

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Hammersmith and West London College

September 1996

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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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 1995, some 208 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 208 colleges are shown in the following table.

College grade profiles 1993-95

Activity	Inspection grades				
	1	2	3	4	5
Programme area	9%	60%	28%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	13%	51%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	11%	56%	29%	4%	<1%

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 111/96

HAMMERSMITH AND WEST LONDON COLLEGE

GREATER LONDON REGION

Inspected September 1995-May 1996

Summary

Hammersmith and West London College offers a wide range of mainly vocational courses. It has productive links with external agencies. There is a comprehensive strategic planning process. The governors are committed and experienced, but need to increase their awareness of the curriculum and the quality of its delivery. Students' recruitment and induction are generally well conducted and there are good counselling and advice services. Although the tutorial support for students on some courses is good, the quality of tutorials varies widely across the college. There is some good teaching in all curriculum areas but, on many courses, the overall quality of teaching and learning should be improved. The college should address the poor levels of achievement, attendance and retention that are a feature of many courses. The quality assurance system has some strengths, but it has not consistently maintained and enhanced academic quality and standards. There is a need to raise teachers' general awareness of the importance of quality assurance and to ensure that the quality assurance system focuses more strongly on the quality of teaching and learning. The college has a good information system to support managers at both strategic and operational levels. The standard of accommodation and equipment in specialist and cross-college areas is generally good and recent alterations to the accommodation have improved the learning environment.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision	Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision	2
Governance and management	3
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	3
Quality assurance	4
Resources: staffing	3
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and mathematics	3	Health and community care	4
Construction	3	Art and design and performing arts	3
Business	2	Humanities	4
Hotel, catering, leisure and tourism	3	Access and English for speakers of other languages	3
		SLDD provision	4

INTRODUCTION

1 Hammersmith and West London College was inspected between September 1995 and May 1996 by 16 inspectors who spent a total of 71 days in the college. Inspectors observed 162 classes and examined a broad range of students' work, together with documentation relating to the courses. As a result of industrial action taken by teachers during the inspection, some timetabled classes did not take place. Meetings were held with students, teachers, support staff, senior managers, governors, employers and representatives of local community groups, local schools and the Central London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Hammersmith and West London College is a further education college offering a diverse range of mainly vocational courses. It operates within the area covered by the Central London TEC, and occupies three sites in the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. The main site at Barons Court was purpose built in 1980. The Olympia site is in a former school building and the Lime Grove site is in a listed building which the college shares with the Chelsea College of Art. The college sees the community it serves as extending from Camden and Maida Vale in the north to Putney, Battersea and Wimbledon in the south and from Hounslow in the west to Paddington and North Kensington in the east. There are nine other general further education or tertiary colleges nearby, and five secondary schools in the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. Prospective students in the locality therefore have a wide choice when deciding where to study and there is intense competition between institutions in recruiting students.

3 At the time of the inspection, there were 9,990 students enrolled at the college. Some 73 per cent of these were funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and nearly 80 per cent were over 19 years of age. FEFC-funded enrolments by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. Many of the college's adult students live near the college. Some are employed near the college, but live a considerable distance from it. The college recruits some of its students from the area's large refugee population, many of whom have high level qualifications from their own countries.

4 Twenty-three per cent of the people over 16 years old living in the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The Irish, who comprise 7.8 per cent of the population, form the largest single group. Afro-Caribbeans are the second largest group, comprising 5.5 per cent of the population. Approximately 45 per cent of the college's students come from minority ethnic backgrounds, reflecting the population of the wider area from which the college recruits. Population projections for the Central London TEC area predict that the number of people aged 15 to 24 will fall by 20 per cent by the year 2000.

A 12.5 per cent increase in the population aged 45 to 64 is expected over the same period.

5 The college curriculum is delivered through five faculties offering courses in nine of the FEFC's 10 programme areas. The college has received £0.8 million this year from the Higher Education Funding Council for England for higher education courses. It has departments dealing with external relations and overseas marketing, human resources and management information services together with a range of cross-college support services. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

6 In its mission statement, the college states its commitment 'to providing high quality education and training and promoting participation in life-long learning'. The college's declared aims are to strengthen and develop links with the community, to be a major centre of excellence, and to provide specific progression routes into higher education and a professional service to employers. It has started to make progress towards achieving some of these aims through the work of its business development unit and an extensive access programme.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 The college offers a wide range of courses which provide education and training opportunities for a variety of students, including school leavers, those in employment, refugees, adults returning to education, and the unemployed. There are vocational further education courses in a range of subjects, including business studies, construction, catering, health and social care, hairdressing and beauty therapy and the performing arts. In addition, there are some general education and higher education courses. The college advertises and promotes its services by various methods which are carefully monitored. New courses have been offered in response to needs identified by market research. In accordance with its marketing plan for 1995-96, the college is developing more systematic methods of analysing the results of its market research in order to inform curriculum planning.

8 There is a policy to introduce General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) for 16 to 19 year old students in all vocational programme areas. Currently, there are advanced, intermediate and foundation level courses in art and design, science, business, leisure and tourism, information technology, and health and social care. There are two intermediate GNVQ programmes in information technology, one of which is designed specifically for adult students. In addition, there are advanced and intermediate level courses in media and communication studies.

9 Courses leading to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are offered in a variety of subjects, including business administration, management, catering, beauty therapy, sports and recreation and building

crafts. Most of these courses are offered at levels 1 to 3. New programmes in subjects such as information technology and customer services were introduced in 1995-96, and there are plans to extend the range with courses in hairdressing and hotel and catering. Courses leading to professional qualifications in building have been discontinued because of declining demand but there is a substantial programme of courses leading to NVQs, and short courses, in building crafts.

10 The college offers full-time and part-time General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) courses in 24 subjects. Alternative syllabuses are available in several subjects. One-year intensive courses are offered in most subjects. These are suitable for students who have already followed a GCE A level course and wish to improve their grades. A minority of students take advantage of the opportunity to study for both a GNVQ and a GCE A level. For example, 22 of the 119 students taking the advanced GNVQ course in business in 1995-96 are also taking a GCE A level subject. The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) is offered in 13 subjects. From 1995-96 onwards, it is college policy not to provide a programme of GCSE subjects for students who have already followed such a programme. They will be advised to follow an alternative programme offering more chance of success. Courses in English and mathematics are available either in the day or in the evening. GCSE evening courses are available in seven other subjects. Full-time advanced GNVQ and GCE A level students can take GCSE courses in photography and pottery as additions to their main programmes.

11 The college has an extensive modular programme of access to higher education courses for full-time and part-time students which can be taken over one or two years. The subjects offered to full-time students include art and design, building, surveying and land use, business, computing, fashion and textiles, humanities, social sciences and teacher education. There is also a university preparation programme designed for students with relevant overseas qualifications in science, engineering and the built environment who wish to progress to higher education in the United Kingdom. Although the access programme met its overall recruitment target in 1995-96, enrolments in some subjects are low. More detailed market research is needed to establish the needs of potential clients more clearly.

12 The college offers a wide range of courses, at various levels, in English for speakers of other languages. These are designed to meet the needs of individual students and to facilitate their progression to further study or employment. Students transfer easily between these courses according to their rate of progress. There is also a substantial number of full-time and part-time courses in English as a foreign language which cater for beginners and more advanced students. In 1995-96, these attracted over 1,000 students. There are also several courses for teachers of English as a foreign language.

13 The college is keen to promote a more flexible approach to learning through the use of paper-based and computer-based study materials. There has been a substantial investment in a learning centre equipped with such resources where students on many courses have timetabled sessions as an alternative to attending more conventional lessons. Some courses are based entirely in the learning centre. For example, GCE A level and GCSE courses in English and mathematics, and some information technology programmes can be studied using materials which allow students to work at their own speed in the learning centre, and at home, under the guidance of a tutor. The college offers flexible study arrangements in other subjects. For example, office skills students can choose their own timetable from a variety of part-time day and evening lessons and can start their course at any time of the year.

14 The college's business development unit is establishing good links with employers. It offers courses in information technology, management and other subjects to employers and other outside bodies. During 1995-96, approximately 130 full-cost courses were provided, including 50 which took place on employers' premises. The college works with the local authority on various initiatives to assist the economic regeneration of the region and to promote collaboration between industry and education. The college has a wide variety of work placements for some 750 students on 33 courses. However, the extent to which teachers in different curriculum areas liaise with employers is variable. Links with employers need strengthening in construction, catering, science and languages. The college has strong links with several local organisations which provide education, training and careers guidance. Relationships with the Central London TEC are good. There are regular meetings between TEC staff and the principals of colleges which lie within the TEC's region. A positive outcome of these meetings has been a successful bid to the Competitiveness Fund for funds to promote information and learning technology. The college played a key role in this initiative. TEC funding has also been obtained to support other initiatives, such as an improvement in the arrangements to advise students who wish to progress to higher education.

15 The college operates link courses in collaboration with eight local schools. It also collaborates with several universities in the provision of higher education courses. Amongst these are the first year of a four-year science degree programme run jointly with Kingston University, and the first year of a four-year degree course in economics and management, validated by the University of London. Extensive co-operation with the University of Westminster over the planning of access courses and other initiatives has led to a formal agreement of association with the university.

16 The college has links with education and training organisations in 10 European countries. These links have led to the provision of business courses at the college for students from Denmark, Norway and Sweden. College staff and students have participated in international projects and

exchanges supported by European Union funds. Successful bids for financial support from the European Social Fund have enabled the college to offer 14 courses for adults during 1995-96, including courses in export management, European business management with Spanish, and building services with information technology skills.

17 The college offers a range of courses for students with learning difficulties, but there is some mismatch between the needs of the students and the courses provided. A prevocational access course, designed for young people, is offered to adult students for whom it is unsuitable. The college's provision in health and social care is too limited to meet the needs of many part-time and adult students.

18 The equal opportunities policy is included in the staff and student handbooks. As well as defining general principles of equality, the policy recognises a need for positive action and regular review. Action has been taken on a number of issues, such as increasing the number of female students on construction courses. An equal opportunities committee monitors the effectiveness of the policy.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

19 The governing body of 14 comprises eight independent members, including a TEC nominee; three co-opted members, of whom one is from the Committee for Racial Equality, one is from a local resources centre for the blind and one is the head teacher of a local secondary school; two staff members and the principal. Four governors, including the principal, are women. Governors have experience in business, finance, law, higher education and in the local community. There are three subcommittees; audit, finance and general purposes, and remuneration. The members of the finance and general purposes committee, apart from the principal, form the remuneration committee. There is a senior member of staff whose sole responsibility is to act as clerk to the corporation, senior management team, academic board and other committees.

20 Most members have been on the board since incorporation and two were members of the governing body before that. The governors are highly committed to the college. Attendance at full board and subcommittee meetings from August 1995 to February 1996 was 83 per cent. In November 1995, governors held an annual general meeting which was attended by over 100 staff, parents, students and people from business and the community. Initial training was organised for governors on incorporation and some have attended external training events. There is a register of governors' interests, but no code of conduct. The governors do not formally evaluate their own performance. The governors' main involvement has been with financial and personnel issues. They have not concerned themselves to the same degree with the curriculum and its quality. Nevertheless, some governors have spent time getting to know a particular aspect of the college to which they might make a contribution. The benefits of this participation have yet to be determined.

21 The senior management team is conscientious and committed. It has 13 members comprising the principal, deputy principal, eight assistant principals, the director of finance, the director of marketing and the college systems manager. The management structure is clear. Five assistant principals are responsible for the five faculties and three of them also have cross-college responsibilities. One is responsible for the strategic planning process. The three other assistant principals are responsible for curriculum and quality, external relations and human resources. The deputy principal is responsible primarily for estates and health and safety and the director of finance is assisted by one assistant principal who is the college's accountant. The senior managers have achieved the college's objectives of maintaining financial stability, increasing enrolments and improving the quality of management information, but they have not focused clearly enough on improving the quality of teaching and students' support, and increasing students' completion and success rates. Managers have responded quickly to weaknesses identified by the inspections of curriculum areas. The full senior management team meets once a fortnight and the smaller group of senior curriculum managers meets on alternate weeks to address curriculum matters.

22 Teaching staff are managed by programme area leaders and lines of accountability within faculties are generally clear. Staff identify with their programme area and most feel supported by their programme area leader. The assistant principals responsible for the faculties meet regularly with their programme area leaders. Some teachers reported that they are not clear about the cross-college responsibilities of staff, and that they have conflicting demands made upon their time by different managers which sometimes lead to delays in getting things done. Some programme area leaders do not meet regularly with their staff and do not make sure that teachers implement policies relating to students' punctuality and withdrawal from courses. These programme area leaders need further support and more rigorous monitoring by senior managers.

23 The senior management team recognises the importance of communicating effectively within a large organisation. A staff newsletter is published at least every two weeks and contains information about the college and about developments in further education. There is a standing item on each faculty management meeting agenda which requires the assistant principal to report to programme area leaders on the deliberations of the senior management team. Programme area leaders are required to communicate this to their own staff, but this is not always done. Assistant principals report any matters raised by their staff to senior management team meetings. The principal communicates important decisions to all staff in writing. There have been a number of presentations on key issues but these were not well attended. The principal has termly meetings with all programme area leaders.

24 Senior managers are responsible, with the help of advisory committees, for monitoring key policies in areas such as health and safety and equal opportunities. Working groups are formed as required to address other cross-college issues such as information technology, timetabling and the introduction of GNVQs. Staff are not always aware of the existence of such groups or feel that they are not always fully representative. The academic board is not effective. Out of a membership of 19 there were five vacancies for staff and student representatives at the time of inspection. Attendance at board meetings during 1994-95 was only 65 per cent. Senior managers outnumber elected representatives and the board's agendas and decisions are not effectively communicated to staff and students.

25 Strategic planning is based on a comprehensive and continuous process of evaluation and review. The strategic plan is approved by governors, who also re-evaluate the strategic objectives. At present, some review processes occur too late to inform planning, but the cycle in place for 1996-97 is better synchronised. A system of statistical annual reviews has been in place for some time. This requires all programme area leaders to monitor, with the principal and relevant assistant principals, the extent to which targets have been met and whether they need to be revised. All faculties and curriculum areas produce annual operating plans with targets which reflect the college's strategic objectives. Comparison of the quality of faculty operating plans over the past two years shows considerable improvement. The plans identify who is responsible for monitoring targets and the date by which the target should be achieved. All staff are involved in developing these plans. In spite of this, not all staff are committed to the college's mission or feel that they have any influence on strategic decisions.

26 The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6 respectively. The average level of funding in 1995-96 is £20.98 per unit of activity compared with £21.88 in 1994-95. The median for general further education colleges is £17.84. The staffing budget is held by the principal. The budget for consumables is allocated to programme area leaders on the basis of predicted enrolments weighted for more expensive provision. It is allocated in three tranches over the year and adjusted according to actual enrolments. The allocation of other funds is based on bids made by managers in the light of strategic objectives. Once funds have been allocated, actual expenditures are compared regularly with target figures. Spending is closely monitored and detailed monthly reports go to budget holders.

27 The college has a sophisticated management information system which produces extensive information on finance, students and courses, for external and internal use. All managers have access to the information, although some lack the expertise to make full use of it. Enrolment targets are set for each course and effectively monitored. The targets have been met or exceeded over the last three years. There are systems for monitoring

the retention of students. Students' attendance is systematically monitored and reported to programme area leaders, who do not always take appropriate action when attendance is poor. Faculties are responsible for monitoring students' destinations. Some programme area leaders have detailed information on destinations, others have little. Overall, the destinations are known of only 50 per cent of full-time students leaving the college in 1995.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

28 The college has effective systems for the recruitment and enrolment of students, but the guidance and support available to students while on their courses is of variable quality. The college liaises closely with schools over a wide geographical area through a programme of visits and events. The college hosts a series of widely-publicised and well-attended open days and promotional events. Publicity materials are professionally prepared and distributed widely. Staff in the course information centre provide prospective applicants with effective guidance on courses, financial advice and fees assessment. Faculties do not always meet their response targets for contacting prospective students for interview.

29 The main enrolment week in September runs smoothly. Teachers are trained in the use of a computerised enrolment system with terminals in each course area, and enter details directly as each enrolment is completed. Students receive a college entry card with their photograph, a copy of the timetable, and a guide to the college. On several courses, an offer is made to assess and accredit the knowledge and experience which students already have. Although the service is clearly advertised, relatively few students take advantage of it. Nevertheless, some students have gained exemption from elements of courses through the scheme. Students who do not fulfil the entry criteria for their first choice of course receive advice on possible alternatives from the course information centre and are then interviewed by faculty staff, as appropriate.

30 Induction programmes are generally effective. Full-time students are given a tour of the college and are encouraged to undertake optional sporting and recreation activities. These are popular with students. Part-time students are informed about college services and facilities in a brief talk at the beginning of their course. Tutors are responsible for providing an induction programme of assignments and activities over the early part of the course. The programme includes the signing of learning contracts and, for foundation and intermediate level students, screening tests to determine literacy and numeracy needs. Tutors provide students with course handbooks which vary in their usefulness. The best integrate course information with ice-breaking exercises and quizzes to test students' knowledge about the college. In contrast, some of the induction sessions inspected were tedious and provided students with excessive amounts of information. A few tutors failed to ensure that students visited the key support areas such as the counselling and advice centre.

31 A good range of services exists to assist students whose circumstances might prevent them from completing their studies. A counselling and advice centre at the main site provides personal counselling, and guidance on financial and welfare matters. Four hundred and twenty-one students received financial help through the centre in 1994-95. In addition, 21 students with physical and sensory disabilities received support. The appropriateness and effectiveness of this support varied. Staff arrange programmes of events to assist other groups of students. For example, an international students' group meets weekly to help overseas students deal with life in the United Kingdom. Although the centre staff work vigorously to promote their services, some teachers do not respond to offers of tutorial visits by counsellors.

32 There is sufficient additional learning support available to students. In 1995, for the first time, foundation and intermediate level students were screened for literacy and numeracy needs. About half the 400 students screened were found to need support, but only a small proportion have received help. Literacy and numeracy support is provided in workshops. The systems for recording the attendance and progress of the students are effective, but the literacy workshop is also a classroom, which discourages students from dropping in. Although many staff providing the literacy and numeracy support are committed, few possess sufficient expertise in the teaching of basic skills. However, learning support for students whose first language is not English is well developed. Support teachers work alongside subject teachers and devise appropriate and effective programmes of work for the students. This support is available only to those students whose teachers respond to offers circulated by teachers of English for speakers of other languages.

33 Expert careers education and advice are available to all students, both as a timetabled element of courses or tutorial programmes, and at a careers centre which individuals can visit at their convenience. The centre contains a good range of printed information and software on careers and higher education opportunities. Younger students can also have careers interviews with staff from the former borough careers service. The careers support is valued by students, although there are no procedures for ensuring that all students take advantage of the facilities.

34 There is a full-time work experience co-ordinator who liaises with course teams to help find placements for students enrolled on vocational courses. The organisation and monitoring of placements are the responsibility of course teams. Placements are only open to full-time students on advanced vocational courses. Some students feel they are not given sufficient help in finding work placements.

35 Students on full-time courses receive at least an hour's tutorial each week. GCE A level students receive a well defined and structured tutorial programme with contributions from cross-college services, such as careers. On other courses, the content of the tutorial programme is left to the discretion of the course tutor. The extent to which students' progress

and welfare are monitored varies widely. Although the college does not formally evaluate the effectiveness of the tutorial programme, it recognises the need to provide more consistent tutorial support and in 1995 appointed a tutorial manager to develop a tutorial policy, building on existing good practice. Limited progress had been made by the time of the inspection.

36 Formal channels for students to communicate their views do not work well. The students' union, despite a prominently located office, attracts little interest other than in the social events it arranges. A students' liaison group, consisting of faculty representatives, students' union executive members and senior college managers, meets twice a term. However, attendance at meetings is poor, most students are unaware of the group's existence, and it has no mechanisms for eliciting the views of students.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

37 During the inspection, inspectors observed 162 lessons involving 1,204 students. In 41 per cent of the sessions inspected, strengths outweighed weaknesses. This is substantially lower than the average for all colleges as recorded in the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1994-95*. In 17 per cent, there were weaknesses which clearly outweighed the strengths. The following table shows the grades awarded for the lessons inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		3	13	18	2	0	36
GCSE		0	2	7	1	0	10
GNVQ		2	10	13	7	0	32
NVQ		0	8	8	1	0	17
Other*		11	17	22	14	3	67
Total		16	50	68	25	3	162

* includes courses in English for speakers of other languages, the access to higher education programmes, vocational access courses for students with special learning difficulties, the BTEC higher national certificate in business studies, and a course in computer literacy and information technology.

38 The average level of attendance in the lessons observed was low, at 57 per cent. The lowest level, 49 per cent, was in health and social care, and the highest, 88 per cent, in performing arts. Poor attendance and a lack of punctuality had an adverse effect on learning in a significant proportion of lessons observed.

39 In general, it was clear from course documentation that the topics required by the syllabuses were being covered, and that there was a suitable balance of practical and theoretical work in subjects such as

science, construction and the performing arts. However, the quality of the schemes of work varied widely. Those for access to higher education courses were well structured and substantial, but others, including those for many courses in health and social care, languages, and English, provided insufficient detail. In such schemes, topics to be studied were listed, but there was no indication of teaching methods or assessment procedures to be used.

40 The thoroughness with which lessons were prepared varied. Those in science, catering and art and design were well structured. In business, preparation by teachers was thorough and there was good progression from earlier sessions. Lessons for students with learning difficulties were well planned but the content was often inappropriate. The preparation of some lessons in health and social care, languages, and English for speakers of other languages was poor. The planning of some sessions in art and design and modern languages suffered from a lack of teamwork by teachers. GCE A level and GCSE English lessons were generally not well structured and the aims of some sessions were not clear.

41 In science and business courses, the strengths of the teaching clearly outweighed the weaknesses. Students responded enthusiastically in science lessons and worked hard on a good range of practical and theoretical assignments. A well-designed practical exercise for intermediate GNVQ science students involved the use of chemical tests to detect the presence of glucose and proteins in specially-prepared sample solutions. The samples were then matched to the case studies of four patients to determine their clinical condition. The students were required to carry out standard analytical procedures and draw inferences from the results obtained, and all of this, with some help from the teacher, met the lesson objectives. In an office skills class, the tutor clearly explained relevant theoretical principles to a group of 20 students and questioned them carefully to ensure that they understood the key issues. The students then applied the principles they had learned to appropriate practical tasks. They co-operated well and were keen to share their findings with each other. The teacher frequently offered encouragement and praise, and regularly reminded students of the aims of the session.

42 The teaching and learning in mathematics, construction, catering, art and design, performing arts, social sciences, and English for speakers of other languages had a balance of strengths and weaknesses. In the best sessions, students were given appropriate tasks. Teachers made good use of a range of well-prepared teaching aids, such as printed notes and self-test questions in catering, and visual displays in art and design. There were frequent checks on students' learning. Performing arts students were given regular, challenging opportunities to demonstrate their expertise. In a sociology lesson on an access to higher education course, a language tutor was on hand to provide learning support for non-English students. The sociology teacher gave an effective presentation, supported by thought-provoking handouts, and set tasks which challenged the

students' understanding and language skills. The language tutor had produced a list explaining key sociological terms and distinctive words used by the teacher. This enabled the students to fully understand and appreciate the material presented to them. The less effective lessons were dull and slow; teachers failed to take account of the different levels of students' ability, knowledge and expertise. In a few sessions, students spent too long copying notes or taking dictation. For example, in a GCE A level sociology lesson, students spent almost an hour writing notes, with no check on their understanding or learning. Construction theory lessons lacked vitality, in contrast to the practical classes. In catering, the well-organised practical sessions were marred by the inadequate number of workstations and other items of equipment.

43 In health and social care, English and communication studies, modern languages, and courses for students with learning difficulties there were some good sessions, but, on the whole, the weaknesses in teaching and learning outweighed the strengths. In some of the less successful lessons, students were not encouraged to engage in debate and the content was inappropriate. In health and social care, the pace of the lessons was too slow and teachers missed opportunities to reinforce learning with visual aids, such as video tapes, slides and overhead projector transparencies. In modern languages, there was sometimes only one student in attendance and the learning activities were not appropriate for a single person. In GCSE and GCE A level English lessons, discussions were often superficial and unfocused, questions to students were often poorly framed and it was rare for the teacher to encourage students to develop their own ideas, check that students had understood key principles or summarise what had been learned during the lesson. Students with learning difficulties were often taught skills which will be of little use to them in their everyday lives.

44 There were suitable schedules of assignments and homework on most courses. The marking of assignments was generally appropriate. Thorough records of students' progress were kept in most areas, and assignments were usually returned promptly with helpful comments to guide students' future work. However, there were some shortcomings. Students on GCSE English and health and social care courses reported that they did not receive sufficient feedback on their progress. In art and design, some of the assignments were poorly planned, the tasks were set at too high a level, and the briefings given to students were not clear. Some science students' work was returned with insufficient written comment.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

45 In most sessions, the students were well motivated and enjoyed their studies. Students generally expressed positive views about their courses. Most students applied themselves enthusiastically to practical work, particularly in construction, art and design, hotel and catering, and some

of the science subjects. In practical lessons, due emphasis was placed on working safely. In some health and community care sessions, students lacked enthusiasm. Students on GCE A level sociology, psychology and economics courses often failed to participate in class activities, and in some modern language and English lessons, the students were inattentive.

46 Completion rates for courses vary considerably across the college. Those for many part-time evening courses have been high; 100 per cent in some cases. However, rates for many full-time and part-time day courses have been low; under 50 per cent on occasions.

47 Slightly fewer than 20 per cent of the college's students follow GCE AS/A level and GCSE courses. Results have been variable over the last three years, but in many subjects in 1995 they were below the national figures for general further education colleges. Students aged 16 to 18 entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1995 scored, on average, 3.2 points per entry. This places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on data in the 1995 performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment. In 1995, 64 per cent of students taking GCE A level mathematics achieved grades A to E which is close to the national figure of 65 per cent. The percentage of students gaining grades A to E at GCE A level in modern languages in 1995 was in line with the national figure. GCE A level pass rates in biology, chemistry, and physics have generally shown an improvement over the last three years, but in all three subjects pass rates in 1995 were below the national figures. Pass rates in sociology, psychology, economics, English literature, communication studies, business studies, economics and accounting were also below national figures.

48 Most GCSE results have been at or below the national figure for comparable colleges in recent years. In 1995, only 20 per cent of the students sitting GCSE mathematics obtained grades A to C. Forty-four per cent of GCSE English students achieved grades A to C; well below the national figure of 69 per cent. In contrast, 86 per cent of GCSE drama students, and the same percentage of part-time evening students in Spanish, obtained grades A to C. This level of achievement has been consistent over the last three years. Results for full-time students taking four GCSE subjects in 1995 were poor, with only 7 per cent of those who completed the programme obtaining grades A to C in all four subjects. Twenty-seven per cent achieved grades A to C in three subjects.

49 In 1994-95 over three-quarters of the college's students followed vocational courses. Students were entered for a wide range of externally assessed qualifications validated by the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G), the RSA Examinations Board (RSA), the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry and other professional examining bodies. Eighty-six per cent of students, aged 16 to 18, in their final year of study on vocational

courses included in the Department for Education and Employment's 1995 performance tables were successful. This places the college among the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. However, almost 80 per cent of the college's students are aged 19 or above.

50 In 1995, students' achievements were good on many vocational courses. Seventy-five per cent of students completing the intermediate GNVQ science programme achieved the full award. The pass rates for C&G carpentry and joinery were high, as were completion rates. On the level 2 NVQ course in construction, 75 per cent of the students completing the course achieved the full award. In business studies, results were good in export marketing, the institute of marketing certificate and diploma, and the GNVQ in business at both foundation and intermediate levels. For example, the pass rate on the BTEC national certificate in business was 87 per cent. There were good pass rates on other courses, including programmes leading to NVQs in catering, and the BTEC national diplomas in performing arts and health. Pass rates for most GNVQ programmes were comparable with national figures.

51 Students' achievements have been poor on some vocational courses. In 1995, less than 20 per cent of students on courses leading to NVQs in bricklaying and plumbing obtained the full qualifications. Only 19 per cent of students enrolled on the intermediate GNVQ in leisure and tourism in 1995 successfully completed the course. The overall success rate amongst students on the BTEC first diploma in care was even lower, at 14 per cent.

52 The achievements of students on access to higher education courses in 1994-95 were generally good. Most students completed their course successfully and progressed to higher education. The results achieved by students on courses in English for speakers of other languages were satisfactory. The majority of students made good progress in developing their language skills and 67 per cent of those who completed their course in 1995 obtained the target qualification.

53 On courses for students with learning difficulties, the level of work has not been well matched to the skills and abilities of the students, and the accreditation arrangements have been inappropriate. Consequently, the results achieved by students have often been poor.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

54 The college has the elements of a quality assurance system which have been reviewed by the recently-appointed assistant principal for quality and curriculum. A unified system is being developed which incorporates a review and evaluation of all courses. This process takes account of the views and findings of the course teams, and provides opportunities for students to make their views known through a series of termly questionnaires.

55 The college's policy on quality assurance is clearly stated and widely publicised. The strategy for improving quality is published in the college's strategic plan and in the staff handbook section of the college diary. The regular staff newsletter includes information on quality assurance initiatives. Despite this, some teachers are not committed to quality assurance. The quality assurance system has some strengths. These include the use of minimum quality standards for cross-college services, such as the course information service, financial services and estate management. It has led to some improvements to courses, and some courses have been discontinued because they were undersubscribed or unsuccessful. However, the system has not been effective in maintaining and improving academic quality and standards. The quality procedures do not focus sufficiently on learning and on the students' overall experience of the college.

56 Many activities designed to improve quality are less effective than they should be because of the variations in the way they are carried out by faculties, inadequate monitoring of action or the lack of firm measures to ensure compliance. There is undue variation in the quality of the annual course reviews. Although some of these are thorough, others do not take sufficient account of performance indicators, such as students' achievements, or the comments made about the courses by students, assessors, and employers. Where course reviews have identified weaknesses course teams have frequently taken no action to address them. Managers have been slow to address weakness identified by quality assurance procedures, such as poor retention or weak teaching. Some initiatives have been introduced with little or no thought for how their outcomes are to be monitored. A survey of students' perceptions of the college's success in achieving commitments contained in its charter was recently carried out. Results were quickly analysed, but no action has been taken to address the issues identified.

57 Senior managers are aware of the weaknesses in quality assurance and some improvements are planned. For example, a new course approval procedure has been designed to ensure that proposed courses meet identified needs and can be effectively delivered.

58 Support staff are appraised and their training needs identified. Training is organised by the college's training officer. The effectiveness of teachers' appraisal is variable despite the introduction of a uniform appraisal system and training for appraisers. For example, appraisal is operating well in business studies and catering but, at the time of the inspection only two teachers had been appraised in humanities, and no care teachers had been appraised at all. Observation of teaching is not a compulsory part of appraisal. The identification of teachers' staff-development needs is not adequately informed by appraisal or by course review. Staff development often takes place without reference to the college's strategic aims and some teachers have been unwilling to take up staff-development opportunities. A mentoring system is in operation in business studies to improve the teaching skills of staff.

59 The college's charter is widely distributed and is discussed with new staff and students when they are inducted into the college. Posters to remind students and staff of the charter are displayed throughout the college. The charter is revised annually, and any revisions are endorsed by the senior management team and the academic board. The college is aware that some of the performance targets in the charter are too imprecise to have much impact.

60 The college's self-evaluation addresses all the issues identified in the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The sections of the report vary in the amount of description and analysis they contain, and in the accuracy of their judgements. The section on quality assurance contains a particularly accurate assessment of the quality assurance system. Some other sections are rather uncritical. Either they do not accurately identify strengths and weaknesses, or they express weaknesses in general terms only.

RESOURCES

Staffing

61 Most of the full-time teachers are well qualified. Eighty-four per cent have first or higher degrees and 81 per cent have teaching qualifications. Despite their good qualifications some staff display poor teaching skills. Some have low levels of commitment to key aspects of their role, for example, responding to poor attendance by students, acting as tutors, and conducting thorough course reviews. In some areas, such as science and art and design, few staff have acquired assessor and internal verifier qualifications. In most subjects, teachers have relevant industrial experience, but such experience is lacking among business studies staff. Some design staff also lack up-to-date specialist expertise and staff teaching on courses for students with learning difficulties lack awareness of best current teaching and assessment practice.

62 The college employs 114 part-time teachers of whom 33 per cent have degrees or teaching qualifications. In many vocational subjects, their up-to-date professional and commercial experience makes a valuable contribution to students' learning. However, in areas such as health and social care the large proportion of part-time teachers makes it difficult for programme area leaders to ensure students receive effective pastoral support. In some course teams, the involvement of part-time teachers is minimal.

63 Although programme area leaders have responsibility for the deployment of teachers, they lack information on how efficiently staff are utilised. In general, there are sufficient teachers to support the courses offered by the college. However, at the start of the year there were insufficient catering teachers, with the result that some students had to be given an initial work placement of 12 weeks until teachers became available.

64 The support functions of finance, personnel, estates and general administration are staffed with sufficient appropriately-qualified staff. The learning centre has an adequate number of librarians and other support staff, including information technology assistants who help students using the drop-in computing facilities. In most areas, technician support is adequate.

65 The overall ethnic mix of staff reflects the local community but there are few senior staff from minority ethnic groups. There are approximately equal numbers of male and female staff. A high proportion of staff has been at the college for many years.

Equipment/learning resources

66 Overall, the college is well equipped and resources are effectively deployed to support learning. Most teaching rooms on the main site have whiteboards and overhead projectors, and a few have wall-mounted television and video facilities. Classrooms at Lime Grove and Olympia are less well equipped. Teachers on all sites have access to video equipment, desktop publishing and photocopying facilities. Much of the classroom furniture is of a low standard.

67 Specialist equipment is good in art and design, construction and sports and is adequate in most other areas. There are two language laboratories and a well-equipped travel office. Electronics test equipment is of a suitable standard, but there are not enough items, and students often have to share. Catering equipment is inadequate and there is a limited stock of music technology equipment. Some equipment in the learning centre and communications workshop is suitable for students with visual impairments. Modifications have been made to art and design equipment to assist students with co-ordination difficulties. There are facilities for wheelchair users in science and pottery. However, there is limited specialist equipment for students with physical disabilities and too few alternatives to printed material for students who cannot read.

68 The main site has a large, pleasant, well-equipped learning centre which was opened in 1994. It consists of a library, drop-in computer facilities, resource-based learning facilities, three seminar rooms and well-equipped workshops for mathematics, communication studies and English as a second language. In all there are 409 study spaces, 140 computers, 15 audio cassette players and 38 video recorders. There is a good stock of 55,000 books, cassettes, compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases and videos. In most subjects, the books are up to date and well used by students. The college also subscribes to 240 periodicals and newspapers. Students on many courses are scheduled to use the resource based learning facilities as part of their programme of study. This helps to promote the idea that students are expected to take some responsibility for their own learning. The learning centre has a business-like atmosphere. In its first year, it had 39 per cent more users than the library it replaced. Book borrowing also increased by 6 per cent

in the first year. On average, over 3,250 students per week use the centre. The centre is open during the vacations.

69 The Lime Grove site has a small library with a bookstock which effectively supports the building crafts courses located on that site. There are 27 study spaces, six computers, one video recorder and one audio cassette player. The facility is not well used. The Olympia site has neither a library nor computing facilities. Although the main site is within walking distance, students based at Olympia are significantly less well served than those based at Barons Court.

70 The college is well equipped with modern computing facilities. The development of these facilities has been effectively planned by an information technology group which includes users from across the college, and technical staff, and is chaired by the principal. In all, there are 413 machines to which students have good access. However, some specialist areas would benefit from dedicated information technology facilities. For example, there are no computers in science laboratories and there is no use of information technology by catering students for stock control or at the cash point.

Accommodation

71 The college has three sites. The main site at Barons Court was opened in 1980. The Olympia site is a converted school building less than half a mile from Barons Court. Lime Grove is a listed building, shared with The London Institute and located two miles away from the main site. The college has made good progress towards its strategic aim of modifying the buildings to accommodate more students and facilitate different methods of teaching and learning. There is good specialist accommodation for art and design, drama, mathematics, leisure and tourism, and building trades. The training restaurant and bar are good, but kitchens and storage areas are shabby. Accommodation for music is poor and language laboratories are located well away from the language teaching rooms. Some science laboratories, although designed specifically for practical work, are used for teaching theory. There are plans to provide more suitable accommodation for electrical installation.

72 Barons Court provides 70 per cent of the college's teaching space. It has good facilities, including three lecture theatres, a large gymnasium, dance and drama studios, two language laboratories, a nursery for 20 children, staff and student common rooms, and a large refectory. The reception area includes a bookshop and travel information centre. Teaching rooms are light, airy and of adequate size. Some corridors are poorly lit. Access for people with mobility problems is reasonably good; there are ramps and a lift. The layout of the site is confusing despite the maps of the building which are placed on corridor walls. Security is effective. There are nine external video cameras and everyone entering the site passes through a turnstile. Communal areas on the other sites are less satisfactory. There is no common room for students at Lime Grove,

although one is planned, and there are no childcare facilities at either Lime Grove or Olympia. Access for people with physical disabilities at these sites is poor.

73 The accommodation is well managed. The deputy principal has weekly meetings with cleaning, catering, ground maintenance and security contractors to discuss any issues which have arisen. There are clear maintenance schedules and procedures. Minimum quality standards for many aspects of site care have been set out in the college newsletter. Regular room utilisation surveys are carried out. They indicate scope for more efficient use of space, particularly at Lime Grove. The interior and exterior areas of all the sites are clean and well maintained.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

74 Hammersmith and West London College is making progress towards achieving its mission. The particular strengths of the college are:

- a good range of courses which reflects the needs of the community, higher education and employers
- good links with outside agencies
- extensive international links
- a committed and experienced governing body
- a reliable and accurate management information system
- effective arrangements for the enrolment, induction and guidance of students
- good counselling and advice services for students
- good teaching in business and science
- good retention rates on many part-time evening courses
- generally good resources in specialist and cross-college areas.

75 If it is to continue to improve the quality of provision and standards of achievement, the college should:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning on many courses
- improve students' retention, attendance and punctuality on some courses
- improve students' achievements across a number of courses
- improve the effectiveness of curriculum management
- ensure that the governing body is kept informed about the curriculum and its quality
- increase staff involvement in the strategic planning process and improve their commitment to the college mission
- ensure more consistent tutorial provision for students
- improve course review and evaluation procedures
- further develop the appraisal system for teachers.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage FEFC-funded enrolments by age (as at May 1996)

 - 2 Percentage FEFC-funded enrolments by level of study (as at May 1996)

 - 3 FEFC-funded enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at May 1996)

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

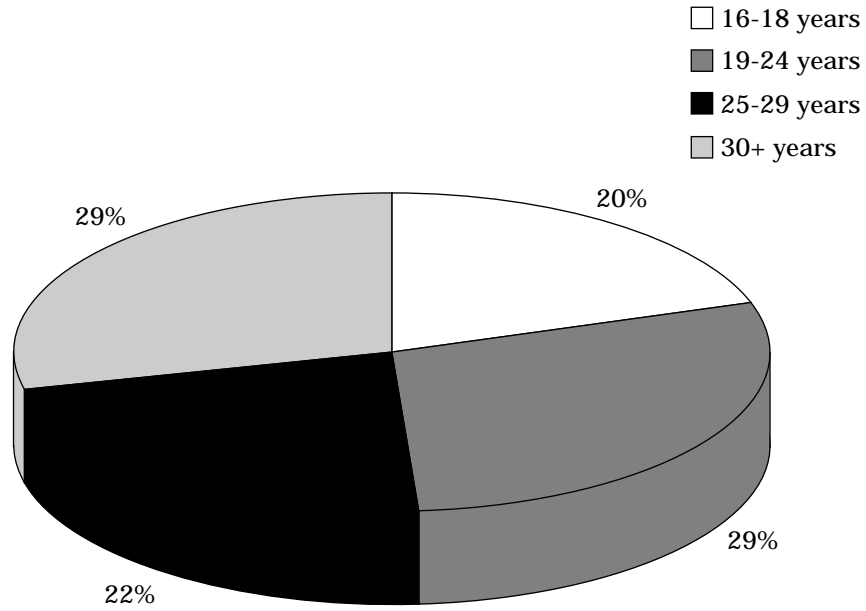
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1995)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

Figure 1

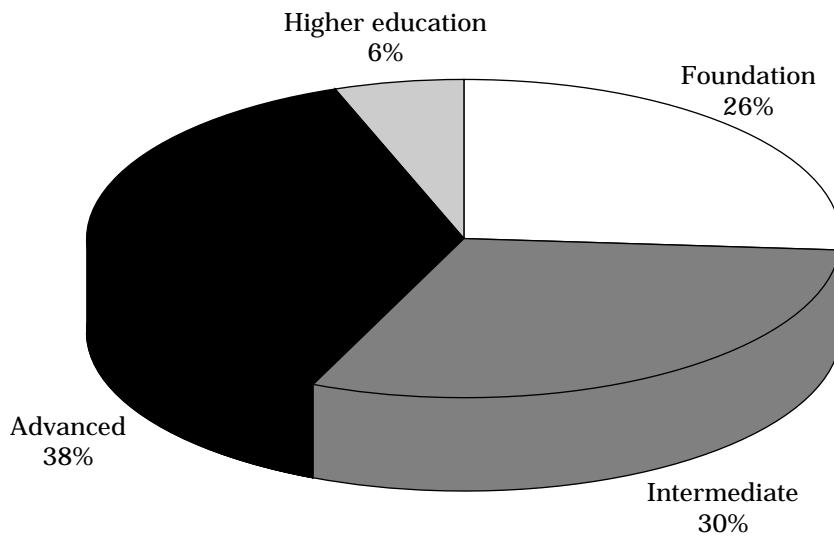
Hammersmith and West London College: FEFC-funded enrolments by age (as at May 1996)



FEFC-funded enrolments: 7,328

Figure 2

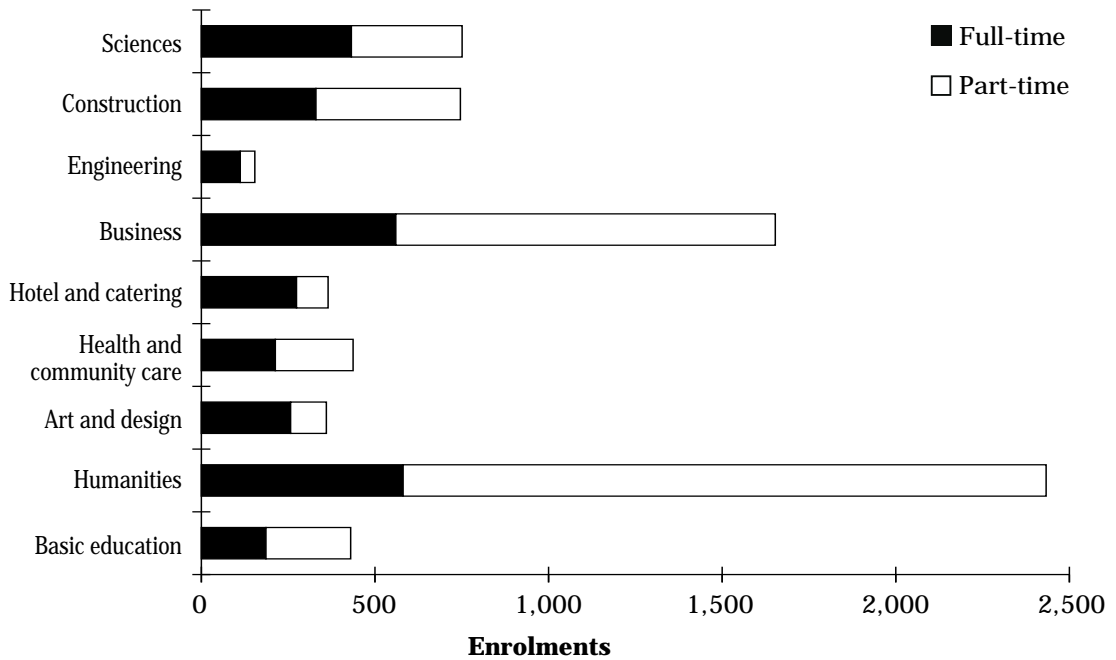
Hammersmith and West London College: FEFC-funded enrolments by level of study (as at May 1996)



FEFC-funded enrolments: 7,328

Figure 3

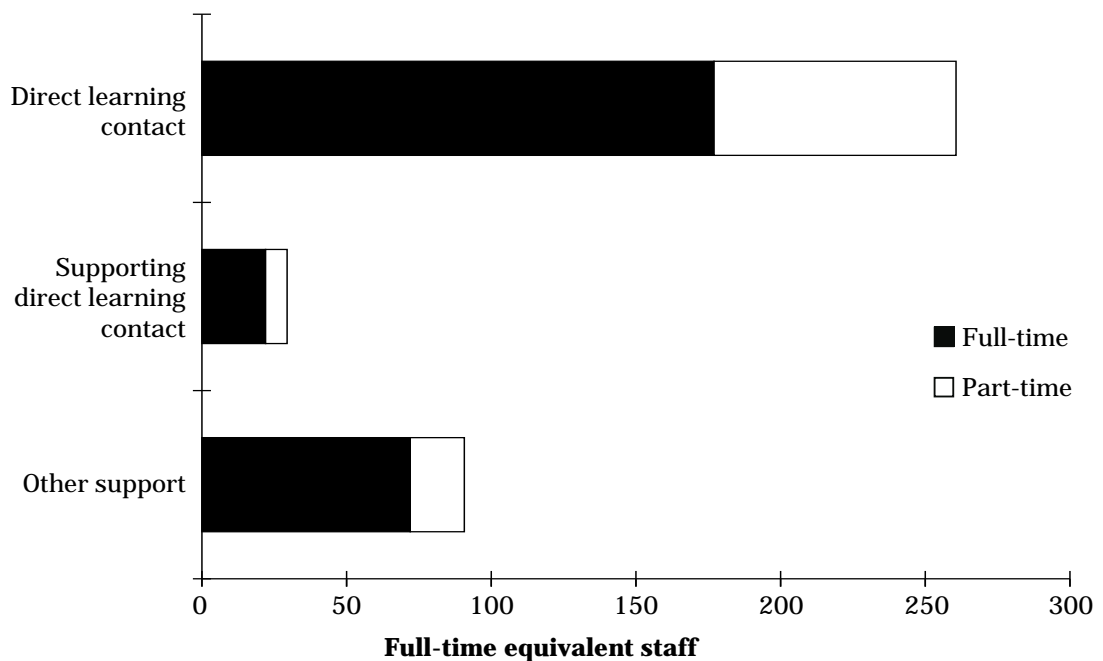
Hammersmith and West London College: FEFC-funded enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at May 1996)



FEFC-funded enrolments: 7,328

Figure 4

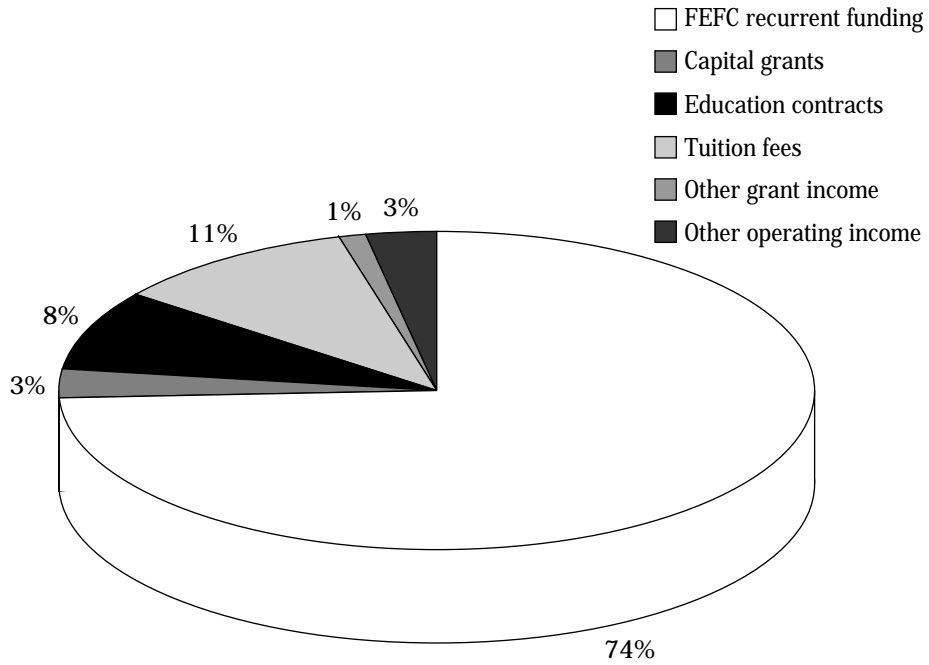
Hammersmith and West London College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at May 1996)



Full-time equivalent staff: 381

Figure 5

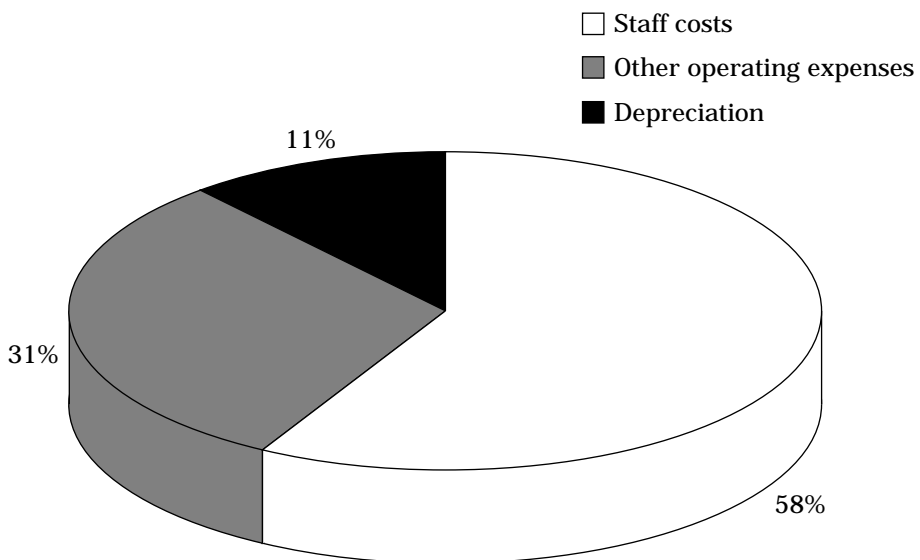
Hammersmith and West London College: income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Income: £15,893,000

Figure 6

Hammersmith and West London College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Expenditure: £17,287,000

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