

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

**East Norfolk
Sixth Form
College**

June 1997

**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 the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

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

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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

College grade profiles 1993-96

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 72/97

EAST NORFOLK SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

EASTERN REGION

Inspected January 1997-March 1997

Summary

East Norfolk Sixth Form College offers a broad range of GCE AS and A level subjects for 16 to 19 year old students. The college has developed a few vocational programmes. An increasing number of adults participate in evening courses and in employment-related training. Governors are experienced and supportive and work closely with senior managers who provide effective leadership within the college. Students receive a high level of care and support. Staff monitor students' progress rigorously through the profiling system. There is a high standard of teaching in most subjects. The college has a good range of library texts, videos and specialist equipment. Students achieve high pass rates at both GCE AS and A level. Staff are highly qualified and keen for students to succeed. There is a well-formulated professional review and development scheme for staff. The college should: develop its corporate planning and review procedures further; improve its management information systems; extend the scope of the objectives for the tutorial programme; improve completion rates and students' achievements in a few subjects; continue to develop its quality assurance measures; and make further improvements to the accommodation.

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	2
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	2
Quality assurance	3
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Mathematics and computing	2	Creative and performing arts	2
Sciences	1	English, media and modern languages	2
Business studies	2	Other humanities	2

INTRODUCTION

1 East Norfolk Sixth Form College was inspected in three stages between January 1997 and March 1997. Twelve inspectors spent 50 days in the college. They visited 75 classes, inspected the college's enrolment and induction procedures and attended tutorials. The team scrutinised students' written work and college documentation. Inspectors also held meetings with governors, college managers, staff, students, parents and with representatives from industry, local schools, the community, the careers service and the Norfolk and Waveney Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 East Norfolk Sixth Form College was established in 1982 following the reorganisation of post-16 education in East Norfolk. The college is situated in a residential area of Gorleston, near to the coast, just south of Great Yarmouth. There is one other further education college in the locality, Great Yarmouth College of Further Education. The nearest other post-16 providers are Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education, 20 miles to the west and Lowestoft College, Suffolk, eight miles south, and school sixth forms in Norwich and Lowestoft. In the region served by the college, unemployment is relatively high and incomes are lower than the national average. In November 1996, the unemployment rate for Great Yarmouth was 9.2 per cent, compared with 5.9 per cent for Norfolk as a whole. The local economy depends mainly on tourism, port industries, the offshore gas and oil industries and light manufacturing. Most local companies are small and they employ fewer than 25 people. Part of rural East Norfolk is within a European Community Priority 3 Area.

3 At incorporation, the college had 460 full-time students. Over the past two years, full-time enrolments have grown by 22 per cent. In November 1996, there were 820 students enrolled on college programmes of whom 595 were full time and 225 part time. Most of the part-time students are adults who participate in the evening class provision and employment-related training courses. Student numbers by age, by level of study, and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3. The majority of full-time students comes from the college's nine partner schools, although increasing numbers of students have been attracted from other schools in both Norfolk and Suffolk. Four of the partner schools have had applications for new sixth forms rejected in the last two years. The catchment area of the college is roughly within a radius of 12 miles; approximately 55 per cent of students come from the urban borough of Great Yarmouth and the other 45 per cent are from the surrounding rural areas. In 1996, the post-16 participation rate in education in the Great Yarmouth area was 66 per cent. Approximately 23 per cent of the area's school-leavers came to the college.

4 Most full-time students follow courses leading to the general certificate of education advanced supplementary/advanced level (GCE

AS/A level) examinations; less than 10 per cent are on general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) programmes or one-year general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) courses. In contrast, most part-time adult students enrol on foundation or intermediate level courses. The college employs 48 teachers and 19 support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

5 The mission of the college is to 'give all its students the best possible opportunities to develop their potential through the quality provision of a wide range of mainly academic courses'. Emphasis is placed on the 'caring learning environment' of the college and on encouraging students to take responsibility for their own progress and development.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

6 The college offers a wide range of subjects at GCE AS and A level. Twenty-nine GCE A level options are offered. Some subjects, such as industrial design, are not available at any other institution in the locality. Many subjects have a modular structure which enables students to study GCE AS modules in the first year of the two-year GCE A level course. GCE AS and A level subjects are taught together in the same lessons. Such timetabling is efficient and enables students to switch with ease between study for the GCE AS, or the GCE A level, examination. As a result of this arrangement, the college is able to offer 21 GCE AS subjects. In its publicity material, the college advertises 14 GCSE subjects which are intended primarily for students whose main course of study is GCE A level. For example, courses in GCSE mathematics and GCSE English are available for students who have not previously obtained grade C or above in these subjects. Few students follow a programme made up entirely of GCSE subjects; this year only 18 students are on such a programme. The range of syllabuses and subjects is reviewed each year by course teams.

7 Relatively few students have been attracted to GNVQ programmes. The GNVQ advanced course in business has recruited well and students' retention on both years of the course has been good. The GNVQ advanced course in art and design has been replaced by a course consisting of two GCE A level subjects. There is a GNVQ intermediate course in art and design but numbers on this are low. The college advertised GNVQ courses such as those in health and social care, and trained staff to teach these. Recruitment for these other GNVQ courses was poor, and they are no longer offered.

8 There is a well-structured complementary studies programme. All full-time students choose an activity from the programme which comprises 33 options, including work experience, the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, voluntary work, first aid, safe driving, self-defence, and archery. Some activities, for example first aid, lead to qualifications. Other options enable students to work with local companies or enter national competitions. Some students fail to attend activities regularly, however, and they do not value the opportunities provided by the programme.

9 The college offers a growing range of evening courses for adults, including short courses in computer literacy and information technology, and GCSE and GCE A level subjects. Two hundred and fifty-six adult students were recruited in 1995-96. The numbers of adults on most GCSE and GCE A level courses were small. Demand, however, for 10-week computer literacy and information technology courses was high. In 1996-97, 360 adult students enrolled on these courses during the first two terms. At the beginning of the academic year, the college set the minimum class size at 12 students. There were enough enrolments from adults for the college to run four GCSE courses, and the second year of four GCE A level courses for them. Computer literacy and information technology courses continue to recruit well and these include additional 'twilight' classes which are run in the early evening for college staff and several local companies. The college's courses have been advertised and promoted jointly with part of the local education authority (LEA) adult service which also offers provision on college premises. Only two adults attend day-time classes. No specific courses are offered for those from minority ethnic groups which have been under represented in further education.

10 The college has close links with its partner schools. Designated 'link tutors' provide a point of contact between the college and each school. Teams of staff and ex-students give presentations on the work of the college to pupils in schools. A college newsletter 'Springboard' is published twice a year and this is sent to all partner schools. Each school receives feedback on the success of its former pupils. There is some contact between subject teachers in the schools and the college. The principal meets formally with heads of the schools four times each year.

11 The college has productive links with a small number of local companies and community organisations. Several links provide two-way benefits. For example, a local electronics company offers work placements for college students and the college provides information technology training on the company's premises. The local branch of a major bank has sponsored a musical production and has taken part in 'industry days' in the college. The college is a member of the local chamber of commerce. The college maintains effective links with the local newspaper and with local radio in order to promote its curriculum through the local media. Students have contributed to the annual industrial handbook which is a major marketing brochure for the town. The college's premises are used as a venue for local events, such as football competitions.

12 The college is in the process of re-establishing its links with the local TEC, which has recently undergone a major reorganisation. Development funding from the TEC has been used to purchase information technology equipment for the art suite. The college maintains a productive relationship with Great Yarmouth College of Further Education. There are no formal links with higher education institutions. There is, however, an informal link with Norwich School of Art and Design and this is helpful to students

who wish to progress to the foundation arts programme at the school. Staff from the school give talks to students.

13 The marketing strategy aims to promote the college as a centre of excellence for GCE A level provision. The increase in numbers of full-time students is an indication that this strategy has had some success. Recently, there have been efforts to improve marketing initiatives such as the presentations to feeder schools, the open day, and the introductory day. Promotional material, such as the college prospectus, has been rewritten and printed in a more modern style. Marketing information is evaluated to gauge its effectiveness with students.

14 The equal opportunities policy has been approved by governors. The policy is included in the staff handbook together with a useful checklist for teachers. An equal opportunities working party developed the policy; its membership was open to all staff and included two students nominated by the students' association. Surveys have been undertaken to ascertain the extent to which students are aware of the college's support for equal opportunities. Guidelines have been drawn up to ensure that appointment procedures for staff are equitable.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

15 Governors are well qualified, experienced and committed to ensuring the success of the college. The 15 members of the corporation include eight independent members, the principal, the vice-principal, the college administrator, a member nominated by the TEC, an elected parent member, a staff member and an elected student member. Only the staff and student members are female. Three vacancies for independent governors have been outstanding for more than a year. The corporation has implemented a search process for governors who match an agreed skills and gender profile and advertisements have recently been placed in the local and regional newspapers. Governors bring to the corporation a wide range of professional and business expertise. Most independent members hold senior positions in local or national organisations. There is a register of members' interests and governors have established a code of conduct.

16 Senior managers and members of the corporation have confidence in one another. There is a productive working relationship between them and this is based on a clear understanding of their separate roles as managers and governors. The business of the corporation is well organised. The corporation meets at least seven times a year. Its preferred approach is to handle most of the business at full corporation meetings and devolve some detailed work to its three committees which cover finance, remuneration and employment policy, and audit, respectively. Working parties are also occasionally convened to consider specific matters such as the accommodation strategy. The chair of the corporation meets monthly with senior management members to plan corporation business and to consider papers and policy proposals. Senior managers give clear

and concise presentations at meetings and they are asked probing questions by members. The corporation has reviewed its own organisation annually. The corporation recently re-confirmed that the co-opted member, who is also the college administrator, will continue to act as clerk and it is aware that this appointment incurs a potential risk of a conflict of interest. The corporation is viewed positively by college staff.

17 Corporate planning and review are not fully developed. The senior management team annually updates the rolling three-year strategic plan using information from a range of sources including departmental operating plans. There are eight targets in the college's operating plan. The plan includes objectives which have to be met within a certain time, and specific developments which managers must carry out. There are, however, few quantified measures and targets which can be used to judge whether the plan has been successfully implemented, other than enrolment and financial targets. The plan contains little risk analysis or consideration of options to meet particular contingencies. Departments develop their own operating plans but these contain few specific targets. The last two annual self-assessments by the college have identified the need for there to be greater involvement of the corporation in strategic planning and in the setting of performance indicators. The corporation has decided to consider the next strategic plan at an earlier stage in its development.

18 The senior management team is made up of the principal, the vice-principal, the college administrator and the director of studies. This team meets weekly to formulate internal policy and to discuss organisational issues. Meetings are well minuted and details of who has responsibility for implementing actions are recorded. In this comparatively small college, each senior manager holds a number of responsibilities. For example, the principal takes responsibility for strategic planning, the accommodation strategy, marketing and quality assurance; the director of studies combines her role as head of mathematics with an overall responsibility for curriculum development, organising examinations, providing data for external bodies, and managing the college's computerised information system.

19 Senior and middle managers work together effectively and provide enthusiastic leadership. There are weekly meetings of the three heads of department and the senior management team. At these meetings, however, there is little formal review of progress in the implementation of the strategic and operating plans. Staff value the open consultative style of managers and feel part of the decision-making process. However, some staff are unclear about line management responsibilities, especially where post holders have a range of duties.

20 At subject level, there is clear leadership and the curriculum is effectively organised. Responsibilities have been successfully delegated and it is clear to staff where accountabilities lie. Formal and informal meetings on curricular issues are held regularly. Staff work well in teams. Communications across the college are good. Teaching staff value the five

formal staff meetings each year and the daily briefing. Some support staff, however, feel they are not well informed about developments in the college.

21 Budgets for staffing and fixed costs are managed centrally. Funding for teaching materials is allocated through a bidding system. The amount of the funds allocated is determined by the size of previous allocations and an estimation of future needs. Budget holders receive regular financial reports and senior managers make effective use of the financial control system to monitor expenditure. Unit costs at course or departmental level are not measured. The college has met its targets over the last two years, and its growth of 11 per cent in 1995-96 was significantly above target. At the time of the inspection, the college appeared likely to exceed its growth target for 1996-97. The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £18.91 per unit. The median for sixth form colleges is £19.36 per unit. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

22 The various college information systems provide data on finance, staffing and student records. Whilst the current systems adequately provide data for external agencies, they fail to meet managers' needs for information for planning and quality assurance. Teachers and managers have limited access to the data. They are over reliant on one member of staff for the extraction of information on students. Additional staffing has been made available recently for administering the information system. The college, however, does not yet have a fully effective management information system.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

23 Student support and guidance have a high priority. The college's documentation demonstrates the college's commitment to providing the 'caring learning environment' for all students, outlined in the college's mission statement. Students value the care and support they receive and appreciate the willingness of staff, including senior managers, to devote time to helping them.

24 Prospective students and their parents receive helpful information and advice about the college and its courses through the well-established programme of recruitment activities. The college prospectus and course leaflets are informative and attractively presented. All prospective students have an individual interview. In late June, students spend a day at the college and can sample different subjects. They find this day valuable in helping them to make their subject choices. Enrolment is well organised and centres around one-to-one discussions between students and personal tutors. The interviews give students an opportunity to reconsider or confirm their choice of subjects. Subject teachers and senior tutors are available for further advice.

25 The well-structured induction programme ensures that new students become familiar with the college. Students receive a handbook which contains useful information such as college regulations and the role of

tutors. However, the presentation of the booklet is unattractive. Each department devises its own way of introducing its courses to students. There are no college guidelines on how courses should be introduced. Many of the course handbooks give comprehensive details about teaching and learning methods and assessment systems. When it is appropriate for them to do so, students can transfer from one subject to another, following advice and guidance from relevant staff.

26 The vice-principal and three senior tutors have responsibility for the guidance and welfare of students. Each senior tutor works closely with a team of eight other tutors. Tutor groups are a mix of second and first-year students and, where possible, students are allocated to a tutor who is one of their subject teachers. Tutors meet their groups daily for registration, and weekly for a 30 minute tutorial period. The frequency of contact between students and tutors enables them to get to know each other quickly and well. Senior tutors have good links with external agencies and are able to refer students who need specialist help to them.

27 The tutorial programme has limited aims and does not fully meet the needs and interests of all students. For example, the tutorial programme contains few taught sessions on topics such as careers guidance. There is also a need to find the most appropriate way of providing individual support, given the increased size of tutorial groups. The college plans to consult students on the content and format of the programme prior to planning future provision. A pack of resources is provided for tutors and this is discussed in tutorial meetings. More tutorial training is planned. The quality of tutorials varies and some tutors do not make effective use of the tutorial period. A group of students has been trained as 'peer educators' by the local health authority. They work in the community, visiting local schools and youth groups to discuss health, sexual and HIV/AIDS issues. The students' commitment is impressive and the training has developed their confidence and maturity.

28 Students' progress and attendance are carefully monitored. Subject teachers inform tutors of any problems students may have and tutors report these weekly to senior tutors. Parents are notified of such problems when necessary. The same procedures are followed when a teacher wishes to commend a student. Attendance is, generally, very good. Attendance at complementary studies is monitored but students' absence from activities is not followed up as rigorously or consistently as it is on their mainstream courses.

29 The college has developed a profiling system in which students assess their own progress and subject teachers add their comment after individual interviews. The profiling procedure is valued by students, teachers and tutors. Tutors encourage students to identify targets for improvement as part of an individual action plan. In the first profile produced by students, the short-term targets do not relate sufficiently to longer-term aims, such as those set out in action plans which all students bring with them from

their secondary schools. The profiles give students an opportunity to offer comments on their experience of teaching and learning at the college. These comments are not seen or collated by senior tutors or senior managers. At the end of their course, all students update their records of achievement with help and encouragement from subject teachers and tutors. The college keeps parents well informed about students' progress. Consultation evenings allow parents to follow up the comments in the students' profiles. Parents have confidence that they will be contacted by the college when necessary. They say that they find the college staff receptive to their comments and queries.

30 Students with disabilities and/or medical needs receive good care following discussions of their individual needs and wishes. There is limited provision for students with learning difficulties. Screening tests are not used to identify students who may need extra help with their learning. Subject teachers and tutors are encouraged to refer appropriate students for extra help and this is provided in numeracy workshops or by additional English teaching; a small amount of time is given to such assistance. Extra help is given by teachers on an informal basis, which is appreciated by students.

31 Students receive comprehensive and informative careers guidance. Advice on higher education is of particularly high quality. This is provided through workshops, one-to-one guidance from college careers specialists and representatives from Norfolk Careers Service, and at an annual higher education convention which is attended by students. Work and community experience is arranged on request. For those seeking employment, guidance on careers and jobs is tailored to individual needs. Tutors encourage students to take responsibility for seeking the advice and guidance they require. However, a minority fails to use the system effectively. Details of students' destinations are collected by Norfolk Careers Service but they are not analysed in order to gain information which could be used to help future students to decide on their course.

32 A students' association organises parties and charity events to foster the friendly community spirit which attracts many students to the college. The association's executive group is supported enthusiastically by the principal. The college fulfils its obligations under sections 44 and 45 of the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992*. Students have the opportunity for religious education and a group of students calling themselves SCREAM (Some Christians Really Exist And Meet) meets regularly for Bible readings, and to organise retreats and visits.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

33 Seventy-five teaching sessions were observed. Of these, 75 per cent had strengths that outweighed weaknesses. This is 12 per cent higher than the average for all lessons observed during the 1995-96 inspection programme, recorded in the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. The weaknesses outweighed the strengths in 5 per cent of sessions. This

proportion is 3 per cent less than the average for all observations in 1995-96, according to the same report. The average attendance in the classes inspected was 87 per cent and the average number of students in each teaching group was 12. The following table summarises the grades awarded to the sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	15	29	9	2	0	55
GCSE	1	6	4	0	0	11
GNVQ	1	2	1	1	0	5
Other	2	0	1	1	0	4
Total	19	37	15	4	0	75

34 Throughout the college, relationships between teachers and students were characterised by mutual respect. Teachers were committed to their work and showed enthusiasm for their subject specialisms. They offered a great deal of support to students both in and out of class.

35 Teaching in science was of a consistently high standard. Courses were well planned and managed. Teachers maintained students' interest by using an appropriate range of methods including group work, discussions and presentations by students. Teachers were skilful in asking probing questions to help students grasp difficult concepts and principles. Particularly effective use was made of laboratory assignments to develop practical skills and to enhance students' learning. In a GCE A level biology class, students worked in pairs to set up a respirometer to measure the oxygen uptake of maggots. All students obtained satisfactory results from this difficult exercise and gained enjoyment from their success. They felt able to approach staff for additional help both in and outside lessons. Teachers set work regularly and kept careful records of students' progress and achievement. However, there is no common marking policy for internal tests and assignments across subjects.

36 Students studying mathematics engaged in a wide variety of activities, especially through coursework assignments. These were designed by teachers to ensure that students carry out library research, design and use data collection techniques and use mathematical modelling. Teachers made effective use of practical experimentation and investigation. For example, in a mechanics lesson the path of a projectile was simulated by projecting a ball bearing at a known speed and direction up an inclined plane and tracing its path. Students were required to use energy calculations to calculate the initial speed of the ball bearing. The results were then compared with theoretical predictions. Teaching on information technology courses was generally well managed, allowing students to work on their own, and at their own pace, through a series of tasks. Teachers

produced high-quality printed handouts to support these activities. However, the teaching of GCE A level computing was too demanding for some students. Their understanding was limited and the notes they took in class were inadequate for them to use as revision material.

37 In business studies and economics, teachers generally planned their lessons well and related them to previous learning. GNVQ business students were provided with informative handbooks which included detailed descriptions of assessment criteria. Teachers gave clear explanations and made effective use of questioning to check that students understood the lesson and to challenge their thinking. There were examples of well-paced and appropriately-varied learning activities. In a GNVQ business class, students analysed data collected as part of a market research activity with Great Yarmouth Town Council. The task helped students to develop a range of key skills, including information technology and presentational skills. It was a demanding activity and they carried it out successfully at their own pace. The teacher provided appropriate support and asked challenging questions to help the students to extend their analytical ability. In a few weaker lessons, the teacher dominated the activity, talked too much, and failed to sustain the students' interest. Some tasks lacked direct relevance or realism or were too far outside students' personal experience. Teachers regularly set and marked homework. Teachers of GCE A level economics marked students' essays with particular thoroughness and they provided students with critical and supportive comments on their performance.

38 Students on art and design and performing arts courses were generally well taught. Teachers were rigorous in expecting high standards from students on all courses. They used a wide variety of teaching and learning approaches which included formal lectures, practical demonstrations, individual tuition and visits to galleries, theatres and concerts. In a few instances, the pace was too slow and students were insufficiently challenged by, or involved in, the lesson. In a GCE A level music lesson, students analysed a piece of sixteenth-century notation. The teacher made the lesson exciting by challenging the students to examine the music form in depth. The lesson ended in a practical music performance which brought all the theory to life. Most projects were imaginative and demanding but, in a few cases, students did not fully understand project briefs and the guidance provided by teachers was vague. There were good examples in art and design of student projects related to community and business needs. As part of Great Yarmouth's 'Seasons of the Sea' initiative, students produced a set of sand sculptures. A grant had been obtained for the project and a visiting sculptor worked with the students on the beach. The project generated a great deal of local interest and provided an effective learning experience for the students.

39 The teaching of social sciences was supported by clear course documentation and effective arrangements to ensure that all staff followed consistent assessment procedures. Course planning took particular

account of the need students had to develop essay writing skills. Teachers clearly presented key concepts in lessons, often with the effective use of visual aids. For example, geography students were helped to grasp the principles of erosion by glacial meltwater by identifying examples from mapwork and using detailed diagrammatic representations. Video extracts were used in a psychology class to provide case studies of individual abnormality. Teaching was supplemented by excellent use of up-to-date secondary sources and by summary handouts. In some lessons, teachers talked for too long or set too few challenging learning tasks, leaving students with little to do. There was limited use of information technology beyond wordprocessing of assignments, despite the availability of relevant, subject specific software. Teachers set homework regularly and returned it promptly. Their marking included detailed and constructive feedback on students' performance.

40 There were detailed schemes of work for all courses in English, media and modern foreign languages. English and media studies teachers had produced effective handbooks which set out the course requirements clearly. Lessons were well prepared and put in context. Teachers used an appropriate variety of learning methods and used carefully-selected material to stimulate a response from students. In one lesson on regional accents, the teacher chose to use Tony Harrison's poem *Them and Uz*. The Yorkshire accent at the centre of the poem was compared with the Norfolk accent evident in the college's locality. This led to a lively and interesting discussion of issues of class and socio-economics. In a French lesson, where students were developing their vocabulary to enable them to write about noise pollution, their interest was sustained by the teacher's skilful management of a variety of activities and control of the lesson's pace. In some discussion sessions, teachers failed to involve all students. Many students valued and benefited from visits to theatres and museums and from trips abroad which teachers organised for them.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

41 Students enjoyed their studies and spoke enthusiastically about the college. They expressed confidence in the staff and appreciated the support they received from them. Most students worked purposefully in class and listened attentively. Many developed important skills such as problem solving and team building. In particular, students showed a willingness to develop and defend their ideas and opinions. There is notable achievement by individual students and by groups of students. Recently, two art and design students won a competition sponsored by the Norfolk Constabulary to design a 'don't drink and drive' poster. A student won the University of East Anglia Essay Prize for History. Another student performs with the Norfolk Students' Orchestra. In sport, students have had considerable success at regional and national level.

42 Through their work in individual subjects, most students showed they had mastered appropriate skills and specialist knowledge.

Mathematics students, generally, displayed proficiency in algebra and were competent in the use of graphic calculators. There were examples of bold and imaginative practical work in art and design and performing arts. Science students carried out practical work safely and skilfully. Students on English, media and modern language courses worked well in groups. Social science students, generally, had a good understanding of research methodologies and their practical applications. However, they showed little evidence beyond the requirements of the course and of the examination syllabus, of reading widely or of an ability to evaluate evidence in their written work critically.

43 In 1996, the college introduced a policy to ensure that all new students gain a qualification in information technology. Students' information technology skills, however, are not being developed consistently across all courses. Students were using and improving their information technology skills in art and design, English, media studies, modern languages and vocational business courses. In other areas, such as mathematics, science practical work, GCE A level programmes in business studies and economics, and in social sciences, there were fewer opportunities for students to develop these skills in the context of their subjects.

44 The performance of students in individual GCE A level subjects has been consistently high. During the last three years, the average pass rate at grades A to E has increased from 89 per cent to 92 per cent. In each of those years, the pass rates have been 6 per cent above the national averages for 18 year olds in sixth form colleges. In 1996, the overall percentage of students who gained grades A to C was 55 per cent and this proportion is 4 per cent higher than the corresponding national average in sixth form colleges. Students' results included a higher than average percentage of grade Cs and a lower than average proportion of grades A and B. According to data published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) for 1996, the 240 students aged 16 to 18 entered for GCE A level examinations scored, on average, 5.0 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This places the college in the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure.

45 There were 537 entries in 29 subjects for GCE A level examinations in 1996. Pass rates were above national averages in 19 subjects. In 12 subjects, the proportion of students gaining grades A to C was higher than national averages for sixth form colleges. There were 100 per cent pass rates in 12 subjects: art, biology, chemistry, dance (two entries), economics, English literature, English language (nine entries), French, further mathematics (six entries), media studies, physical education and theatre studies (nine entries).

46 The college subscribes to an independent, external service which provides an analytical report of the value added to students' achievements by comparing their actual performance at GCE A level with their predicted performance based on GCSE achievements. The report for 1996 indicated

that, taken as a whole, students throughout the college were performing in line with expectations. At individual subject level, students have, over the last three years, performed significantly better than expected in biology, chemistry, English literature and psychology. They performed significantly below expectations in graphical communications (few entries), German (few entries), mathematics and media studies.

47 The college arranges students' programmes with considerable flexibility in order to enable students who wish to do so to switch between GCE AS and GCE A level courses. In 1996, there were 107 entries for GCE AS examinations in 13 subjects. Over half the entries were for general studies and mathematics. There were fewer than 10 entries in 10 subjects. The overall pass rate was 87 per cent, 17 per cent higher than the national average for sixth form colleges in 1996. Of the 227 students who began a programme of two or more subjects at GCE A level or its equivalent in 1994, 73 per cent achieved their primary learning goal, 11 per cent left the college before completing their studies, 12 per cent achieved fewer than two GCE A levels and 4 per cent stayed on for a third year at the college.

48 There were 169 entries for GCSE examinations in 13 subjects in 1996. Most entries were from GCE A level students who wished to improve their performance in individual subjects or to gain extra qualifications. The proportion of students who achieved grade C or above was 59 per cent, compared with the 1996 national average for 16 to 18 year olds in sixth form colleges of 51 per cent. In five subjects, the proportion of students who achieved grade C or above was higher than the appropriate national averages. In electronics and critical studies, over 70 per cent obtained grade C or above. Fourteen students followed a one-year programme of four or five GCSE subjects in 1995-96; of these, only three achieved at least three grades at or above grade C. In addition, four GCSE subjects were offered in 1996 as evening provision for adults attracting 27 entries. The proportion of adult students who obtained grade C or above was 67 per cent. In three of the four subjects, the achievement levels were above the national averages for students aged 19 and over.

49 In 1994, 10 students began the college's first GNVQ advanced business programme. Of these, nine completed the course and six achieved the whole qualification; all six gained either a merit or a distinction. In 1995-96, six students started the GNVQ intermediate course in art and design. Of these, five completed the course and all gained the full qualification; four gained either a merit or distinction. These achievements are all above national averages for 1996.

50 Most students complete their programmes of study. In 1995-96, the retention rate of full-time students in the college was 90 per cent. However, completion rates were not consistently high across all courses. They were particularly poor in GCE A level computing, GCSE human biology, and GCSE media studies where seven out of 20 students, six out of 13 students, and one out of 13 students, respectively, completed these courses.

In contrast, completion rates were higher than 90 per cent in GCE A level English language, history and sociology.

51 The college encourages its students to progress to higher education. College staff say, however, that there has been no history in the locality of large numbers of students choosing to go on to university. In 1996, about 50 per cent of students who completed advanced level courses went on to study at universities. In addition, 15 per cent continued in further education, 20 per cent found employment or started further training, 10 per cent were unemployed and the destinations of 5 per cent were unknown. The proportion of students entering higher education in 1996 has declined by approximately 14 per cent compared with the proportion (64 per cent) who went on to higher education in 1994. About 12 out of 20 students who complete intermediate level courses return each year to the college to continue their studies.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

52 A quality assurance policy was formulated during 1995-96 and procedures are being developed to enable the quality of the college's provision to be monitored effectively. Senior managers are committed to the development of a robust quality assurance system. The principal takes direct responsibility for operating the quality assurance framework. There is a calendar of quality assurance activities. This identifies the areas which will be subject to reviews, gives the dates when the reviews will be carried out, and specifies who will be responsible for producing the review reports. The principal monitors a schedule of actions arising from reviews throughout the college. Arrangements for monitoring the quality of provision in areas other than the curriculum are underdeveloped. Performance measures and standards have not yet been identified. Strategies for improving the quality of provision within departments are not yet firmly established.

53 Subject teams prepare course review reports at the end of each academic year. Most provide an analysis of the previous year's examination results and summarise comments made in response to course evaluation questionnaires. These comments, however, come from students who are in a different group from those students whose results are analysed. As a result, the reports do not provide a comprehensive evaluation of the quality of provision for a single group of students during the year. Some reviews provide a summary of strengths and weaknesses. Most are insufficiently self-critical and do not identify targets to be achieved. Data on the value-added element of students' achievements, attendance rates and attitudes to subjects are not analysed in a consistent way throughout the college. Although some subject areas have acted on such data, for example, by changing examination syllabuses, there is no common understanding across the college of how the data should be used in setting targets for improvement. This year, subject leaders have been asked to prepare reports in a more standard form and to include statements of actions needed to improve unsatisfactory examination results.

54 The reports written by heads of department are based on individual course reviews. These reports are discussed at departmental meetings. The reports are produced too late in the year to have much immediate influence on the quality of students' experience. The quality of teaching is assessed in a variety of ways. For example, observation of teaching normally forms part of the arrangements for the professional review and development of teaching staff. Students are able to make comments on the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects through the profiling arrangements. The assessment of the quality of teaching is, however, insufficiently co-ordinated to enable heads of department and staff teams to be fully informed about the quality of teaching in the college, or for them to identify and share good practice.

55 The college's self-assessment report is an integral part of the college's quality assurance process. The report is set out under the headings in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. It takes into account the evaluations in departmental annual reports and evidence collected from reviews of some cross-college functions such as marketing and external liaison. The 1995-96 report is the second to be produced by the college and it has been presented to the governors. Strengths and weaknesses are identified against criteria but they are not summarised for each section or for the college as a whole. Action plans to improve the provision have not been prepared and there is no assessment of the extent to which weaknesses in the previous report have been addressed. The report has not been discussed by staff in departments. The judgments made in the report were, generally, considered to be appropriate by the inspection team. In some areas, however, the evaluation was insufficiently penetrating.

56 Procedures for gathering and analysing the views of students, staff, and parents about the quality of the college's provision are underdeveloped. The college participates in a national attitude survey and receives a summary of students' views on their experience at the college. Participation in this survey has not led to identifiable plans for improvement. Students' views are also gathered through individual subject evaluations which take place at the end of their courses. These are administered by subject teachers and vary in style and format. There is no overall summary of these evaluations. Occasional surveys are carried out of the views of samples of students in order to assess their needs and the appropriateness of facilities, such as the library. A small-scale survey of staff views has been conducted and the results of this were used in the self-assessment report. The college has implemented a pilot survey of parents' views. It plans to include wider surveys of parents' views in its self-assessment process.

57 A summary of the college's charter is issued to students when they enrol. The full charter is available on request. Students are generally unaware of the commitments it makes. The charter was revised in 1996.

The college is currently reviewing arrangements for the dissemination of information about the charter in order that students are better informed about it. The charter is a comprehensive document which outlines clearly the services and procedures students can expect from the college. The college has not, however, identified standards for the services it offers and it has not established targets to help it measure its success in meeting its charter commitments.

58 Staff are supported by a well-formulated and effectively-planned professional review and development scheme. This began as a two-year pilot scheme involving nine staff. It enables all staff to review their performance in a chosen aspect of their work and to prepare a plan for their further development. In submitting requests for training, however, staff have to show how the training will help them to achieve the aims of their individual development plans. For most teaching and support staff the scheme is at an early stage. Nearly everyone has had an initial interview to establish the area of work that will be assessed and to identify his or her reviewer. Newly-appointed staff have a well-organised induction programme. The staff handbook provides helpful guidance on the college administrative and academic systems. Teachers new to the college are effectively supported by heads of subject. Formal arrangements for mentoring new staff have not yet been established.

59 There is a clearly-written policy on, and a college co-ordinator for, staff development and training. Priorities for staff development across the college are agreed at management meetings. Annual departmental reports provide a summary of staff-development activities which have taken place during the year. The reports do not, however, identify priorities for staff development which relate to plans for improving the quality of provision. In the current year, over two-thirds of teaching staff have taken part in at least one externally-organised training event. In addition, the college holds five training days for staff. Some staff attend college in the early evening for 'twilight' courses, for example, in information technology training. A few support staff have taken part in staff-development activities. Evaluations by staff of training events are collated centrally by the staff development co-ordinator. These are not copied to heads of department and as a result, they find it difficult to assess the extent to which staff development is effective in helping departmental targets and objectives to be met.

RESOURCES

Staffing

60 Teaching staff are well qualified. All staff who teach full-time students are graduates and most are qualified teachers. Few teachers have recent industrial or commercial experience. However, a number of subject teachers have undertaken staff-development activities in order to keep up to date in their specialisms. Four teachers have gained, or are in the process of gaining, vocational assessor or verifier awards; four holders of

such awards are sufficient for the current range of vocational programmes offered. There are approximately equal numbers of male and female teachers. Part-time teachers make up almost 30 per cent of the total full-time equivalent teaching staff. Some full-time teachers consider that they have to carry a significantly increased workload of tutorial and administrative responsibilities, despite recent changes in the contracts of part-time staff which enable them to take on these responsibilities in addition to teaching.

61 Teaching staff are effectively deployed to ensure that their expertise is used appropriately. There have been difficulties in staffing some classes in business studies following increased demand for this subject. The changing needs of students have led to the necessity for staff to be able to teach a range of subjects. College managers have implemented a number of initiatives to ensure that staff can cover all the subjects in the college's curriculum. For example, they have offered full-time staff who wish to concentrate on one particular specialism the opportunity to take a contract of part-time employment. At the same time, they have offered part-time staff who are able to teach a diversity of subjects, contracts of full-time employment. Some full-time and part-time staff have found the option of changing the nature of their contract to be attractive. All staff have job descriptions which are periodically reviewed and brought up to date.

62 Well-qualified administrative, technician and support staff work flexibly with teachers to assist students in achieving their learning goals. For example, the two part-time science technicians adjust their hours of attendance throughout the year to meet the varying demands on their services.

Equipment/learning resources

63 Almost all classrooms are equipped to a good standard with basic teaching resources such as boards, overhead projectors and screens. Television and videotape playback equipment are readily accessible to staff and there is a good audio-visual aids service. Computing facilities have been significantly improved by the installation of a network of 30 high specification computers running up-to-date commercial software. These computers supplement the original 16-station network in the computer room. There is a total of 65 computers available for students' use, giving a ratio of one machine to every 9.2 full-time students. Seventy per cent of computers are capable of running modern software. There are enough computing facilities to meet students' needs. Students usually have sufficient access to computers both during and outside lessons. The college is not on the Internet.

64 There is a good range of specialist equipment to support teaching and learning in most subjects. In science, the range of equipment is comprehensive. Science resources are well utilised although there is scope for increased use of the data logging equipment. The learning resources

in geography include a computer program on meteorology and weather tracking equipment. There is no special-purpose lighting in the drama studio. Some video and editing equipment for media studies is heavily used and it is becoming dated. Departments provide students with copies of modern text books on long-term loan. There is an extensive and well-catalogued collection of 1,586 video tapes and 425 audio tapes which is available for use by staff and students. The collection is conveniently located next to the library. There were 823 loans from it in the first 22 weeks of the year.

65 The library is pleasant, well decorated and popular with students. Its hours of opening suit most students and they are extended on one evening a week for the benefit of adult students. The librarian has recently carried out a comprehensive review of the bookstock, facilities and services. As a result, most of the 8,300 books are up to date and relevant. The college is a member of a local inter-library loan network. The library budget allows for an annual stock replacement of 10 per cent. A television dedicated to receiving foreign language satellite broadcasts is also available. Compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database facilities are provided on three computers. The library has seating for only 52 students and is overcrowded at peak times. There is a computerised library catalogue but it does not include the books, videos and other learning materials held locally by departments.

Accommodation

66 The college is located on a single site close to the town centre and opposite a large council recreation field, which is occasionally used by the college for sports events. The college has its own playing field at the rear of the main buildings. There are no street signs to the college. The main college buildings date from 1935 and 1937, having originally been the Alderman Leach High Schools for girls and boys. The common room and cafeteria provide a covered link between the two blocks of the original schools. Two temporary classrooms have been added and they are in regular use. Since incorporation, the college has carried out a number of modifications, each requiring significant ingenuity, and these have been designed to maximise the use of available space. As a result, the common room has been substantially enlarged, a small art room has been created, several former cloakrooms have been turned into classrooms and the library has been refurbished. The corridor floors have been raised to a common level to enable wheelchair users to have full access to classrooms and laboratories. The accommodation is clean and well maintained.

67 Most classrooms are well furnished and decorated. Many of the rooms are carpeted. Teachers have made good use of displays to make the interior of the buildings more attractive. Some of the communal areas and passages are small and cramped. The layout and design of many laboratories impose limitations on teaching and learning styles. The college is operating close to the limits of its capacity. At the time of

the specialist inspection, a small number of English and psychology classes were being held in inappropriate rooms. An additional mobile classroom has since been obtained, and this will be used for some of these classes. The college has developed a long-term accommodation strategy. The college has not yet implemented the proposals in the strategy because of uncertainties about funding.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

68 The strengths of the college are:

- the range of its GCE AS and A level provision
- the effective leadership by senior and middle managers
- the effective management of the curriculum at subject level
- the high level of care and support for students
- its system for reviewing, recording and managing students' progress
- the high standard of teaching in most subjects
- its good pass rates in GCE A level and AS subjects
- its professional review and development scheme for staff
- its well-qualified and enthusiastic staff
- the good range of library texts, videos and specialist equipment for most subjects.

69 If the college is to continue to improve the quality of its work, it should address the following issues:

- its underdeveloped corporate planning and review
- the inadequate information systems
- the limited nature of the tutorial programme
- the low completion rates and achievements in a few subjects
- shortcomings in the quality assurance system including insufficient use of performance measures
- some cramped and unsuitable accommodation.

FIGURES

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

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

 - 3 Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1996)

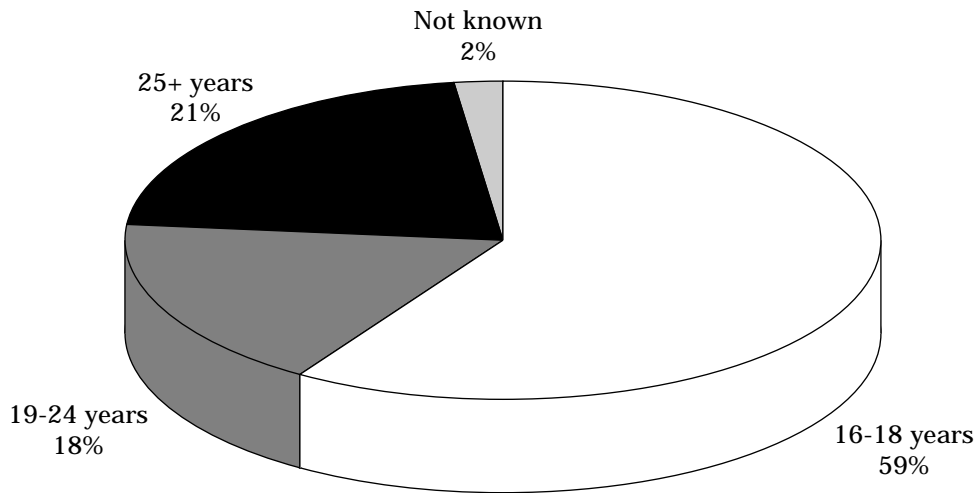
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

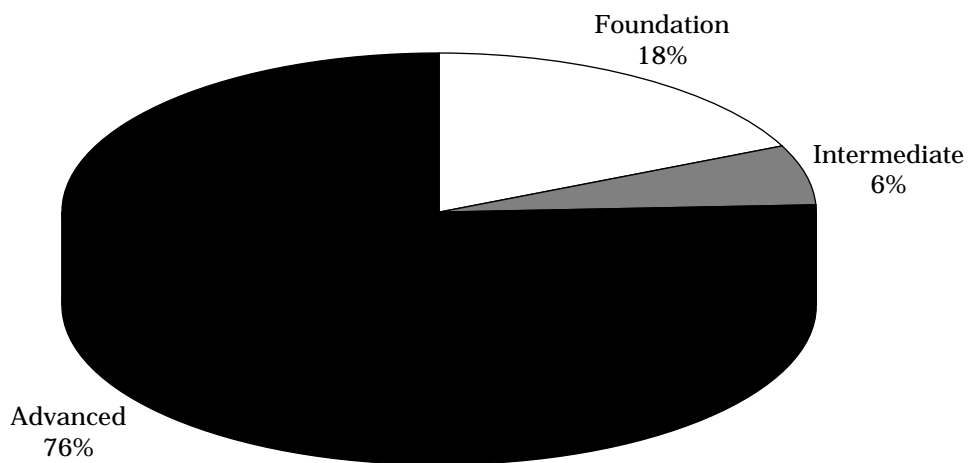
East Norfolk Sixth Form College: percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 820

Figure 2

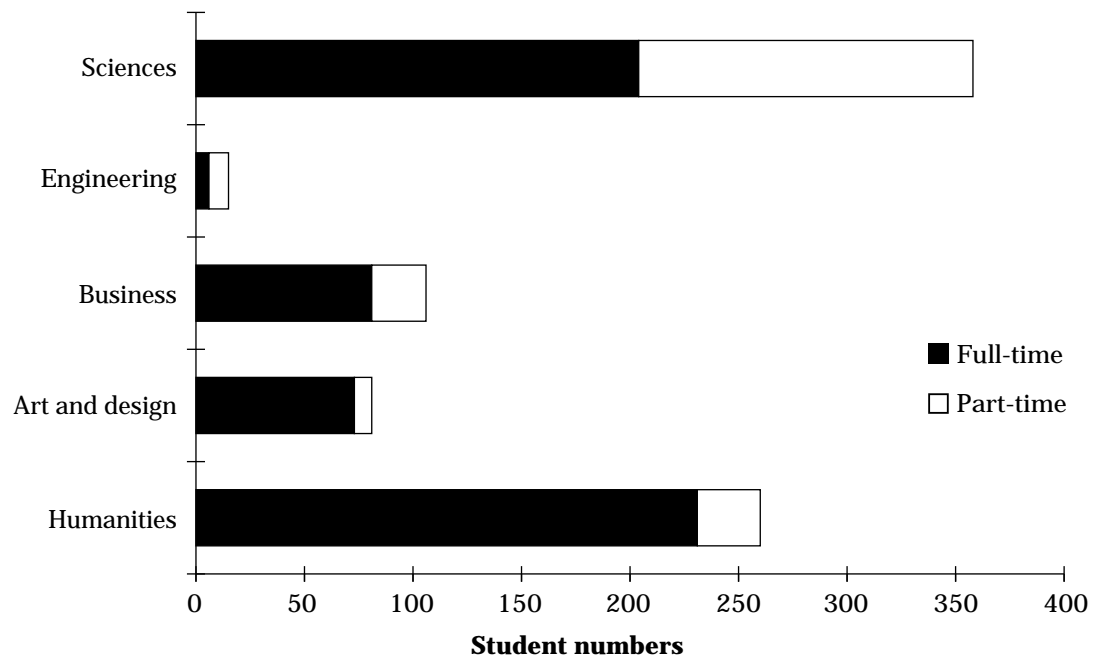
East Norfolk Sixth Form College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 820

Figure 3

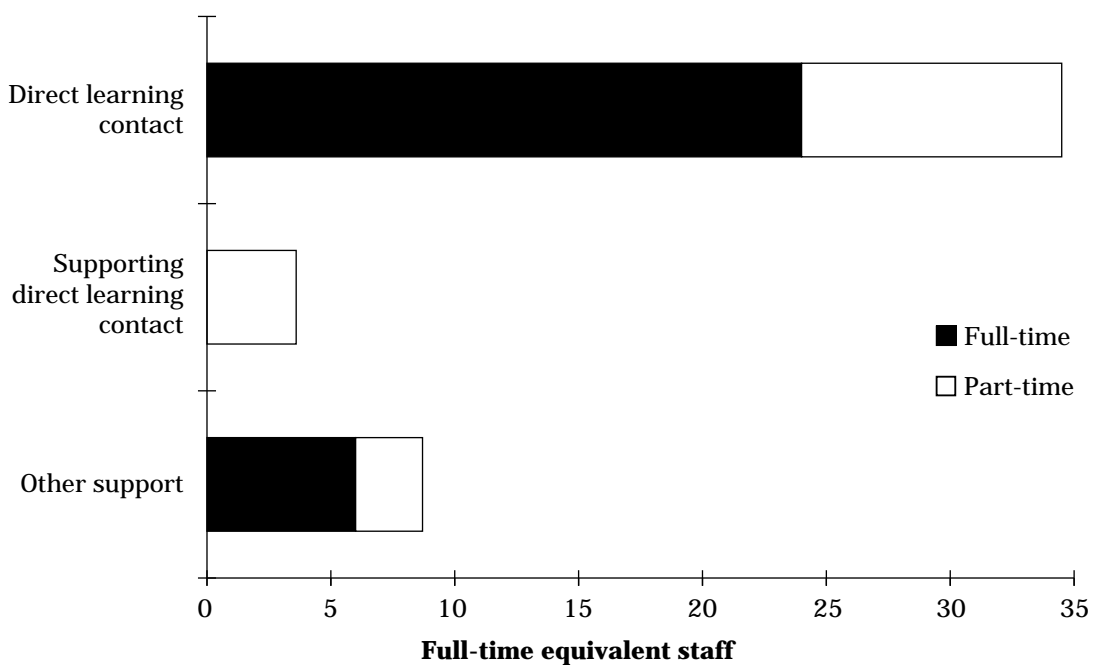
East Norfolk Sixth Form College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 820

Figure 4

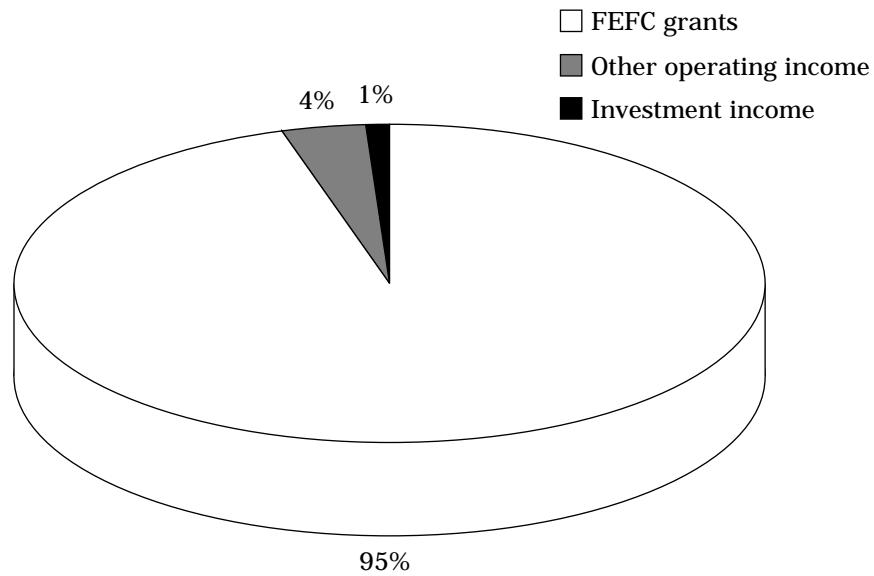
East Norfolk Sixth Form College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1996)



Full-time equivalent staff: 47

Figure 5

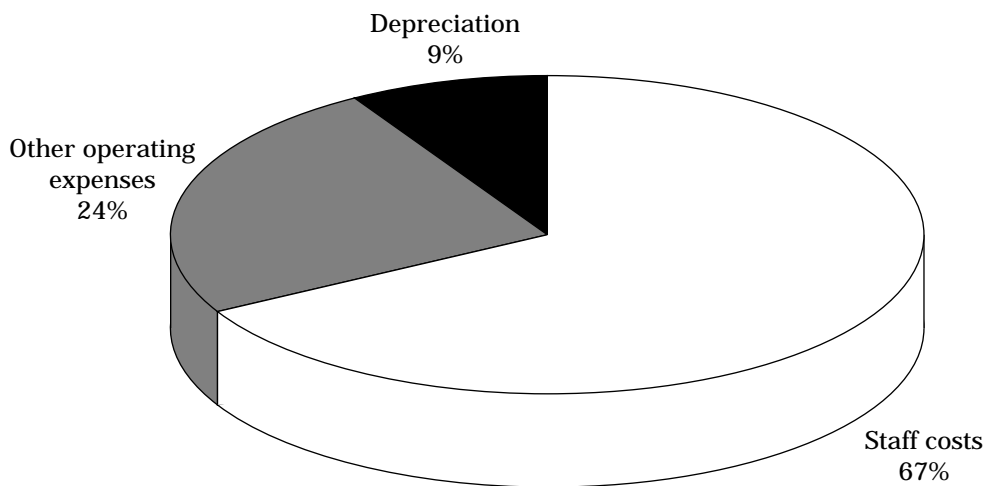
East Norfolk Sixth Form College: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £1,590,000

Figure 6

East Norfolk Sixth Form College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Expenditure: £1,616,000

Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
June 1997