

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Eastbourne College of Arts and Technology

May 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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CONTENTS

	Paragraph
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	2
Responsiveness and range of provision	6
Governance and management	16
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	24
Teaching and the promotion of learning	33
Students' achievements	41
Quality assurance	52
Resources	61
Conclusions and issues	69
Figures	

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

By June 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 68/97

EASTBOURNE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY SOUTH EAST REGION

Inspected September 1996-February 1997

Summary

Eastbourne College of Arts and Technology is a medium-sized general further education college in East Sussex. All its senior managers have been appointed since 1995. The principal and the corporation board provide strong leadership. The college has succeeded in increasing its student enrolments, particularly among adults. It has secured substantial gains in efficiency and has streamlined its management structures. Staff morale is high. Teachers are well qualified. The standard of teaching and learning in the lessons inspected across the college was similar to the average for the further education sector, but there were significant variations between the different schools and centres. The standards of teaching and students' achievements in art and design are high. A large measure of autonomy is accorded to schools and there are differences in the levels of pastoral care and curriculum quality that each achieves. A rigorous quality assurance structure is being introduced. This has brought about some improvements but impact on the curriculum will not be discernible until the end of the academic year. Learning resources are generally good. The college has rationalised and improved its accommodation considerably in the last two years. The college should: improve its management information; ensure consistent implementation of college policy by schools; address poor student achievements, especially on GCE A level courses; and improve the inadequate learning resources for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and humanities	4	Art and design	1
Technology	3	Performing arts and media studies	3
Business, computing and management	3	Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3
Catering, leisure and tourism	2	Adult education, English as a foreign language and teacher education	2
Health and social care	3		
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	3		

INTRODUCTION

1 The inspection of Eastbourne College of Arts and Technology took place in three stages. Enrolment and induction were inspected at the beginning of the autumn term in 1996. In January 1997, 12 inspectors spent 36 days inspecting curriculum areas. They observed 151 lessons and examined students' work. In February 1997, seven inspectors spent 28 days assessing aspects of cross-college provision. Meetings were held with the college strategy team and members of the college operational group, teachers, staff with cross-college responsibilities, support and administrative staff, and students. Inspectors consulted employers, members of the corporation board, a representative of Sussex Enterprise, members of community groups, head teachers, and parents of students at the college. They also looked at policy statements, minutes of committees and working papers.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Eastbourne College of Arts and Technology is a medium-sized general further education college which has two main campuses north of the town centre. The Cross Levels campus is adjacent to Eastbourne's sixth form college. Eastbourne College of Arts and Technology intends to move all its operations to this campus in the next few years. It provides community education in nine other centres, including local schools.

3 Eastbourne is a seaside resort in the predominantly rural area of East Sussex. The town has a population of approximately 90,000, of whom 25 per cent are of retirement age and only 5 per cent are between the ages of 16 and 19. The participation rate for post-16 education is high at 78 per cent. Eastbourne is one of the fastest growing districts in East Sussex. Unemployment across the borough is about 6 per cent, with seasonal fluctuations because of the area's heavy dependence on tourism. The college is the third largest employer in the area. Eighty per cent of local businesses employ fewer than 25 people. The town centre includes some areas of social deprivation where unemployment is 24 per cent. The town receives support from the European Union to enhance employment prospects, to create and sustain economic growth, to improve housing, to tackle crime and to protect the local environment.

4 The college faces competition from the neighbouring sixth form college in general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and some general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) provision and, to a lesser extent, from three other general further education, tertiary and sixth form colleges which are within a 15 mile radius. In 1995-96, the college had over 11,000 enrolments, of whom 82 per cent were aged 19 years and over. On 1 November 1996, it had 4,855 students enrolled on Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) funded provision and 2,770 students on other programmes. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3. During the last three years the college has increased its enrolments

by 31 per cent and achieved efficiency savings of 35 per cent. The college employs 651 staff, of whom 182 full-time equivalent are teachers and 123 full-time equivalent are support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4. At the time of the inspection the college was divided into eight schools or centres: adult and continuing education; technology; service industries; English as a foreign language (EFL); visual and performing arts; business, computing and management; health and social care; and general education. The college has already announced its intention to rationalise this structure further.

5 The college's mission is to be the first choice for quality education and training. It seeks to achieve its mission through eight key principles which address curriculum development, enterprise, equal opportunities, staff, students, quality, communications and resources.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

6 The college offers a wide range of courses for school-leavers and adults. It has succeeded in attracting a significant number of adults to full-time courses. Over 50 full-time vocational courses are available, mostly leading to GNVQs or national vocational qualifications (NVQs). The college provides GNVQ courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels in health and social care, catering and hospitality, business, and leisure and tourism; and at intermediate and advanced levels in an additional eight subjects. Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national certificate and national diploma courses are available in 11 subjects. There are full-time NVQ courses up to level 3 in catering and hospitality, motor vehicle studies, hairdressing and beauty therapy, administration, travel services and construction. The college offers 27 subjects at GCE A level, 14 GCE advanced supplementary subjects (AS), and 16 general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects.

7 An access programme in science and humanities is available for adults wishing to enter higher education. The part-time foundation course in art and design and open college network courses in art and design also aim to prepare students to progress to higher education. The college has a higher national certificate programme in motor vehicle engineering and courses leading to both the qualification of the Association of Accounting Technicians and NVQ level 4 in management. It will introduce its first higher national diploma in information technology for the academic year 1997-98, and it is developing a higher national certificate in engineering. The college's international access course is run in collaboration with the University of Brighton and negotiations are taking place to establish more extensive links with both Brighton and Sussex Universities. Overall there are few formal connections with higher education institutions.

8 There are many part-time day and evening courses which lead to vocational and academic qualifications or cater for leisure interests. Vocational courses range from pre-foundation to NVQ level 4, although

there are few programmes at level 4. Basic education is available for adults who wish to improve their literacy or numeracy, or to return to more intensive study. Some courses are taught in the town and there are plans to establish centres in outlying rural communities. The college offers weekend activities. Summer schools for international students are a regular feature of the college's work. Accreditation of students' prior learning is a strong feature of the NVQ in motor vehicle studies but few other courses offer this service. In GCE A level courses, there is a variety of flexible study arrangements to meet the needs of students of all ages and circumstances. In most curriculum areas there is a range of distance learning and open learning opportunities for students who are unable to attend college regularly.

9 There are well-conceived specialist courses for both adults and younger students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A special programme takes students with moderate or severe learning difficulties 'towards independence'. There is a course for adult students with severe learning difficulties which is flexibly organised to make their attendance easier. Profoundly disabled students can take courses at home or at care centres through distance learning. Students who have not fulfilled their potential at school may take a general foundation programme. The college makes special arrangements for 14 and 15 year olds who are not succeeding at school. Many of these pupils go on to become full-time students at the college.

10 The college works closely with five local secondary schools, through a consortium which also includes the sixth form college and two schools for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Principals and head teachers meet regularly. One benefit has been the strengthening of link courses for pupils who attend the college to study vocational subjects. A collaborative funding bid has been made to help develop vocational programmes at key stage 4 of the national curriculum. Careful planning ensures that pupils and parents receive balanced information about educational opportunities for students after the age of 16. The college works hard to build good relations with many other schools, some of which have sixth forms, and it is beginning to extend co-operation with other East Sussex colleges.

11 The college has introduced 'learning partnerships' to promote lifelong learning in the local community. Formal connections have been developed with nine organisations, including schools, a local authority, a health trust, companies and training concerns. The Bell Project is a particularly successful example of community education. Parents have attended a programme to explore the national curriculum at primary level. A 'new directions' course for adults has been offered to prompt them to return to learning. In both cases, a creche staffed by college students was provided. The intention of this, and other similar initiatives, is to foster a culture of learning in areas where educational participation has been low.

12 College staff have developed good working relationships with Sussex Enterprise, the local training and enterprise council (TEC). The college is now an approved training supplier running jobskills and modern apprenticeship schemes for over 100 trainees. The college has won development funding for new equipment in motor vehicle engineering and for courses in key skills. The college's enterprise unit develops and manages commercial contracts. It was established early in 1996 with the aim of generating additional income. The unit has made some productive links with local employers and the college is now better known among local businesses. The unit offers a range of short courses and is gradually building up its business with tailor-made programmes for companies. The unit works well with public sector training concerns to educate NVQ assessors and to offer the 'welcome host' customer care scheme in partnership with the South East England Tourist Board. Most curriculum areas also have close links with employers.

13 There is a successful programme for international students, a growing number of whom progress to a special access programme in which they study alongside full-time GNVQ advanced students in business and information technology. Several curriculum areas have connections with colleges in continental Europe which offer scope for exchanges and exhibitions. The college has received no substantial European Union funding in recent years.

14 Staff throughout the college are aware of the need to meet both local and national targets for education and training. A new marketing manager was appointed a year ago to improve the effectiveness of the college's marketing functions. Six broad market segments have been identified: school-leavers; adults seeking vocational courses; adults who lack basic skills; adults wanting leisure courses; employers; and overseas students. Plans for each of these sectors have been drawn up based on statistical data. Effective market research into the need for adult education has led to the increase in work in the local community. Sound procedures for planning publicity and promotion have been established. Printed publicity materials are well designed. The college's prospectus is now available through the Internet. The college handles its relations with the media well and also advertises widely. Its extensive programme of exhibitions and promotional activities is well organised.

15 The college's schools and centres are strongly committed to equality of opportunity and their concern is reflected in the range and style of programmes on offer. The staff have recently reviewed the equal opportunities policy and a new one is at draft stage awaiting final approval. Monitoring procedures are to be improved through the work of the equal opportunities group. The group includes an assistant principal, representatives from both full-time and part-time staff, and a student member.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

16 The corporation board has 17 members, of whom 12 are from the business sector, one is nominated by the TEC, and one is co-opted. Other members include two elected staff members and the principal. There are three women members. There are no student governors, but the corporation seeks the views of students informally and receives the minutes of the students' council. Corporation board members have a wide range of experience including the law, finance and healthcare. Every governor is assigned to an area of the college and visits it termly. Attendance at meetings of the corporation board and its committees is good at 82 per cent for the last two years.

17 The board has four committees: finance and general purposes; audit; personnel and remuneration; and quality. The board has concentrated on finance, buildings and personnel. The new quality committee will consider students' achievements and evaluate the performance of the college and the work of the corporation itself. All committees have clear terms of reference. There is a well-planned calendar of meetings. Subcommittees are established to deal with specific issues, for example, detailed work on the strategic plan. Corporation board members receive papers which summarise background information and highlight key issues. The committee structure assists members to discuss important issues in detail. The outcomes of committee meetings are brought to the board for information or decision. The clerk to the corporation has a legal background. The board has adopted both a code of conduct and a register of members' interests.

18 There is a close working relationship between board members and senior managers, but it is based on a clear distinction between their differing roles. New governors are well briefed and receive a useful handbook and regular seminars on current issues. The most recent seminar covered the challenges of providing proper opportunities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff and governors worked together closely to develop the college's mission statement and strategic plan. The strategic plan provides the framework of objectives for subsidiary plans produced by teaching schools and college service teams. Staff are involved in setting enrolment targets. Plans are reviewed and revised, although those of a few curriculum areas lack targets that can be measured easily.

19 The principal took up his post in September 1994, and in 1995 introduced a new structure with an entirely new senior management team. The college strategy team comprises the principal, the assistant principal for curriculum management and development, the assistant principal for staff and student services, the assistant principal for support services and the clerk to the corporation. Together, they provide strong leadership. Each assistant principal is responsible for the work of a group of middle managers. Curriculum areas are managed by heads of schools or centres, who are supported by programme co-ordinators and course leaders.

In addition, there are a number of managers responsible for cross-college services. The college is reducing the number of management posts from 24 to 17, resulting in a further clarification of its management structure. Although considerable efficiency gains have been made by reducing course hours and expenditure, morale is high and staff are enthusiastic. The pervading management style is an open one which encourages staff to innovate. Considerable autonomy is devolved to schools and centres. The college acknowledges that the success of this approach depends largely on the quality of its managers if creativity and consistent implementation of policies are to co-exist. In a few curriculum areas, courses are poorly managed. There are a number of examples of inconsistent application of policy which adversely affects the service given to students.

20 Communications are good. Most staff teams meet regularly and take notes of the actions they have decided upon. The college strategy team meets twice a week and the assistant principals' teams meet fortnightly. Middle managers meet senior managers monthly in the college operational group. This provides an opportunity for senior managers to brief middle managers about changes in policy and to seek their guidance. The large size of the college's operational group limits debate, but imminent restructuring will reduce the size of this group. The principal holds frequent meetings with staff where there is opportunity for debate. There is a staff bulletin which is published regularly.

21 The college's management information system cannot produce accurate or reliable information for internal requirements or do so in a timely fashion for external bodies such as the FEFC. Computerised systems provide data on student administration, finance and personnel. Apart from data on applications from prospective students and enrolments, there is no other information on academic matters which is produced as a matter of routine. Additional information can be provided on request. The present computerised systems do not allow the college to monitor the efficient deployment of teaching staff or use of accommodation, and alternative manual systems have to be used.

22 The process for delegating budgets to middle managers is generally understood. The system reflects many of the features of the FEFC's funding regime and heads of schools and centres are set targets for earnings. Budgets are amended to take account of increased enrolment or of failure to recruit or to retain students. Heads have authority to spend within the limitations of their budgets, including the freedom to determine course hours and part-time staffing requirements. In some curriculum areas, there is inadequate control of expenditure on part-time staff. Some school heads devolve money for materials and for small items of equipment to programme co-ordinators and other staff, but this practice is not common. Managers bid for capital funds. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £21.30 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.97 per unit. The college has exceeded its targets for growth in student numbers.

23 Appropriate policies exist to guide most aspects of the college's operations, including health and safety. The environmental policy is being revised. A detailed disability statement describes educational facilities and support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

24 Effective pastoral care is considered by the college as an important element in enabling students to achieve success. Student support is overseen by the assistant principal for staff and student services. The student services manager is responsible for the nursery, examinations, admissions, careers education and guidance, welfare and counselling services. A group chaired by the assistant principal monitors the tutorial system. The tutorial system is closely connected with other student services. Additional learning support is managed by the assistant principal for curriculum management and development.

25 Students and their parents speak highly of the quality of information which is sent out by the college. Applicants receive a prospectus, a guide to fees, course charges and methods of payment, and a leaflet with course details. The college's guidance service is used extensively by prospective students and schools. The college careers and guidance adviser is assisted by a careers officer from the Sussex Careers Services who is based at the college for three days a week. The advice that is given is impartial, and students are advised to consider alternatives to the college where appropriate.

26 There are targets which define the level of efficiency the college expects of its staff who process applications. Information on enrolment and registration is sent to students in good time. Full-time students attend for enrolment at set times, whereas part-time students can enrol by post. Enrolment is generally smooth and efficient, and any problems are dealt with promptly. Students and staff are invited to express their views on enrolment in a questionnaire, and their responses are used to improve the process.

27 The college prescribes the basic information which students are to be given during induction. Each curriculum area supplements the standard induction programme to fit its own requirements. There is inevitably some variation in the amount of information that is provided by curriculum areas. In some cases, the advice given on financial help and welfare is inconsistent and this works against the interests of students. Most students, in retrospect, say that they find induction useful. Written information given to students during induction is expressed in clear language. The leaflet for parents is helpful but some did not know of its existence. All full-time students receive the student handbook, but distribution to part-time students is patchy.

28 Students are aware of their rights and responsibilities, which are defined in the student charter. Staff resolve students' problems quickly.

Health education is regarded as a priority. A lecturer is allowed time to act as drug education co-ordinator and a small team of staff is available to support this work.

29 All full-time students have a regular weekly tutorial. The tutorial handbook contains suggestions for group activities and lays down the responsibilities of tutors. Nevertheless, schools have considerable freedom to interpret the tutor's role and there is wide variation in the quality of tutorial support. Some tutorials are purely administrative, while others do the intended job of setting and monitoring targets for students which will help them to make progress in their work. There is little evidence that students are encouraged to keep up their records of achievement. Tutorials for part-time students are also uneven.

30 All students on full-time courses are tested when they enrol for basic literacy and numeracy. In 1996-97, 20 per cent of the full-time and part-time day-release students who were tested were found to need extra help. During courses, teachers identify more students who have difficulty with basic skills. The learning support team has concentrated on helping full-time students and those part-time students who refer themselves for extra help. In several curriculum areas, additional support is integrated with the main programme, an approach which is well received by students. In other areas, students have to attend the learning centre to receive additional support. Taking students away from classes for extra help is judged by the learning support team to be the least effective approach. For most courses entry depends upon students having the published entrance qualifications. However, some students who lack the required entrance qualifications are placed on level 2 courses because there are no appropriate courses at level 1. Many of these students need extra help and often have considerable difficulty in gaining the key skills which are a requirement of GNVQ programmes.

31 Advice on welfare matters, finances and careers, and personal counselling is given by the student support service. The arrangements made to house overseas students are appropriate. The college doctor and dentist provide services that are particularly useful for students who are away from home and who sometimes have limited English. There is a college nursery which offers places for the children of students at a subsidised rate. Thirty-six students use it and the nursery shows flexibility in meeting their needs by imposing no minimum time limit for children's attendance. The counselling service is provided by third-year counselling students, who work under the supervision of an independent agency and their tutors. This is a new venture which has been welcomed by students, but there are obvious difficulties to be overcome in ensuring that the service is consistent throughout the year. The careers service offers evening sessions to meet the needs of part-time students.

32 The college offers voluntary recreational activities on Wednesday afternoons. Few students participate. Overseas students find the social

activities that are arranged for them enjoyable, but some wish that they could mix more with English young people. There is an active student union which has promoted several successful social events. It has also supported students following the complaints procedure. The student union sponsored a student to attend a human rights conference in Turkey.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

33 Of 151 lessons inspected, 62 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses, and 10 per cent had weaknesses which outweighed the strengths. This profile is similar to the average for all colleges inspected during 1995-96, according to the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. The quality of teaching and learning ranged from outstandingly good in art and design to poor in science and humanities. The average level of attendance in the lessons inspected was 76 per cent. The highest attendances were in business, computing and management at 88 per cent, and art and design at 86 per cent. The lowest attendance was in health and social care at 63 per cent. The average number of students in the lessons inspected was 11. The following table summarises the grades given to the teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	0	8	6	8	0	22
GCSE	0	2	2	0	0	4
GNVQ	4	13	6	0	0	23
NVQ	1	9	15	3	0	28
Basic education	5	6	6	0	0	17
Other vocational	10	15	6	3	1	35
Other	4	16	2	0	0	22
Total	24	69	43	14	1	151

34 Teachers prepare schemes of work for all curriculum areas, but their quality varies widely, within schools as well as between them. Teaching and learning in art and design are consistently well planned and documented. Schemes of work in some other areas such as catering, hair and beauty and engineering are often little more than a list of topics, with varying amounts of detail about the learning outcomes to be achieved, teaching methods and the resources which will be needed. Course outlines are handed out to adult education students, and on access and teacher training courses the schemes of work are summarised in student handbooks. Outlines of the GCE A level courses in law and biology which are given to students are sufficiently well structured to enable them to plan their work.

35 Most teachers prepare conscientiously for their lessons. In the better lessons, teachers state their objectives clearly at the start and students are made aware that the lesson is part of a considered programme. Reference is made to previous work, the teacher checks that students understand and clear instructions are given for future work. In one successful sign-language session the teacher was deaf and the students were not. The teacher communicated only by signing, but used excellent handouts to reinforce the more complex points. Students watched intently, communicating with the teacher and with each other by signing. When they did not understand, students asked the teacher to repeat the point, which she did by repeating her signs more emphatically. In art and design, teachers pin up their lesson plans for the day on a noticeboard or in the studio.

36 There were examples of poor lesson planning which resulted in haphazard activity from which students learned little. After 50 minutes of a performing arts session which was supposed to be on *Twelfth Night* the text had hardly been touched upon but the students had repeated physical and vocal exercises which they had done in the previous lesson. Teachers had plainly failed to co-ordinate their work. In a GCE A level psychology lesson only half the class was present and some had covered the work as part of a GCE AS course the year before. The pace of work was slow because the students could not remember what they had learnt previously and because they had little understanding of behaviourist theory and the basic experiments on which the theories are based. The lesson was planned on ill-founded assumptions about students' prior learning.

37 In the better lessons, teachers are imaginative in finding ways to hold their students' interest. They use a variety of methods such as group work, class discussions and individual presentations by students, as well as formal teaching. In a foundation level GNVQ lesson in business, which focused on a case study of a small business starting out, the circumstances were so graphically described that students were able to relate the story to their own experience and their own families. Students on the part-time foundation course in art and design had been asked at a previous session to bring along objects that they considered to be 'kitsch'. One student had been asked to research the topic and to brief the group. The teacher broadened the debate and directed questions to those who did not volunteer their thoughts. The standard of discussion was high, the pace of work was lively and every student learned a good deal. A second-year national diploma group in mechanical engineering carried out a year-long project to design and make a test rig for pumps. Working from a design brief, students developed their ideas so that the best could be selected for the group to cost and produce. A wide range of machining processes was used, including some which were numerically controlled. A group of bricklaying students learning to set out buildings was introduced to the topic through an illustrated work book and a video. The teacher gave further explanation before the class practised the techniques in groups.

38 In most curriculum areas, assignments are set regularly and marked promptly. Assessment criteria are made clear to students and the better teachers give detailed guidance in their comments to help students to improve their work. Students are regularly informed of their progress. However, some courses have no consistent approach to setting and assessing work, and the quality of marking is uneven. Some teachers make few, if any, written comments and those they do make are too terse to be helpful. The lack of evaluative commentary on work returned to students means that it cannot be used by them to improve their work or for revision. Grammatical and spelling errors are sometimes left without correction.

39 Information technology is generally well integrated with the rest of the curriculum. In the school of service industries, students are encouraged to use a wordprocessor when presenting assignments and they have ready access to computers in the learning resources centre. A health and social care student spoke spontaneously in a lesson about her joy in discovering that she could use a computer, and in mastering something at which she had failed in school.

40 Practical work is well organised and accurately assessed, and proper attention is paid to health and safety. A lack of clients in the travel shop means that students are not always able to apply the skills acquired on the course.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

41 Most students who attend the college are well motivated. Some speak vividly about their work and show that they remember what they have been taught, but there are occasions when students make no contribution at all in their lessons. The quality of note making varies greatly. Some students, for example in biology, keep excellent notes from which they can revise, while in other subjects students have only scraps which will be of little use in the future. There is little consistency across curriculum areas in the attention paid to developing students' ability to write. The college had considerable difficulty in providing accurate data to enable inspectors to evaluate students' achievements.

42 As the following table shows, in 1994 and 1995, the college was close to the average performance of general further education colleges offering GCE A level courses. It fell considerably below the average in 1996.

College pass rates at grades A to E compared with national averages for further education sector colleges between 1994 and 1996 for students of all ages entered for GCE A level examinations

	1994	1995	1996
Number of students entered	365	413	287
Average pass rate	66%	69%	60%
National average	68%	69%	71%
Number of subjects above the national average	*	11	11
Number of subjects below the national average	*	7	8

**figures not available.*

43 Since 1994, the pass rates for students taking two-year GCE A levels in business studies, law, media studies and psychology have been consistently above the national average for further education colleges. In other subjects the pass rates have fluctuated from year to year. In 1996, students who attempted GCE A levels in one year achieved an average pass rate of 47 per cent. Those who took two years achieved an average pass rate of 68 per cent. Students aged 16 to 18 entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1996 scored, on average, 2.9 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This places the college in the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, according to data published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). In 1995, the average point score per examination entry was 3.4 and the college was placed in the middle third of colleges on this performance measure. Pass rates for GCE A levels generally are declining.

44 Between 1994 and 1996, the number of entries in the 10 GCE AS subjects which are offered has fallen from 88 to 54. Pass rates have been consistently above the average for further education colleges. In 1996, the pass rate at the college was 63 per cent, compared with a national average of 53 per cent.

45 The number of entries for GCSE subjects has varied over the last three years. In 1996, there were 529 subject entries and an average pass rate of 45 per cent at grades C or above. This was 17 per cent below the provisional average for further education colleges for students of all ages. Pass rates differ considerably between subjects. The following table gives data for a sample of courses based on comparing the number who achieved grade C or above with those who were enrolled on 1 November of the year before. The modest retention rates in, for example, human biology, psychology and sociology evidently contributed substantially to the low success rates. Many other poor success rates, however, for example those in French and media studies, were the result of poor performance among students who stayed to the end of the course.

Success rates and student retention rates for a sample of GCSE courses, 1996

Centre for general education GCSE subjects	Success rates A* to C of those enrolled (%)	Retention (%)
Human biology	17	44
English literature	40	75
English	45	80
French	65	95
Media studies	44	78
Psychology	22	65
Sociology	46	63

Note: success rate is a comparison of those who achieved grades A to C with the number enrolled on 1 November on the first or only year of the course.*

46 The success rates on many advanced vocational programmes have declined over the past three years. In some cases, the replacement of earlier awards by GNVQ has led to a sharp drop in students' achievements, from which the subject area has taken time to recover. In 1996, 69 per cent of students on the advanced vocational courses included in the DfEE's performance tables were successful. This places the college in the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. As is shown in the following table, good performance has been sustained over the period 1994-96 in the national diploma in general art and design, the diploma in foundation studies in art and design, and in nursery nursing.

Success rates in a sample of advanced vocational courses (national diplomas, advanced GNVQs) 1994-96

	1994 (%)	1995 (%)	1996 (%)
Computing and information technology	56	44	9 (GNVQ)
Business studies	66	62	49 (GNVQ)
Media studies	89	63	55
General art and design	81	59	81
Foundation studies in art and design	95	81	86
Engineering (electrical and electronic)	53	71	33
Engineering (mechanical and manufacturing)	64	50	67
Motor vehicle mechanical repair	65	54	41
Nursery nursing	73	83	78
Catering and hotel keeping	65	72	50
Travel and tourism	57	71 (GNVQ)	13 (GNVQ)
Leisure	59	46 (GNVQ)	82 (GNVQ)
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	47	44	64

Note: success rate is the percentage of those enrolled on 1 November on year one of the course who achieved the qualification.

47 In 1996, 56 per cent of students who were entered for intermediate vocational qualifications achieved their qualification. This measure of performance places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector according to data prepared by the DfEE. The performance of students in the intermediate GNVQ in art and design in 1996 was very good, reflecting standards of work that are well above those usually seen by inspectors on courses leading to this award. The following table gives a sample of the success rates achieved by students on a sample of courses over the period 1994-96.

Success rates in intermediate vocational courses (BTEC first diploma, intermediate GNVQ) 1994-96

	1994 (%)	1995 (%)	1996 (%)
Business	n/a	25	45
Information technology	46	27 (GNVQ)	39 (GNVQ)
Art and design	62	55 (GNVQ)	89 (GNVQ)
Engineering	54	20	30 (GNVQ)
Health and social care	44 (GNVQ)	47 (GNVQ)	38 (GNVQ)
Catering and hotel keeping	n/a	58 (GNVQ)	76 (GNVQ)
Leisure and tourism	57 (GNVQ)	55 (GNVQ)	56 (GNVQ)
Travel and tourism	35 (GNVQ)	29 (GNVQ)	11 (GNVQ)

Note: success rate is the percentage of those enrolled on 1 November on year one of the course who achieved the qualification.

48 Over the past three years, construction craft programmes which previously led to City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) awards have transferred to NVQs at levels 2 and 3. Some students failed to achieve the full award in the agreed time, although they gained part of the qualification which consists of a series of units. Subsequently, most students gained the full award through further study at the college. Most students on NVQ level 3 programmes completed the award in the target time. Electrical installation students, who are mainly sponsored by industry, achieved good results. The following table shows the success rates of students on a sample of courses in the period 1994-96.

Success rates in NVQs 1994-96

	1994 (%)	1995 (%)	1996 (%)
Administration level 3	68	65	41
Association of Accounting Technicians level 2	–	50	25
Hotel and catering level 2	–	89	62
Cooking for the catering industry level 1	56	60	65
Cooking for the catering industry level 2	58	80	91
Plumbing level 2	52	62	61
Brickwork level 2	52	100	53
Wood occupations 1/2/3	61	60	56
Professional hairdressing and beauty therapy level 2	42	25	50

Note: success rate is the percentage of those enrolled on 1 November on year one of the course who achieved the qualification.

49 At all levels, the results achieved in the college vary both within schools and between them. Results for different courses in similar subjects often differ. For example, GCE A level psychology results are good, but GCSE psychology results are very poor. GCSE results in computing are excellent, but GNVQ intermediate and advanced results in computing are poor. This inconsistency suggests that there is a weakness in subject leadership in some areas. Few patterns of achievement are discernable, except the strength of art and design courses and the drop in performance which usually marks a change to a new award. On a few courses results are remarkably consistent. For example, the intermediate GNVQ in art and design achieves high pass rates in examinations and high retention rates. Although a number of students on this course are in difficult personal circumstances, some have progressed directly from the intermediate award to degree courses. The art foundation course has also achieved excellent results, with 100 per cent pass rates for all students who complete the course and a success rate of around 90 per cent every year.

50 The college has a wide range of achievements on which it can build under its new management to seek consistently high standards. The very high standards of drawing which underlie all the successful art and design courses are a testimony to the importance of concentrating on developing a solid core of skill among students. In numeracy courses, students were seen working through long division and decimals with delight because for the first time they understood what they were doing. Animated and creative teaching yields very good results on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses. Teachers working with adults on higher education access courses take care to understand their students, and those who pass through the initial difficulties of returning to study do very well indeed.

51 Students do well in a variety of competitive situations. A team of hairdressing students won the national championships in 1994 against stiff competition. Some students represent the county at football, athletics, swimming, badminton, judo and karate. Two students won a Randori competition, the first event organised by the British Schools Judo Association for East Sussex. Students from across the college are involved in a project with the crew of the yacht *Sussex Challenge*, who plan to enter the next Whitbread Round the World Race. Art and design students have won travel awards and have had their work exhibited in local galleries. A student gained second prize in the art and design category in the national Edexcel student of the year award. Two students in media studies documented photographically, and for radio, the Great Himalayan One Hundred Race, featuring a team led by Ian Botham.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

52 The new team of senior managers has introduced an ethos to the college which staff describe as democratic, and which encourages candour and responsibility. This is rightly seen by the college as fundamental to

the existence of a self-critical academic community, but it takes time to achieve. Elements of quality assurance, for example British Council accreditation of foreign language courses and the Basic Skills Agency quality award for the testing of students at entry have existed for some time in parts of the college but they were not drawn together into a comprehensive system. The new policies and procedures, which are well designed and thoroughly applied, are appropriate to the college's intentions. Whether there are tangible outcomes in terms of better students' achievements and retention will not be clear until the end of this academic year.

53 The college's policy for quality assurance is based on the concept of 'total quality management'. Quality procedures relate explicitly to the college mission and the strategic plan, and to staff and student charters. The existence of a staff charter is unusual and valuable. The charters set out the college's commitments to those whom it employs or serves, in clear and precise terms. An increasing number of these commitments are expressed in the form of measurable service standards. Their achievement is monitored through a procedure known as team review and evaluation. This process applies to schools of study and support services alike. Team review and evaluation was used on a pilot basis by curriculum areas alone last year. The first outcomes were promising, with course teams and schools identifying many areas for improvement, most of which have been tackled. The several elements which contribute to the reviews include: staff appraisal; student questionnaires issued three times a year to collect information, respectively, on the quality of entry procedures, course delivery, and achievements; staff commentaries on the progress of courses and on the standard of cross-college services; and an internal quality audit. A quality manual which gives a comprehensive guide to all the procedures was published in February 1997.

54 Student questionnaires ask appropriate questions and are well designed. The rate of completion for an entry-phase questionnaire issued in the autumn of 1996 was 77 per cent, more than twice that achieved in the previous academic year. Thirty teachers submitted comments, compared with only one in the previous year. Three-quarters of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the service they had received and students say that their requests for improvement are met quickly. There has been a noticeable change in the nature of some staff comments, with less seeking to blame shortcomings on others as in the previous year to more thoughtful consideration of how improvements might be secured. The outcomes of questionnaires are well presented, and a particularly well-designed graphical analysis is provided for the student council.

55 An internal quality audit was conducted in the summer of 1996. Members of staff and governors were trained by a senior manager in the college who is also a registered inspector of the FEFC. They used similar procedures to those of the FEFC's inspectors, observing teachers at work

in the classroom and grading the effectiveness of students' learning. The fact that staff felt able to volunteer to act as auditors was a confirmation of the extent of the commitment to quality improvement that now exists in the college. The quality audit was considered a success by both the auditors and their colleagues. The reliability of its conclusions was compromised to some extent by inaccurate or incomplete data on students' achievements, but the process took the college forward significantly. The college plans to conduct a second audit this year to examine in greater detail those courses which are seen as particularly successful and those which are in difficulty.

56 The prime source of review and evaluation is the course or service team, which considers the standard of work it is achieving and prepares an action plan to secure improvements. Heads of school or service managers then draw together individual plans for submission to the appropriate assistant principal. The summaries produced by assistant principals in the autumn of 1996 faced up squarely to complex or controversial matters and set clear priorities for development work. Assistant principals' reports are considered by the academic board. Since the reform of its membership and practice in 1995, the academic board has dealt appropriately with its business. Advice from the academic board is refined by the quality assurance steering committee which, like the academic board, is chaired by the principal. The conclusions of the quality assurance steering committee inform both the actions of the quality assurance team, which is chaired by an assistant principal, and the college operational group which is chaired by the principal. A recent addition to the structure is the corporation quality committee which provides a focus for the involvement of governors in quality procedures. Other bodies, such as the student and staff councils contribute to the quality assurance process, although some members are not clear about their role. The ladder of committees is logical in its basic conception but it is elaborate. The role of the academic board needs to be considered further because it is not clear to some of its members whether or not it, or some other body, is the central forum at which evidence on quality from the whole college should be brought together, analysed, compared and refined into decisions for action.

57 A sample of governors' reports on the curriculum and service areas to which they are attached suggests that while their visits are valuable in giving them a deeper understanding of the college at work, the outcomes often consist of relaying staff anxieties or wishes which might better be addressed to managers. It is too early to tell whether the corporation quality committee will enable governors to play the necessary role of exercising strategic oversight of standards in the college, but members intend to draw up stricter guidance on the attachment scheme and to develop performance indicators for the college's work.

58 A form of appraisal has existed for some time. The college's scheme of staff-development review was superseded by nationally-agreed arrangements for appraisal in 1992. Staff were trained to participate, but

the scheme was not introduced with conviction and only about half the staff were appraised. The two-year cycle, without an interim annual review, was found to be cumbersome. Last year, both teaching and support staff were consulted on a new structure which includes work observation wherever appropriate. About a quarter of the staff have been appraised under the new scheme and it is intended that everybody should be appraised by the end of this academic year. In February 1997, the academic board noted that the managers of some curriculum areas were making little progress with appraising their staff. Those who have been appraised speak about it positively, but the scheme is seen by some managers as excessively time-consuming. Appraisal is monitored thoroughly by the staff-development manager.

59 One per cent of the college's FEFC income is committed to staff development. In 1996-97, this sum amounts to about £60,000. The budget is delegated to schools and service areas, each of which receives between £1,000 and £4,500, depending on its size. Each budget holder prepares a staff-development plan which takes account of the college strategic plan and the personal action plans arising from appraisal. Budgets which are underspent are withdrawn to meet college staff-development priorities. The college also offers its staff free participation in its courses, and many take up this opportunity. Induction, mentoring, and guidance through the probationary period for new staff are effective, and teacher training is provided for those who lack this qualification.

60 The college produced a self-assessment report which was organised to reflect the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement* and which drew on the findings of the internal quality audit. The college's new structures are well adapted to regular self-assessment in the format required by the FEFC from 1997. However, the report presented to inspectors was more bland than the detailed work which went into its production promised. Some significant weaknesses were not mentioned. Otherwise, the college's appreciation of its current status coincided with that of inspectors.

RESOURCES

Staffing

61 The college employs 498 teaching staff, of whom 95 are in full-time or fractional posts and 403 are part time. Part-time teachers amount to 92 full-time equivalents. There is an even balance between men and women among teachers and managers. Academic staff are appropriately qualified for the courses they teach. Seventy-eight per cent of full-time teachers have degrees or other appropriate educational awards, and more than 80 per cent of them have teaching qualifications. Ten per cent of teachers hold higher degrees. The awards of the training and development lead body are held by 52 staff, six of whom have external verifier awards and four are qualified for the accreditation of students' prior learning.

There are 137 support staff, of whom 56 are full time. The qualifications and experience of support staff are generally appropriate for the work they do. Most teaching staff are efficiently deployed, although nearly 9 per cent of teaching groups have less than 10 students. Sixty-six per cent of the college budget is devoted to staffing. The college aims to reduce this expenditure to 55 per cent of its annual outlay.

62 Policies and procedures for managing human resources are soundly established. There is a qualified personnel manager and staff who report to the assistant principal for staff and student services. There is a profit-related pay scheme which relates to the college's planned annual surplus. Systems for appointing new staff are efficient and are based on a clear commitment to equality of opportunity. Full-time staff receive a staff handbook which sets out personnel procedures in detail. There is also a handbook for part-time staff. The number of part-time staff has increased in recent years, placing an additional administrative and organisational load on full-time staff. Some schools have inadequate arrangements for the induction and support of part-time staff.

Equipment/learning resources

63 Classrooms are well furnished with whiteboards, overhead projectors and video players. Science laboratories are adequately equipped and facilities in the electronics laboratory are particularly good. Specialist equipment is of a high standard in most curriculum areas. Diagnostic equipment in the motor vehicle maintenance workshop is particularly sophisticated, and it meets current industrial requirements. The hairdressing and beauty salons are equipped to professional standards. The catering kitchens are extensive and they serve meals to the public in the restaurant and the bistro. The popular music course has modern sound-mixing decks and computer keyboards and, in media studies, there is one digital and two linear editing suites as well as a suite of 18 computers with the software for desktop publishing which is used in industry. There are new kilns in ceramics, and modern plumbing equipment has been installed in construction. Engineering equipment is adequate, though elderly. Some areas are less well equipped. There is no professional lighting rig for drama. The foundation studies and basic education areas have insufficient audio and video equipment. The effectiveness of replacement policies varies in different schools. The college assets register is being updated and a procedure for replacing equipment is being developed to ensure that standards are similar for all students.

64 The two college libraries, one on each site, have computerised catalogues, compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases and access to the Internet. Video and audio playback equipment and three open-access computer workstations are available on the St Anne's site. There are 61 study places at St Anne's. The Cross Levels centre has 24 computer workstations and 153 study places. The library has 26,350 books which are sufficient for the college's courses. An extensive range of

magazines and journals is available. The computer centre on the St Anne's site is well equipped with 32 modern machines. At Cross Levels, there are 150 modern computers in a number of locations. In all, the ratio of students to computers is 8:1. The conflicting demands for class use of computers and personal access are causing tensions which need to be resolved. The foundation studies area only has six old computers, but students have access to more modern equipment in the computer centre at the St Anne's site. Computer-aided design is not available in engineering and computer-assisted cash tills and stock control, which are standard in industry, are unavailable in hair and beauty, and catering.

Accommodation

65 In April 1993, the college had six sites and 43 buildings. Since incorporation, it has closed three sites. The college is now concentrated at Cross Levels campus, two miles north of the centre of Eastbourne and St Anne's campus closer to the town centre. Eversley Court, where art and design are located, is part of the St Anne's campus. The estate consists of eight main buildings and 10 temporary buildings. In all, 22 unsatisfactory buildings have been taken out of use in two years. The college's accommodation strategy envisages the closure of the main St Anne's site in the summer of 1998, and the construction of a new building at Cross Levels. Eversley Court will be improved so that it can be used for the next few years.

66 Three Edwardian buildings provide the bulk of the accommodation at St Anne's. None of them was designed for educational use. Two other teaching blocks were built in the 1960s and additional temporary buildings were erected more recently. The main building houses the college's administration, student support services, a refectory, the library, classrooms and the reception area. This building has been refurbished but it is costly to maintain. The foundation studies and basic education buildings are converted Edwardian houses. They are cramped and are in poor repair, but they do have limited wheelchair access for those with restricted mobility. The GCE A level centre is in good decorative order and provides spacious accommodation, although its first floor lacks access for wheelchair users. Construction and performing arts are housed in a single-storey building with poor facilities. Sound insulation is inadequate. Accommodation for drama and dance is improvised and needs improvement.

67 Eversley Court houses art, design and media studies. Once the Eastbourne Grammar School for boys, Eversley Court is another Edwardian building with interesting decorative friezes and stained glass windows. The building is spacious and it has been effectively adapted. It remains, nevertheless, in poor decorative order and repair. The gate house at Eversley Court has been refurbished to accommodate photography teaching. Temporary accommodation on the site is poor.

68 The Cross Levels campus comprises ECAT house and two modern buildings erected specially for their current educational purposes. The college owns enough land at Cross Levels to enable it to concentrate its work on this single campus. ECAT house has been adapted from commercial offices to provide pleasantly light and spacious classrooms, although some are noisy. There are well-designed facilities for information technology, administration and reception. The service industries building provides good accommodation for hairdressing, and health and beauty, as well as spacious kitchens and a well-appointed training bistro, restaurant and reception area. There is a new fitness suite. The technology centre has good motor vehicle and engineering workshops and a large resource centre.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

69 The particular strengths of the college are as follows:

- strong leadership and open management
- an effective corporation board
- the involvement of all staff in the process of strategic planning
- some innovative approaches to work in the community
- outstanding provision in art and design
- a comprehensive range of courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- a flexible response to clients' needs
- high morale among staff
- its success in increasing recruitment, particularly among adults
- a well-conceived quality assurance system
- its accommodation strategy.

70 If it is to further improve the quality of its provision, the college should address the following issues:

- unreliable management information
- inconsistent application of college policy by schools
- poor students' achievements, especially on GCE A level courses
- poor learning resources for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

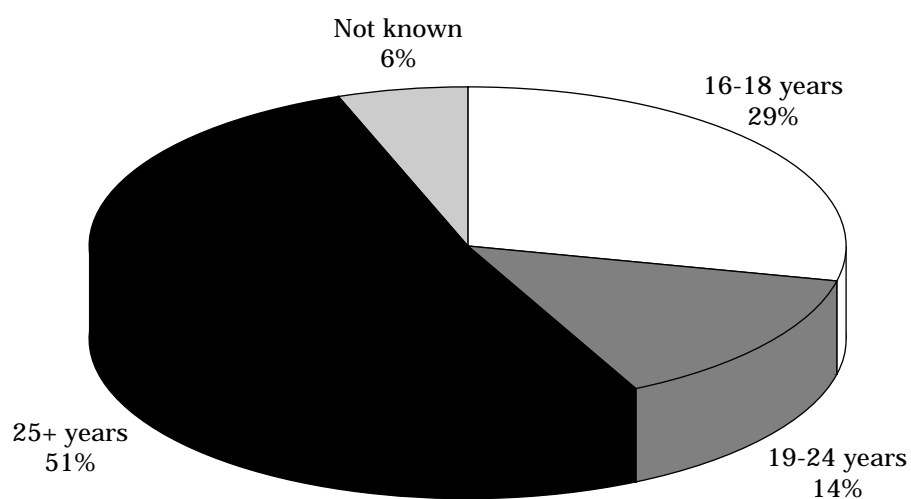
FIGURES

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

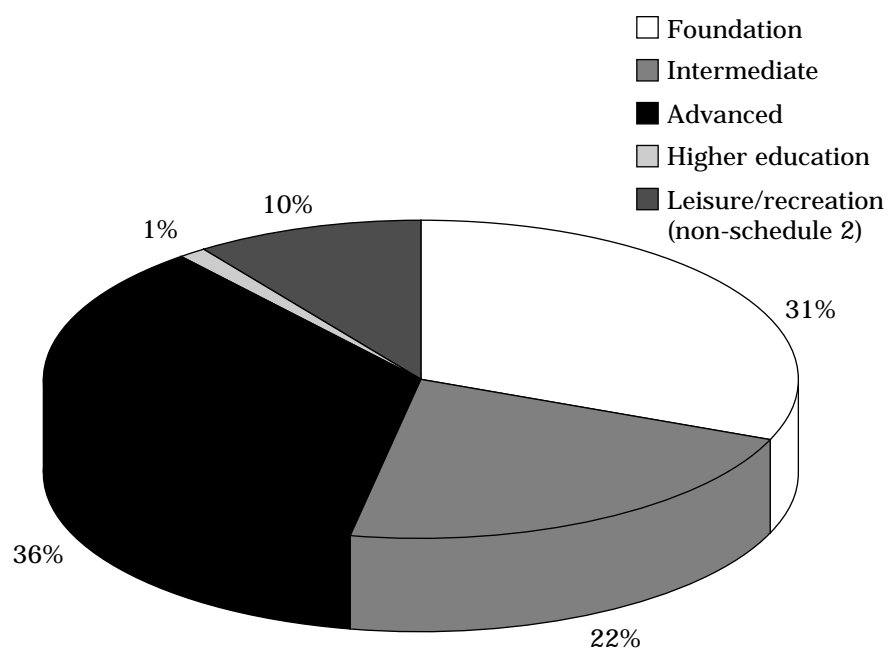
**Eastbourne College of Arts and Technology: percentage student numbers by age
(as at November 1996)**



Student numbers: 4,855

Figure 2

**Eastbourne College of Arts and Technology: percentage student numbers by level of
study (as at November 1996)**



Student numbers: 4,855

Figure 3

Eastbourne College of Arts and Technology: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)

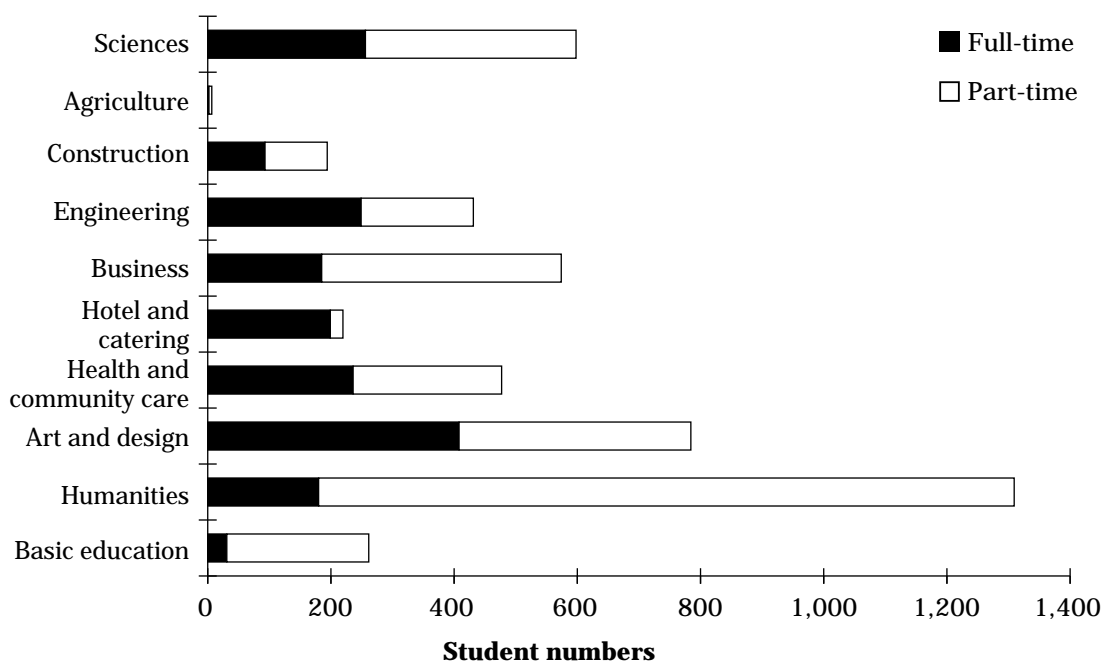


Figure 4

Eastbourne College of Arts and Technology: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1996)

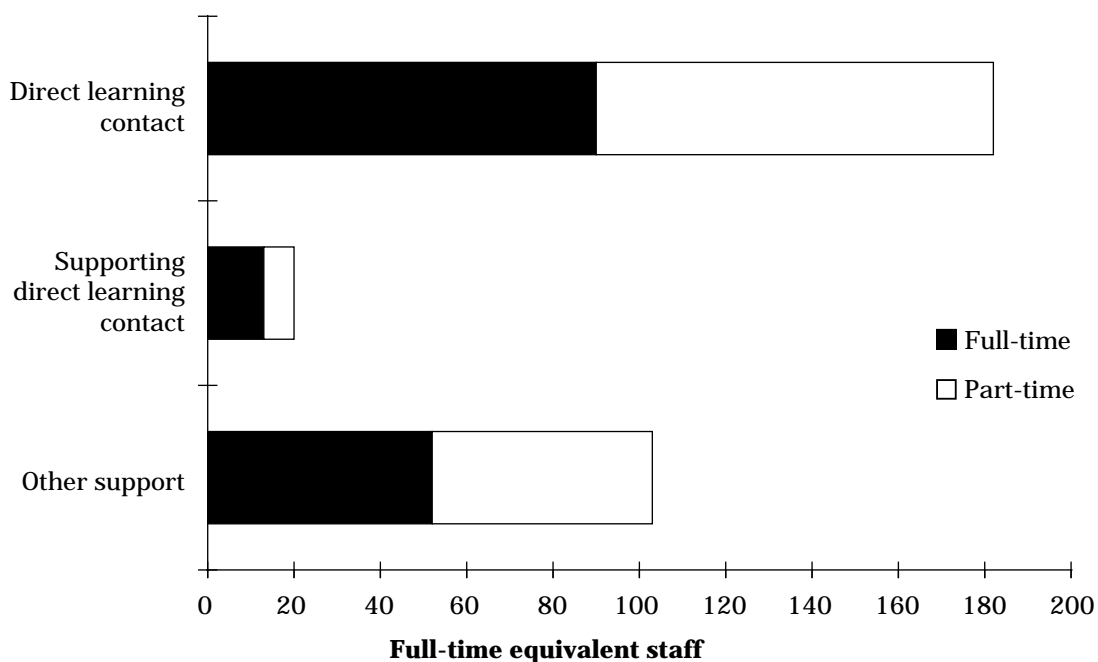
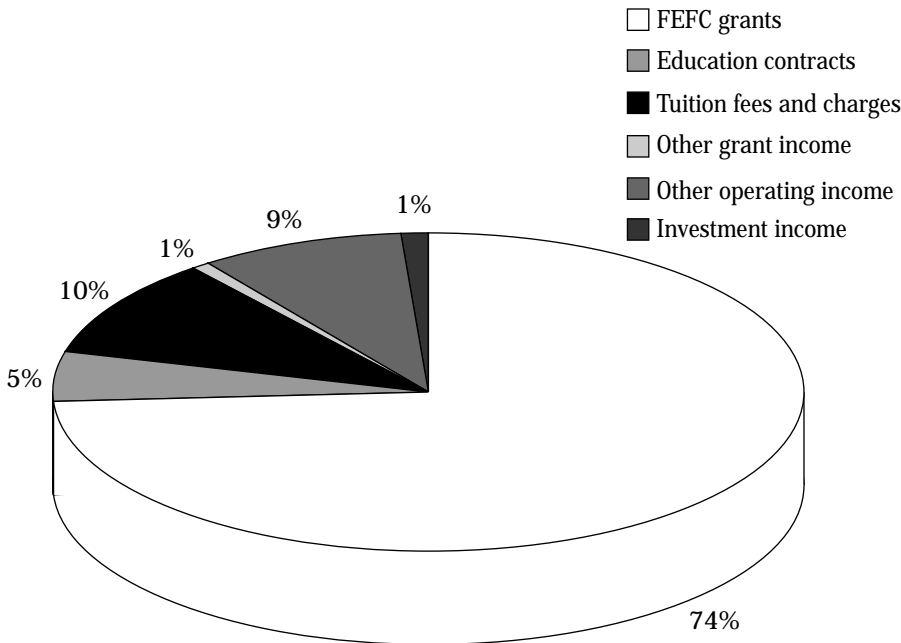


Figure 5

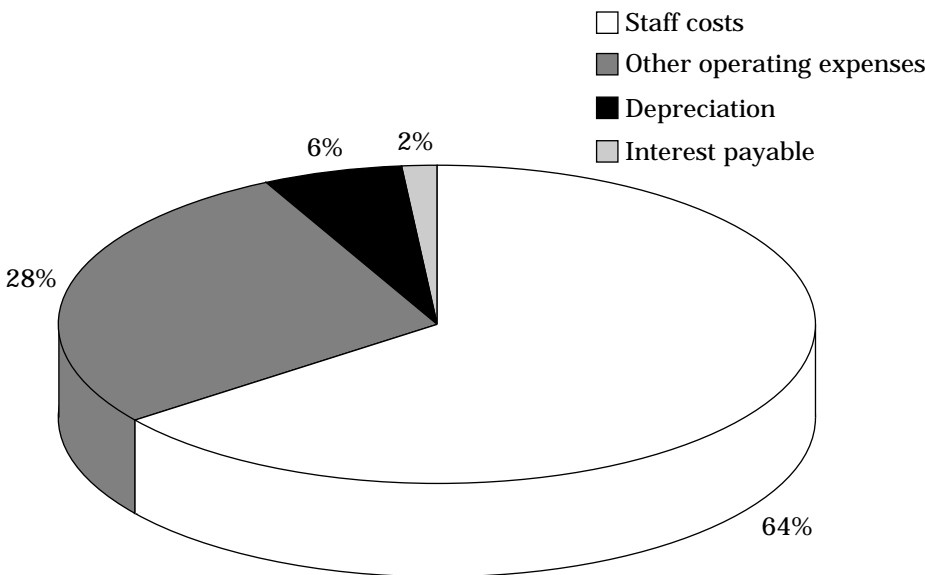
Eastbourne College of Arts and Technology: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £8,627,000

Figure 6

Eastbourne College of Arts and Technology: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Expenditure: £8,581,000

