

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

**Hartlepool
College of
Further
Education**

August 1995

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

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

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 97/95

HARTLEPOOL COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION NORTHERN REGION

Inspected November 1994 – March 1995

Summary

Hartlepool College of Further Education is an entrepreneurial college with a strong commitment to its local community. It provides vocational and higher education courses which have been carefully developed in response to local needs. Two-year GCE A level courses were speedily introduced in September 1994 and recruited well in competition with other local providers. Internal and external communications are good. New and extensive buildings, funded in part by City Challenge, have further raised the profile of the college and provide attractive modern facilities on the main site. Students generally benefit from effective guidance and support and from good teaching. However, levels of achievement are below national averages. A sophisticated management information system supports the comprehensive framework for assuring quality. Staff are generally well qualified and work well together. They are supported by an extensive programme of staff development. The college has invested significantly in improvements to accommodation and equipment to bring many of its resources up to commercial and industrial standards. There is some variation in the effectiveness of operations at section and departmental levels. The college should: strengthen links with partner schools and improve relationships with the local sixth form college; ensure that its tutorial system is implemented more consistently; improve the accuracy and extend the use of centrally-held data; and update the accommodation strategy.

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	1
Quality assurance	2
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	1
accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Mathematics, computing and information technology	2	Cosmetic services	2
Construction	2	Nursery, social work and care	3
Engineering and motor vehicle	2	Humanities and teacher training	2
Business studies and management	1	Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2

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INTRODUCTION

1 Hartlepool College of Further Education in Cleveland was inspected in four stages between November 1994 and March 1995. Arrangements for enrolment and induction were inspected in September 1994. The specialist curriculum areas were inspected in the week beginning 14 November and cross-college aspects were inspected during the week beginning 20 March 1995. Fifteen inspectors spent a total of 65 days in the college, visiting 136 teaching sessions during the eight specialist inspections. They studied a wide range of college documents, scrutinised students' work, observed a full meeting of the governing body and held discussions with governors, college managers, teaching and support staff, students, local employers and head teachers. They also met representatives from local schools, the careers service, partner higher education institutions, the local community and Teesside Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 The main college building was completed in the mid 1960s and is located on Stockton Street in the centre of Hartlepool. Annexes, all within one mile, are located at Lister Street (construction), Brenda Road (horticulture), Exeter Street (motor vehicle), and Tower Street (painting and decorating). The college creche and Brunswick Street annexe are adjacent to the main site. Significant new building has recently taken place, with support from City Challenge funds. Extensive facilities have been provided, such as the Ralph Ward Jackson Centre for advanced vocational education and training, the Sir William Grey building for vocational education and training, and an integrated resource-based learning centre, the Infotech. The buildings form part of the planned regeneration of the town centre and link directly with environmental improvements to other buildings and routes into the town and marina area. The college is a key partner in this inter-agency activity which is grappling with the long-standing economic problems of Hartlepool. Hartlepool City Challenge provides the main focus for partnership and the College works closely with the Borough Council, Teesside TEC, the University of Teesside, Teesside Development Corporation, Hartlepool Enterprise Agency and the Government Office North East in helping to implement the City Challenge action plan. As a result of local government reorganisation, Cleveland is to be divided into four authorities and Hartlepool will become a unitary authority in 1996.

3 Hartlepool is a town with a population of approximately 90,000. It is sited on the Cleveland coast on the Tees estuary. The area is one of high long-term unemployment, brought about by the decline of traditional industries such as steel, coal and shipbuilding. Social and economic problems have been tackled over a period of time by a number of Government initiatives including the Hartlepool Task Force, which ceased to function in 1992, and at the present time, City Challenge. The most

recent labour market information indicates that 22.2 per cent of men and 6.4 per cent of women are unemployed, representing 15.5 per cent in total. This compares with 12.5 per cent for the Northern Region and 10.2 per cent for Great Britain as a whole. The proportion of school leavers remaining in full-time education has increased in recent years to 56 per cent, but remains low when compared with 68 per cent nationally. Twenty-six per cent of school leavers go into youth training programmes, compared with 12 per cent nationally. The majority of these trainees are enrolled on the college's own youth training programme, Hartlepool College Training.

4 Hartlepool College of Further Education is a major provider of post-16 education and training in the Hartlepool area. There are three other educational establishments providing full-time education post-16: Hartlepool Sixth Form College; the Hartlepool base of Cleveland College of Art and Design; and English Martyrs Comprehensive, which is a Roman Catholic 11-18 school. Within six to ten miles of the college are Stockton and Billingham College of Further Education, and Peterlee Tertiary College. There are five 11-16 comprehensives which are the main secondary feeder schools to the college. The college's intake from Hartlepool school leavers rose by 4 per cent over the previous year. Attainment levels are generally low: the Hartlepool schools' average for pupils gaining five or more grades at A-C in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations is 28 per cent compared with 48 per cent nationally and 35 per cent for Cleveland as a whole. Low attainment levels are reflected in the adult population, creating additional challenges for the college which has a majority of adult students.

5 At the time of the inspection there were 6,460 enrolments, 1,383 of which were full time. Approximately 80 per cent of enrolments were fully or partly funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3. The college has 125 full-time equivalent teaching staff and 176 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

6 The college offers a wide range of provision. The main focus is on vocational qualifications from foundation through to higher national levels. The college has made a major commitment to General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). It is working rapidly to develop provision and to introduce and implement new GNVQs and NVQs when they become available. Higher education courses are franchised, mainly through the University of Teesside but also in association with Sunderland University. GCSE and one-year General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) courses have been offered for many years. This provision was expanded in 1994-95 to introduce a two-year GCE A level programme.

7 Hartlepool College of Further Education is divided into six academic departments; general education, technology, business studies, construction, the Ralph Ward Jackson Centre for higher education, and academic services. Finance, personnel and estates functions are well established. The senior management team of the college consists of the principal; two vice-principals, one responsible for the curriculum and one for resources; and the heads of department.

8 The mission of the college is to offer the highest quality opportunities for all sections of the community. It is working towards equality of opportunity regardless of age, gender, ethnic origin, ability or economic and social constraint. It aims to provide a high-quality learning environment in which all students can be given the encouragement and confidence to reach their highest potential.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9 College staff, managers and governors work in close partnership with the local community and are deeply committed to its regeneration. The chief executive of Hartlepool Borough Council, who is a college governor, meets regularly with the principal and the chair of governors. The principal is on the board of City Challenge and Hartlepool Enterprise Agency. Many college initiatives are designed to support the changing patterns of employment in Hartlepool which are resulting from the new developments in the town. The Sir William Grey building houses catering and other service provision designed to support growing employment in these areas.

10 The range of provision reflects the college's first strategic objective which is to support the national targets for education and training for foundation and lifetime learning using local targets proposed by Teesside TEC. Provision is increasing in a number of areas. A wide range of NVQs and GNVQs is offered in all vocational areas except art and design and at all levels from 1-4. There are 15 NVQ vocational programmes covering levels 1-3 and a further two at level 2 only. The college offers five Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) higher national certificates and eight higher national diplomas. Additional vocational programmes are being introduced as a result of requests from employers. The college is strongly committed to developing GNVQs. Nine programmes are currently running: a new foundation programme in health and social care, four intermediate programmes and four advanced programmes. A further four programmes are planned for introduction in the next two years. Enrolments on GNVQ programmes accounted for 20.6 per cent of the total college enrolments in 1994-95, which represents an increase of 11.6 per cent over the previous year.

11 The college is working with other organisations to improve the staying-on rate in education for school leavers. The percentage of school pupils entering the college for further study is growing steadily and now exceeds the overall county rate, as shown in the following table.

Table – Young people from Hartlepool entering Hartlepool College of Further Education (excludes other providers).

Year	Hartlepool College of Further Education	Percentage total of Hartlepool students	Percentage Cleveland County pupils entering further education
1990	125	11	12.3
1991	171	15	16.8
1992	221	19.4	18.3
1993	238	23.2	18.3
1994	294	27.1	22.5

12 In May 1994, after discussions about a possible merger with the local sixth form college broke down, the college established its own sixth form centre to provide two-year GCE A level programmes. Previously, GCE A level work was confined to part-time day and evening classes, and a small number of one-year full-time classes. Enrolments at the new centre exceeded targets by 151 per cent; 73 students joined the centre. The number of GCE A level courses available in the college has increased from 12 to 27. To support the centre in its early stages, the college is tolerating some small class sizes. Students are helped to plan individual programmes and are encouraged to select vocational options to help them prepare for future careers in languages, teaching or sports studies and to support their GCE A levels and GCSE courses. Nearly three-quarters of the students include options in their programmes. The others take two or three GCE A levels. There is now some duplication of provision within the Hartlepool area. At present, there is no evidence of collaboration between the post-16 providers in the town.

13 Collaboration with the local schools, the careers service and employers builds on previous training and vocational education links. College staff work closely with their school counterparts and frequently attend formal and informal meetings with school staff at all levels. Head teachers in the college's catchment area meet with the principal monthly to share information. Current collaborative initiatives include providing short programmes for school pupils in years 10 and 11. These offer accreditation through the Northern Partnership for Records of Achievement in building, catering, and computing. Modules are also available in personal presentation. Pupils are able to come into the college workshops and try out courses which they may wish to take. A school links programme is attended by 141 students. The emphasis is on vocational education to enhance the school curriculum. A compact with Dyke House School is supporting the introduction to the school of GNVQ courses in manufacturing and business administration. Members of the college staff act as mentors and offer support and advice to pupils who are

still at school. The college is working with 24 members of school staff in six schools to accredit them with Training and Development Lead Body awards.

14 The college refers in its strategic plan to the need to make provision for students with significant learning difficulties and has identified that 6 per cent of the population of Hartlepool are reported to have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The college accepts students with learning difficulties, physical disabilities, hearing impairments, visual impairments, and emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is involved in two Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit projects for numeracy and three Further Education Unit projects on diagnostic assessment, developing student competence and supporting learner services.

15 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are encouraged to join the mainstream courses available in the college or to progress to them. Specialist support is provided to assist students who need it. Classes in information technology are provided for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities both at the college and in local special schools. Some computers have special adaptations so that students can join mainstream college classes. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are also supported through separate courses. These include a full-time youth training programme in horticulture and the full-time Acorn programme which is offered as a preparation for progression to other college courses or for employment. In addition, there is a part-time programme which runs over two years for adults from day centres. The number of students on these programmes is small at present.

16 The college is committed to raising awareness of European issues. An event in October 1994 called 'Eurolink' included guest speakers from industry and provided the impetus to increase activities relating to Europe in the college. Activities are co-ordinated by a recently-appointed European officer, supported by a college European committee. All courses include some aspect relating to Europe: for example, assignments in engineering involve a reference to a European country and some parts of the assignment are completed in the relevant language. There are formal links, established over a number of years, with Angouleme in France and with Rostock in Germany, and new connections with Hucklehoven in Germany. The business studies link with Rostock has enabled a group of Hartlepool students to develop a range of skills by planning and arranging a visit of students from a college in Rostock. The college has arranged three study visits, involving staff from a number of departments, to explore possible opportunities for co-operation.

17 Effective links have been established with higher education institutions to support curriculum development and progression for students from foundation level to higher education. The college is a member of the University of Teesside partnership for providers of higher education and is responding to the local need to increase opportunities to

participate in higher education courses. A senior member of staff with responsibility for higher education is currently on secondment to the college from the University of Teesside. The college now offers an increased number of courses at higher levels. For example, the franchise arrangements with the University of Teesside enable students to study for an HND at the college. All HND courses allow students to join an appropriate degree course at the University of Teesside. The first year of a Bachelor of Arts degree and the Certificate in Education is franchised from Sunderland University. The proportion of the college's enrolments on higher level courses is now 6 per cent.

18 The college is successfully expanding its provision to meet adult needs. Sixty-five per cent of the college's students are aged over 19 and the majority of these are aged over 25 years. The college offers an access to higher education programme, accredited by the Tees-Wear Access Federation, which is attracting an increasing number of students. The Newstart programmes offer special provision for women returners and the unemployed in computing and administration, allowing them to set their own pace and identify their target qualifications. The outreach programme provides introductory education and training courses in local community centres. Courses are developed by the college working collaboratively with community centre heads to provide a range of opportunities requested by local residents. Outreach courses are currently offered in French, hairdressing and beauty therapy, typing and information technology. The college takes portable equipment to nine outlying centres to support these courses. Progression routes from these courses are clearly identified and a helpline service offers further advice for those wishing to return to study or needing help with job-seeking skills. There is no overall college co-ordinator for its adult education provision.

19 Commercial work is handled through the college's business service unit. The unit, recently relocated within the main college building, is increasing the range of services provided. The majority of work undertaken is in the areas of computer-aided design, computing and programmable logic control, but all areas of the college are given financial targets for income generation. In the last accounting period, the unit generated 3 per cent of the gross college budget. The unit provides a focus for all employer contacts. Drawing on its employer database, the unit has planned a programme of visits to all businesses in the area with five or more employees. The industrial liaison officer works in the unit. His role includes marketing to employers and identifying employer needs. The unit is successfully raising awareness amongst employers of NVQ provision. For example, the unit is working with employers in the roofing trades to introduce a NVQ programme which will be offered through the college. The unit also contributes to finding work placements for the whole college and assists in organising the employer support group for the college GNVQ in manufacturing.

20 The college collaborates well with Teesside TEC in planning provision to meet the needs of the locality and Teesside TEC targets. It is the only college of further education in the region still to maintain a significant commitment to youth training. Liaison between the various divisions of Teesside TEC and college staff is effective. Regular monthly meetings take place between representatives of both organisations at all levels. Senior Teesside TEC officials speak positively of the college's commitment to joint planning and consultation. A current regional bid for competitiveness funding aims to extend the information super-highway to businesses in the region.

21 An innovative joint project between the college and Teesside TEC has led to the development of accreditation of prior learning which involves work-based assessment and training with two local construction firms. A member of staff from the college was on secondment for eight months to Teesside TEC, setting up procedures for the accreditation of prior learning to be used in the Teesside area. This is now well established within the college. The majority of clients seeking accreditation of prior learning are dealt with through the college's business services unit. Approximately 30 clients are currently being accredited in this way for NVQ qualifications. Over 100 have also been accredited with, or are working towards, Training and Development Lead Body qualifications. The process is thorough, well organised and documented. It involves the production of a curriculum vitae, summary guidance, structured interviews and the gathering of evidence.

22 The college is providing increased flexibility in the organisation of learning. Each adult student negotiates his/her own pattern of learning and identifies a target qualification related to a specific starting point. There is increasing investment in resource-based learning centres located in the departments. Materials are being developed to support learning. The college has established an independent learning centre to allow students to study at times and in ways that suit their own needs. All full-time students are allocated a period of directed study which they can spend in the centre to support their learning programme. This approach was piloted in the department of business studies and, after evaluation, was extended to the rest of the college.

23 The college has an equal opportunities policy which applies to all aspects of its work. It intends to encourage the development of peoples' ability to the full by removing artificial barriers to admission, recruitment and promotion and to attract students and potential staff members from the widest possible pool of talent. Awareness of the existence and operation of the policy is raised through the individual student contracts, the student charter and the staff equal opportunities handbook. Issues related to equal opportunities are dealt with by a college-appointed co-ordinator supported by the college equal opportunities committee. Surveys of the provision for minority ethnic groups and for students with disabilities have been carried

out, and strategies to increase participation from these groups have been identified. Promotional material reflects equal opportunities issues. The college also has a positive commitment to work with economically disadvantaged groups in the community.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

24 The board of governors has 20 members including the principal. One of the two vice-principals is clerk to the governors. The chairman is a local councillor. Governors are drawn from a wide range of business and commercial interests, reflecting the college's commitment to working in close partnership with its community. There is a nominated representative from Teesside TEC, a head teacher from a local secondary school, two co-opted members of the community and the local vicar. Thirteen of the members are independent, and have been selected for their professional expertise in areas such as construction, distribution, engineering, finance, law, management and personnel matters. The college makes constructive use of their experience to benefit the college and encourage further development of partnerships and community networking, for example, with the local authority and development agencies. Governors contributed to the design of the new library and offer help with estates management. Their initiatives have helped to develop an energy policy which is improving the college's energy efficiency. The board has links with teaching and support staff through a staff member. Students are not represented. At the time of inspection there were no women on the board. At the college's request, the TEC has nominated a woman to replace their member who has transferred elsewhere. Most governors received induction or training sessions in preparation for incorporation. There is now a need for more training to ensure members retain a common perspective. The board adopted the college's original mission statement at incorporation and recently amended it to take account of changing college needs. Governors think highly of the senior management team and staff of the college.

25 The governing body chooses to conduct much of its business through its committees. Meetings are well attended. Full board meetings are brisk and lack extended debate. Most governors support this style of working, although a minority would appreciate more opportunities for discussion. There are nine committees of the governing body chaired by independent members. These are: finance, audit, buildings and sites, employment policy, senior staff selection, remuneration, staff appeals, student appeals and student discipline. All governors serve on at least three committees. The audit, finance, and employment committees meet regularly. The other committees have not met since incorporation and some governors on these committees have little opportunity to contribute to the governing body's operation. Members respond flexibly to calls for emergency meetings. Governors do not yet evaluate their individual or collective performance.

26 The principal operates as chief executive. There is a shared sense of commitment at senior management level and across the college. Staff feel confident and secure in the leadership of senior managers. Management structures and lines of responsibility are clear, and departments appreciate the high level of delegation they are given. Structures are well documented, understood and supported by staff. Teams work collaboratively within departments.

27 The college is developing a robust strategic-planning process. The strategic plan is closely linked to the objectives of the Borough Council and supported by market research. The senior management team develops a draft plan in June each year. Departments and sections debate the plan and respond with their own operational objectives which are analysed by senior management for inclusion in the plan. Annual and mid-term reviews are carried out to assess achievement against performance indicators. Teams are responsible for assessing their own achievement. Teaching and support staff understand their involvement in the process. However, some departmental plans lack explicit alignment with the college's strategic plan.

28 The college committee structure is extensive and most staff are members of at least one committee. There are 22 committees and most have a large number of members. Staff appreciate the opportunity to influence developments. The senior management committee effectively oversees the operational management of the college. It consists of the principalship, six heads of department, three operational heads and the staff development co-ordinator. There are six main subcommittees linked to the senior management committee. These are the joint consultative committee, staff-development committee, equal opportunities committee, health and safety committee, information technology committee and the industrial liaison committee. The remaining committees address curriculum issues: one cluster of committees deals with curriculum development and a second with quality assurance. All report through their leading committee to the academic consultative committee which oversees curriculum issues. Not all committees have comprehensive terms of reference and some do not make clear recommendations, or assign tasks to individual members. Some do not have set agenda items aligned to college strategies. Many of the committee minutes lack clear recommendations.

29 The college has key policies covering curriculum, resources, health and safety, equal opportunities, marketing, staff development and the college charter. The policies are comprehensive, effectively implemented and systematically updated by named managers. Senior management actively encourage staff to implement these policies.

30 A wide range of procedures provide a framework for conducting college business to a high standard. The procedures are generally well understood and many staff are involved in developing procedures in the

areas within which they operate and are encouraged to suggest improvements. Records are kept of any revisions. However, some variation in practice at departmental and section levels reduces their effectiveness. A few departments lack regular team meetings and do not undertake effective action planning, share good practice, or effectively evaluate their own performance.

31 Most academic staff have a clear understanding of their general duties which are specified in their contract of employment. Job descriptions are rewritten as vacancies and changes occur. They are reviewed as part of the appraisal process for support staff.

32 The college's average level of funding for 1994-95 is £18.75 per unit of activity. The median for further education and tertiary colleges is £18.17. The college's income and expenditure for the 16 months to July 1994 are shown in figures 5 and 6. Departments have value for money performance indicators to help them manage and measure continuing improvement. At the time of inspection, the college's enrolment and financial performance could not be determined owing to difficulties with the analysis of available data.

33 A deficit was inherited at incorporation but the college is forecasting a surplus to its budget for the current academic year. The college works to attract external funding in support of its developments. The head of finance, a former company secretary, is college accountant. The deputy head of finance is also from industry. Since incorporation the college has used a computer-based finance system, which has been improved and extended by the purchase of new software. The system covers all financial requirements and generates monthly reports to cost centres. Budgets are delegated to cost centres and amended to reflect target enrolments, changing needs and the availability of resources. The reporting system is flexible; for example, financial reports are produced to suit the needs of individual departments. Course teams also receive regular budget printouts that identify cashflow. The finance system is not integrated with the college management information system, although the college is developing a pilot integrated system to handle Easter enrolments. Staff are working towards the identification of unit costs.

34 The college has had a long-standing involvement in developing the software for its management information system which allows the production of numerous reports to suit changing needs. However, the system cannot produce dropout and retention information to enable effective current analysis of college performance as a whole. A new network is being introduced to increase access to curriculum and management information across the college. At present, staff do not have enough access to remote terminals and rely on printouts provided by office services. This is inconvenient for section leaders. The college is aware of the need to train staff to use the network. The college understands its need for a clear and effective information technology policy to draw

together the increasingly complex demands of integrating curriculum and management information.

35 There are good resources policies and procedures which enable effective deployment of human and physical resources. Bids for support staff are assessed against five criteria: the funding available; the students supported; the vocational needs; the specialist skills; and the existing workforce. Departments bid for capital resources through the annual planning process. They are considered against four key criteria: the number of students enrolled; the support of strategic objectives; historical capital allocation; and alternative funding sources. There is no policy for upgrading capital items.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

36 The information provided to prospective students in schools and in the local community is of good quality and highly regarded. A well managed central department of academic services provides guidance, counselling, welfare and careers support to all prospective and current students. This department is conveniently sited immediately off the main entrance to the college. It co-ordinates five subdivisions covering all the guidance and support arrangements: student services, client services, training, marketing and media, and learning services. It provides information, guidance and support of high quality to all who require it within the college. Careers guidance on entry to the college, and on exit, is well organised.

37 The central marketing and media section co-ordinates and arranges for the production of all college promotional literature and for publicity in the newspapers and on radio. All departments update their subject information for the prospectus; individual leaflets are also published. All publications share the corporate image of the college and the information they contain is in a clear and useful format.

38 A school liaison team, made up of representatives from all departments and two from academic services, manages and organises the links with local schools. There is a programme which includes parents' evenings, occasions for students to choose their options, careers evenings at schools and roadshows organised by the college and held at the schools. Professional support is supplied by staff in the marketing and media section. Liaison work begins in the summer term when discussions take place with schools to decide the number of events they require and when they will take place. The programme involves 12 schools with up to five events for each: the number of schools involved has increased by about one each year for the last few years. The roadshows give a general presentation of the college. Each department also has its own stand. These links with schools are supplemented by a termly newspaper called 'Edlines'. Year 10 and year 11 students from local schools are invited to the college to try out the courses they wish to follow. Six schools sent nearly 200 pupils in 1994. Careers staff from schools and the local careers

office are invited into the college every year to discuss possible changes and improvements to college provision.

39 The enrolment process is handled efficiently. A temporary creche is set up in the main building to look after children while parents obtain guidance and/or enrol on courses. This year the college introduced an on-line electronic enrolment process which allows class lists and registers to be generated quickly. This was well received by the majority of clients who encountered only very minor inconveniences. The changeover from a paper-based system resulted in a few students not being recorded on the correct registers. This was put right when students arrived for their first class but they did not receive pre-course information. During enrolment, students' views on the marketing and enrolment process are sought through questionnaires. These are analysed and result in improvements. For instance, the college amended its marketing policy as a result of responses to questionnaires, by altering the focus of its publicity and involving the college's own students in promoting its image through school links.

40 Induction for full-time students takes place within a clear framework. It includes a formal introduction to college facilities as well as tours of the building which focus on explaining procedures in the refectory, learning workshops, creche and academic services unit. Students speak positively of the induction to subjects. The pattern varies according to the requirements of each course and can last from two days to one week. Departments produce additional materials to ease students into their courses. For example, the brickwork section developed an induction booklet for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities which included photographs and pictograms to explain the course more clearly. Increasing emphasis is placed on introducing part-time students to the college. The use of the independent-learning centre by part-time students is increasing as a result.

41 Transfer between courses is well documented and monitored. The numbers of students leaving courses varies greatly. For example, on the BTEC national diploma in business and finance, 30 students out of the 33 who originally enrolled went on to the second year. In contrast only three out of the original 12 students on the BTEC national diploma in beauty therapy are currently in the second year. The college needs to make better use of the information on retention and transfer to identify any implications for the effectiveness of the guidance arrangements.

42 Guidance during courses through the tutorial network varies considerably. Some is poor. The policy for tutorial arrangements is well documented and there are clear procedures, but they are not always followed. All full-time courses have at least one tutorial hour allocated to monitor students' progress, complete students' records of achievement, offer careers advice and give individual guidance. Some students spoke highly of this support but others could only remember attending one

tutorial between September 1994 and the time of the inspection. The delivery of core skills in mathematics and literacy within vocational courses is well organised. Information technology still requires a cross-college policy. All students complete a record of achievement which builds on the Northern Partnership for Records of Achievement. They also maintain an individual action plan which is helpful in setting targets and identifying learning strategies. They complete their records of achievement using a computer program. At the end of the last academic year, only 38 per cent of students collected their completed records. The target for this year is 75 per cent.

43 All full-time students who enrolled in September 1994 were given an Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit screening test to identify those who might experience difficulties with the literacy and numeracy aspects of their courses. Through these screening tests, 52 per cent of the full-time students were identified as needing support. Twelve per cent of part-time students were also identified. Constructive support is provided on a drop-in basis through the independent learning centres or through timetabled slots built into students' learning programmes. Support is sometimes given by an appropriately experienced specialist in the vocational area; for example, an engineer takes a numeracy group. Some course teams are developing initial tests relating to their own subject. At the start of the GCE A level course in mathematics, students were given a diagnostic test covering the mathematical skills they need to benefit from the course. Some topics, such as algebraic techniques, were then dealt with in the whole class. Other specific needs were referred to the independent learning centre. Course documentation makes it clear that students are expected to attend. Some students on this course had marginal grades on entry but, with lecturers' support, they are now making good progress. Writing and reading comprehension tests are taken by GCE A level humanities students.

44 The college has a well-managed and well-used creche which provides 20 subsidised places for the children of students. A further 20 places are available at a reduced rate. There is also an after-school care facility called 'Rascals' for 24 children between five and 11 years of age. This is a very popular service which is extended in the holiday period to run from 09.00 to 16.00 daily. The students' association organises social events. These are well publicised and popular. The officers of the association have frequent meetings with the principal. All full-time students are offered the opportunity to go on one residential course which is heavily subsidised from college funds. They speak enthusiastically and positively of the experience. Sports and other activities are less well organised. Students complain of few sporting and leisure activities other than those organised through the students' association.

45 The student and client services sections have experienced and well-qualified careers guidance staff. All full-time and many part-time

students receive both formal and informal guidance from these sections. Careers guidance is available as a group activity through the tutorial programme or on an individual basis. The local careers service has a service contract with the college which allows students to receive external advice. Counselling within the college is arranged through a full-time, qualified counsellor and her time is divided between giving welfare information, teaching counselling skills and counselling students. There is a private room for counselling students individually. She does not have a role in counselling staff.

46 Students on all full-time vocational courses have the opportunity to go on work experience. The arrangements include one week to three month blocks and day release. The process is managed by a work experience officer, supported by four work-place monitors. The arrangements to brief students and employers on the requirements are thorough and well documented. Sixty-two per cent of students have been on or will be going on work experience this year. They are monitored while on their work placement to evaluate the experience for themselves and the employer. The monitoring visits are also used to gain market intelligence and assess the needs of industry and commerce which are then entered on the database of information, maintained within the business services unit.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

47 Much of the teaching observed was of a high standard. In 68 per cent of the sessions inspected, strengths clearly outweighed weaknesses. Weaknesses outweighed the strengths in 6 per cent of the sessions. 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		4	5	2	1	0	12
GCSE		0	3	4	2	0	9
GNVQ		0	9	9	1	0	19
NVQ		11	12	5	1	0	29
SLDD		1	9	4	0	0	14
Other vocational		17	22	11	3	0	53
Total		33	60	35	8	0	136

48 Lecturers support their students well and make good use of their previous experiences. The teaching in many vocational subjects is set in an industrial context to ensure relevance. Lecturers use examples from their own experience in their teaching. Staff in construction, and hairdressing and beauty therapy maintain contact with the commercial

world and use this to good effect. Teachers use a variety of styles to meet the needs of different groups of students. They are particularly sensitive to the needs of adults returning to study and make good use of the experience they bring. The way that computing courses for mature students are taught quickly helps them overcome their initial fears. Some inexperienced lecturers lack confidence in their subject and the necessary skills in classroom management. Some staff working in the new sixth form centre require additional staff development to ensure they meet the needs and expectations of full-time 16-18 year old students.

49 Courses are well managed. Most schemes of work and documentation are kept centrally and are up to date. In business studies, course planning includes allocating time for work placements, residentials, careers programmes and relevant visits. These courses are supported by well-structured booklets which are colour-coded to highlight instructions and practice exercises. On some courses, aims and objectives are negotiated with the students. Schemes of work are regularly updated in construction, and health and social care. In other areas there is less consistency. Some lesson plans are sparse, covering only the subject topics and not learning or teaching strategies. Dates for assignments are effectively scheduled in some subjects, for example engineering, and students are aware of the timescales for submitting work. There is less consistency in, for example, social studies where, in one case, students had no formally assessed assignments in the first term and, in another, they completed only two pieces of assessed work.

50 Good use is made of realistic work environments to motivate students and allow them to experience the business applications of their subjects. Students studying hairdressing and beauty therapy offer a commercial service to the public. Students in business studies operate a travel bureau and run the training office as a college facility. Classroom and workshop activities are well integrated in craft sessions. Activities in the construction workshops are realistic in scale and industrial relevance. The motor vehicle area includes a reception desk for customers. Close attention is paid to safety in construction workshops. Of particular note is the opportunity provided for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to work within the college bistro. Learning is carefully phased to enable the students to develop the necessary confidence to work within a public setting.

51 Students' interest is developed through a variety of effective teaching strategies. Handouts are well produced. Some mathematics lecturers give students copies of their lecture notes to annotate during the session. A session on the design of reinforced concrete columns made good use of audio-visual and overhead projector facilities. Students in a lesson on engine configurations were fully engaged in their work. The lecturer made positive use of students' knowledge and referred regularly to the experience they had already gained during their practical sessions. Questions were

skilfully framed to develop themes and the students answered with confidence. Groupwork is used productively in most cases to stimulate learning. Students on access to higher education courses, and hairdressing and beauty therapy courses are encouraged to work co-operatively in teams. Humanities students experience a range of teaching styles, such as team teaching, seminars, tutorials and lectures in large groups, which are designed to prepare them for higher education. Lecturers check their students' understanding regularly. In one part-time evening session in business studies, the lecturer successfully used a variety of techniques to engage the attention of the students, including oral presentations by individuals, note taking from the board, group discussion, small groupwork to generate discussion points and students' analyses of their own performance.

52 Some lecturers are adept at recognising learning opportunities. For example, one session in media studies was threatened with potential disarray because students had not completed their homework tasks. The lecturer made speedy alterations to his lesson plan and used role-play to illustrate the selection of news items which formed the basis for the work. College projects are used to bring together students from several curriculum areas and provide stimulating learning opportunities. A recent example occurred when the local fire service used part of the college building to practice evacuation in a simulated bomb explosion. College students acted as accident 'victims', hairdressing and beauty therapy students applied make-up to the 'victims', health and social care students administered first aid, and media students videoed the action and later interviewed participants. All those involved contributed to a full evaluation of the exercise.

53 Video recording is used effectively to enable students to assess their own work. In a French class, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities conducted a role-play, ordering food in a restaurant. This was videoed in the college's studio and then replayed to the students so that they could identify ways in which they could improve their performance.

54 Occasionally, sessions lack rigour. Some lecturers spend too much of the time asking direct questions. In other sessions, directed questioning is used positively to check students' understanding and maintain participation. No procedures are yet in place to ensure routine exchange of good teaching practice. Some directed study sessions in construction lack interest and purpose. Students in health and social care courses would appreciate more guidance in managing their directed study time. A narrow range of teaching and learning strategies was seen in mathematics classes, where students were given little opportunity for investigative work.

55 Some teaching teams in construction offer students a flexible approach to managing their own learning of practical skills and the development of their knowledge about particular jobs. Lecturers produce

learning packages which allow students to work at their own pace under suitable guidance. The adult students on a women returners' course in business studies work independently. Their individual starting points and suitable target qualifications are identified. Students using the workshop provision in information technology enjoyed their work and the fact that they could work at their own pace; in some cases this enabled them to make rapid progress. Staff work well in supporting students in these situations. They deal skilfully with the fluctuations in student numbers and the changing requirements that these bring. In other parts of the college staff are less familiar with flexible-learning techniques.

56 Classroom tasks and assignments generally meet course requirements. A high standard of work is achieved and staff give informative written feedback and offer encouragement to their students. For example, a group of electrical installation trainees was starting on the first of a series of assignments set by the external examining body. The written specifications were clear and the lecturer worked through the assignment clarifying the terminology by directed questioning. Students then started on the project, working assiduously and asking the lecturer relevant questions. He led them to find their own solutions by further skilful questioning. Assessment is conducted in the workplace for construction and for NVQ business students; either in the commercially-operated offices within the college or on work placements. In the training office, advanced business GNVQ students supervise intermediate GNVQ students. Assignments on BTEC health and social care courses are innovative and well designed. However, some lecturers are not proficient at managing different levels of student ability in classroom tasks. Sometimes the attention span of weaker learners is over estimated and at other times weaker students are given tasks in class which fail to challenge them and do not lead to useful learning outcomes.

57 The development of core skills is becoming an accepted part of provision, although there are still variations in practice across the different programmes. The core-skills framework is extensive in BTEC construction, but sparse in NVQ work. Core-skills studies appear as separate sessions on the timetables of full-time business studies students and most business courses include a foreign language. The department of business studies provides cross-college support for GNVQs by offering tuition and assessment in core skills. Students in hairdressing and beauty therapy are using core skills to plan a salon for themselves.

58 Registers are monitored daily using an optical mark reader. Information about attendance is accurate and up to date. Attendance rates are one of the performance indicators monitored by the course teams. Individual patterns of attendance are discussed with students and form part of their reports. Attendance record reports are sent to course tutors on request and weekly reports are generated as a matter of routine on all students who are absent for more than four sessions. Variable reporting systems operate between departments and between courses in the

engineering section. In business studies, attendance rates are calculated by student representatives who report them at termly course reviews. Some staff are unsure of the action they should take if students fail to attend. The overall college attendance rate is 79 per cent. The highest attendance rates are achieved by students in the business studies department. Of the classes observed in business studies, nearly a third had 100 per cent attendance. Classes observed in construction had a 67 per cent attendance rate. Some engineering classes have unsatisfactory attendance but courses sponsored by industry are well attended. Absenteeism is recognised as a problem in some part-time classes in some areas of the college.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

59 The majority of students enjoy their work and appreciate the commitment of their lecturers. They express satisfaction with their programmes of study and, in the majority of teaching sessions, value their learning experiences. Relationships between staff and students are generally friendly and mutually respectful, although a small number of staff tolerate student behaviour which is disruptive and unacceptable. Mature students particularly value the support they receive from staff who respond sensitively to their needs. They speak positively of the progress they are helped to make and the increased confidence they gain.

60 The standard of students' work in class is high. Adult students on access to higher education programmes participate effectively in whole-class discussions and well-focused groupwork. They are prepared well for entry to university. Many students on care courses perform competently. In business studies, students demonstrate proficiency in information technology skills. Targets are set for achievement. Lecturers identify areas where further progress could be made and give feedback on their students' work. Students are routinely encouraged to keep their files and notes in good order. Groupwork sessions often result in productive work. Some students make beneficial use of their periods of self-directed study. In other areas, such as health and social care, less able students find it difficult to cope with opportunities for independent learning and require more structured guidance to enable them to develop independent study skills.

61 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities develop confidence and self-esteem through their studies in college. They learn how to carry out a range of practical tasks, to make decisions and to use their initiative with little supervision from staff. A student originally enrolled on a foundation programme progressed to a BTEC computing programme and has been chosen as student of the year by the mathematics and computing department.

62 In workshops the maintenance of clean and tidy work environments is a priority. Students are supported by displays of posters, internally

produced photographs and information relating to industry. The environment is generally of a high standard and promotes learning; students on vocational courses are introduced to suitable examples of environments that realistically simulate workplace conditions. Practical sessions in hairdressing and beauty therapy and in business studies are conducted in a commercially acceptable manner.

63 Lecturers explain assignments in class and generate discussion to focus on relevant issues. Construction technician students use information technology in the departmental resource base to develop their assignments and project work. The presentation of some of these assignments could be improved. Most students are aware of their progress and the skills they need to develop to improve. Attention is paid to discussing individual progress with students on the new two-year GCE A level courses. Video work is used for oral assessment in business studies; students demonstrated development in their communication skills over the two year course.

64 College students are successful in winning external awards. The Northern Council for Further Education premier award for plumbing, the Wilkinson Shield, has been won by teams from the college twice in the last three years. Bricklaying students are frequently successful in competitions and a mature student was nominated as the Northern Council for Further Education student of the year.

65 In 1994, 66 per cent of students aged 16-18 at Hartlepool College of Further Education in the final year of study on vocational courses were successful (according to performance tables published by the Department for Education). This compares with a range of 63 to 89 per cent across the other five general education colleges in Cleveland, and a national average for all institutions of just over 81 per cent. On this performance measure the college is placed in the bottom 10 per cent of all colleges in the further education sector. According to the college's own measures, 64 per cent of students aged 16-18 were successful and of those students aged 19 and above, 76 per cent achieved an award. This gives an overall success rate of 70 per cent.

66 The pattern of success varies across different programmes. There were high pass rates in 1993-94 at advanced levels in business studies, and leisure and tourism amongst students aged 16-18. The results of part-time students in business averaged a 91 per cent pass rate. All the part-time students on the BTEC national certificate course in the built environment gained a pass. Despite their initial anxieties, all the mature students following a computing course at an outreach centre stayed on the course and succeeded in gaining a qualification. Ten out of the 15 hairdressing and beauty therapy courses also achieved 100 per cent pass rates.

67 The achievement rates on construction programmes are variable. Overall, 54 per cent of students achieve passes in examinations and units

of qualification. Some courses in engineering have poor pass rates. In the health and social care intermediate GNVQ, only 35 per cent of students gained an award. In 1994 students' achievements on the Hartlepool College Training youth training programme in caring and the Northern Council for Further Education counselling and health and safety courses were poor.

68 Fifty-two students aged 16-18 entered for GCE A level examinations in 1993-94. They scored an average of 1.8 points per entry (where A=10, E=2). This places the college in the bottom 10 per cent of further education colleges on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1994 tables published by the Department for Education. In 1993-94, 44 per cent of the 276 entries for GCE A level examinations achieved grades A-E. This is well below the provisional national average pass rate for all further education colleges of 72 per cent. Most GCE A level subjects consistently achieve pass rates below the national averages. Most of the courses have small numbers of entrants. Pass rates range from 0 per cent to 100 per cent. No students passed law or geography; all students passed art and sports studies. Less than half of the students taking psychology passed. Some improvement has been shown over the last three years in English language and literature, which in 1994 had a pass rate of 80 per cent compared with the national average of 82 per cent. There is, however, still under achievement at grades A-C. In the past the college's GCE A level programme has been taught over one year of study: the results in 1996 of the new two-year GCE A level students will require careful scrutiny, as these will give a more realistic point of comparison with similar provision.

69 Results at GCSE are more satisfactory, but there is still variation between subjects. In 1994, 45 per cent of all students entered for GCSE examinations achieved grades A-C. Those students studying for GCSE courses part time achieved better results; 63 per cent achieved A-C grades. The national average in further education colleges was 38 per cent for students aged 16-18. No grades at C or above were achieved in motor vehicle engineering or chemistry. There were poor results in history, French, electronics, mathematics and accounting where results were below national averages. GCSE English literature students have consistently exceeded the national average pass rates for the past three years and the English language results show some improvement in 1994. Part-time students taking psychology achieved better than the national average at grades A-C, as did those students taking sociology and integrated humanities. All the mathematics entrants in 1994 improved their previous grades.

70 The college results need to be considered in the context of the generally low achievement rates of Hartlepool's secondary schools: all have lower achievement at GCSE than the national average. There is no college strategy for assessing students' progress by comparing their actual achievements with those which might be predicted from their GCSE

performance. The college should consider using value-added analysis as a means of measuring its contribution to students' achievements and of exploring ways to make its teaching more effective.

71 Retention and destination data are monitored through course evaluation and reviews. Retention rates on certain courses cause the college concern but it is not yet clear what strategies will be adopted to improve completion rates. They are low in some construction, information technology, and health and social care courses. One course in community care had a retention rate of 23 per cent. The intermediate GNVQ course in health and social care had a retention rate of 43 per cent. The BTEC national diploma in engineering started its first year with 36 students; nine went on to the second year and six students passed fully. There are problems with much of the part-time provision, where retention rates are generally poor. In the general education section fewer than half the students who originally enrolled completed their course. One part-time course in history had lost 85 per cent of its students over the year. Overall, the college reports a retention rate of 80 per cent which is lower than the national averages of 87 per cent for GCE A level courses and 82 per cent for vocational courses reported in *'Unfinished Business'* 1993, published by the Audit Commission. Greater success is experienced with flexible provision for adult returners, either at the college or in outreach centres. Computing programmes such as the software, hardware and engineering programme recorded 100 per cent retention rates for their students.

72 The destinations of college students are monitored by the college, assisted by higher national diploma students as part of a course project. The majority of full-time students proceed to further or higher education. Nearly half of the GCE A level students secured places in institutions of higher education as did 62 per cent of the students on the BTEC national diploma courses. There is good progression from intermediate level awards to the advanced programmes. Twenty-two per cent of students go directly into employment, a considerable achievement given the current lack of employment opportunities in the area. Despite increasing numbers, students on the access to higher education programme have achieved good pass rates over the last three years. In 1994, 70 per cent of those students successfully completing the programme proceeded to higher education.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

73 The college has made a strong commitment to ensuring that quality assurance is central to all its activities. As a result, quality assurance is comprehensive and pervasive. Staff understand how it operates and are convinced of its value. They feel positively involved in its development. The quality assurance policy provides a framework for other policies and detailed procedures which cover all aspects of the college's operations. The development of procedures for quality assurance is undertaken by a vice-principal. He works through a development group consisting of heads of departments plus the principalship. The group generates ideas and

establishes other working groups to take initiatives forward. Once approved, responsibility for operating quality procedures is delegated to a quality manager who is also a head of department. Systematic internal reviews are conducted by two review groups, one for curriculum and the other for support systems. These reviews will be co-ordinated by a quality assurance group which will take over responsibility for issues of quality from the development group.

74 There is clear guidance on how to implement college policies. Evidence for this can be seen in the comprehensive working manual of quality assurance policies and procedures. Quality policies and procedures have developed from previous good practices. These include valuable experience gained from achieving accreditation of BS 5750/ISO 9001 in 1993 for the college's business services unit. The strategic plan sets out a number of objectives against which the college's performance can be measured. A comprehensive framework is in place for the systematic monitoring and review of quality issues.

75 The quality assurance policies and procedures manual is a comprehensive document which contains a general quality policy and specific policies and procedures relating to curriculum delivery and support systems. The committee framework regulates the production of new policies and procedures, and informs staff of changes. Staff are informed by memoranda or by presentations about new material. A positive attempt is made to provide staff with information relevant to their needs by dividing the main manual into five subsets which contain the essential procedures for academic, technician, administrative, caretaking and refectory staff. The procedures are clearly written and staff find them helpful. Staff frequently refer to the procedures and are confident that they are observed. The manuals are being transposed to a compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database for networking around the college.

76 The college has a number of centrally agreed strategic performance objectives which are linked to the Council Circular 94/31, *Measuring Achievement*. In the middle of 1994 the academic consultative committee undertook a review of the progress made towards achieving these strategic objectives as part of the planning cycle. As a result, there have been improvements to the management information system, the standardisation of forms for departmental health and safety issues and the professional production of curriculum materials. Surveys of students' perception of the college have been replaced by more rigorous student charter questionnaires which measure their perceptions of the quality of their experience while at college and which are completed at three points in the college year. There is a positive commitment to monitor relations with and perceptions of employers.

77 Course monitoring, using standardised performance indicators, is generally good. The strategies adopted for monitoring, evaluation and improvement are often based on procedures required by external

validating bodies. External reports are routinely monitored, and issues arising from them are brought to the development committee. The college is the first Teesside TEC training provider to be awarded the TEC quality 'kitemark'. Most course teams follow good practice including the use of performance indicators such as retention data and the preparation of well-structured action plans. There are attempts to work towards more standardisation of monitoring practices while maintaining some flexibility. There are some weaknesses in the accuracy with which the quality assurance system uses evidence to provide an overview. For example, students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the tutorial system were at variance with the college management's view.

78 All new staff receive an induction to the college. The personnel department monitors the process through a checklist and improvements to the service have been made. The staff handbook is informative and referenced in the quality assurance policies and procedures manual. The college began to seek accreditation to an Investors in People award in 1993 and is confident of achieving this by the end of the 1994-95 academic year.

79 A framework and clear guidelines for the appraisal of staff are in place. They focus on the needs of the individual rather than on the organisational or strategic objectives of the college. There are two different appraisal systems. The system for support staff is open and directly promotes staff-development proposals. The academic system, which derives from the Cleveland model, is wholly confidential and does not include the observation of classroom teaching except at the appraisee's request. The completion of appraisal is recorded but all other data remain confidential and therefore inaccessible to monitoring. Academic appraisal is completing its first cycle before further review. Appraisal is well advanced: all but a few teaching staff and nearly a quarter of support staff have been appraised. Staff are generally supportive of the appraisal process and find it helpful.

80 Opportunities for staff development are widely advertised throughout the college. Activities are supported by a budget which is approximately 0.5 per cent of the total college budget. In addition, many development sessions are provided within the college. Suggestions for appropriate staff-development activities may arise through the appraisal process, or be initiated by individuals. The range of activities includes those specific to the delivery of the curriculum such as computer skills in new software in business studies. Staff are also supported in seeking more general qualifications such as higher degrees. Staff development extends to all full-time and part-time academic and support staff. For example, a member of the refectory staff has completed a course on signing for the deaf and hard of hearing. Development is monitored by the staff-development committee which is responsible for administering the budget. Strict criteria are applied, including matching the activity against the college's strategic aims. There is a strong emphasis on ensuring value for

money. As the committee has a representative from each department, staff feel ownership of the process and speak highly of it.

81 The college charter was published following consultation among staff and with the help of the students' association. It was approved by the board of governors and first introduced in September 1994. It complies with the main requirements of the Department for Education's charter for further education. There is no explicit guidance on how to make complaints to governors. The charter is presented to all students at induction and students are aware of its existence. It features prominently in internal documentation related to quality assurance and is valued by staff as a clarification of procedures already in use. The charter refers to other key documents and sources of information.

82 The self-assessment report produced by the college to support the inspection assesses achievements under headings used in FEFC inspection reports. An extensive appendix of 38 bar charts analysing college and departmental performance indicators is included. The report was drafted by a vice-principal and circulated for discussion and agreement at a development group meeting. It concentrates on the perceived strengths of the college during the previous academic year, which ended in July 1994. Some issues prioritised for action for 1994-95 by the report were also identified by the inspection team. The report contains no supporting cross-references or evidence and its contribution to the inspection process was limited. An internal quality assessment report for 1993-94 was also available for the inspection team and this provided a more realistic evaluation of the college's position.

RESOURCES

Staffing

83 Most teaching and support staff are suitably qualified. Turnover in staff has been low in the past, but there have been a number of recent appointments. These include appointments to the new sixth form centre of staff with relevant qualifications and experience for this range of work. Most staff are well informed about trends and issues in the further education sector. Teaching staff are generally up to date in their subjects.

84 Nearly three-quarters of staff have a first degree and a similar proportion have a teaching qualification. Many staff are continuing to study for further and higher qualifications. Seventy-seven per cent of full-time staff and some part-time staff are working towards, or have, Training and Development Lead Body awards. Some support staff are taking further qualifications related to their posts. A majority of staff have industrial or commercial experience. Recent appointments have been made direct from industry, for example, in engineering, and hairdressing and beauty therapy.

85 Staff work co-operatively and support their college with pride. They are committed to their students and enthusiastic about the progress they make. Students find their tutors supportive and relations between staff and students are good. The college values the contribution made by all its staff. Technicians attend course meetings and part-time staff are able to share in curriculum planning. There are good contacts across departments through GNVQ teams and Training and Development Lead Body development. However, staff perceive that there are few other systematic ways in which staff below senior management team level can meet to exchange ideas and share good practice. The college states its current ratio of students to staff as 12.8:1. Staff are deployed flexibly to make good use of their expertise. Some technicians in hairdressing and beauty therapy, catering and construction also teach. Part-time academic staff are effectively deployed in order to utilise their skills. There is good support by both secretarial and technician staff. All but a few full-time staff are on new contracts of employment.

86 In some areas, for example, in business studies, the ratio of part-time to full-time staff is high. The management of large numbers of part-time staff in some areas of the college occasionally places a significant administrative burden on full-time lecturers. In some areas there is a staff gender imbalance. There are no female lecturers in engineering and few male lecturers in the care areas, but the college is aware of this. At the time of inspection, women were not represented at senior management level.

Equipment/learning resources

87 The learning support for students on their courses is provided through departmental learning workshops and a central area, called the Infotech. Here the library and the 'Mediatheque' provide audio-visual materials, and the independent-learning centre houses resources for computer-based learning. In addition, there are departmental learning workshops, all with computers and software relating to specific curriculum needs. Over the last two years the college library has been developed from a traditional library into an information and media-resource centre. Less than 1 per cent of the bookstock is lost annually and steps are being taken to introduce a scanning system to reduce this still further. The new logging-on system uses individual swipe cards which allows library staff to collect useful information about the use of the library facilities: for example, it is possible to identify which departments use the facilities and where there might be a need for extra equipment or books. The library is not well stocked with up to date texts in some areas and students complain about this.

88 The college has invested considerably in new specialist equipment and technology. Most programme areas have good levels of suitable specialist equipment, often of an industrial or commercial standard. In the engineering department, machinery is up to date and of industrial standard. The multi-skills training office is well equipped. Recently

purchased media equipment is of high quality. There are sufficient overhead projectors in classrooms or stored in convenient places close by. The audio-visual provision is particularly plentiful in teaching rooms and specialist suites.

89 Throughout the college, classroom furniture is of a good quality and well maintained. The furniture is suitable for class teaching and also group and investigative work. In some areas, whiteboards are too small or inconveniently positioned and there are insufficient projection screens.

90 The college is committed to providing information technology equipment to support all areas of the curriculum. Departments are well represented on the information technology committees and are able to discuss their needs. Recent acquisitions have increased the number of teaching computers in the college to 317. The student to workstation ratio is 6:1.

91 A recent enhancement to the infrastructure has been the installation of a fibre optic network. This allows students to access software and is intended to give the teaching staff access to management packages. There are appropriate control systems in place to ensure the proper management of the network, including the control of software licences and effective back-up and storage of data. Access to the Internet is about to be established, bringing further benefits to the college, such as links with information databases at other academic institutions. The strategy for information technology concentrates on the purchase of industrial-standard hardware and software.

Accommodation

92 The main college building has a prominent position in the centre of Hartlepool on the edge of the main shopping area. The central block is four stories high, mainly glass-walled with flat roofs. The college is addressing the lack of signposting on approaches to the campus. Security is not generally a problem; the static security system is adequate and it is frequently reviewed. Car parking facilities on site are restricted. The general interior of the college is pleasant and well maintained. There has been recent extensive redecoration using the college's co-ordinated colour scheme. Students appreciate their environment. Corridors and classrooms are clean and tidy. However, few examples of students' work, posters, photographs and industry-related material are displayed on walls.

93 There are six annexes to the main site: two are adjacent, two within a few minutes walk and two are located within one mile. Brunswick Street is a single-storey building, incorporating general teaching rooms, workshops, offices and stores for the general education department. Exeter Street is the motor vehicle annexe built in the 1970s. Tower Street houses painting and decorating and adjoins the Exeter Street site, sharing a common yard area for project work. The creche is a new single-storey building on an adjacent landscaped area. It is well equipped and

maintained. The two more distant annexes are situated in Lister Street and Brenda Road. Lister Street is a 100 year old, converted school building and accommodates the construction department. Brenda Road is a single-storey building with a plot of cultivated land and some glasshouses. Both buildings are maintained to an appropriate standard given that they may be vacated in due course. Students based in some annexes do not have access to a full range of support facilities.

94 Recent investments have refurbished the buildings to a high standard; classrooms are light and airy and workshops are suitable for their purpose. The college bistro and the new hairdressing and beauty therapy facilities are attractive and of commercial standard. Some recently-refurbished areas such as the library and student refectory, however, still have unresolved problems. A few areas still need investment and upgrading.

95 The accommodation strategy addresses some issues which are no longer current. It contains a number of options for rationalising the site but they are not fully analysed. Occupancy of some parts of the buildings is low. Access for those with physical disabilities has been given careful consideration; there remain a few problem areas.

96 The college's strategy for a planned 10-year maintenance programme includes asbestos removal. In practice, however, cyclical planned maintenance is not yet under way. The maintenance work is mostly carried out to a high standard by the college's estates department, although contractors are brought in if necessary. Energy management has been a problem. Through an industrial link with a governor, some consultancy has been obtained to address the issue. As a result an estimated £30,000 has been saved in energy consumption and a scheme for zoning the heating system in the main building is under consideration to give further savings.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

97 The college is making good progress towards achieving its aims and objectives. The strengths of the college are:

- a clear sense of mission which informs strategy and operations
- effective management and clear communications
- strong and productive partnerships with a wide range of organisations committed to the regeneration of the area
- an effective and well-managed central department of academic services which provides high-quality guidance, counselling, welfare and careers support for students
- a high standard of teaching and good use of realistic work environments to stimulate learning
- a comprehensive quality assurance system covering all aspects of the college's operations
- a valued and extensive programme of staff-development activities
- high levels of recent investment in new buildings and refurbishment

-
- highly-motivated and enthusiastic staff
 - a well-equipped range of resource-based learning centres
 - commercial and industrial standards in equipment.
- 98 In order to improve further, the college should consider:
- the varying effectiveness of operations at section and departmental levels
 - the need for stronger curriculum links with partner schools and improvement of relationships with the sixth form college
 - the variable quality of students' tutorial experience
 - student achievement levels which fall below national averages
 - some centrally-held data which are inaccurate or underused
 - an accommodation strategy which does not accurately reflect the current situation.

FIGURES

-
- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)

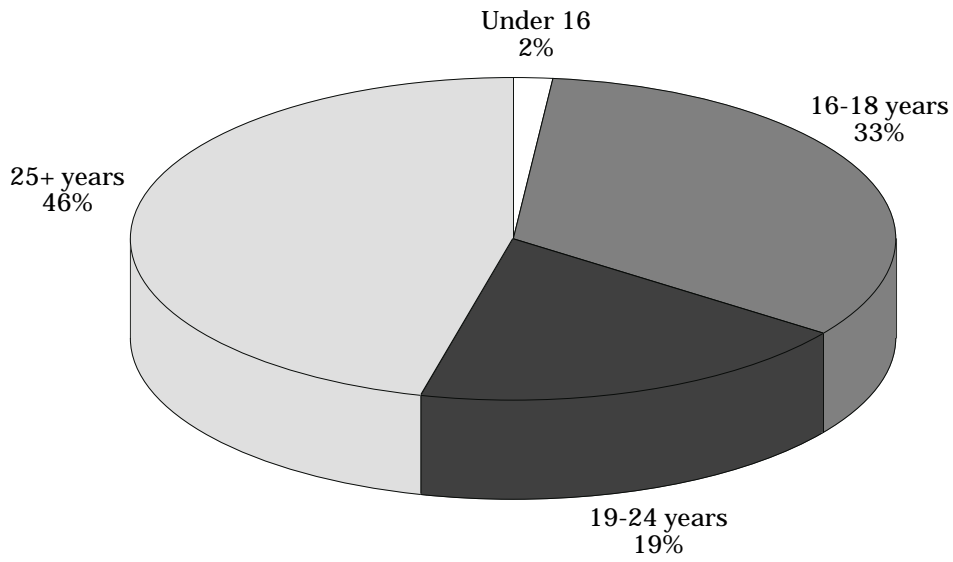
 - 5 Income (for 16 months to July 1994)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

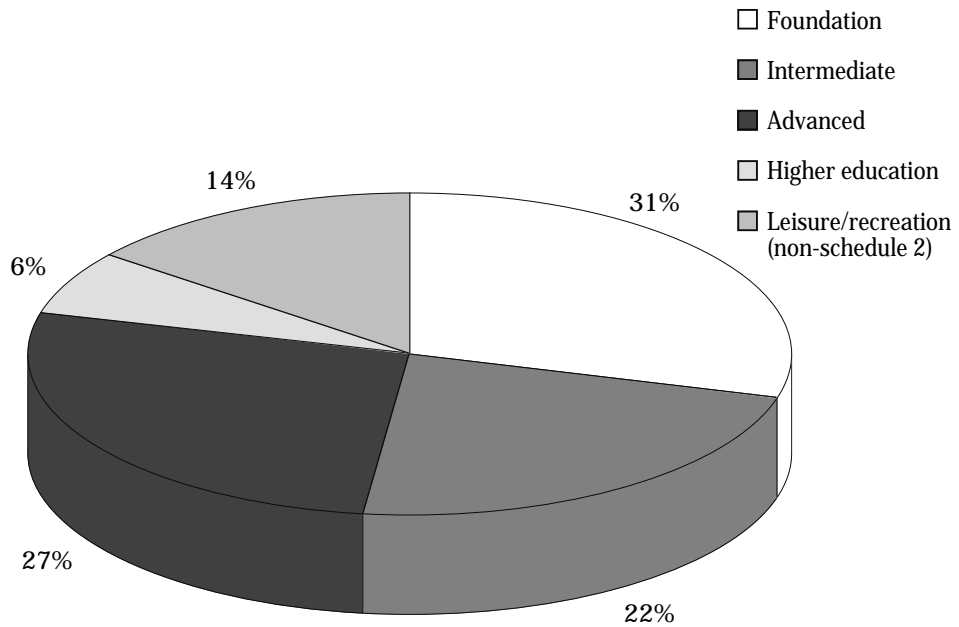
Hartlepool College of Further Education: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)



Enrolments: 6,460

Figure 2

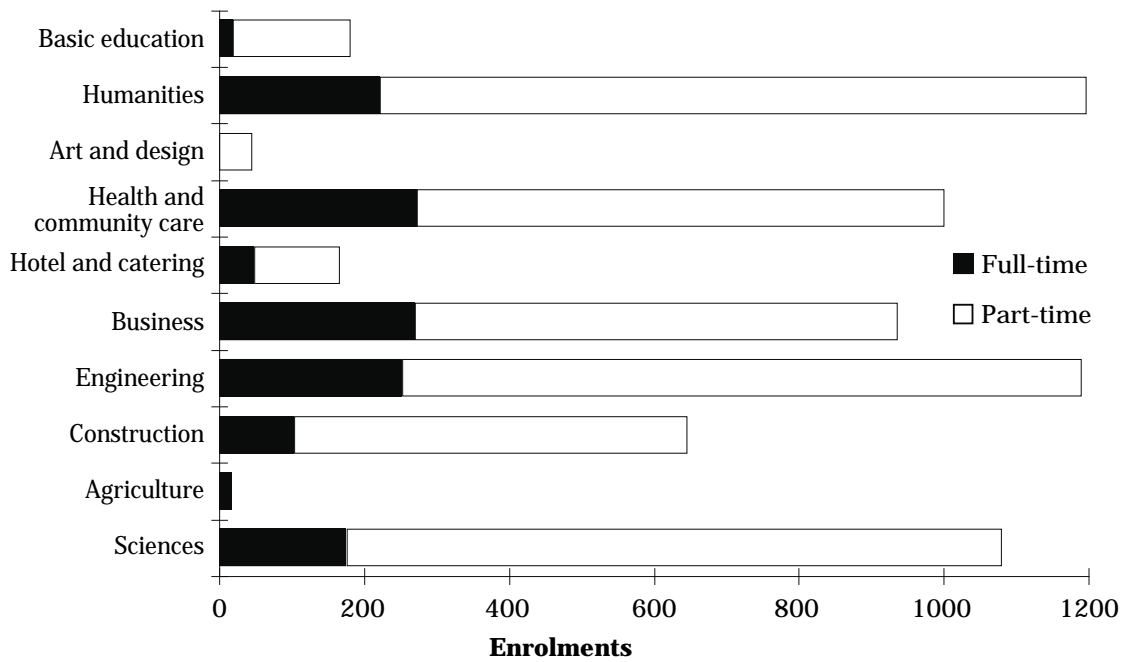
Hartlepool College of Further Education: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)



Enrolments: 6,460

Figure 3

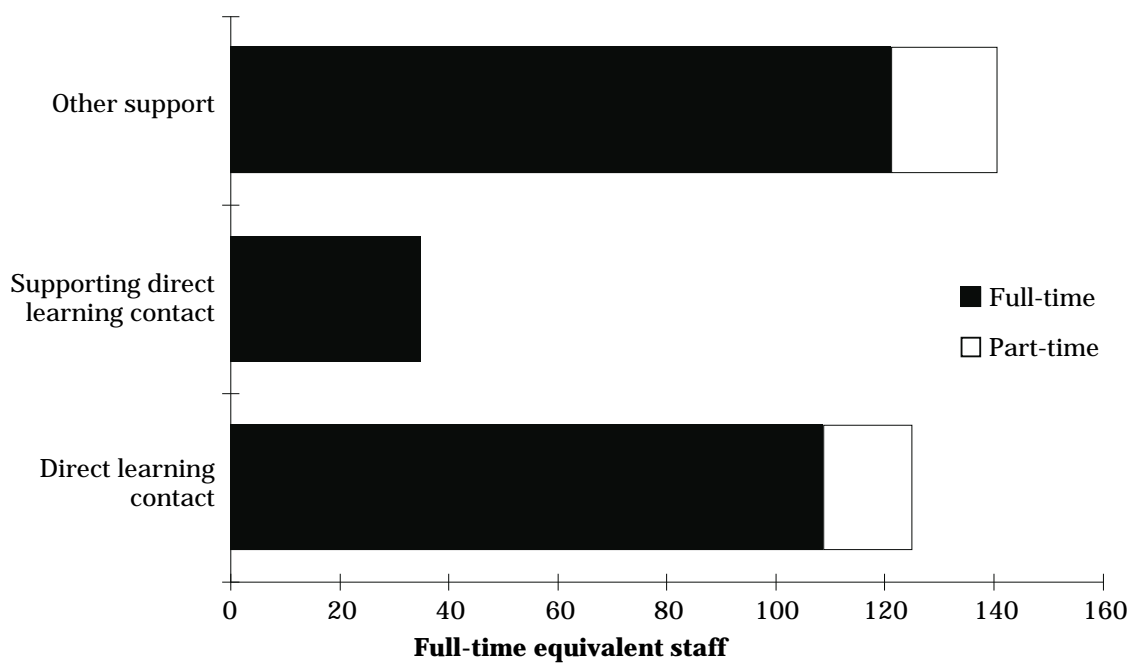
Hartlepool College of Further Education: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)



Enrolments: 6,460

Figure 4

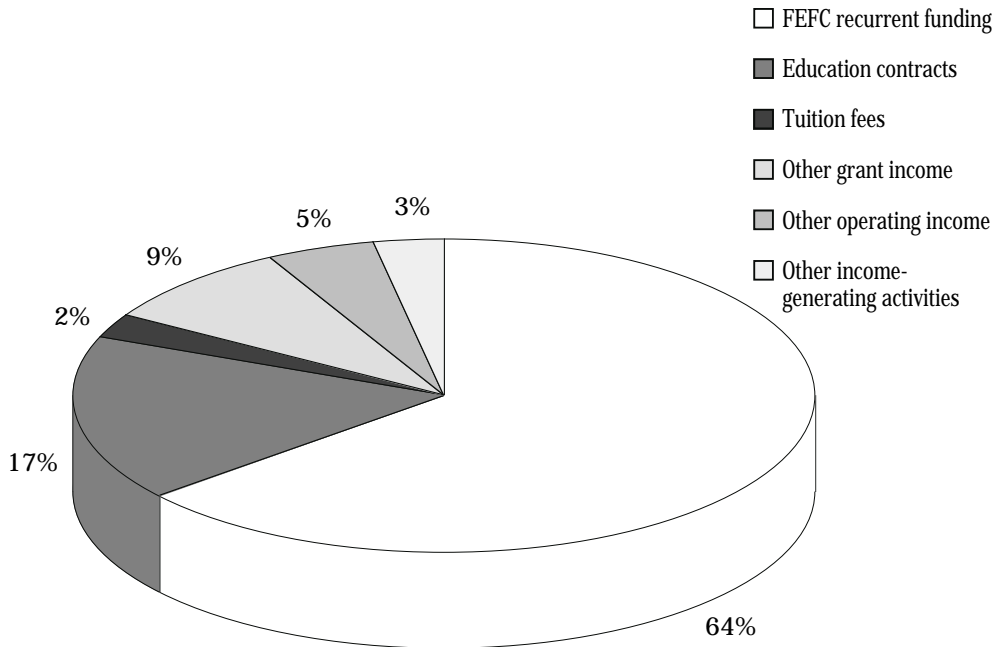
Hartlepool College of Further Education: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)



Full-time equivalent staff: 301

Figure 5

Hartlepool College of Further Education: income (for 16 months to July 1994)

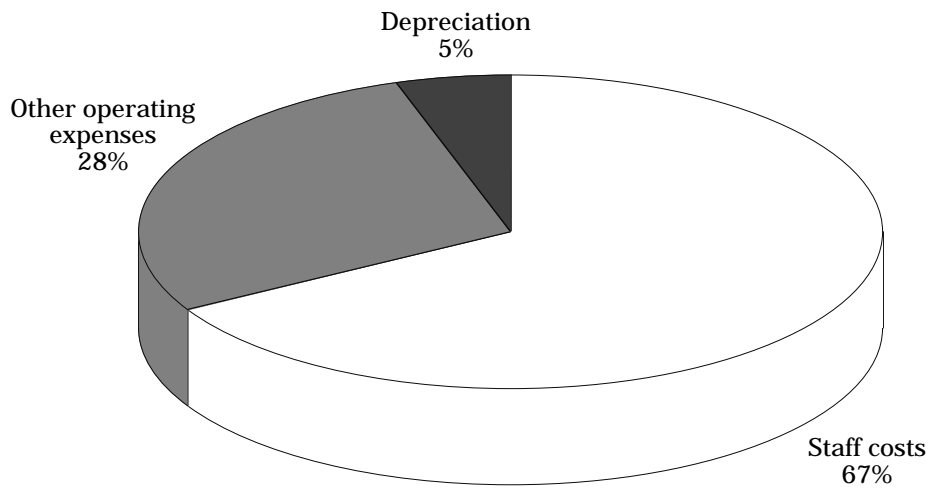


Income: £8,742,000

Note: this chart excludes £16,000 capital grants.

Figure 6

Hartlepool College of Further Education: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)



Expenditure: £8,556,000

Note: this chart excludes £42,000 interest payable.

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