

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Doncaster College

September 1996

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

**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 the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

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

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 01203 863000
Fax 01203 863100*

CONTENTS

	Paragraph
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	2
Responsiveness and range of provision	7
Governance and management	15
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	23
Teaching and the promotion of learning	35
Students' achievements	49
Quality assurance	64
Resources	76
Conclusions and issues	90
Figures	

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 120/96

DONCASTER COLLEGE
YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE REGION
Inspected September 1995-June 1996

Summary

Doncaster College is a general further education college. It offers a wide range of courses from foundation to postgraduate level. The college has strong links with the Barnsley and Doncaster TEC, employers, the local authority, higher education institutions and the community it serves. Governors are well informed about the college and they work constructively with its managers. The college's strategic planning process is effective and is based on consultation with staff. Teaching is effective. Relationships between students and staff are good. Students' examination results on vocational courses are good. Staff are well qualified and hard working and their expertise is appropriately deployed across the college. Much of the accommodation is of a high standard. The college should: ensure that there is greater consistency in the implementation of annual reviews by course teams; improve the quality of its management information so that staff have greater confidence in its reliability; implement its tutorial system more consistently; and improve students' attendance and retention rates.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science including mathematics	2	Health and community care	2
Information technology	2	Art and design	2
Construction	2	Humanities	2
Engineering	2	Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities/basic education	2
Business and management studies	2		
Hotel and catering	2		

INTRODUCTION

1 Doncaster College was inspected during May and June 1996. The enrolment and induction of students were inspected in September 1995. Inspectors visited 212 classes, examined students' written work and college documentation, and held discussions with college governors, college managers, staff and students, parents, employers' representatives from the Barnsley and Doncaster Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and the local authority, head teachers and other members of the local community.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Doncaster College was established in 1990 following a merger between Doncaster Metropolitan Institute of Higher Education and the Don Valley Institute of Further Education. The college is the only provider of further and higher education in the borough of Doncaster. It is in strong competition with other post-16 providers. Doncaster Local Education Authority (LEA) maintains 16 secondary schools, of which 13 have sixth forms. There are four further education colleges within a 25-mile radius.

3 The college has four sites. Its main site is at Waterdale which is in the centre of Doncaster. The Church View and Bessacarr sites are close to the town centre. The site at High Melton is six miles from the town centre and has residential accommodation in addition to teaching facilities.

4 Doncaster and its travel-to-work area has a population of 290,000. Much of the local employment is provided by a small number of large firms. The unemployment rate currently stands at 12.1 per cent, compared with the national rate of 8.5 per cent. During the last 10 years, a number of coal mines in the area have closed. The college is a significant employer within the borough.

5 As at March 1996, 16,964 students were enrolled at the college. Of these, 3,645 were on full-time courses and 13,319 were part-time students attending in a variety of modes, including day release, block release and evening only. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. The college employs 387 full-time equivalent teaching staff and 287 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

6 The college's mission is to meet the needs and aspirations of individuals and organisations by providing high quality vocational education and training, and to enhance the quality of life by its service to local communities. In partnership with local employers and the TEC, the college aims to contribute to the development of a highly skilled and motivated workforce which will assist in the regeneration of the regional economy. The corporate objectives reflect the college's mission. They give priority to improving the college's effectiveness and its responsiveness to the varied needs of those who use the college's services.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 The college offers a wide range of general and vocational courses from foundation to postgraduate level. Its sixth form centre offers 40 subjects at General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level), and 35 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects. The college is making a contribution to the achievement of the national targets for education and training by offering courses leading to General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) in seven vocational areas and a substantial and increasing number of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1 to 4. The college is a national provider of courses specifically designed for the mineral extraction industries. There are some gaps in provision. For example, there are no GNVQ courses at intermediate and advanced level in construction and the built environment.

8 A marketing unit co-ordinates marketing activity across the college, including external promotional events. The unit is responsible for the production of publicity materials. The college prospectus and publicity material about courses have a clear corporate identity, and are attractively presented. The unit has been successful in raising the college's profile in the local and regional press. A marketing group, which includes representatives from each faculty, meets regularly to review marketing activity. Promotional events are run by individual programme areas; for example, in art and design there are exhibitions of work, a fashion show and theatre and music productions. Faculty teams vary in their use of market and employer research in planning their provision.

9 The college works closely and effectively with the TEC on a range of projects and initiatives. The college and the TEC recently signed a joint statement of strategic intent, which commits them to work together to meet local training and development needs. Full-cost courses for industry and commerce earned the college £850,000 in 1995-96. The Dearne Valley Business School was set up by the college in 1992 to offer provision which would meet employers' needs for training in business and management. The work of the school is assisted by a valuable network of extensive links with former students who are employed in business and commerce. The college works in partnership with some employers on projects which aim to provide training of a specific nature. Off-site provision currently accounts for approximately 8 per cent of the college's total funding units.

10 The college is committed to increasing its participation rates and to making its provision more accessible to a wider range of students. It has specifically developed provision for groups traditionally under-represented in further education. The sixth form centre offers a range of opportunities for mature students wishing to return to study. The timetable is structured to meet the needs of parents with young children. A 'Women into Technology' course has been successfully introduced and a 'Women into Construction' course is being developed. An extensive adult and community education programme is offered in over 20 centres within the

community. This programme includes vocational courses which offer progression routes to courses at the main college. The college employs four community education organisers and five community development workers who work closely with a variety of community organisations in order to identify, and provide for, their needs. For example, staff have worked with the Showmen's Guild and with local travellers to devise the Doncaster College travellers' education programme. The college has a five-year contract with the prison service to provide education in prisons within the borough boundary.

11 The college provides opportunities for open learning, whereby students may study materials tailored to their individual needs, at times which suit them. The college also provides opportunities for distance learning for students who cannot attend college regularly and who may have to study at home or at their place of work. Approximately 1,200 students a year use the open learning centre which offers facilities for the study of information technology, modern languages, and a number of GCSE and GCE A level subjects. There is significant take-up of these opportunities for open learning, for example, by unemployed men and women returning to study.

12 Liaison between the college and 11 to 16 schools in Doncaster is good. In addition, the college has links with two schools outside the local authority. It is strengthening its links with primary schools through the Doncaster Curriculum Partnership, established to continue the contacts set up by the LEA under the technical and vocational education initiative. Despite the fact that the college is competing with local 11 to 18 schools, it has developed a number of collaborative activities with school sixth forms. For example, the college provides courses leading to NVQs in schools. The college has a policy on links with schools but it has yet to develop an effective strategy putting this fully into practice.

13 Separate provision for full-time 16 to 19 year old students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well established. Vocational provision for these students is accredited. A course called 'Options in Business' has been piloted. This provides opportunities for some students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to study with other students on mainstream courses and it is part of a progression route to further qualifications. The college has plans to increase the range of provision at foundation level in 1996-97 and to increase the number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on mainstream courses. There are strong links with local special schools and specialist organisations such as Doncaster College for the Deaf and the Sue Ryder Foundation. Thirteen students from Doncaster College for the Deaf are taking vocational courses at the college. Provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well developed as part of the community education programme at the college's outreach centres. The college intends to appoint a member of staff who will be responsible for co-ordinating this

provision and for identifying adult students' needs for additional learning support.

14 The college's equal opportunities policy commits it to ensuring that there is equality of opportunity for all staff and students. A senior manager, supported by an equal opportunities manager within each faculty, monitors the implementation of the policy.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

15 The corporation of the college has 15 members who bring a wide range of relevant expertise and experience to the board. They include nominees from students and staff, and from the TEC and the local metropolitan authority. Three members of the corporation are women and one of the community representatives is of Asian origin. There are committees for audit, employment, policy and finance, health and safety, search, and remuneration. All committees have agreed terms of reference and most board members belong to at least one committee. The corporation holds at least two meetings a term. Members receive regular financial reports as well as minutes of academic board meetings. There is a register of interests and a code of conduct has been adopted by the corporation. The clerk to the corporation is the head of personnel.

16 In order to improve their contacts with members of the college, governors have recently begun to hold meetings with staff to discuss issues with them. Governors have also been paired with key college staff in order to widen their understanding of the college curriculum. An induction programme and mentoring scheme for new governors have been implemented. A governors' handbook supplies comprehensive information about all aspects of governance. A number of training events have been provided for governors and these have been well attended.

17 The college's provision is delivered through four faculties: business and professional studies, humanities, technology and client services. The senior management team comprises: the principal; the deputy principal (operations); the deputy principal (academic affairs); the four heads of faculty; and the director of finance. The management structure and organisation are clearly understood by staff. Lines of responsibility are defined by organisational charts and job descriptions. All the main groupings of staff have regular meetings which are minuted. Leadership at senior management level is positive and effective and there is strong academic leadership at faculty level. The academic board is supported by two committees; one for academic standards and policy, and one for academic planning and resources. The former focuses on the quality of teaching and learning, the latter on curriculum development to meet the needs of students. Cross-college committees meet regularly and a review of their work and progress is monitored by the client services faculty management team. In some programme areas, heads of section do not always fully exercise their line management responsibility.

18 The strategic planning process is consultative and systematic. The current plan is fully costed. A clear timetable illustrates how and when the different components of the plan should be completed. The college has produced detailed yearly operating statements for the last two years. These show that the college has made significant progress towards meeting many of its targets. There is an academic plan for the college which is based on the academic plans of the faculties. All faculties produce strategic plans and these have clear aims and objectives and include a review of performance over the previous year. Sections within faculties produce action plans; a small number of these are superficial.

19 Communication between senior management and staff is generally effective. The college's weekly newsletter *Open File* is distributed to all staff. There is direct mailing to staff through the payroll system. Faculty news sheets and team briefings are also distributed. Faculty management structures mirror that of the principalship. Each faculty has two deputies, one for operations and one for academic affairs, and they are supported by appropriate committees where staff may put their views forward. The college has produced a strategy document for the millennium, which it calls 'vision 2000 and beyond'. In compiling this, senior managers sought the views of all staff.

20 The college has diverse sources of revenue, including European funds and full-cost work. Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) recurrent funding accounts for about 60 per cent of income. Staffing costs have been reduced significantly over the past three years and they now account for less than 70 per cent of total expenditure. The college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The average level of funding for the college during 1995-96, is £20.88 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges in 1995-96, is £17.84.

21 Management information is available to heads of faculty, operations and curriculum managers and senior administration staff through the college's computer network. It is intended that this network facility will be extended to all section heads during 1996-97. Information available to faculties includes retention and enrolment statistics, and details of committed expenditure, including that for part-time staff. Whilst faculty managers appreciate having data made available to them, course teams consider that the information produced centrally is unreliable and some prefer to maintain their own data. As a result, there is unnecessary duplication of effort and limited sharing of information.

22 The college has met its enrolment targets for 1995-96. The 1996 operating statement records an overall student retention rate of 92 per cent. Course leaders collect information on the destinations of students before they leave college. A follow-up card is sent to students after they have left their course and they are asked to record any changes in their destinations on this and return it to the college.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

23 The faculty of client services is responsible for students' recruitment, guidance and support across the college. The faculty contains the college's information unit and is responsible for counselling and welfare, careers guidance, learning support, childcare and the accreditation of students' prior learning. Staff responsible for these services form a student services group, and meet regularly to co-ordinate their work. They work closely and effectively with course teams and personal tutors in the other faculties, providing resources and guidance to assist them in their work with students.

24 The guidance which students receive before they enrol is extensive and well organised. Publicity materials give potential students clear information on how they may obtain further advice. The college holds regular events at which potential applicants may meet teachers and obtain information about courses. The college's information centre acts as a valuable focal point for the distribution of information. Bilingual community education staff provide information on courses in the community to those whose first language is not English. Adults considering returning to education are invited to attend a free 10-week 'taster' course, during which free childcare is available to them. Enquiries and requests for interviews are dealt with speedily. Staff from the college's central admissions unit check all applications and refer students who are uncertain about their choice of course to a careers adviser for a preliminary interview. Applicants can obtain financial advice from the college's grants and benefits adviser. Students are informed of the costs which they are likely to incur during their time at college.

25 There are effective arrangements for accrediting the knowledge and skills which students have acquired before coming to college. There is a college policy on, and a costing model for, the accreditation of prior learning. Course teams receive help in developing procedures and materials for accreditation of prior learning in their particular curriculum area from the college's adviser on accreditation of prior learning and through staff-development workshops. Leaflets for employers and potential students explain the benefits of accreditation of prior learning and illustrate these with case studies. Approximately 400 students are currently undergoing the accreditation of prior learning process and the college intends to extend its use and availability.

26 Course teams ensure that all students receive induction to their courses and to the college. Full-time students are issued with a helpful students' handbook and a course handbook. Part-time students receive an information sheet which outlines sources of support available to them including careers guidance, personal counselling and childcare. All full-time students receive a copy of the college charter. During the first week of term, students review their choice of course with their tutors. Students wishing to transfer to other courses receive support and guidance

from the student counselling and welfare service. In a recent survey, most students expressed satisfaction with their induction to the college.

27 There are inconsistencies in the way teachers across the college identify students' needs for additional support in numeracy and literacy. On some courses, students' needs are identified by testing and formal assessment at an early stage. On others, no such assessment takes place. There are insufficient checks to ensure that students' needs, once identified, are effectively met. Few students take advantage of the additional support which is available to them in the college's learning support workshop. There are no systematic arrangements to ensure that course tutors are told about students' attendance and progress in the workshop. The college has recently drawn up a policy to promote ways of identifying and meeting students' needs which are suitable for the level and nature of their particular course.

28 All students, whether full time or part time, are allocated a personal tutor. Students speak highly of their tutors and their willingness to support them. A college policy document gives a general outline of the duties of personal tutors. A handbook issued by client services contains useful guidance for tutors on interviewing and listening skills. However, personal tutors are not given a detailed specification of their duties and there is no induction or training for those new to personal tutoring. The interpretation of the purpose of tutorials and the time allocated to tutorial support vary widely across the college. On some courses, there is a structured programme of group and individual tutorials which includes study skills, health education, individual action planning and careers guidance. On others, there are no timetabled tutorials and students have individual discussions with tutors when they request them. The college has no policy on health education or drugs awareness. There is scope for the college to develop a more detailed policy on the role of the personal tutor. The college charter contains a commitment to establish service standards for personal tutorials during 1995-96 but these have not yet been identified and published.

29 Students benefit from a comprehensive counselling and welfare service. Two professionally qualified counsellors and a student benefits and grants adviser provide a confidential service on all the college's sites and this is highly regarded by staff and students. The counsellors also train staff in counselling skills. They have established informal self-help groups and workshops for students. They have drawn up a clients' charter and they have implemented thorough systems for monitoring and evaluating the service they provide. They maintain effective links with other support services in the college and with external agencies. In a survey of students' views on the college's counselling and welfare service, 40 per cent of respondents said they would have left college had it not been for the helpful counselling and support they had received. There is a good range of childcare facilities for students with children. These facilities are friendly and welcoming.

30 The college encourages students to maintain a record of achievement. There is a cross-college co-ordinator and a working group which helps to develop the use of records of achievement. All full-time 16 to 19 year old students are provided with relevant computer software and an explanatory booklet to assist them in maintaining their individual record. The extent to which records of achievement are valued by staff and students varies widely. On some courses there is a significant gap between the college policy and practice in relation to records of achievement.

31 Some poor levels of attendance were noted during the specialist inspections. The monitoring of attendance and the following up of absences are insufficiently rigorous and consistent across the college. In some cases, course and personal tutors do not receive timely and accurate information about absences. There is no consensus on how long a student needs to be absent before follow-up action is taken and there is no agreement of what this action should be.

32 Careers education and guidance are provided by the college's careers staff and the local careers service, Lifetime Careers Limited who work together in effective partnership. The work of the careers service is well integrated with the work of teaching sections. Careers officers are linked to a specific faculty or course and they liaise with course leaders on the provision of careers guidance within students' programmes. Staff from each faculty, section and course have received staff development in relation to careers education and guidance. They work together with the college's head of careers to develop careers education within their curriculum area. A comprehensive careers resource pack has been issued to all course leaders. Despite these efforts, students' responses to questionnaires show that many think they receive insufficient careers guidance. Students who wish to enter higher education speak highly of the well-structured guidance they receive on higher education application procedures. Information on careers and higher education, including appropriate computer software, is readily available in the learning resource centres on all the main sites.

33 Students on courses designed specifically for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive a good level of support. The college has well-established links with local special schools. College staff are able to have a full discussion of prospective students' needs before they enrol at the college. Once students have enrolled at the college, staff assess their additional needs and provide them with a well-planned induction programme. Students' progress is regularly reviewed. Students maintain a record of their achievement, often using photographic evidence of their progress. Specialist guidance for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who join mainstream courses is less effective. The college has, however, recently advertised for a 'support and guidance worker' to assist these students. The college lacks a qualified teacher to provide specialist tuition to students with dyslexia.

34 Students comment favourably on the supportive nature of the college and on the accessibility and availability of support when they need it.

They report that their views on the quality of the provision they receive are sought and taken seriously. Students are well represented on college committees, and the college is seeking accreditation for a training programme for course representatives. The students' union, through its full-time officers who are on a year's sabbatical from their studies, offers students individual advice and support. It also provides some cultural, recreational and sporting activities and plays an important part in the social life of the college.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

35 Inspectors observed 212 teaching sessions involving 2,193 students. Sixty-two per cent of the teaching sessions inspected had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses. Five per cent of sessions had weaknesses that clearly outweighed the strengths. The following table summarises the grades given to teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		7	20	9	0	0	36
GCSE		3	13	9	2	0	27
GNVQ		4	9	9	1	0	23
NVQ		9	19	19	3	0	50
Other*		17	31	23	4	1	76
Total		40	92	69	10	1	212

* includes BTEC, access, provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and basic education courses.

36 In the better lessons, teachers used well-structured schemes of work and their lesson plans contained clear aims and objectives. The pace of learning was well managed and teachers regularly checked to make sure that students understood what was being taught. Teachers provided students with a variety of suitable learning activities which engaged their interest. Where appropriate, they related theory to current commercial and industrial practices. Teachers marked students' assignments and other work fairly and returned it to them promptly. In some less successful lessons, the teachers' methods were insufficiently imaginative and they worked without a lesson plan or used schemes of work which were lacking in detail. Some lessons were poorly attended. During the inspection of curriculum areas, inspectors recorded an average attendance rate of only 60 per cent.

37 In art and design, relationships between teachers and students were good, and lessons were lively. Teachers used an appropriate variety of teaching and learning methods. In most courses, assessments were set at the right level and were appropriately graded. Students were kept well informed about their progress. In a few instances, however, assignments

did not challenge the students sufficiently. Some schemes of work consisted of little more than a list of topics. Students generally depended on secondary sources, such as photographs, to illustrate their work. In general, their skills of drawing based on observation, were undeveloped.

38 Teaching in humanities was generally of a high standard. Staff had prepared their lessons well. These were carefully structured and reflected the course aims. Teachers displayed enthusiasm for their subjects. They provided the students with good-quality handouts and they used a variety of suitable teaching aids. There were positive working relationships between students and staff. In most foreign language lessons, teachers provided the students with a range of appropriate and imaginative activities and they used the language being studied as the main means of communication in the classroom. In one successful Spanish lesson, a teacher had prepared a laminated map of a town on which directions were drawn. Students used the map to give directions in Spanish. The lesson fully engaged the students' interest and they participated in it with obvious enthusiasm. The small size of some classes, however, restricted the range of learning activities for the students. On some courses, the continuity of the students' learning had been disrupted by staffing changes.

39 Much of the teaching in hotel and catering was of a high standard. Relationships between staff and students were good. The schemes of work and lesson plans had clear aims and objectives. In practical and theoretical lessons, students were set clearly-defined tasks. Students received regular and constructive feedback on their progress and achievement. Assessment procedures on courses leading to NVQs were of variable quality, however, and they lacked consistency in terms of rigour.

40 In leisure and tourism, teachers used effective methods to extend the students' knowledge and understanding. Lessons had clear objectives. Teachers covered topics thoroughly. They encouraged students to ask questions and explore their ideas in discussion. In some instances, teachers failed to explain the purpose and context of the lesson and they did not summarise its content at the end.

41 Business and management lessons were well prepared. The relationships between staff and students were friendly, relaxed and conducive to learning. Teachers used a variety of appropriate teaching and learning strategies which maintained the students' interest. Learning materials were well matched to the needs of the students. Teachers encouraged students to draw on their own backgrounds and work experience. In some lessons, teachers failed to take adequate account of the different abilities of students, and they did not provide sufficient opportunity for all students to participate in discussion. In some lessons, poor attendance adversely affected the quality of group work.

42 Much of the teaching in engineering was of a high standard. Most lessons were well planned. The tasks set by teachers challenged the students and engaged their interest. Practical lessons were carefully

structured to enable students to work at their own pace. Teachers had up-to-date knowledge of their subject. They encouraged the students to draw upon their own practical experiences. In one mining engineering lesson, the students contributed with enthusiasm to a discussion on safety procedures in mining and illustrated points they made with examples from their own work experience. In some instances of less satisfactory practice, teachers did not have lesson plans or their schemes of work were insufficiently detailed. In some theory lessons, teachers talked too much and did not check to see whether the students were listening or whether they understood what was being taught. As a result, these lessons failed to motivate the students or hold their interest. In some instances, teachers failed to mark and return work to students by the agreed deadlines.

43 In construction, relationships between students and staff were good. On craft and technician courses, students were encouraged to assess their own work before having it marked by teachers. On some courses, students worked at their own pace using learning packs which were appropriate to their abilities. In the best practice, teachers carefully monitored students' progress and provided them with detailed and helpful information on their performance. The programme of assignments was well planned. Some teaching, however, lacked momentum and a sense of purpose. In some instances, schemes of work were not well planned. Handouts were sometimes of poor quality and in theory classes, teachers made insufficient use of imaginative and appropriate teaching and learning aids.

44 Teaching in sciences and mathematics was of a high standard. Lessons were generally well planned. Schemes of work were good. Science lessons were often lively. Practical work was complemented by discussion which the teachers directed skilfully. Teachers provided their students with a good range of stimulating learning materials and used appropriate teaching methods. Students responded well to the challenging tasks they were set. In the mathematics workshop, teachers gave careful guidance to students studying for GCSE mathematics as they worked through some good learning materials. In some lessons, teaching was poorly planned. It lacked vigour and failed to maintain the students' interest. Teachers did not always enforce the wearing of safety spectacles during laboratory practical sessions. Some lessons were poorly attended.

45 Most lessons in computing and information technology were well planned. In the better lessons, students responded well to a broad range of activities and they were provided with high-quality learning materials. Practical work was well organised and effectively supervised. In one effective revision lesson on the women into technology course, students were split into four brainstorming groups in order to find solutions to past examination papers. The teacher sat with each group in turn and encouraged discussion. Teachers made good use of overhead transparencies when working through problems. The teaching of some revision classes was unimaginative and students simply worked on their own through past examination papers.

46 Much of the teaching in health and community care was of a high standard, and relationships between staff and students were good. Teachers used a variety of appropriate teaching and learning strategies which engaged and sustained the students' interest. In the majority of instances, lesson objectives were fulfilled. Teachers used question and answer techniques effectively to check that students understood what was being taught. Some lesson plans lacked sufficient detail and some teachers failed to maintain up-to-date records of work.

47 There was good and imaginative teaching in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Working relationships between staff and students were positive and productive. Lessons were well planned and students were provided with a variety of appropriate activities. In one theory lesson, the teacher gave out a number of job advertisements. The students were then required to write a job description for one of the posts being advertised. In order to do this, they had to exercise their ingenuity and draw on their own experience of commercial practice gained through their work placements. In hairdressing, some lesson plans did not properly reflect the aims of the overall scheme of work and some theory teaching was insufficiently related to commercial practice. In some practical lessons, teachers did not ensure that the students' work matched industrial and commercial standards.

48 There was good teaching for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In the most successful lessons, students worked individually at tasks which were part of a programme of learning which they had discussed and agreed with the teacher. Students were encouraged to work at a pace which enabled them to make progress. Teachers gave the students valuable guidance and support. In a small number of instances, however, teachers gave students work which was not well matched to their needs. Some students did not have action plans for their learning or targets which they had to meet.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

49 Most students enjoyed their studies and showed a willingness to learn. They developed levels of knowledge and understanding appropriate to their level of study and capability. Most students had the confidence and ability to apply their skills in a variety of contexts. They spoke with enthusiasm about their programmes of study, assignments and work experience. They showed a good understanding of what was required of them and of the progress they were making.

50 In hairdressing and beauty therapy, most students achieved appropriate levels of skill in their practical work and carried it out to professional standards. Students found their activities challenging and the range of subjects interesting and relevant. For example, students worked effectively with their peers in fashion and art to produce shows and exhibitions. Their achievements were well documented and recorded.

51 Students in art and design displayed a positive attitude to their work. They had the confidence to work safely on their own and they had acquired a wide range of relevant technical skills. Their portfolios contained many examples of imaginative work of a high quality. They had acquired core skills as part of their specialist studies. They had access to a range of appropriate information technology equipment. In 1995, 90 per cent of art and design students progressed to degree or higher national diploma programmes.

52 Performing arts students were able to discuss their programmes of study with enthusiasm and confidence. Project work was well co-ordinated. Group activities were of a high standard and students demonstrated the ability to apply theory to practical work. In 1995, 82 per cent of students on the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma course in performing arts and 78 per cent on the music foundation course completed their studies successfully. However, the BTEC national diploma course in performing arts had a retention rate of only 55 per cent.

53 Students on hotel and catering courses spoke positively about their studies and displayed a high level of professional competence in their work in the kitchens. Those working in the restaurant were able to describe dishes accurately to customers. Student files and portfolios were well organised and presented. Students' work in their portfolios showed that their achievement was appropriate to the level and type of programme on which they were enrolled. The best assignment work showed that the students had carried out careful research and had translated theory into practice.

54 In business and professional studies, most students were well motivated. They were self-disciplined, enjoyed their studies and took pride in their completed work. Their written work was generally of a good standard and it was well presented. Students understood the tasks they were doing and spoke confidently about them. Students participated in a range of activities which developed their ability to interpret and analyse information. In management studies, there were 100 per cent pass rates on most courses. Students' files were well presented and they showed that the students had acquired a range of skills progressively.

55 Students on health and social care courses were able to work together effectively in groups and share ideas. Students displayed their understanding of how theory translated into practice in the world of work. Assignment work was well researched and presented. Ninety-seven per cent of students who completed the BTEC national diploma course in childcare studies in 1995 achieved a full award. Students enjoyed their studies and acquired appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding. They were successful in progressing to related employment, further training or a higher level of study.

56 The achievements of students in engineering were generally good. Many students who completed their course of study achieved an award. They acquired appropriate levels of skills and knowledge. The standard of their practical work was good and they paid due attention to issues of health and safety. Student retention rates were low on several courses.

57 In mathematics, students displayed appropriate levels of understanding in class and in their written work. Their achievements in mathematics were generally good. GCE A level examination results were above the national average. Student retention rates in GCSE mathematics classes were high. Examination results on some courses run by the college's sixth form centre declined last year. In computing and information technology, students generally showed enjoyment and interest in their work. They acquired communication skills through group work and by preparing and delivering presentations. Achievements by adults were at least satisfactory and often good. Some adult returners to education have done well. They began by attending short courses and have gradually progressed to a higher national certificate course. The college ran a GNVQ information technology course at intermediate level as a pilot initiative last year. Students' results on this course were above the national average. There were low retention and success rates on some other information technology courses, including GCSE and GCE A level.

58 Science students spoke with enthusiasm about their work. Some displayed a high level of presentation and research skills. Students' written work was generally of a high standard. Students acquired levels of knowledge and understanding appropriate to their level of study and they performed practical tasks safely and competently. Retention rates on science courses were generally low.

59 Students on sport, leisure and tourism courses demonstrated appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding. Students worked conscientiously to produce good standards in assignments, although the standard of English of some GNVQ intermediate students was poor. The pass rates of those completing their courses in 1994-95 were above the national averages. However, student retention rates on BTEC national diploma and GNVQ intermediate courses in 1994-95 were low. In the current academic year, student retention rates are good and the results achieved by students in GNVQ external tests are impressive. There is, however, some persistent absenteeism from classes.

60 In construction, students participated in lessons enthusiastically and were able to explain the nature of tasks they were undertaking. A number of students had achieved success in competitions at regional level. Assignment work was of a good standard and met the requirements of external bodies. Students' work books were well organised and presented. Students and teachers did not always pay sufficient attention to issues of safety during workshop activities. The retention rates on some courses were poor.

61 Humanities students participated confidently in discussions and demonstrated understanding, perception and knowledge. They acquired appropriate core and study skills. The standard of their coursework was generally good and they did well in their examinations. In languages, students on community and open learning programmes obtained excellent results in GCSE, GCE A level and GCE AS subjects. Most students were willing to use the language being learnt in lessons and they undertook all the tasks they were set with enthusiasm. The achievements of students in other humanities subjects were variable. Evening class students taking GCE A level and GCSE subjects generally did better than full-time students following the same courses. Retention rates were low on some courses.

62 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities gained in self-confidence. They worked competently and showed awareness of health and safety issues. A number of students were making substantial progress and took externally validated and nationally recognised qualifications, such as NVQ level 1 in horticulture, catering, painting and decorating. In a minority of classes, students were not clear about the purpose of their work or the extent of their achievements. Most adult and basic education students were well informed about their programmes of study and they had a clear understanding of their learning goals. Students on basic skills courses had their learning achievements accredited and they were able to progress directly to mainstream courses.

63 Eighty-nine per cent of students in their final year of study on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education and Employment's 1995 performance tables were successful. This places the college among the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. Students aged 16 to 18 who were entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1994-95 scored, on average, 2.3 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This places the college among the bottom 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1995 tables published by the Department for Education and Employment.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

64 The college has a formal framework for quality assurance. This includes policy on quality, the specification of standards, and procedures for quality assurance.

65 Responsibility for the college's quality assurance system rests with the deputy principal (academic affairs), who is assisted by the academic registrar. The directors of study in the faculties have responsibility for matters of quality. They are members of the academic board's standards and policy committee, which together with the academic board, comprises the college's main forum discussing quality assurance issues. Each faculty also has a quality team and other groups, such as course committees. The college's extensive documentation for its quality assurance system is held in the 'White Book', which contains over 80 documents. It is available in

staff rooms and on the college's computer network. Staff say they find it useful as a reference document to ensure they are following college procedures correctly. Many aspects of the quality assurance system are well established, but some, such as procedures for reviewing the system itself are not fully operational.

66 The students' experience is the main focus of the quality assurance system. The quality assurance process begins with the production of annual course monitoring and review reports by course leaders in the early autumn. These reports have a common format and include sections for completion on aspects of provision such as recruitment, retention rates, examination results, students' and others users' views on the quality of provision, teaching and learning, resources, and students' destinations. There are spaces for comment on provision and for required action in the future. Some important aspects of provision, such as tutorial support for students and data on attendance, are not included. A substantial number of the reports are poorly completed and presented. For example, some sections are left blank and the comments in others fail to address important issues such as retention rates and examination results. In some cases, recommendations for action are imprecise. Procedures to improve the quality of course reviews are at an early stage of development. A revised version of the report format will be used in 1996-97 and this gives greater prominence to self-evaluation and action planning.

67 The annual course reports are submitted to section leaders and aggregated to produce section reports, which in turn contribute to faculty reports. These reports also have a common format. Faculty reports have some good features. They show the extent to which objectives have been achieved. They contain statistical tables which indicate how the college is meeting its enrolment, retention and achievement targets and they specify action plans on key issues such as staff development and resources. Faculties are also required to assess the quality of provision at section, faculty and college level against the criteria listed in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement* and to grade each aspect of their work. However, the objectives in some faculty plans are too imprecise and progress towards meeting them cannot be rigorously evaluated. Some objectives are insufficiently related to the quality of provision.

68 The college has used the Advanced Level Information System in order to calculate the value which is added to a student's experience whilst he or she is at the college. This value-added factor is calculated by comparing students' GCSE grades upon entering the college with their GCE A level grades upon leaving, and then measuring the extent of difference between them by means of a formula. Reports for the sixth form centre as a whole and for each GCE subject have been produced for each of the last two academic years. Teachers have had training in how to use the value-added data, particularly in discussions with individual students about their progress. However, course teams do not make use of the value-added data in their course reviews or in their quality review and assurance processes.

69 Targets for students' attendance, retention and achievement are set at college level, and modified by course teams in the light of their experience. Although the targets are set, their impact and influence are limited. For example, some course and faculty reviews contain no evaluative comment on enrolments or examination results, even when these fall significantly below target. Service standards have been produced for most areas of the college's work but they do not cover teaching and learning or related activities such as tutorials. Whilst some standards, particularly those for central services such as estates and finance, are well established and demanding, others are in the early stages of development and are of variable rigour.

70 A structure for the internal validation of new courses has been established. There is, however, no system for validating or revalidating existing courses. Curriculum and service sections are subject to in-depth periodic reviews over a four-year cycle which began in autumn 1995. These reviews follow the headings of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*, and include observation, where appropriate, of teaching and learning in the classroom. They have proved useful in helping the four sections so far involved in these reviews to take a broader view of their activities. Quality audit teams have been recently established and they have a remit to check that the college's quality assurance systems are being carried out properly. The first audit took place in February 1996, and this checked the administrative arrangements of faculties in relation to quality assurance. The next audit will check that franchisees are complying with the college's requirements for quality assurance. A cross-college internal verifiers' group was set up in February 1996.

71 Students' views on the quality of provision are gathered in a number of ways, some of which are more effective than others. There are student representatives on course committees, and students are also members of faculty boards. Students express their views on courses through their answers to questionnaires. Students' responses to the standard college questionnaires are not summarised. Students complain that they receive little information on the general thrust of their answers to questionnaires or, on any action that is taken as a result of their responses.

72 The college charter is unappealing in its appearance. It is issued to all full-time students and is made available to part-time students. In addition, it is included in the staff handbook. Its commitments are not exacting and it contains few specific standards. It is reviewed annually, though there is no standing group and no established process for reviewing and monitoring its usefulness.

73 Staff development has a high profile in the college and funded staff-development activities currently account for 1.75 per cent of the college's staffing budget. Staff speak positively about the wide range of staff-development activities that are available to them. Part-time and support staff, in particular, appreciate the support the college gives to

their professional development. The individual training needs of staff, together with priorities for staff development identified by course and section reviews, are brought together in an annual faculty plan. The human resource director draws on these faculty plans and the college's strategic priorities to establish the college's yearly human resource development plan. This plan is reviewed systematically and faculties provide an evaluation of staff-development activities which took place in the previous year. Individual staff who receive staff-development training are required to evaluate its effectiveness and disseminate what they have learnt to their colleagues. The Dearne Valley Business School obtained the Investors in People award in 1995. The college hopes to obtain the Investors in People award by September 1996.

74 The college's policy on staff development and its associated procedures are set out in the staff handbook. Appraisal is fully established for full-time teaching and support staff, and a pilot is under way to extend it to part-time staff. The staff-appraisal process is primarily a means of staff development rather than judging performance, although those appraised are observed at work on a task, or in the classroom. Processes for the induction of all full-time staff are comprehensive and effective. All new staff have a mentor and they receive briefing on the college and an induction handbook. Line managers oversee the induction of new staff for whom they are responsible. They have to make sure that induction covers all the items on a checklist and they are required to sign that each one has been satisfactorily dealt with. The checklist also has space for comments by the new member of staff and his or her line manager and mentor about particular aspects of induction. There is an induction process for new part-time members of staff. They receive materials about the college and attend briefing meetings. Their induction activities are also itemised on a checklist. All new full-time staff, irrespective of their previous experience, have to serve a probation period of at least six months.

75 The college's self-assessment report is comprehensive. It draws on the college's quality assurance processes, and on consultation with all staff, the academic board and the corporation. The report follows the headings of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement* but it has no specific sections on teaching or students' achievements. Each section includes some description in the form of a commentary, and strengths and weaknesses are clearly defined. There are recommendations on action to redress weaknesses but, in some instances, these do not fully address the issues. The report contains little evidence to support its judgements. The findings of the report largely concur with those of the inspection in relation to the college's strengths. However, the report understates, or does not mention, some of the college's weaknesses identified by inspectors.

RESOURCES

Staffing

76 Staff are committed to ensuring the success of the college. Parity of esteem and respect for all staff is one of the college's priorities, and pay and conditions for full-time and part-time staff have been harmonized. At the time of inspection, 51 per cent of full-time permanent lecturing staff were on new contracts of employment. There is good teamworking among staff. For example, staff work together to create specialist resource centres and to devise course materials. Non-teaching staff operate co-operatively to provide excellent support for the work of the college. Relationships between different groups of staff are good. Employment policies and procedures are well documented and those covering the selection and recruitment of staff are particularly comprehensive.

77 The college has a human resources management strategy which is directly linked to curriculum and financial planning strategies. The use and deployment of teaching staff, many of whom teach on more than one site, are monitored effectively. An audit of all staff has been undertaken to determine the range of skills, qualifications and experience they have available and to ensure that it matches the range of courses offered or planned. Full-time teaching staff are generally well qualified for the work they undertake. Over 84 per cent have either degrees or professional qualifications relevant to the area in which they teach. Most staff have received some form of teaching training and 75 per cent have qualified teacher status. Teachers of vocational subjects generally have appropriate industrial and/or commercial experience. Thirty-four per cent of staff possess training and development lead body assessor awards. Staff teaching in some areas of the college's work are not interested in achieving these awards.

78 Approximately 20 per cent of teaching is undertaken by part-time staff, the majority of whom are now on fractional appointments. Many part-time staff make a valuable contribution to the work of the college. However, in health and social care 48 per cent of the teaching is carried out by part-time staff. As a result, full-time staff carry a heavy burden of responsibility for the management of health and social care courses. Part-time staff are generally well qualified for the work they undertake and 60 per cent have a teaching qualification.

79 Technical, professional and clerical staff are well qualified and experienced. The quality of the support they provide is high. They are allocated either to faculties or cross-college units. Their numbers are generally sufficient. Non-teaching staff receive the same encouragement and support as teaching staff to further their qualifications.

Equipment/learning resources

80 Learning materials and equipment in most areas are sufficient. For example, in the majority of teaching areas there are whiteboards or screens and overhead projectors. There are standards for the quality of furniture throughout the college. Marketing information, handbooks and course materials are produced to a high standard by the college's educational technology unit which is based on the main site. The media unit is well equipped and provides a valuable source of expertise and equipment.

81 The quality of specialist equipment is generally good. The realistic working environments established for the assessment of NVQs are of an appropriate standard. Several curriculum areas have well-equipped specialist rooms. Modern facilities for computer-aided design enable engineering to provide a large number of commercial training courses. However, there is a shortage of specialist equipment in some areas of engineering. The college has a number of practical areas for engineering which are dispersed across sites and it is difficult to ensure that these are all equipped to the same standard. The provision of resources and equipment for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is limited. The college has a systematic approach to the maintenance of equipment. Stock control is effective. In construction for example, there is a computer-based system for stock control.

82 The college's four learning resource centres provide a comprehensive range of facilities including paper-based and computer-based learning resources, audio-visual material and well-stocked libraries of information about careers and higher education. Their environment is conducive to learning. Compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases are available at all four main sites. In recent years, there has been a considerable investment in stock. The college's annual expenditure on its learning centres is £26.10 for each full-time equivalent student. Most subjects have adequate resources to support learning. However, some care courses which have recently been moved from one part of the college to another, lack some learning materials.

83 Students have access to 780 computers of recent manufacture. There is a ratio of one machine to every six full-time equivalent students. The central computer team provides an effective advisory and support service and co-ordinates purchases to ensure compatibility between hardware and software. The college's standard wordprocessing, spreadsheet and database software packages can be used with approximately 90 per cent of the college's computers.

Accommodation

84 The accommodation strategy is closely linked to the priorities identified in the college's strategic plan. Surveys indicate a current under-utilisation of accommodation in some areas of the college. Staff are involved in discussions on the design of both new and refurbished facilities to ensure that they are suitable for their purpose.

85 The four main sites offer attractive, good quality learning environments for most curriculum areas. A carefully considered refurbishment programme is designed to upgrade accommodation to meet the changing needs of learners and changes in courses. Since incorporation, the college has invested £5 million in updating and upgrading its building stock. Most of the accommodation is kept in good repair by an efficient estates management team, whose work is appreciated by staff and students. Foyer areas on all sites provide welcoming entrances to the college.

86 The college uses a large number of centres for its community education provision. The college has recently taken over ownership of some of the centres. The quality of these centres is more variable than that of the buildings at the main sites. However, their locations suit the communities they serve.

87 The college has created a secure environment. Security staff are effectively employed. Each site has catering facilities of commercial standard. Students use these catering areas as social areas in the absence of alternative accommodation. The students' union building on the Waterdale site is drab and uninviting.

88 The college places importance on health and safety issues. Each site has a health and safety committee to ensure that students and staff are made aware of current safe working practices. There are clear health and safety procedures for students undertaking outdoor activities. The college has made strenuous efforts to improve access for students with physical disabilities. There are instances where special arrangements have been made to meet an individual's particular needs. However, 27 per cent of the college is only accessible by stairways.

89 With some exceptions, teaching and specialist areas are generally appropriate for their purpose. Classrooms are well decorated, clean, tidy and carpeted. However, a number of rooms and workshops are not well suited for the purpose for which they are used. For example, in engineering, some classrooms are drab and workshop space is cramped.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

90 The college is working to achieve its mission. Its strengths are:

- the wide range of courses from foundation to postgraduate level
- extensive links with local employers and the community
- a well-developed and consultative strategic planning process
- a well-informed governing body which has a productive working relationship with college management
- effective teaching
- good relationships between students and staff
- good relationships with the TEC, local authority, higher education institutions and community organisations

-
- staff who are hard working, well qualified and effectively deployed across the college
 - some good specialist accommodation and equipment.
- 91 If it is to succeed in achieving its aims, the college should address:
- the lack of staff confidence in the college management information systems at course level
 - inconsistencies in the implementation of the tutorial system
 - the poor level of student attendance on some course programmes
 - the poor quality of some of the internal evaluations and review processes.

FIGURES

-
- 1 Percentage student numbers by age (as at March 1996)

 - 2 Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at March 1996)

 - 3 Percentage student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at March 1996)

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

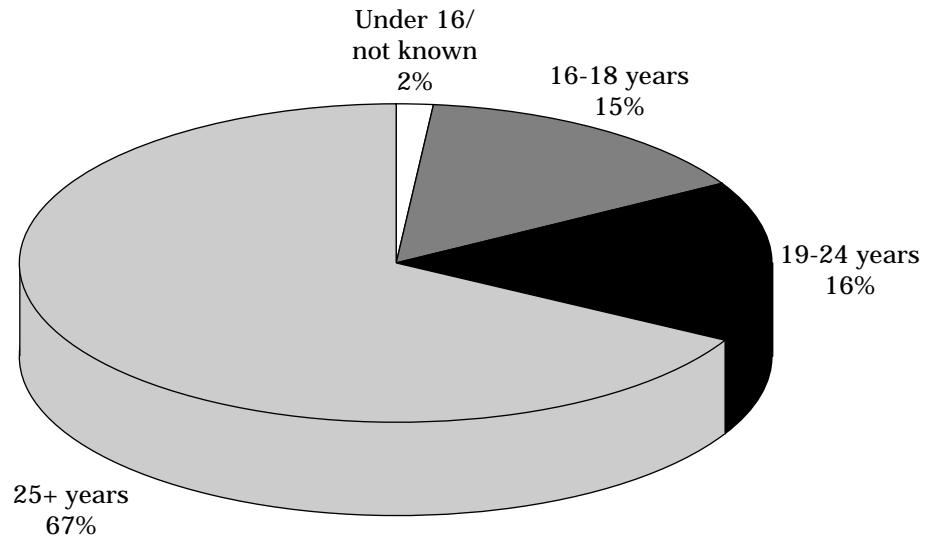
 - 5 Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

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

Figure 1

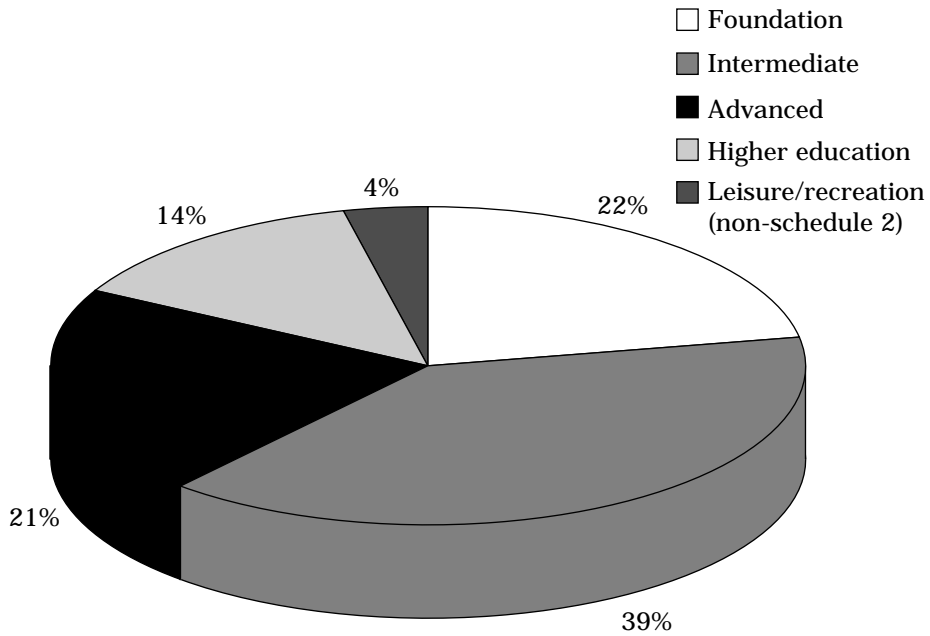
Doncaster College: percentage student numbers by age (as at March 1996)



Student numbers: 16,964

Figure 2

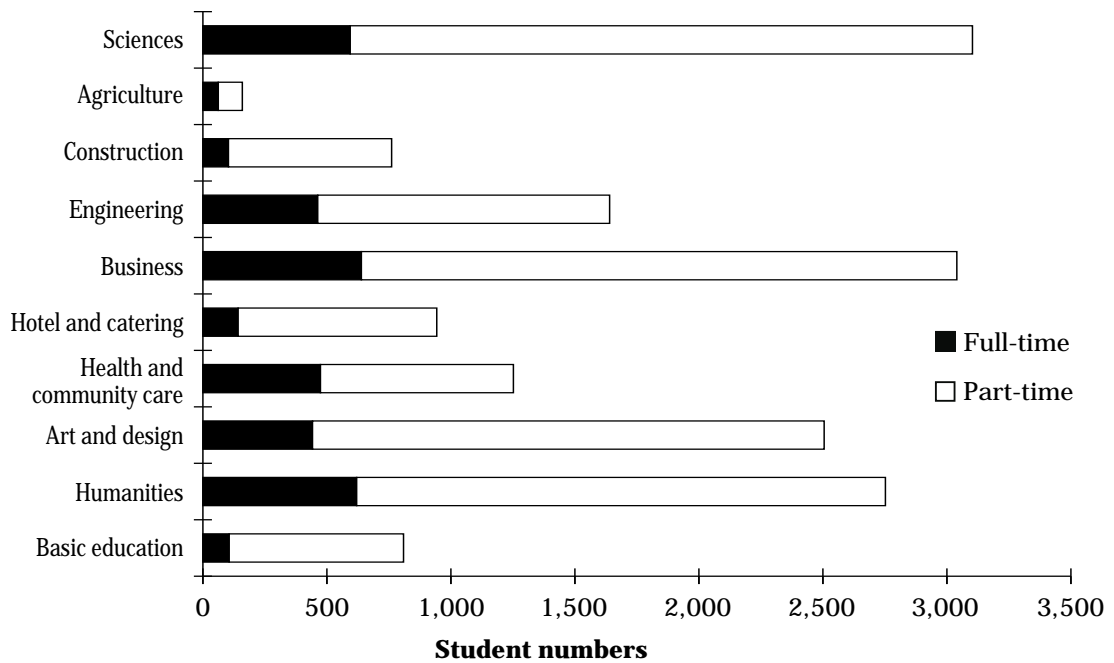
Doncaster College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at March 1996)



Student numbers: 16,964

Figure 3

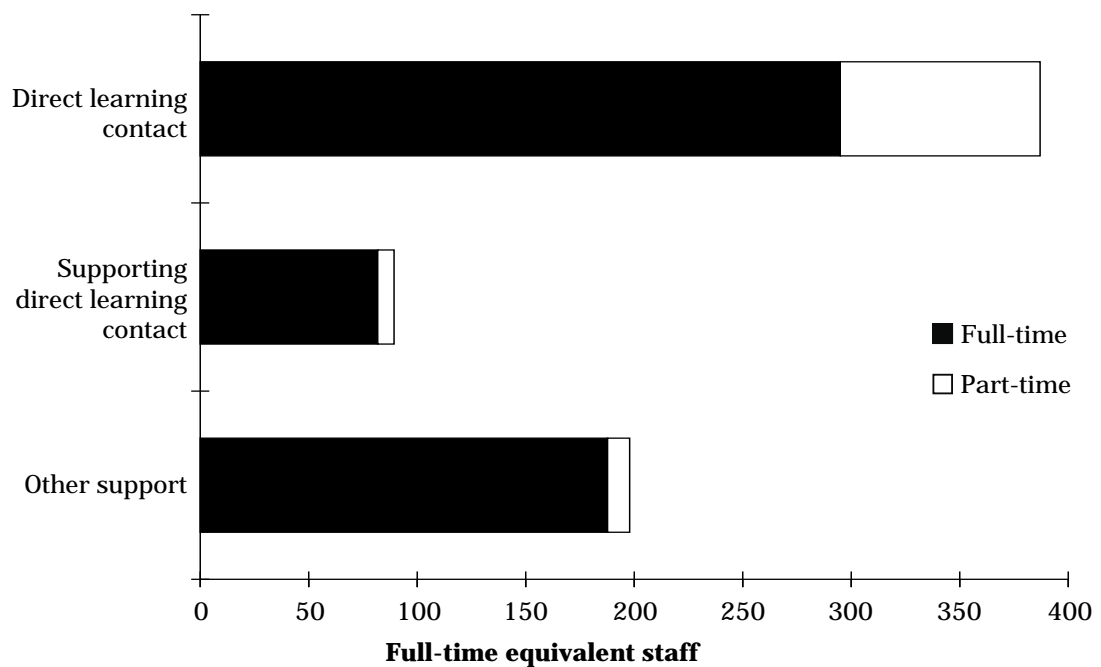
Doncaster College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at March 1996)



Student numbers: 16,964

Figure 4

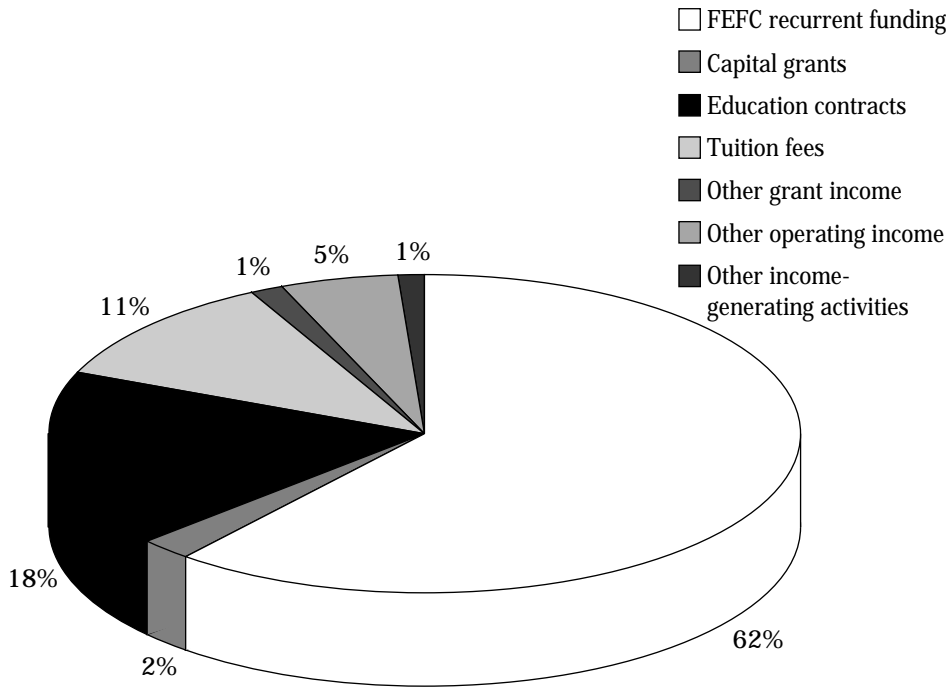
Doncaster College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)



Full-time equivalent staff: 674

Figure 5

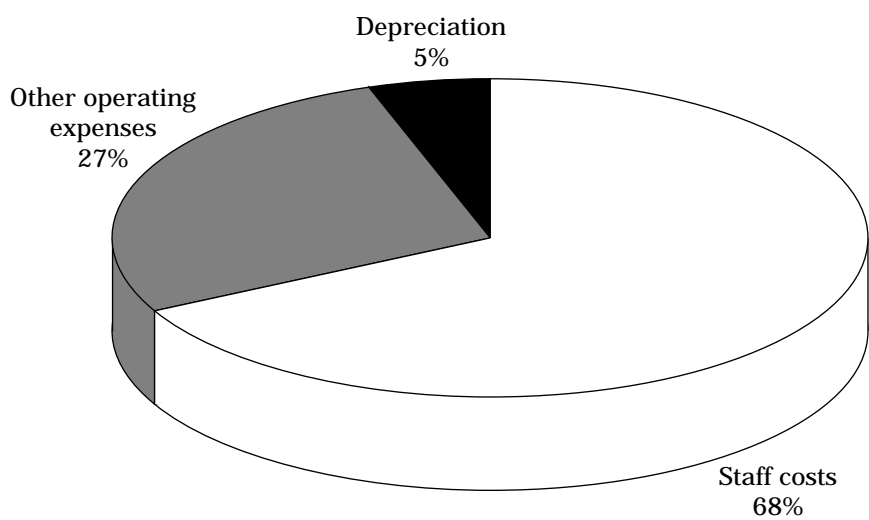
Doncaster College: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Estimated income: £20,201,000

Figure 6

Doncaster College: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Estimated expenditure: £20,783,000

Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
September 1996