

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

East Devon College

May 1995

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

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

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 41/95

EAST DEVON COLLEGE

SOUTH WEST REGION

Inspected October 1994 – January 1995

Summary

East Devon College is a tertiary college serving mid and east Devon, including the town of Tiverton. It has developed a broad and varied curriculum providing for students of all ages and abilities in a community which values its contribution. Its strengths include a hard-working governing body; well-qualified and experienced teaching staff generally providing good teaching across most subject areas; well-established higher education provision; effective support services for students; good examination results at GCE A level; good staff development and appraisal schemes; and high-quality accommodation. The college should revise its strategic plan to take account of falling enrolments; strengthen middle management; improve management information systems; improve aspects of quality assurance; raise standards in a few areas of work, particularly in leisure and tourism; and improve the quality of some of its specialist equipment.

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	3
	accommodation	1

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and mathematics	3	Health and social care, hairdressing	2
Engineering, motor vehicle	3	Creative arts	2
Business, administration and information technology	3	Humanities	2
Public services	1		
Hotel and catering	3	Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and adult learning	2
Leisure and tourism	4		

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INTRODUCTION

1 East Devon College was inspected between October 1994 and January 1995. A team of full-time and part-time inspectors spent a total of 65 days in the college.

2 During October and November 1994, a team of 11 inspectors inspected courses in science and mathematics, engineering, motor vehicle, business management, administration and information technology, public services, hotel and catering, leisure and tourism, health and social care, hairdressing, creative arts and humanities. They also inspected provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for adult learning. Inspectors visited classes, examined a wide range of students' written work, met with college managers, teaching staff and students, and looked at course documentation.

3 During January, a team of six inspectors spent a week in the college inspecting cross-college provision. They examined a wide range of college and course documentation. Meetings were held with governors, parents, college managers and staff, representatives from local schools, employers, the community, higher education institutions and Devon and Cornwall Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

4 The college serves the area of mid and east Devon, including the town of Tiverton and its largely-rural catchment area. Its main campus is located on the outskirts of Tiverton in some of the best accommodation in the further education sector. It shares the site with Tiverton High School, an 11-16 school, since a local reorganisation in 1992. The college also has an annex, Axe Vale, at Seaton on the south coast. Adult education work is undertaken at the main site and other premises in Tiverton, Seaton, in Honiton and in other rural locations.

5 The population of Tiverton is approximately 17,200, of which 10 per cent are in the age range 16-19. The wider Tiverton travel-to-work area includes a further 10,000 people. The local economy relies heavily on manufacturing and land-based industries including agriculture and quarrying. The largest employers are a textile manufacturer and a meat processing company. The number of jobs in the service sector is growing. The unemployment rate within Tiverton is currently 5.9 per cent, significantly lower than the Devon county average of 8.3 per cent.

6 At the time of the inspection, the college had 3,841 students on roll. Nine hundred and eighty-six were full time and about a quarter of them, excluding those on higher education courses, were aged 19 and over. There are 152 students enrolled on higher education courses, and 227 students from local secondary schools undertaking vocational courses at the college. Percentage enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2, enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area in figure 3. Eighty per cent of students were enrolled on programmes leading

to nationally-recognised academic or vocational qualifications; the remaining 20 per cent were following recreation or leisure courses. The college employs 207 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 113 are teachers and 94 are support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

7 In 1993-94, the college planned to expand student numbers by 8 per cent. In the event, an expansion of 4 per cent was achieved. In 1994-95, the college again planned to expand by 8 per cent but it is currently about 2 per cent down on the previous year's figures. In consequence, a substantial financial deficit is projected.

8 The number of 16 year old school leavers in the college's catchment area is predicted to rise in the next year, but competition for school leavers is intense. Tiverton High School has approximately 1,100 students and there are two other schools which cater for pupils aged 11-16 within 10 miles, one at Cullompton and the other a grant-maintained school at Uffculme, each with approximately 750 pupils. Apart from Axe Valley School, some 30 miles away, the remaining seven schools in the area are 11-18. In Tiverton itself there is also Blundell's Public School. The nearest further education sector colleges are Exeter College, 15 miles to the south west, and Somerset College of Arts and Technology and Richard Huish College, 20 miles to the north east at Taunton.

9 Approximately 45 per cent of school leavers in the Exeter and East Devon area proceed to further education colleges at 16, and about 30 per cent stay on in the sixth forms in the 11-18 schools. In September 1994, 463 sixteen-year olds from local schools enrolled on full-time courses at the college, which was 35 per cent of all leavers of that age.

10 The number of full-time students enrolling at the college fell from 1,062 in 1993-94 to 986 in 1994-95, although the number of 16 year old school leavers in the catchment area rose by 6 per cent. Full-time enrolments on the first year of GCE A level courses have fallen from 113 to 79 between 1992-93 and 1994-95, but there was a small increase in the number of part-time GCE A level students from 44 in 1993-94 to 61 in 1994-95.

11 The management structure of the college was established in September 1992 and will be reviewed this year. The executive consists of the principal, vice-principal and the director of finance and administration.

12 The mission statement, college priorities and strategic aims are set out in the strategic plan for the period 1994-97. In its mission statement, the college seeks to promote the curriculum of a responsive tertiary college, providing quality learning programmes within a caring environment; to secure individual achievement; and to meet the needs of the community. By 1997, the college hopes to have made further improvements in quality; to have expanded the range of its work, particularly to meet the needs of adult students and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; to have managed its resources more effectively; and to have improved its systems of communication with students, parents and employers.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

13 East Devon College has developed a broad and varied curriculum which provides for students of all ages and abilities.

14 The college prospectus offers school leavers over 30 full-time programmes. There are 26 General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects, eight General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects, General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) in health and social care, art and design, business, leisure and tourism and built environment and Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma courses in public service, nursery nursing, computing, graphic design and media studies and a range of part-time programmes at National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) levels 1, 2 and 3. There are various programmes designed for adults, including courses for adults wishing to return to study. There are also courses leading to higher education awards.

15 The effect of maintaining this wide range of courses in the face of the reduction in enrolments is that many individual courses now have less than 10 students. The few courses with healthy enrolments are subsidising others.

16 The college forecasts some difficulty in achieving any significant expansion of its full-time 16-18 student numbers, given existing staying-on rates, the increase in post-16 vocational provision in schools and the competition from other colleges and sixth forms in the area.

17 The college did not participate in the GNVQ pilot programmes. GNVQs have replaced existing programmes in line with the national timetable for their introduction and these have recruited with varying degrees of success. The college fears that the parallel introduction of GNVQs in the local schools will accelerate the decline in recruitment to certain areas of work. Enrolments have generally fallen in those subjects also offered by the schools, but have held steady in subjects such as design, hotel and catering, and public services, which are not part of most schools' curricula.

18 The college sees its contribution to the achievement of the national qualification targets as dependent on its success in attracting a greater number of adult students. It has developed courses tailored specifically to the needs of adult students: for example, access to higher education programmes; a BTEC nursery nursing diploma course for adults with accelerated progress for those who have relevant prior experience; and a 'return to learn' programme in basic education, which currently provides for approximately 280 part-time students in Tiverton and rural areas in the east of the county.

19 The college has a substantial number of adult students on courses leading either to higher education or achieving higher education qualifications. Most of the higher education courses are franchised from the University of Plymouth. The college started by offering higher education

care courses. It now has a two-year diploma in social work and a two-year diploma in nursing, and a higher national certificate in care management is planned for next September. The college also offers a two-year higher national diploma in travel and tourism and a certificate in education. Higher national certificate courses in business and finance and business and tourism started this year. An access programme to prepare students for entry to higher education, designed by the University of Exeter, is validated by the South West Access Federation, although the university oversees the provision and is responsible for quality assurance. Representatives of the universities of Plymouth and Exeter spoke highly of the college's work, and in particular the emphasis it has placed on tutorial support and guidance for adult students.

20 The college plans to increase its provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Existing courses include: the 'Breakthrough' pre-vocational courses intended for school leavers with moderate learning difficulties; the 'Focus' courses for students with severe learning difficulties; and the 'Pathway' programme for adults with severe learning difficulties, timetabled to link with the social service day-care centres.

21 The college has links with a number of schools and provides a few programmes for their students. The number of students from schools attending school/college link courses has declined as schools have increased their own vocational provision. The links are nevertheless an important part of school/college liaison. School representatives valued the good relationship with the college, the interest staff from the college took in their pupils, and the quality of its teaching. A more recent development is the link with the West of England School for Children with Little Sight, two of whose pupils attend the public services course. The college has responded positively to the needs of these students.

22 The college undertakes a small amount of full-cost recovery work for local employers. For example, there is tailor-made training for carers working in homes for the elderly and a successful programme of information technology training, offered nationwide and in Europe, with a current annual turnover of approximately £200,000. These areas of work are not centrally co-ordinated other than to determine costs and marketing needs.

23 The college has established its own organisation, Devon Training Alliance, to manage the contractual relationship between East Devon College and the Devon and Cornwall TEC. The Devon Training Alliance offers training for young people and adults in the community through the training credits scheme. Training may be provided in a company or at the college. The Alliance provides placements officers to complete health and safety checks, agree training programmes with employers and the college, and check trainees' progress against agreed training plans. In the college, students may join existing programmes or have special programmes created for them. Courses are on offer in over 20 different occupational

areas, although over 70 per cent (167) of the trainees pursue studies in the technical services area, and the majority of these study motor vehicle or agricultural engineering. An estimate of current activity indicates a turnover of approximately £500,000. The contract is run by a small team of staff whose efficiency is attested by the TEC manager responsible for the college account.

24 The college's marketing officer is responsible for advertising, media coverage, the prospectus and publicity material. Much of the publicity is of good quality, eye-catching and informative. However, the college could do more to publicise its achievements; for example, the 32 students taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award. The marketing officer draws on published sources of information relating to the supply and demand for vocation skills.

25 The college has developed links with many local employers through advisory committees, work-placement arrangements, part-time course provision and specific training provision. Those employers who met the inspection team were supportive and positive about the college, valued its presence in their locality, and expressed a willingness to provide placements to college staff.

26 The college provides a programme of complementary studies. There is a choice between some 50 different courses, including a variety of sports, a college cadet corps, music, pottery, wordprocessing and the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. All students are expected to undertake at least one activity during each of their years at the college. The programme is not compulsory, and not all students take part. Nevertheless, most students recognise that the activities are intrinsically valuable and useful for their other studies. For example, success in the GCE A level general studies is helpful for entry to higher education, and employers such as the armed forces and the public services may give weight to successful participation in sport or the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. The programme is well organised and staff are keen to see it kept going.

27 The college is highly regarded by the community it serves. Although there were some reservations, for example, about the extent to which parents are involved with the college, those members of the community who spoke to the inspection team held a high opinion of the college and its staff. They saw it as positively welcoming to students, and attached importance to its contributions to the life of Tiverton through such things as the choral society, the training restaurant, the hairdressing salon, and the range of evening class provision.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

28 There are 20 governors, of whom two are women. Many started their service on the governing body before incorporation. The chairman has been on the board of the college and its predecessor colleges continuously for 41 years, and has been chairman since 1971. He takes a particularly

active interest in the college. He meets regularly and on an ad-hoc basis with the senior management team, often raising matters drawn to his attention by staff, students and members of the community.

29 The commercial and industrial experience of the independent members has been of great benefit to the college. The members include a doctor, accountant, solicitor, chartered surveyor, two chairmen of large companies, two head teachers, an ex-finance director, an ex-trade union regional official, a representative of the Devon and Cornwall TEC, and a social services manager. In addition, there are two elected college staff, a student and the principal. There is likely to be a turnover of about 25 per cent in the membership (including the chairman and vice-chairman) this year, and a committee has been set up to seek new members.

30 The committees of the board include the chairman's executive committee and committees for finance, audit, employment policy, and remuneration. There is also the Axe Vale advisory committee. Meetings of the governing body and its committees take place regularly and are well attended. Governors have attended a range of training events to inform themselves on matters relating to their role. They are kept well informed of the college's work by the principal's detailed report to each board meeting.

31 Governors were involved in the production of the strategic plan. Although contributions from all parts of the college were included, the plan is nevertheless widely seen in the college as the production and property of senior management. Faculties and sections have their own operating plans which have been drawn up to align with the strategic plan. Governors have been involved in revising the plan to take account of the decline in enrolments.

32 Proposals for resolving the difficulties stemming from the college's failure to recruit to target include:

- better marketing to increase enrolment
- greater efficiency in the delivery of courses
- the generation of additional revenue through more short courses and other cost-recovery exercises
- a reduction in the number of teaching and support staff.

33 Summaries of the college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figure 5 and 6. The college receives approximately 67 per cent of its income from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The total allocation from the FEFC in 1994-95 amounts to £3,586,000, an increase of 5.2 per cent on the previous year. This represents an average level of funding of £19.18. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £18.17, and the median for the sector is £19.01.

34 The executive team consists of the principal, the vice-principal and the director of finance and administration. The vice-principal as director of studies manages the two heads of teaching faculties. He also has responsibility for student services and personnel and is currently managing the redundancy plan. The senior management team comprises the members of the executive team, the two heads of faculty and the director of marketing, who reports directly to the principal. There is also a college management team with a membership that embraces the senior management team, the six divisional managers, two cross-college student support managers, the estates manager, the librarian, the co-ordinators for GNVQ programmes and TEC programmes, and the head of the Axe Vale Unit. There are plans to review the management structure during this academic year.

35 The executive team meets as required to oversee the strategic direction of the college. The senior management team meets weekly to consider operational matters across the college, and is also responsible for the quality control, marketing and promotion of the college. The college management team also meets weekly; it is not a strategic policy-making body but rather a forum for the exchange of information, the briefing of middle management, and the discussion of operational issues. Each of the two faculties has a faculty management team, consisting of the head of faculty and divisional managers, which meets weekly to implement the decisions of the senior management team and to plan the operational organisation of the faculty and its divisions. The faculty team is seen by college managers as the main channel of communication between the senior management team and the classroom teacher. Meetings are generally well documented and minuted and responsibility for further action is clearly indicated. Beneath the faculty level, divisional teams and course teams meet with varying frequency.

36 The two heads of faculty are each responsible for three divisions. The head of faculty of academic and community studies also has cross-college responsibility for curriculum developments including NVQ and GNVQ. The head of faculty of business and technical studies has responsibility for learning resources, timetabling, the Devon Training Alliance and Axe Vale. This assignment of responsibilities at faculty level does not always match exactly the more detailed assignment of curriculum responsibilities. For example, some hairdressing and catering courses, which are the responsibility of one head of faculty, are provided at Axe Vale, which is the responsibility of another. This sometimes results in difficulties of management and communication.

37 In some divisions, there have been frequent changes of head of division in the last three years. Currently, four of the six divisional managers are occupying their posts on a temporary basis. There is some hesitation on the part of temporary divisional heads to take long-term management decisions. The divisional managers carry a significant

teaching load in addition to their line management role, which in some cases involves responsibility for 20 or more staff in a number of different curriculum areas. They are not all providing clear leadership and effective management of staff. The uneven size of the divisions within faculties, and the tensions experienced by those carrying cross-college, as well as line management and teaching responsibilities, cause further problems. The middle management role is a point of weakness in the management structure.

38 The academic board is known as the curriculum council. This provides a formal means of communication and debate between representatives of the staff and the managers on matters relating to academic organisation, the curriculum, quality standards and students' performance. Its membership of 23 includes the principal and 15 other ex-officio members, two teachers from each of the faculties, a member of the support staff and two students. It meets at least once each academic term and much of its business is taken up with the consideration of reports from committees reporting to it. These include the two faculty boards and committees dealing with staff development, equal opportunities, information technology, course validation, marketing, European matters and quality assurance. The curriculum council is seen by some staff as a useful forum where representatives from all parts of the college can discuss matters of mutual concern with senior managers. Others regard it less favourably because of its lack of decision-making powers and the apparent overlap of function with that of the college management team.

39 Apart from the management and committee structure, there are a number of ways in which management keep staff informed. The principal has recently instigated a weekly briefing session for all staff and a newsletter is published from time to time. A training day for all staff in early January was arranged to address the problems confronting the college, and a conference to review outcomes is planned for later in the spring.

40 The deployment of staff is generally effective. Heads of faculty bid for additional staff and staffing levels are routinely monitored. In the college's present situation, staffing has been subject to very careful scrutiny. Budgets are allocated to faculties on an historic basis adjusted to reflect enrolments. More accurate costing methods are being developed by the director of finance to reflect the new funding arrangements. At present, some course or section leaders know what is available for them to spend while others do not. Staff are generally aware that a bidding system operates for capital items and that final decisions are made by the senior management team, but the criteria on which allocations are decided are not understood.

41 Management information systems are still at an early stage of development. Senior managers are provided with the information required to carry out some of their tasks. For example, there is careful monitoring

of enrolment trends and applications for places at the college. The recently-purchased student attendance system is not yet providing management information for course tutors. The college has suspended work on the staffing database, while awaiting the requirements of the FEFC on the staff record. A software system to aid estate management has been purchased but has not yet been brought into commission. The college is participating in the pilot scheme for the individual student record. During enrolment week, managers were supplied with daily updates on actual enrolments, as compared with target numbers, and the implications for costs and funding. Under present arrangements, reports can be commissioned, as required, on a number of subjects, especially those relating to students, but staff cannot access and interrogate data systems directly.

42 The calculation of unit costs is still perceived as a tool of senior managers. Nevertheless, the present under-recruitment has created a greater awareness of the cost of individual courses and the consequences of failing to reach recruitment targets. An analysis of some of the costs involved in providing courses has been used to inform the governors' understanding of the college's present situation.

43 Student retention rates are monitored centrally and a report is made each term to members of the finance committee of the governing body. This is not always the case at subject or course level, where retention in a particular subject may not be systematically analysed. The governors are anxious to identify the reasons why students leave courses before achieving their educational goals.

44 The college has policies in place for equal opportunities and health and safety. Responsibility for their implementation is clearly allocated and there are committees to promote developments in each area. The health and safety policy has been widely distributed and remedial action is taken where needed. A health policy is advocated, and the college maintains a no smoking policy in all buildings. There is a continuing programme of training events related to health and safety matters. There is an equal opportunities officer whose main responsibilities include the promotion of equal opportunity issues, and the monitoring and evaluation of policy and practice in the college.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

45 Support services for students are co-ordinated centrally by marketing and student services support staff. The director of marketing is responsible for information and publicity, schools liaison and admissions, and two student service managers for guidance and support including the tutorial system, health education, careers, counselling and accommodation advice. The student course and information centre opened in 1992, provides a welcoming and responsive access point for students. The overall structure of support for students is still evolving. Present arrangements are generally working well. The staff involved have clear roles and responsibilities.

46 Liaison with local 11-16 schools includes regular visits by a schools liaison team of senior college staff who speak to 15 and 16 year old pupils. College staff attend careers events and open evenings in many of the local schools, although liaison with 11-18 schools is more difficult as the schools and the college compete for students. The college organises its own open evenings and open days when school pupils can experience life at the college. These events have recently been reorganised to provide a more structured setting for meetings with individual course and subject tutors, followed by opportunities for potential students to gather information and advice about specific courses. These changes have been welcomed by local schools. Students and parents appreciate the information and guidance provided before students enrol at the college. Advice days are also held for prospective students after GCSE results are published. Guidance interviews are available for adult students throughout the year.

47 The admissions procedures are co-ordinated effectively by the central admissions staff who arrange the appointments, track students' progress and act as a point of reference for the student. The time taken to respond to applications is generally short, and the management information system provides regular information on the stage that an application has reached. Evening classes, and the recruitment of adult evening students, are the responsibility of the adult and community education division. While this provides a coherent approach for the adult evening class provision, the separation limits the opportunity to develop college-wide systems which can support all students.

48 Induction is generally working well. Most students are given basic college information, the outline of their course, and assignment requirements. Tutors appreciate the induction guidance provided by student services. Monitoring arrangements are in place to make sure that induction operates consistently.

49 Support for students' individual learning needs is at an early stage of development. A member of staff has recently been given the responsibility for co-ordinating this work. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have an opportunity to record their needs at interview. They are then referred for appropriate support. Screening for basic skills has recently been introduced and the college intends to include it for all new students in the induction process next year.

50 The core skills unit provides a place where students can drop in during the day to get help with numeracy and literacy outside their normal timetable. However, the unit's ability to respond is constrained by its more formal role of providing timetabled classes, for example, in GNVQ core skills. The procedures used by the unit to identify students' learning needs, and to track their progress, require further development.

51 The tutorial system is led by a team of five senior tutors. One has specific responsibility for adult learners, although this role is as yet underdeveloped. A useful tutorial handbook is provided by student

services. Students have a one-hour group tutorial each week, and at least one individual tutorial each term. Students commend the system, and testify to the support given by individual tutors, but they have mixed views about the use to which tutorial sessions are put. Tutors would benefit from meeting with senior tutors to review the use of tutorial time.

52 A strong emphasis is placed on records of achievement and individual action planning which includes a regular process of reviewing and reporting students' progress. Tutors and students have reservations about the current format of some individual action plans, and particularly about those for vocational courses.

53 Procedures for monitoring student attendance are in place, but staff do not always observe them. A computerised system for monitoring attendance has recently been purchased but is not yet providing reports. Once it is fully operational it should enable more effective monitoring.

54 The college has a male and female counsellor providing a total of six hours counselling a week. The senior tutors provide additional support on a rota basis at lunch time and are part of the counselling and guidance team. Significant numbers of students make use of the counselling service. There are appropriate arrangements for referral. Confidentiality is maintained. Adult guidance is provided at the adult-learning centre in Bampton Street, Tiverton and at the main college site.

55 There are good links with Devon Careers Service. Two careers advisers attend the college for two days every week and a third adviser makes specific visits for adults. Two members of college staff act as careers co-ordinators, one concentrating on higher education and the other on vocational careers guidance. They are given some remission from teaching duties to carry out these tasks. Careers guidance packs are provided for all full-time students. There is a well-managed careers library which includes an interview room within the learning-resource centre. Careers staff are prepared to support tutors by providing advice and guidance to students during the tutorial sessions, but there has been a limited response from tutors, particularly on vocational courses. Not all the appointments offered to students for individual guidance interviews are taken up.

56 An established systematic pattern for providing information on higher education includes events for both students and parents. Extra staff time has recently been given to the support of students when GCE A level results are published.

57 There is a 60-place nursery on site providing care for children up to the age of five. It has been in its present form for one year and has received a positive inspection report from the county social services department. Although financial assistance and reduced charges are available, charging levels for students of up to £55 a week are causing difficulties for some adult learners. Fifty-seven per cent of the users of this service are not students at the college. This figure increases to about 75 per cent for children in the two to three year age range.

58 The college has a well-resourced medical suite and a recently-appointed nurse/health promotion officer is beginning to develop an imaginative approach to health promotion issues. A family planning advice service is starting shortly. An accommodation and welfare officer provides advice and maintains a register of local accommodation.

59 Students are advised of their rights and responsibilities through the college charter and a student survival guide. A student guild seeks to represent students' views and the chairperson is also the student representative on the board of governors and the college curriculum council. A member of staff acts as a student liaison officer. Although there have been some good examples of consultation there was no formal consultation with students on the drafting of the college charter. Students' awareness of the student guild and its work is limited.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

60 One hundred and seventy-two teaching sessions were inspected. Of these sessions 59 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses. In 13 per cent of sessions the weaknesses outweighed the strengths. The curriculum areas of catering, and leisure and tourism had a higher-than-average number of weak sessions. The following table shows the grades given during the inspection.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		4	24	11	5	0	44
GCSE		0	1	2	1	0	4
GNVQ		2	11	7	3	2	25
NVQ		5	7	14	9	0	35
Basic education		3	4	0	0	0	7
Access to higher education		0	6	0	0	0	6
Access to further education		1	1	0	0	0	2
Higher education		0	0	2	0	0	2
Other vocational		11	19	12	2	0	44
Other		2	1	0	0	0	3
Total		28	74	48	20	2	172

61 Teachers in science and mathematics prepared thoroughly for lessons and demonstrated a sound knowledge of their subject. However, teachers generally failed to take sufficient account of different abilities within the same student group. In most lessons, students had the opportunity to ask questions or to engage in discussion, and learning materials were of good quality. In a few sessions, teachers spent too much time dictating notes to students. Practical work was usually appropriate, although there was

insufficient attention to the reinforcing of good practice in some practical laboratory sessions. The positive relationship between teachers and students, and teachers' subject expertise, counterbalanced some weaknesses in delivery and the limited range of teaching methods.

62 In most engineering and motor vehicle studies sessions, teachers made appropriate reference to current industrial practice, and this helped students to understand the context of the lesson. There were particular strengths in the teaching of practical skills. Most students were well motivated and starting to develop confidence in carrying out practical servicing and maintenance tasks. In some theory classes, the work lacked challenge and progress was slow.

63 The quality of business studies teaching was variable. In some lessons, students were set to work on an appropriate range of relevant activities and encouraged to contribute to discussions. In other lessons, teachers relied too heavily on the use of standard workbooks and students were frequently unaware of deadlines for the completion of activities and the submission of work. Students' assessed work rarely included comments from teachers. Sessions in information technology were well planned, although the pace of work was occasionally slow.

64 Public services courses recruit students aiming for careers in the armed services, police, or emergency services. Courses are well organised and supported by clear and comprehensive documentation. In one session, in preparation for a real activity involving the services, students acted out a press conference; they were well prepared and approached the exercise in a mature manner. All the classes observed were well managed, interesting and challenging, and students were involved and attentive.

65 In catering, some of the practical classes had more strengths than weaknesses and were enjoyed by the students. However, considerable use was made of pre-prepared learning materials, disliked by many students who found the routine completion of workbook tasks repetitive and unchallenging. Other weaknesses included the variable levels of course planning by staff on NVQ programmes, limited opportunities to experience the challenges of a busy production kitchen, and some poor practice in food service.

66 Standards of teaching in leisure and tourism were inconsistent. Some of the classes were well taught; there were detailed plans, well-presented handouts and clear explanations from tutors. In other classes, instructions to students were unclear and students failed to respond to the style of delivery. There were significant levels of student dissatisfaction with several programmes.

67 In hairdressing, the teaching of theory is supported by published workbooks and handouts supplied by teachers. Most theory and practical sessions were effective and proper attention was given to the development of students' practical skills. In a few cases, small classes or the lack of

external clients meant that the pace of work was too slow or that activities lacked sufficient challenge. Written work was carefully marked and there was detailed written feedback to each student.

68 Learning programmes for students in health and social care programmes were designed to encourage students to work on their own. In many sessions, there was a wide range of activities including role play and the use of video facilities, and teachers drew effectively on students' work experience. Teaching on the BTEC national diploma in nursery nursing was consistently effective. In a few sessions on other courses, the pace of work was too slow and there were too few opportunities for students to take the initiative.

69 In art and design, lectures were generally well planned. Students had good opportunities for discussion, although some students made little contribution. Practical work in art and design and media was generally well organised; there was good use of simulated activities and visits to theatres, television studios and concerts. Local artists and musicians frequently contribute to the teaching. Some design and media work has involved co-operation with local employers. Students receive a high level of individual support from teachers.

70 The humanities curriculum area includes English, history, geography, foreign languages and social sciences. Teaching activities are well planned. They are clearly linked to syllabus requirements and take into account the previous knowledge and experience of students. Tasks set are varied and challenging, and appropriate use is made of video and of up-to-date learning materials, particularly in history. Relations between staff and students are good, and students are encouraged to question and think critically. Assessed work is carefully marked and returned to students with detailed written comments.

71 The quality of teaching on specialist courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Many relevant practical activities are included. For example, one group of students works for a day each week in the training restaurant. Other students participate in video, drama and enterprise activities. Teaching on adult basic education programmes is well structured and is closely related to the specific needs of individual students. In the professional courses, for example the further and adult education teacher's certificate and the counselling programmes, the teaching is well managed. Overall, there was much talented and effective teaching which provided challenge and purpose for adult learners and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

72 In most cases, the integration of adult students with younger students is working well. Students are generally positive about course content, the help and support provided by teachers, and the relevance of their chosen course of study to their future careers. Many students on vocational courses expressed a particular interest in, and preference for, practical activities.

73 On many courses, for example, business studies, leisure and tourism and health and social care courses, training in information technology is required by the awarding body. In these cases, students were able to demonstrate appropriate levels of competence in the use of computers. In other areas, for example, in hairdressing, the college has introduced information technology into the course on its own initiative. However, in art and in design and in science, students have insufficient opportunities to develop relevant skills in information technology, and computers are not regularly used to support teaching and learning activities.

74 All students on GNVQ courses are required to complete units in application of number and communication. On some courses the programme for these units was separate, and limited time was given to their teaching and assessment. In leisure and tourism no assessment had yet taken place.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

75 As a major part of their assessment, students on NVQ and GNVQ programmes are required to produce portfolios of work. Some portfolios for example, in NVQ travel services, demonstrate high standards of achievement and professional standards of presentation. In other areas the quality of portfolios varies, for example, the presentation of many portfolios on NVQ business administration courses did not measure up to the standards required by employers.

76 In 1994, 341 candidates sat GCE A level examinations in 28 subjects, achieving an overall pass rate of 85 per cent. This compares favourably with the best pass rate achieved in the previous four years. In 1994, the provisional average pass rate for all sector colleges other than sixth form colleges was 68 per cent. Pass rates of 100 per cent were achieved in 12 subjects including mathematics, English literature, computing, economics, modern languages and three of the four art and design specialisms. General studies had the highest number of entries (61), and a 95 per cent pass rate compared with a provisional average for the sector of 70 per cent. A few subjects achieved pass rates of less than 60 per cent; for example, business studies evening course (58 per cent), chemistry (58 per cent), history (56 per cent) and law (25 per cent), although all four of these areas achieved pass rates of over 80 per cent in 1993. Over all subjects, in 1994, 49 per cent of successful candidates were awarded an A, B or C grade. Students in the age range 16-18 accounted for 86 of the entries at A level. According to tables published by the Department for Education the average point score per entry in 1994 was 4.4 (where A=10, E=2). This puts the college in the top third of colleges in the further education sector.

77 In 1994, 289 candidates sat GCSE examinations, and 51 per cent achieved a grade between A and C. This is similar to the pass rates at A-C in 1993 of 50 per cent for the sector. However, the college's 1994 results are worse than in 1993 when the pass rate at grades A-C was 64 per cent.

The best results were obtained in three-dimensional art (96 per cent), sociology (94 per cent), photography (83 per cent) and German (83 per cent). These four subjects have performed consistently well over a three-year period. Pass rates of less than 40 per cent were achieved in English (35 per cent), psychology (33 per cent), biology (23 per cent) and health studies (15 per cent). There are often significant differences in pass rates between consecutive years: for example, pass rates achieved over the previous two years in English were 61 per cent and 76 per cent.

78 Compared with initial registrations, the numbers of students gaining final awards in BTEC certificates and diplomas in 1994 varied between subject areas: in public services (77 per cent), hotel and catering (62.5 per cent for students at Axe Vale and 81 per cent for students at the main site), care (60 per cent), business and finance (58 per cent) and leisure studies first diploma (50 per cent). These figures take account of students who left for relevant employment before completing the course and those who have not yet completed and are about to submit final assignments. Adjustments for such students would result, in the case of public services, in pass rates of 86 per cent for the first diploma public services and 81 per cent for the national diploma. In leisure studies, adjustment of the figures would result in pass rates of 57 per cent for the first diploma and 77 per cent for the national diploma. The Department for Education tables for 1994 recorded 125 entries for 16-18 year olds. They achieved an overall achievement pass rate of 74 per cent. This puts the college into the bottom third of all further education sector colleges using this performance measure. The college claims a discrepancy in the statistics presented to the Department and is seeking to agree new figures.

79 The achievement of NVQ qualifications is variable. For example, 75 per cent of level 2 hairdressing students achieved a full award, compared with only 12 per cent of accounting technician students, although some of the latter achieved units towards the full award and remain students at the college. Many students prepare for the examinations of specialist technical and professional bodies. Success rates again vary. There were good results in secretarial single subject examinations and in beauty therapy, but in catering many City and Guilds of London Institute examination results were poor.

80 Students' pass rates on access courses were generally good, and many students proceeded to their chosen course of study in further or higher education. In 1993-94, 29 out of 34 students completed the access to higher education course and 22 went on to higher education. Substantial progress was also made by adult students returning to college. Of the 40 students on the foundation programme, 27 progressed to other courses in the college.

81 The manager responsible for monitoring students' progress also monitors student destinations. Systems for the collation, analysis and summary of information are in place, although no real evaluation of their

effectiveness has taken place as yet. Little attention has been given to the systematic use of data to inform course planning and influence the advice given to students. The data show that the number of GCE A level students going on to higher education increased from 72 per cent in 1993 to 83 per cent in 1994. Fifty-six out of the total of 148 achieving a BTEC award at national diploma level applied for a higher education place, and 36 (68 per cent of applicants) were successful. In 1993, 74 per cent of applicants secured a place in higher education. Last year, as part of its marketing strategy the college produced brief pen portraits of all leavers and sent them to the secondary schools they came from.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

82 The college produced a self-assessment report which was presented by the principal to the inspection team at the start of the cross-college inspection. It covered the headings set out in appendix A to Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The report was clearly and logically set out, and provided a helpful context to the inspection. However, it was mainly a review of past activities and offered few critical judgements on key areas of current concern.

83 The college has a policy statement for quality assurance which sets out a clear intention to seek continuous improvement in all areas of the college's activities. The policy is understood and well supported at senior and middle management level, but less so by some teaching staff. Quality developments at the college were initially focused on gaining British Standard (BS) 5750 accreditation for East Devon Training, the college's training arm. It was decided not to pursue this for the whole college, and the college is now aiming for a total quality management approach. This involves the systematic setting of standards and targets in conjunction with students, employers, members of the community and college staff, the monitoring of progress towards their achievement, and their regular review. However, the operational structure that the college has established to achieve quality improvements is complex. Staff do not yet fully understand how it works, what the procedures are and who carries responsibility within the structure.

84 The college is continuing to develop its approach to implementing quality assurance procedures, and there is considerable evidence of recent progress. A good start has been made with the monitoring and review of courses and the development of standards of service to be achieved by each part of the college. The course monitoring and review system is well documented. It is designed to elicit formal responses from students three times a year, covering the experience of new students, views on how courses are presented, and perceptions of the availability of resources. Views are also sought from students who have left the college. Student perception surveys are analysed and there is some evidence of improvements having been made as a result including changes in course structure and improvements in accommodation, refectory and childcare facilities.

85 Despite the progress being made there is a lack of consistency in the use of the system across programme areas. Although the review process should provide course-related data on examination results, number of leavers, and destinations of students, these are sometimes omitted or incomplete. Where they are available, there is little evidence of their use as performance indicators and to provide objectives and targets for improvement to particular courses. Although the action to be taken as a result of the course reviews is written up as an action plan, no one is made specifically responsible for implementing the plan and assessing its outcomes.

86 Not all staff have a commitment to the process nor realise the potential benefits of the outcomes. As a result, the review procedure is not fully operational at programme level. Quality issues do not have a high profile on the agenda of college meetings.

87 Procedures to support service level agreements are being devised for student admissions, marketing, guidance and counselling and personnel functions. The materials recently prepared have been circulated to all staff in a policies and procedures booklet which is proving to be a useful document. Some of the statements on standards and targets do not lend themselves to measurement and should be reviewed.

88 The college is introducing specialised software to provide efficient tracking of students and the recording of information on student attendance, performance, destinations and progression. The system will provide data for programme managers and others who prepare quality assurance reports.

89 As part of the college plans for developing the range of provision, priority has been given to the achievement of Training and Development Lead Body qualifications, and a budget has been provided for the purpose. This training has developed slowly. Some staff have been reluctant to take part and in a number of cases it has taken a long time to prepare portfolios and gain accreditation. Some concerns have been expressed in reports from an external award body, and confirmed by inspectors looking at curriculum areas, about the lack of an internal verifier system to secure common standards of assessment. This issue is being addressed by college managers.

90 Staff-development policies and procedures for teaching staff are well developed and efficiently managed. The budget for all staff development activity, including support staff, is £33,000, which represents 0.65 per cent of the college budget. A proportion of the budget is delegated to faculty level, providing flexibility and the opportunity to direct training. There are effective formal links between the development programme for teaching staff, college plans, and the teacher appraisal scheme. Staff proposals to attend training are matched against college strategic objectives.

91 Staff-development opportunities for support staff are not so well organised. The college intends to bring together all staff-development arrangements into a single college staff-development programme when the appraisal scheme for support staff is implemented later in 1995.

92 The college provides an induction programme for new staff which includes assignment of a mentor. This is valued by new members. However, the content of the induction programme should be reviewed in the light of the skill requirements of new programmes such as the GNVQ.

93 The college has taken care in introducing an appraisal scheme for all full-time teaching staff. There are briefings and training for appraisers, and staff welcome the positive outcomes. Opportunities are provided to discuss development needs in the context of programmes and college priorities. The college is committed to the achievement of Investors in People status, and an initial action plan has been developed in conjunction with the Devon and Cornwall TEC. This development has been delayed because of the college's current circumstances.

94 A college charter has been published and all staff are aware of this and are responding to the commitments which it incorporates. A version of the charter, in the form of a diary, has been published in the student handbook. It contains useful and essential information for students.

RESOURCES

Staffing

95 The teaching staff at East Devon College are well qualified and experienced for the work they carry out. Almost all have a first degree or an equivalent professional qualification. Ninety per cent have a teaching qualification and about a fifth have a postgraduate qualification.

96 The personnel section is good and operates a clear, well-documented recruitment and selection policy. There are written job descriptions on file for every academic and non-academic post. Recruitment policy for academic staff over the past three years has had as one of its objectives the provision of new blood to the college, and has resulted in an academic staff profile under which 37 staff have been in post for five years or less. This policy has also resulted in a staffing base with a significant amount of recent relevant industrial experience in many areas of work.

97 Part-time staff are also well qualified and experienced. They undertake 13 per cent of the teaching. This is a reduction on the input for 1993-94 and a direct result of the introduction of new contracts of employment and the college's policy to increase the number of full-time staff in some curriculum areas to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The policy has reduced the flexibility that the college requires to respond to the fall in enrolments. The college intends to return to having approximately 20 per cent of its staff as part time. The use of part-time staff is reasonably uniform across the subject areas.

98 Teachers' poor attendance at some staff-development sessions, particularly those set up to achieve the Training and Development Lead Body awards, and the slow introduction of GNVQ programmes, has meant that the development of the college's knowledge and understanding of these new curriculum areas has been slow.

99 Support staff are allocated to teaching sectors or cross-college functions, and organised and managed in work groups to provide maximum flexibility. Technician staff are particularly well qualified and trained. A substantial amount of technicians' time (between 20 and 25 per cent) is spent in maintaining equipment.

100 Two technicians, one a recent appointment, provide support for cross-college information technology, including administration. This level of technician support is adequate for the current provision, but insufficient for the planned development of the communications networks and to sustain the increasing use of information technology.

Equipment/learning resources

101 There is good specialist equipment to support teaching and learning in hairdressing and beauty therapy. There is a well-equipped fitness centre in the sports hall, and good sound and video studios are being developed. In art and design, there are inadequate computing facilities for design students; and in business studies, some obsolete equipment limits the range of software available to students. In engineering, self-help and industrial sponsorship have boosted the equipment of the motor vehicle section, but there is inadequate provision for computer-aided design. Across subject areas, much of the equipment is old and requires substantial maintenance. The college lacks a systematic rolling programme for the replacement and improvement of equipment.

102 The college-wide provision in information technology is good. Open-access centres and computer rooms provide some 190 workstations, giving a student to workstation ratio of 8:1. However, only 120 workstations are currently networked, and the remainder cannot support the full range of software required. There is a replacement programme for information technology equipment, but the college lacks a comprehensive strategy for developing information technology.

103 The library provides a pleasant environment for private study and work in small groups. It is well managed and offers a good service to students and staff. There are 80 study spaces within the library and some 30 more spaces in the student-learning centre, where there are resources for students undertaking project work. With the other spaces available around the college the provision for private study is adequate for current demand.

104 The four full-time equivalent staff provide a friendly and efficient service and the library is well used by students. In addition to books, journals, reports and reference materials, staff have organised useful

collections of newspaper cuttings and topic folders. Other learning resources include compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases, computers and video facilities, which are provided in separate areas of the library. The stock in the different subject areas is of a varying standard. Some dated books in areas such as business, engineering and science should be reviewed. Overall, the bookstock is of a good standard, and there is an appropriately wide range of periodicals.

105 The layout of the library makes good use of the available space but provides little integration of the various resources. Although the facilities are appropriate for a learning-resource centre, the layout and style are more in keeping with a traditional library. There is a small library facility at the Axe Vale centre, but there are no library staff on the site.

106 None of the computer systems in the library are connected to the college communications network and therefore are not part of the wider communications systems in the college. There is at present no automated library system; loans are managed by a manual ticket system. The library is also responsible for providing audio-visual aids such as overhead projectors and screens throughout the college.

Accommodation

107 The college has some of the best accommodation in the further education sector and has much more than it can reasonably be expected to use in the foreseeable future.

108 The main campus at Tiverton provides an attractive and spacious environment for students and staff and there are good car parking facilities. Most of the accommodation is in permanent buildings, maintained to a high standard. The Axe Vale campus at Seaton is relatively large. It has a series of permanent buildings and huts including the buildings of a former primary school. It provides facilities for catering, hairdressing and information technology, and a multi-skills workshop, mainly used for carpentry and joinery. At the time of the inspection, the future of the Axe Vale site was under review and awaiting a decision by the governors. There are two other sites, one at Bampton Street in the town, and one in Honiton, both providing general teaching accommodation, mainly for adult education use.

109 Access for students with limited mobility is possible to all buildings on the main site with the exception of one teaching block. Nevertheless, students with mobility problems have raised concerns about difficulties in moving around the campus.

110 Accommodation on the main site also includes a large and attractive nursery and a spacious canteen, recently refurbished to a high standard. The main reception area does not compare with the rest of the accommodation. It lacks the attractive and accessible design of the central admissions area and is located in a different building. The college is well maintained, clean, and tidy.

111 There is a wide variety of general teaching accommodation, most of it decorated and furnished to a high standard and equipped with good visual aids. About 8 per cent of it is, however, located in temporary buildings of much more variable quality.

112 The quality of the specialist accommodation is generally satisfactory and some of it is good. A new sports hall provides excellent facilities, including a well-equipped mini-gym. The information technology building provides a range of flexible spaces comparable with a modern commercial office. The hairdressing and beauty salons on the main site are of a high standard and provide the opportunity for flexible teaching and learning. Exceptions to this favourable picture include catering, where overcrowded kitchens provide an unsatisfactory working environment, and the restaurant at Axe Vale which is not up to good commercial standards. In music, photography and art there is a lack of practice rooms and exhibition space.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

113 The strengths of the college are:

- a broad and varied curriculum providing for students of all ages and abilities
- the well-established higher education provision
- appropriately-qualified and experienced teaching staff
- the value placed on the college by its local community
- the continuity of service and experience provided by governors
- the training and briefing sessions provided for governors
- effective systems for students' support and guidance
- the developing standards and service level agreements
- good policies and procedures for staff development
- an effective appraisal scheme, accepted by staff
- good library facilities
- an attractive and spacious main site.

114 If the college is to raise standards further, it should:

- address the substantial shortfall in recruitment
- review the strategic plan to take account of the decline in enrolments
- raise standards in some areas of the work, particularly leisure and tourism
- strengthen management at faculty and divisional level
- improve its management information systems
- continue to develop arrangements for learning support

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- simplify quality assurance procedures and ensure they are fully supported by staff
 - improve the quality of some specialist equipment.

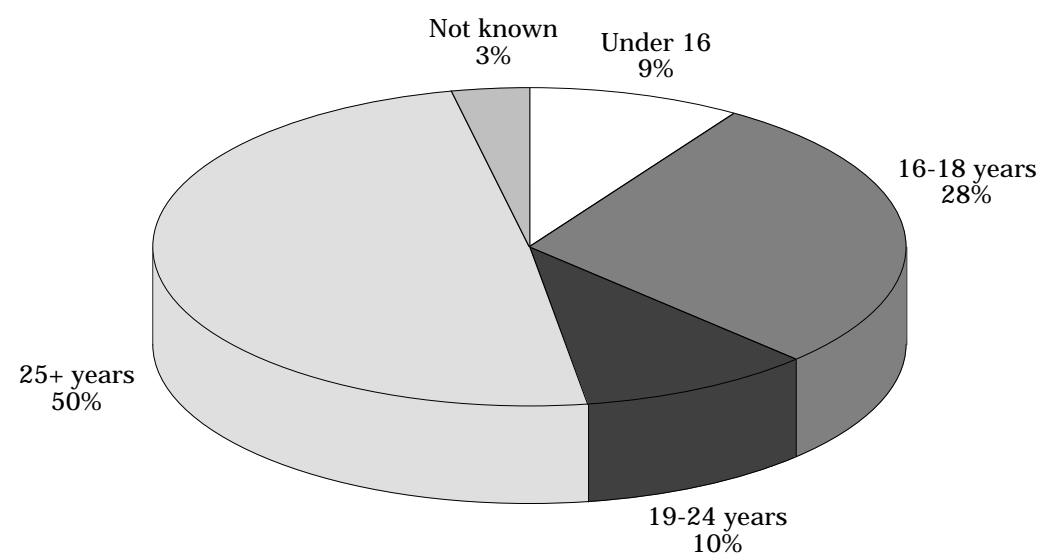
FIGURES

1	Percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)
2	Percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)
3	Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)
4	Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)
5	Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995)
6	Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

Figure 1

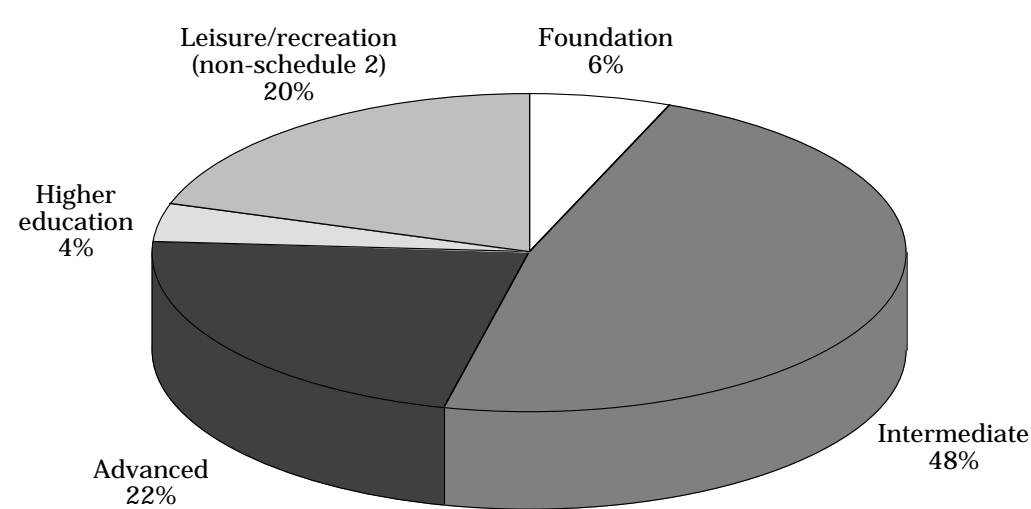
East Devon College: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)



Enrolments: 3,841

Figure 2

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



Enrolments: 3,841

Figure 3

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

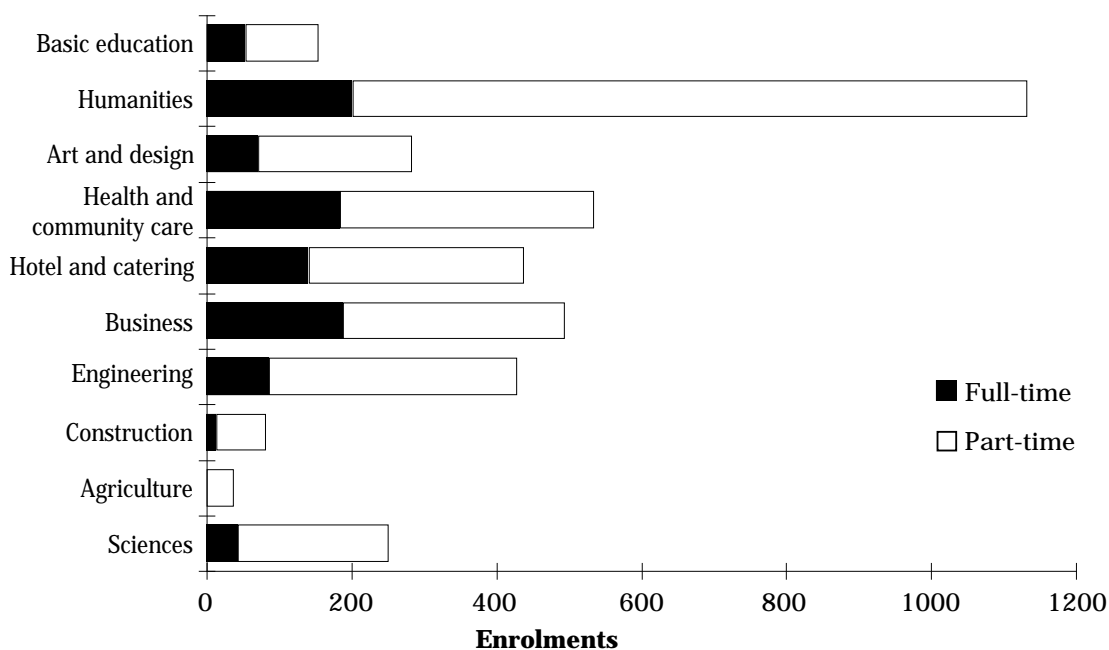


Figure 4

East Devon College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)

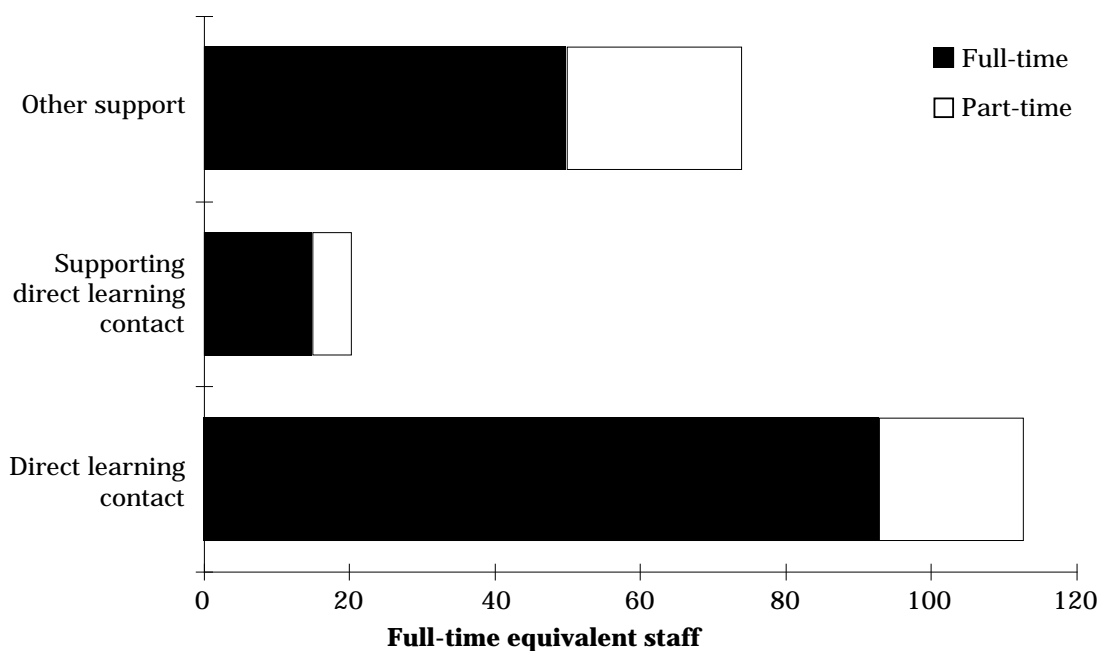
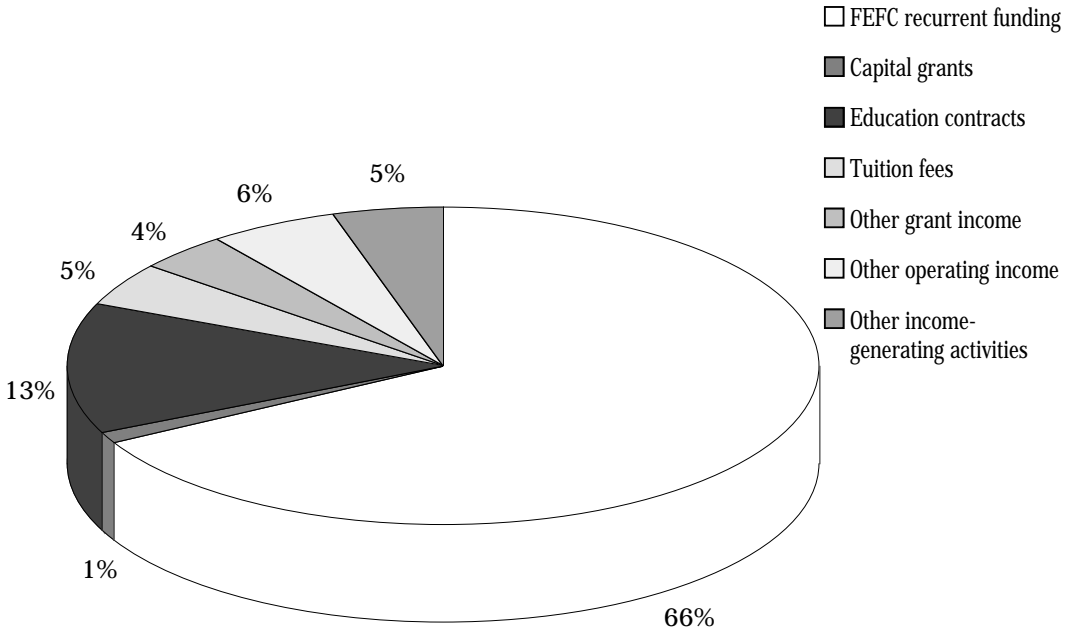


Figure 5

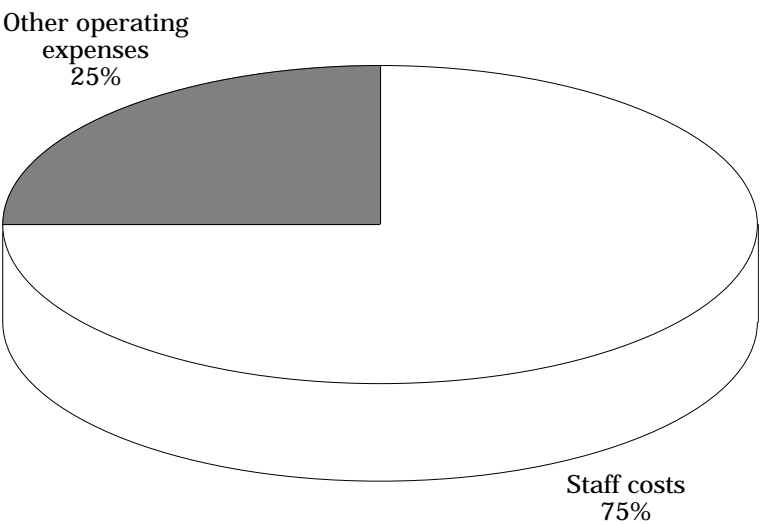
East Devon College: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Estimated income: £4,797,000

Figure 6

East Devon College: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Estimated expenditure: £4,894,000

