is college policy that all newly-appointed staff should embark on teaching qualifications within two years of appointment. At present about 42 per cent of the staff have a teaching qualification.

75   The level of commercial and industrial experience amongst staff varies but is generally good. In construction, staff are encouraged to participate in their professional institutions as a means of keeping up to date with developments in their industry. In engineering, business, science, mathematics, and hairdressing, most staff have appropriate industrial or commercial experience. Catering teachers have good vocational qualifications but have limited recent commercial experience and lack awareness of some current work practices. In leisure and tourism, and engineering, there has been limited commercial or industrial updating of the staff's knowledge. Two hundred and fifty-three assessor or verifier qualifications have been obtained to date and 86 members of staff are currently working towards one or more awards. Good progress towards achieving these qualifications has been made in hairdressing, leisure and tourism, computing, and catering. In construction, few staff have achieved awards and in the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and basic education, there are insufficient staff with these awards to meet the needs of the curriculum.

76   The deployment of teaching staff is monitored. The small numbers in classes and the duplication of provision, especially of GCE A level courses, has led to some inefficiency in the use of staff and an unevenness in the quality of provision in some subjects. In health and social care, courses could be improved by ensuring that more staff have current experience of the vocational area.

77   Support for teaching is effective in most areas including the learning centres, which incorporate the flexible learning workshops. There is a generous level of technical support in science and mathematics; in hairdressing and construction the level of support is good; in languages, there is ample provision of foreign language assistants. However, in art and design there is a shortage of technical support. There is insufficient administrative and clerical support in hairdressing and beauty therapy, and in the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and basic education.

Equipment/learning resources

78   The standard of specialist equipment is generally good.   In construction the equipment in the workshops and laboratories is adequate for the courses offered; concrete testing equipment complies with current British Standards and there is a good range of surveying equipment. In engineering the laboratories are well equipped, although some of the equipment is old. In catering the kitchens, restaurant, and refectory used for realistic-working environments are well resourced and the training kitchens are adequately equipped. There are good specialist facilities of a professional standard available for the school of art and design at Barclay Road. The equipment available for GCE A level media and art at both Heath Clark and Selhurst is rudimentary; there are no dedicated media cameras and edit facilities and the art rooms offer only a basic level of equipment for painting and drawing. In leisure and tourism, the specialist equipment is old and there is no operational viewdata system within the travel shop. The multi-gym is well resourced and extensive use is made of it. The quality of the equipment available for hairdressing is adequate, but it is not sufficient when two groups of students are using the salons at the same time. Resources, other than computers, are generally good for the teaching of mathematics and science. The college's budget for the purchase of major items of new equipment in the current year is £664,000. In addition, £892,000 has been delegated to the schools for expenditure as they see fit. For the past two years, most of the college's equipment budget has been spent on computers and on equipment and furniture for two of the canteens.

79   There are libraries on all the sites apart from Barclay Road. Library staff are committed to improving the service provided. The libraries are well stocked with approximately 92,500 books, 22 compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases, 228 audio, and 3,984 video cassettes; 537 newspapers and periodicals are taken. There is adequate library provision for most subjects. In engineering, the stock is small and, except for motor vehicle engineering and electronic servicing, there have been few recent acquisitions. In health and social care, there are insufficient library resources for the numbers of students. The budget for the current year to provide books and periodicals, CD-ROMs, videos and computer software is £96,000. Television and radio programmes are recorded for use by teachers and students. The college is consulted by organisations such as the British Broadcasting Corporation, for whom it pilots and reviews videos. The library service offers its clients, both within the college and outside in the local community, an abstracting service, through which it locates back copies of articles using a topical index, specially constructed by staff to satisfy student demand.

80   There is a shortage of study spaces in the libraries. A total of 204 individual study spaces gives an average of one study space to every 24 full-time equivalent students across the college. At Fairfield the ratio is 1:18, and at Selhurst it is 1:33. There are also flexible learning workshops

on all the sites apart from Barclay Road. These include a further 124 group and 162 study spaces for students using the learning support materials or learning packages. The facilities are well used for their intended purpose and they occasionally provide additional private-study space when the libraries are full. The libraries' opening hours vary; at Fairfield and Selhurst, they are open in the day and evenings from Monday to Thursday. There are no evening classes at Heath Clark and the library closes at 17.00.

81   The college produced a strategy for information technology in 1993, and since then it has been under constant review. There are 773 up-to-date computer workstations available to students. This represents one for every 7.6 full-time equivalent students. Overall, this is sufficient, but the number of workstations per full-time equivalent students varies from 1:12 at Barclay Road to 1:6 at Heath Clark. At times there is limited open access to the computing facilities at Fairfield, Heath Clark and Selhurst. Access to computers for specialist use is good in art and design and adequate in construction and engineering. There are insufficient computers for science and mathematics. Computer software with supporting notes is available for GCE A level economics students. In computing, students have access to high-quality hardware and software. However, there are insufficient workstations in some rooms to support the larger student groups and, as a result, students are forced either to share workstations or use nearby rooms. Hardware and software used by students on foundation GNVQ programmes is neither reliable nor up to date.

Accommodation

82   The college has an excess of accommodation for its anticipated student numbers. Most of the temporary accommodation at Heath Clark has already been taken out of use and it is proposed to do the same with that at Selhurst. The college's long-term requirements are currently under review and various options are being considered. Last year, the canteens at Fairfield and Heath Clark were refurbished as part of the planned programme to improve the college environment. Most of the teaching accommodation is of an acceptable standard. Almost all learning environments are pleasant and many are stimulating. A number of classes visited by inspectors had been timetabled in rooms which were too small for the group size. The range of specialised accommodation for art and design at Barclay Road is extensive although, due to recent expansion, some of the rooms are not suitable for the use to which they have been put. In catering, the accommodation for practical classes in food preparation and service is adequate and meets the needs of the current courses. However, there are no specialist rooms for teaching hospitality studies. The standard of accommodation for hairdressing is generally good, although the amount of space available means that conditions are cramped for the number of students and the reception area for the salons is inadequate. Apart from the motor vehicle workshop which is too small,

the specialist and classroom accommodation for engineering is of an acceptable quality, although widely dispersed over five floors. The accommodation provided for construction studies is generally of good quality and is well maintained. The large workshop at Heath Clark, with room enough to accommodate a two-storey house, is an excellent facility. The accommodation for mathematics and science at Heath Clark and Selhurst is good; the laboratories for all science subjects are adjacent on both sites, but at Selhurst the rooms used for mathematics are dispersed. Access for students or staff using wheelchairs, or with restricted mobility, varies from site to site. At Fairfield most areas are accessible, with a few exceptions; most of Barclay Road, the science laboratories at Selhurst and the flexible learning workshop at Heath Clark are not.

83   The social facilities provided for students vary from site to site. There are canteens at Selhurst, Heath Clark and Fairfield. At Fairfield there is a licensed bar and a coffee bar which serves snacks and light meals. There are common rooms for students at Barclay Road, Heath Clark and Fairfield but, with the exception of the two at Selhurst, they are small given the number of students attending the sites. There are some sports facilities on three of the sites. At Fairfield this is limited to a gymnasium, but at Selhurst there is also an all-weather playing area and at Heath Clark there are tennis courts and football pitches.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

84   Croydon College is making good progress towards achieving its mission. The strengths of the college are:

- a good range of courses which offers students opportunities for progression from foundation level to higher education
- effective governance
- well-managed courses and services
- effective guidance and induction for students
- teaching which is good in most curriculum areas
- the good learning support available to students and the supportive tutorial system
- the flexible learning workshops
- appropriately-qualified and experienced staff
- the staff-development and appraisal system
- well-established course validation procedures
- good specialist equipment and library provision
- an effective strategic planning process.

85   If the college is to improve the quality of its provision further, the following should be addressed:

- the poor attendance, retention and pass rates in some courses, particularly hairdressing

- the variable practice in monitoring students' attendance and retention

- an inadequate computerised management information system, especially for students' records

- the limited co-ordination and sharing of good practice between and within schools based at different sites

- the limited use of performance indicators in management and in the monitoring and evaluation of quality

- the variable quality of the annual course and service reports

- the lack of reliable statistical information for use by managers and staff.

FIGURES

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

Figure 1

Croydon College: percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1995)

Not known
1%

16-18 years
29%

25+ years
44%

19-24 years
26%
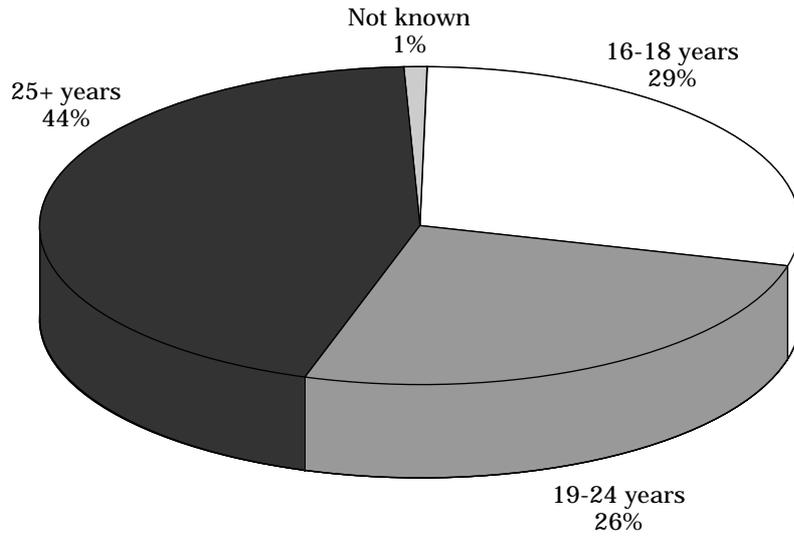
Enrolments: 12,069   *Note: this chart excludes 38 enrolments under the age of 16.*

Figure 2

Croydon College: percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1995)

Foundation
6%

Higher education
26%

Intermediate
27%

Advanced
41%
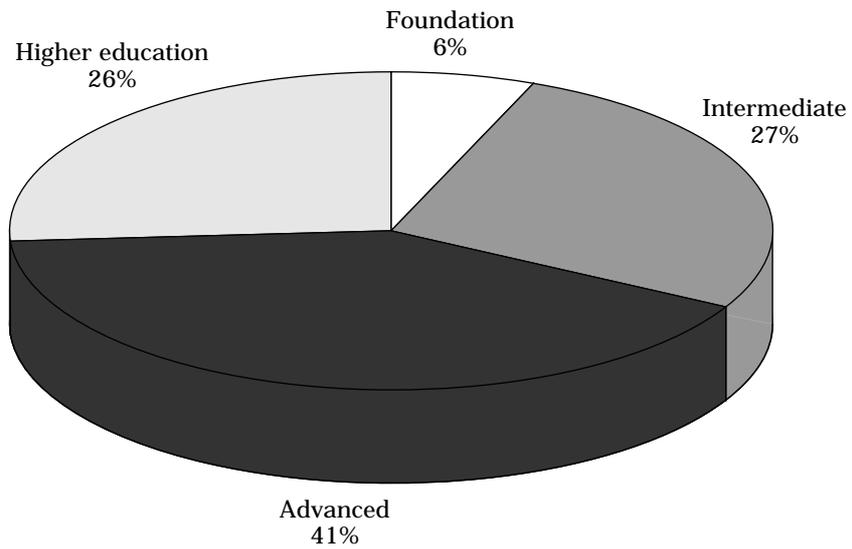
Enrolments: 12,069

Figure 3

Croydon College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)
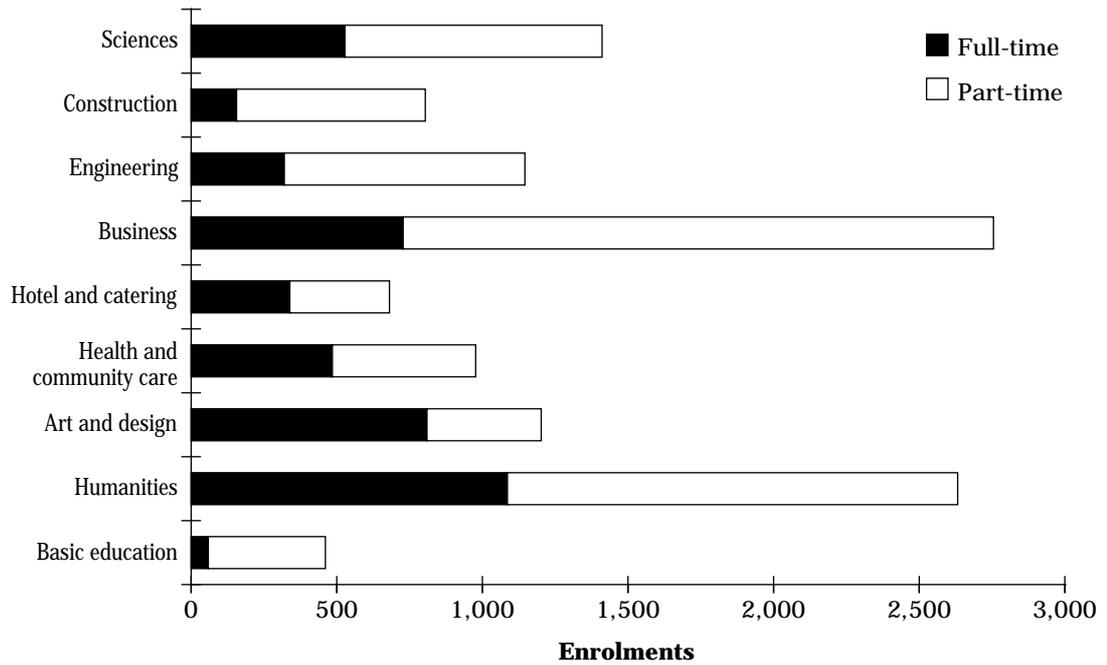


Enrolments: 12,069

Figure 4

Croydon College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1995)
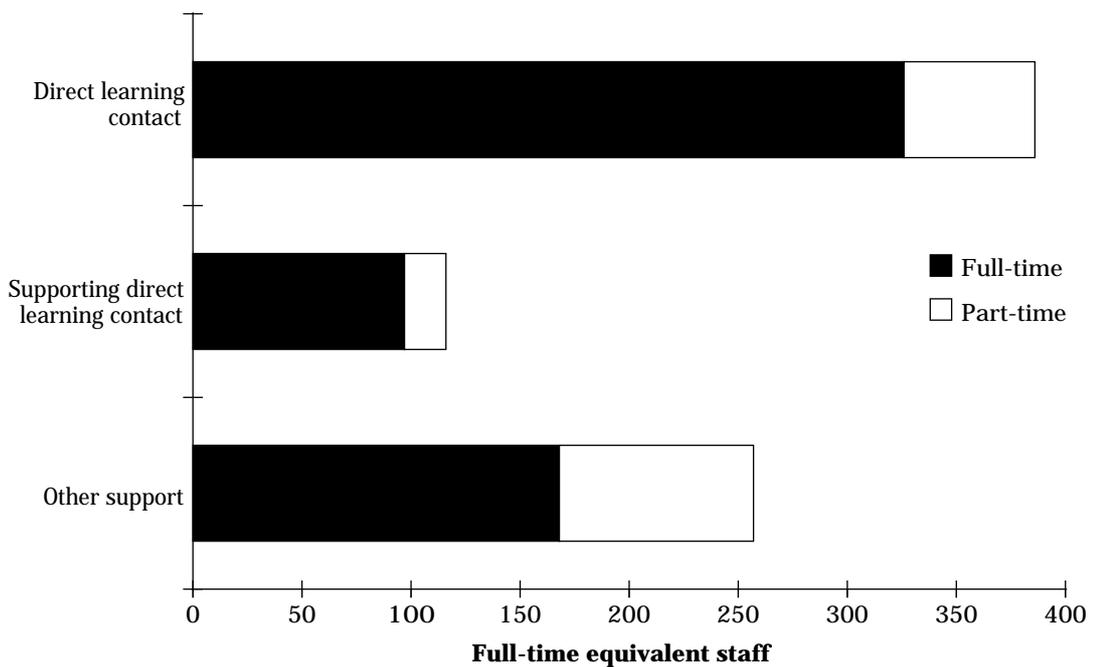

Full-time equivalent staff: 759

Figure 5

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

Legend:
- FEFC recurrent funding
- Capital grants
- Restructuring fund
- Education contracts
- Tuition fees
- Other grant income
- Other operating income
- Other income-generating activities
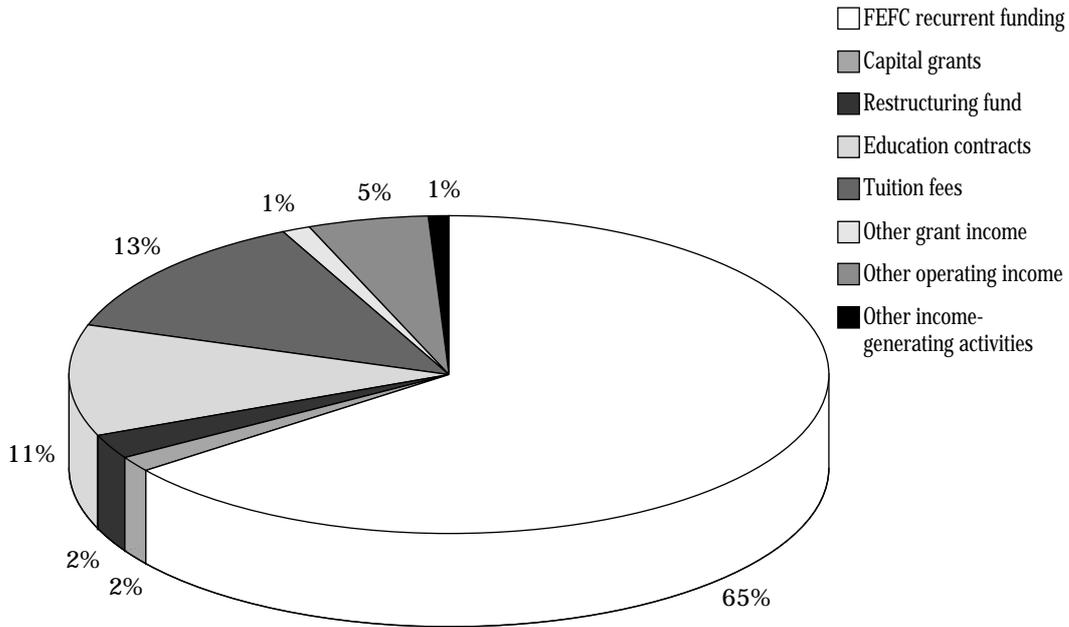
Income: £23,961,000   *Note: transfer from capital reserve is £668,000.*

Figure 6

Croydon College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)
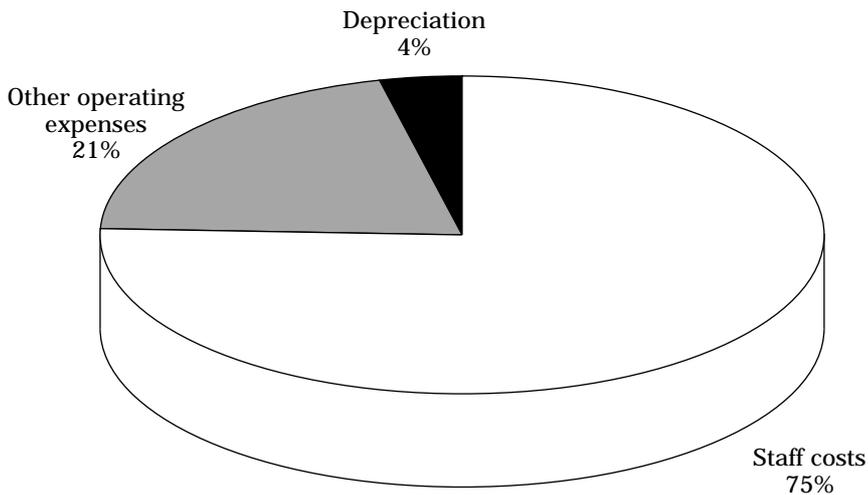
Expenditure: £25,401,000   *Note: this chart excludes £3,000 interest payable.*