

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

The Henley College

August 1997

**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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CONTENTS

	Paragraph
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	2
Responsiveness and range of provision	6
Governance and management	14
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	23
Teaching and the promotion of learning	30
Students' achievements	40
Quality assurance	52
Resources	62
Conclusions and issues	70
Figures	

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

College grade profiles 1993-96

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 98/97

THE HENLEY COLLEGE

SOUTH EAST REGION

Inspected April 1996-April 1997

Summary

The Henley College in Oxfordshire is a tertiary college offering a range of general education and vocational courses. It has strong links with partner schools and the local community. Governors provide clear strategic and financial direction for the college but need to be better informed about curriculum matters. The strategic planning processes are effectively managed. Staff provide students with impartial guidance on entry to the college and carefully introduce them to their studies. Liaison with parents is good. Students have access to an extensive enrichment programme. Students' achievements are generally good on GCE A level courses, but are poor on some vocational courses. Quality assurance arrangements are well documented and internal quality audit reports are rigorous. Library services are well managed. To improve further the quality of its provision the college should address the following issues: its narrow range of courses at foundation level; poor success rates on some courses; inadequate management of the tutorial system; inconsistent practice in monitoring students' attendance; the ineffective academic board and anomalies arising from the organisational structure.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and mathematics	2	Health and social care	2
Engineering	3	Art and design, performing arts	2
Business studies, leisure and tourism	2	English and modern languages	2
Catering, hairdressing and beauty therapy	2	Humanities	2
		Basic education	3

INTRODUCTION

1 The inspection of The Henley College in Oxfordshire took place in three stages. Enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the beginning of the autumn term 1996. Between April 1996 and January 1997, 11 inspectors spent 32 days assessing the quality of teaching and learning in the college's main curriculum areas. They observed 179 lessons and examined students' work. In April 1997, seven inspectors spent 28 days assessing cross-college provision. Meetings were held with governors, college managers, teachers, support staff, and students. Inspectors talked to employers, representatives of the Thames Valley Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), staff from partner schools, community representatives, a careers officer from Thames Careers Guidance, and parents of students attending the college. They examined policy statements, minutes of meetings, and other documents.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 The Henley College is located in Henley-on-Thames in Oxfordshire. It was formed as a tertiary college in 1987 as a result of a merger between a sixth form college, which had itself developed from a grammar school founded in 1604, and a further education college which was founded in 1873. The college occupies three main sites close to the centre of the town, which together comprise an area of 13 hectares. The population of Henley is approximately 10,000, to which the college's students add substantially during the day. The college is the second largest employer in the town. A major building programme valued at £4.8 million has recently been approved by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). It will, if the college completes every phase, consolidate the college on two sites and replace 40 per cent of its temporary or poor accommodation.

3 The college is situated at the intersection of three counties. Full-time students are drawn from five partner schools in south-east Oxfordshire and also from the neighbouring counties of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. There are three large further education colleges and a specialist college of agriculture within 15 miles of Henley. Eighteen grant-maintained and 13 independent schools, all with sixth forms, are within a 10-mile radius. Part-time students are drawn from a wide area. The college arranges a fleet of coaches to provide students with daily transport. Eighty-three per cent of local 16 year olds continue in full-time education, compared with an average for Oxfordshire of 73 per cent. The Thames Valley is prosperous. It has a low unemployment rate of 3.8 per cent. Many local residents travel to work in Reading, High Wycombe, Maidenhead and Slough; a significant number commute to London.

4 In November 1996, 3,310 students were enrolled at the college, of whom 1,902 were full time. Student numbers by age, by level of study, and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3. Full-time student numbers have nearly doubled since the

college was formed 10 years ago; most of this growth was achieved before incorporation in 1993. The work of the college is organised in seven teaching divisions: business, administration and financial studies; care and service professions; creative and performing arts; engineering, electronics and information technology; humanities; languages and communications; and mathematics, pure and applied sciences. Students are based in three schools of study: business, professional and service industries; communications, science and technology; and humanities and creative arts. The college employs 184 full-time equivalent staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

5 The college's mission is 'to be an open-access tertiary college with a commitment to excellence in teaching and learning'. The mission statement is amplified by the following aims: 'to develop individual learning potential; to promote high expectations and equal value; to deliver quality education and training; to respond to the needs of schools, higher education, employers and the wider community, within a challenging and changing world'.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

6 The college offers 38 general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects, 31 of which are being studied by students this year. A small programme of GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects is used mainly by students wishing to change from GCE A level to GCE AS studies in mathematics, science and business. Adult students are encouraged to take GCE AS or one-year full-time GCE A level courses in seven subjects. The college does not encourage students to take general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) resit courses, but offers six subjects for those who need them in order to progress further. The college has developed a two-year International Baccalaureate programme, which attracts some 25 full-time students each year.

7 Since 1993, the college has expanded its range of vocational programmes. It currently offers 27 courses. General national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) are offered at intermediate and advanced level in art, business, health and social care, leisure and tourism and information technology. There are no GNVQ foundation level programmes. National vocational qualifications (NVQs) are offered in beauty therapy, business administration, care, catering, hairdressing, motor vehicle engineering and retailing. First and national diplomas validated by the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC; now part of the Edexcel Foundation) are offered in art, caring services, communications and information technology, engineering, health studies, performing arts, public service and sports science.

8 The 'complementary and contrasting studies' programme provides opportunities for full-time students to take part in a broad range of extra-curricular activities. The programme is compulsory for full-time students who are new to the college, but is optional for those in their

second year. Participation is uneven. The programme includes more than 20 sporting activities, as well as community service, drama, languages, information technology and music. The college offers certification for some elements of the programme. Students are involved in the local community in a variety of ways. For example, they produce a 'talking magazine' for the blind and assist at the mayor's Christmas party, which caters for some 200 elderly people. The college works with the people of Henley in a number of other ways: it provides space for committee meetings of the local Citizens' Advice Bureau; its students have undertaken survey work on behalf of the police; there is a series of lectures each year which are open to the public and which attract nationally and internationally known speakers. College drama and opera productions are well attended by local people.

9 The college devotes only a small amount of its resources to market research, but successfully publicises its activities locally. Articles about the college often appear in the local press. Research has shown that the college's reputation is an important influence on people who decide to apply for a place, and that word of mouth is the means by which most students learn about the college. The prospectuses are easy to use and informative and they have a recognisable house style. Of the part-time courses which are advertised, 76 per cent have run in recent years, with an average enrolment of 13 students each. Open learning programmes have attracted only 13 students in total to seven GCSE and GCE A level subjects. The college is reviewing its open learning strategy. An access to higher education course is available for adults. Recruitment is low and it declined to only 12 students in 1996-97. The college runs a higher national diploma in business which is franchised from Thames Valley University. Discussions are taking place with two other higher education institutions to develop more collaborative work of this kind.

10 The college works in close co-operation with its partner schools, four of which are secondary schools for pupils aged 11 to 16 and one is a special school. An area board, comprising heads of institutions, meets termly; an implementation group, made up of a deputy from each institution, meets monthly; subject panels, including one which considers the needs of students with learning difficulties, meet regularly. The extensive planning that is done by these groups and the events they organise, such as open evenings and visits by college staff to year 10 and 11 parents' evenings in schools, secure a smooth transition from school to college. The college recruits smaller numbers of students from many other schools, up to 25 miles away. In some cases, communications with these schools, which have their own sixth forms, are difficult. There are good communications with parents, who speak positively about the attention the college pays to them. Parents of prospective students make initial contact with college staff at meetings in the partner schools. Open evenings at the college provide further opportunities for the exchange of information, and parents are encouraged to accompany their sons and daughters to interview.

11 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have a number of choices open to them. The college offers several full-time programmes, including a general foundation course, a TEC-funded traineeship course and a course which caters for students with profound and complex learning difficulties. There are also part-time options. The college has undertaken a TEC-funded project, 'reaching out', to examine what more it can do to meet the needs of people from a number of groups which are under represented in further education, including women returners, minority ethnic groups and adults with particular needs. This year, the college has run a course for women returning to study after a break and it plans to increase its provision for adults with disabilities.

12 Employers support the college by providing work experience placements. About 700 students spend an average of two weeks on work experience each year. The effectiveness of other links with employers varies considerably. There are strong links in motor vehicle engineering, where employers are closely engaged in designing and monitoring college courses. The college runs a number of courses for the fork truck industry and a national apprenticeship scheme for motor vehicle service engineers. It is an active member of the Henley Business Club; it hosts the local action group for business sponsored by Thames Valley TEC; and it has established the Henley Business Centre to provide a range of services to local firms. Full-cost courses for industry, however, remain few in number. The college has a good relationship with the TEC for which it provides training through Henley College Training Services, although the level of activity is low. In 1994, the college made a successful bid through the TEC to the Competitiveness Fund, which enabled it to open two learning centres equipped with compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases and Internet facilities. The college has worked with the TEC in forums such as the Henley Retailing Initiative and the Education Business Partnership for south-east Oxfordshire.

13 The college's equal opportunities policy is monitored by a support group which has annual targets. It meets regularly and reports its findings every year to the academic board. Actions are carried through to a conclusion and change occurs as a result. For example, a bullying incident led to the adoption of an anti-bullying policy. The course review process requires contributors to comment on equal opportunities matters. College literature is reviewed regularly to ensure that it promotes equality of opportunity.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

14 The corporation board has 16 members. There are eight independent members, a representative of the TEC, four co-opted members, a staff member, a student member and the principal. Members have experience in a range of appropriate professions including finance, planning, human resource management, marketing and estate management. The co-opted members have experience of public service, higher education and

secondary education. None of the governors has a legal background. Three women have been appointed recently to the board. There are no members from minority ethnic groups. The college makes particular use of members' expertise in specialist areas such as information technology and planning. The board needs to ensure that the professional opinions of individual governors are not given undue weight in its decision-making process.

15 The board has five committees: audit, employment policy, finance, remuneration, and members' recruitment. The committees have clear terms of reference and they are effective. The standard of agendas, minutes and papers submitted to the board and its committees to assist members in making decisions is good. Discussion at full board meetings is helped by clear separation of those items which need decision from those which are for information. The remuneration committee is not serviced by the clerk to the corporation and there are some inconsistencies in its documentation. All governors are required to complete a register of their interests and to observe a code of conduct. Attendance at board meetings and committee meetings has been, on average, around 80 per cent.

16 Board members are aware of their responsibilities and they are particularly sensitive to the financial and legal duties upon which they spend a great deal of their time. Governors have been less active in determining the educational nature of the college and monitoring the quality of its work. The corporation supports the senior managers strongly but not uncritically. They probe managers' proposals rigorously, particularly in financial matters. Members support the college by attending its events. Most have had children at the college. The chairman appraises the principal annually against personal objectives derived from the college's strategic plan. The corporation considered self-evaluation at a training session in May 1996 and clarified the responsibilities of its committees.

17 The college has developed an effective process for constructing its strategic plan. Objectives are drawn up by a group of college managers and discussed with two members of the board. A planning framework is then produced and circulated to division and section managers. In discussions with staff the division and section managers translate it into operational objectives. The principal and vice-principals prepare a draft strategic plan for approval by the corporation. The plan is used to guide the college's work and resourcing decisions are based upon it. Account is taken of the national targets for education and training and the operational plan states how the college will respond to them. The aims set out in the strategic plan are used in the appraisal of college managers. Despite this effective planning process the college failed by a significant margin to meet its enrolment target in 1994-95 and to a lesser extent in 1995-96. It expects to meet its target this year.

18 The college's organisation and management structures are based on a model which was devised when a large proportion of its students were on GCE A level courses. It separates each member of the academic staff's responsibility for teaching from their responsibility for students' guidance and support. The vice-principal (students and curriculum) is responsible for students' recruitment, guidance and support, for curriculum development, and for a range of cross-college services such as management information and marketing. She leads three heads of schools of study who manage teachers in their tutorial role. The other vice-principal (staff and resources) is responsible for the management of courses of study and cross-college services related to resources. She leads seven heads of division who manage academic staff in their teaching role. The organisational structure is effective in meeting the needs of GCE A level students who may be taking subjects in two or more teaching divisions. These students now account for half of the full-time enrolments and only about a quarter of the college's total enrolments.

19 The organisational structure lies at the root of several shortcomings and anomalies. Divisions have control over teachers, courses and resources. Schools have control over students' recruitment, pastoral care and tutorial guidance. Teachers are accountable to their division leader, who is responsible for quality control, and also to their head of school, who is responsible for quality assurance. However, the distinction between quality control and quality assurance is not widely understood. In some cases, recruitment interviews are carried out by division or programme leaders. In other cases, students are recruited and allocated to divisions by heads of schools. Some division leaders feel that these arrangements adversely affect their ability to ensure that all students achieve their full potential. Some students to whom inspectors spoke were not aware that they belonged to schools of study. Students are allocated to tutors primarily on the basis that their personal tutor should also be one of their teachers. This practice conflicts with the policy of managerial separation of the teaching and tutorial roles. It leads to differences in the number of students allocated to each tutor and consequent deficiencies in tutorial provision. Heads of schools are each responsible for over 30 tutors. They also carry significant cross-college responsibilities for areas such as marketing, management information and student services. Their spans of control are wider than can be sustained efficiently. The structure relies heavily on the good relationships that exist among senior staff, and particularly between the two vice-principals who bring together the main elements of curriculum.

20 The principal and the two vice-principals meet weekly. The vice-principal (students and curriculum) meets the three heads of schools of study weekly, and also joins the fortnightly meetings held by the vice-principal (staff and resources) with the seven divisional leaders. These staff, and the remaining heads of cross-college services, form the joint planning group. It has a membership of 18 and meets twice a term.

The academic board also meets twice each term. Its membership consists of the principal, the vice-principals, the heads of schools and elected staff and students. Divisional leaders, who are responsible for curriculum delivery, are not members of the academic board. Managers arrange meetings with their staff but these do not follow a consistent pattern. The extensive range of meetings makes a significant contribution to effective communications in the college. There are also written bulletins and voice mail. Meetings make considerable demands on the time of key staff and result in some duplication of effort. Committees have brief statements of purpose rather than precise terms of reference, and in some cases, this reduces their efficiency.

21 The college has a broad range of policies including those for health and safety, equal opportunities and the environment. These policies are clearly written and are generally understood. Arrangements for monitoring and reviewing them are inconsistent.

22 Budget allocations are clear and the means by which they are made are understood. Budgets for staff and non-pay items, including capital, are devolved to 16 budget holders using a formula based on student numbers. All of the budget holders have been trained and they are encouraged to accept responsibility for all the resources at their disposal, even where these are centrally controlled; for example permanent staff appointments. The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £16.99 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.97 per unit. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college's information system produces regular monthly statements for budget holders, who also have immediate access to data on the computer network. Student data are comprehensive, but not always accurate. Some data on students' destinations have been collected but are not reliable and have not been analysed.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

23 Since November 1996, student services have been managed by a head of school, reporting to the vice-principal (students and curriculum). The head of student services is responsible for all the staff offering learning support, welfare, counselling, transport, accommodation, careers and higher education guidance. The three heads of schools are collectively responsible for the admission of students, advice and guidance, discipline and monitoring progress, for the tutors in their schools and for the quality of tutorial work. The head of student services does not oversee the quality of the tutorial work in the two schools other than her own.

24 Applicants for most full-time and many part-time courses are interviewed by heads of schools. The application and enrolment procedures are carried out efficiently. Students may enrol throughout the year. Students who wish to transfer between courses may do so with the guidance and approval of their head of school. There are arrangements

for accrediting the prior learning of students but they are rarely used. There is a well-planned programme of induction for all full-time students. Two days of introduction to the college and its services are supplemented by induction to courses. Arrangements for induction and tutorial support for part-time students are informal and inconsistent. Full-time students are given worksheets to remind them of what they have learned during induction. Their views on the process are gathered through a questionnaire. During induction all full-time students are screened for numeracy and literacy, using either course-specific materials or general tests administered by the learning support staff. Students identified as needing learning support are interviewed, advised about the nature of the problem, and recommended to attend the appropriate workshop for help. Their tutor is informed and asked to urge the student to accept learning support, but there is no compulsion to attend. There is very low attendance at the English workshop. The mathematics workshop is better attended and a number of students also use it when they need help with specific problems. There are special arrangements for dyslexic students, for those with English as their second language, and for block-release engineering students.

25 The college has two part-time counsellors. One is professionally qualified and the other is in the latter stages of training. Tutors and students praise the counselling service, but there are delays when students seek to make appointments to see a counsellor. More appropriate management of the time and duties of the counsellors would enable them to meet the demand. There are effective arrangements for securing accommodation and transport for block-release students. There is generous support from a local charity to assist with student hardship and to provide individual sponsorship. Careers advice and information is provided by staff from Thames Careers Guidance who work at the college. A number of advisory sessions are organised by the higher education co-ordinator and visits to universities are arranged for applicants. Guidance for individual students is arranged through tutors, and the quality is variable. A small number of students reported that they had had to change tutors in order to get a satisfactory level of guidance before applying for a place in higher education.

26 All full-time students are allocated to a personal tutor. The tutorial arrangements for part-time students are inadequate. The role of the tutor is pivotal. Through tutorials information is spread; advice and guidance about careers and higher education is given; additional studies and health and social education programmes are arranged; liaison with parents is conducted; academic progress is reviewed; and attendance problems are followed up. Tutors have considerable freedom to construct programmes for their tutor groups. They provide some aspects of the programme themselves and choose others from a menu prepared by student services staff. Tutors are given a calendar which prompts them to give specific help to their tutees at appropriate times of the year. There is an hour

on the timetable every week for tutors to meet their groups; a period which remains the same regardless of group size. Some students do not consider it worthwhile to attend, particularly if it is their only timetabled activity on the day in question. Standards are laid down for the number of individual progress tutorials each student should receive, but 20 per cent of students who completed questionnaires last year said that they had not received their entitlement. The position is apparently worsening. The student charter and handbook do not include standards for tutorials. The controls on the tutorial programme are inadequate to ensure that every student receives an acceptable level of service.

27 There are comprehensive policy statements relating to student services. They include procedures for monitoring attendance and following up those students who are absent without permission. Tutors' practice in carrying out these procedures is uneven. Some tutors contact students after a single absence; others follow the spirit of the college's intentions by completing an absence slip after three unauthorised absences; others take no effective steps to investigate absences. Not all tutors acknowledge a connection between attendance, retention and achievement.

28 The student union has seven elected posts. Members of the executive represent the student body on the board of governors, the academic board, and the equal opportunities and student facilities groups. Each tutor group is asked to elect one person to represent it at the student council. There are over 100 tutor groups and their representatives are expected to meet the union executive twice a term. In practice many tutor groups do not have representatives and others have ineffective representation. Attendance at the meetings is patchy. Not all tutors ensure that representatives gather students' views and provide them with feedback from the council meetings.

29 Liaison with parents is good. They report that the college offers helpful sessions to inform them about college courses, careers and higher education. They receive reports on their children's academic progress and attendance which they value.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

30 The average level of attendance in the lessons observed was 79 per cent. The lowest attendance was in leisure and tourism at 69 per cent and the highest was in humanities at 85 per cent. The average number of students in each session was 12. Sixty-three per cent of the 179 lessons observed had strengths which outweighed weaknesses. This is the same as the average for all lessons observed during the 1995-96 inspection programme, according to the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. Weaknesses outweighed strengths in 7 per cent of lessons, which again is close to the national average. The proportion of lessons awarded grade 1 or grade 2 was significantly higher on GCE AS/A level and NVQ programmes than on GCSE or GNVQ programmes. The following table summarises the grades awarded to the lessons observed.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Access to higher education	0	3	0	0	0	3
GCE AS/A level	11	43	17	6	0	77
GCSE	2	1	5	1	0	9
GNVQ	4	7	8	2	0	21
NVQ	3	10	2	2	0	17
Other	11	18	21	2	0	52
Total	31	82	53	13	0	179

31 Most courses are well planned. Schemes of work have been developed by most course teams and they provide a clear structure for individual teachers to work within. Where practical work is included, there are comprehensive schemes of work which clearly identify the aims and objectives of each lesson so that an appropriate balance between theory and practice can be assured. In engineering and business studies, teachers discuss the aims and objectives of lessons with their students. Subject teams in humanities use schemes of work which include quality standards for setting and marking homework. The basic skills course is not well planned.

32 In the better lessons, teachers cover the syllabus at an appropriate pace and students' interest is sustained. In an exemplary lesson on the development of oral skills, foundation students were encouraged to play out a range of different social situations, using appropriate language and conventions, and the correct degree of formality. The rest of the class discussed what they had seen and made suggestions for improvements. English teachers use a range of tactics to maintain students' interest. In a lesson which examined Sylvia Plath's poem *Daddy*, the teacher played a recording of the poet's own voice alongside a television programme showing her tragic death. In two GNVQ business studies lessons, students took part in a role-play on aspects of customer care. It was conducted in French and was recorded so that students could learn from the outcome. In mathematics, the effects of different trajectories were demonstrated by two student volunteers throwing a tennis ball across the classroom.

33 Information technology is not used in science laboratories. Computers are not generally used in humanities and relatively little students' work is wordprocessed. Business studies students use information technology and have access to a wide range of up-to-date information and data. The computer in the reception area of the hair and beauty salon is not used fully.

34 Relationships between teachers and students are friendly, and based on mutual respect. In lessons on care courses, there is a relaxed but purposeful atmosphere and the more lively groups are controlled effectively

by maintaining a brisk pace and introducing frequent changes of activity. Teachers circulate among the students in practical lessons to offer help. However, in some engineering lessons, teachers do not deal effectively with irrelevant chatter and inattention to work. In a GCE A level biology revision lesson, a group of 16 students were spread throughout a large laboratory; only students on the front three benches were involved in the lesson; those at the back of the room were inattentive and little attempt was made by the teacher to draw them in.

35 Many of the weaker lessons are characterised by teachers' low expectations of students; by too slow a pace of work; and by students' lack of motivation. In some English lessons, students spend too much time working in groups and they become bored. There are low standards of tidiness and cleanliness in some art and design and some beauty therapy lessons. In hairdressing lessons, the connection between theory and practical work is not always made clear and opportunities are missed at the end of some lessons to check that students have understood the topic. In some humanities lessons, students are not sufficiently encouraged to engage in debate in order to develop their intellectual skills. In one ineffective basic skills lesson in woodwork, students were assembling identical stools but no prototype was on display to help them to see what the outcome should be. The pieces of wood had been cut to shape and students spent the whole lesson sanding them.

36 Students with disabilities are given good support. In engineering, special arrangements are made to ensure that the classrooms used by students in wheelchairs are located on the ground floor. In many cases, teachers provide appropriate support for individual students who need extra help. For example, teachers wear radio microphones to assist students with hearing impairments. An overseas student had been accommodated in Britain by friends and was accepted onto the foundation art course despite his language difficulties. The college helped him learn English and he spoke in glowing terms of the encouragement he had been given. With adults, the college is flexible enough to accommodate their varying domestic circumstances.

37 Many students benefit from work experience which helps to place their studies in an industrial context. Business studies and art students have well-organised work experience programmes. A useful aspect of the work experience programme for catering students is the range of external visits undertaken every three weeks to hospitals, hotels and airports. Part of their work experience programme also includes participation in events such as Royal Ascot, the Henley Regatta and royal banquets. There are sufficient clients in hairdressing and beauty therapy to provide students with adequate experience and assessment opportunities.

38 In most subjects, students are set work regularly and marking by teachers is usually thorough. Assignments for engineering students are not sufficiently rigorous and the grading criteria are not always clear.

There is an excellent logbook for NVQ level 2 motor vehicle students in which they record the work they have completed and the competencies they have gained. Some well-designed assessment sheets are used to record the key skills of GNVQ business students.

39 Many students take part in the additional activities which the college provides. Poets and writers visit the college and read their work to students studying English. Students are taken to the theatre to see productions of plays which are in the syllabus and are encouraged to write poetry and fiction. Art students go to galleries, museums and theatres. Students are encouraged to attend GCE A level subject conferences. There are visits to European cities such as Berlin, and visits to classical sites in Greece and Rome. In geography, there is fieldwork and good use is made of local environments.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

40 Most students enjoy their studies and are well behaved and interested during lessons. Many are articulate and confident and participate readily in debate. Students' written work is generally good; spelling, punctuation and grammar are, in most cases, correct. Practical work is carried out competently. Students show good organisational skills and carry out their work with due regard for health and safety.

41 Students aged 16 to 18 who entered at least one GCE AS/A level examination in 1996 scored, on average, 4.5 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This is lower than the previous two years; the average points per entry were 5.0 in 1995 and 4.7 in 1994. The score for 1996 places the college among the top third of colleges in the further education sector, according to data published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). Most of the students entered for GCE AS/A level are aged 16 to 18. In three-quarters of the GCE AS/A level subjects for which students of all ages were entered, pass rates were at or above the national averages for students in general further education and tertiary colleges. Sixty-three per cent of the students who entered the examinations, achieved passes in three or more GCE A levels or their GCE AS equivalent. In 1996, some students were entered in five different GCE A level subjects and achieved passes in all of them. Retention among GCE A level students is good at an average of 88 per cent for the past three years. The following table shows the number of entries for GCE A level examinations each year between 1994 and 1996, and the pass rates at grades A to E compared with national averages for general further education colleges.

GCE A level entries and pass rates 1994-96

	1994	1995	1996
Number of student entries	1,220	1,265	1,098
Number of subjects in which students were entered	44	41	42
Average percentage pass rate at grades A to E	85	88	81
National average percentage pass rate in general further education and tertiary colleges	68	69	71
Number of subjects with pass rates at or above the national average	38	35	32
Number of subjects with pass rates below the national average	6	6	10

42 Student entries for GCE AS subjects declined from 99 in 1995 to 79 in 1996, whilst the range of subjects they took increased from 16 to 18. The number of candidates in each subject varied, with only ancient history in 1995 and computing in 1996 exceeding 10 entries. Average pass rates in GCE AS examinations for students of all ages have declined from 69 per cent in 1995 to 63 per cent in 1996, although in eight of the subjects all the candidates who entered were successful.

43 There have been 339 entries to GCSE examinations in each of the last two years. The number of subjects offered at GCSE has dropped from 16 in 1995, to 11 in 1996. Examination results in English were good with 72 per cent of entrants achieving grade C or above, but of the 142 students entered for mathematics in 1996, only 43 per cent were successful at grade C or above.

44 Results achieved by students on the International Baccalaureate are good. In 1995, their results were the best ever for the college, with 16 students out of the 19 who started on the course achieving a 100 per cent pass rate. One student achieved a score of 44 out of a maximum 45. Two other students achieved marks above 40. Results were not quite so good in 1996. Out of the 25 who originally started the course 16 completed it and achieved an 87 per cent pass rate.

45 Pass rates on advanced vocational programmes are mixed. According to tables issued by the DfEE, 80 per cent of students who completed their courses at the college in 1996 achieved their qualifications. This places the college in the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. Recruitment and results in GNVQ science have been very poor for the last two years and retention has been low at 52 per cent and 67 per cent, respectively. The college has decided not to continue with this qualification. Business studies students found finance difficult,

with only 20 per cent passing the transactions module test in March 1996 and 25 per cent passing the forecasting module test in the following June. Although results in health and social care have not remained at the high level achieved in 1995, they were generally good in 1996 and retention rates are improving. Pass rates in art and design compare well with national averages and retention has improved considerably. Most of those who complete the access to higher education course achieve the qualification. The following table shows the success rates in advanced vocational courses, such as national diplomas and advanced GNVQs. There have been substantial declines in the success rates in engineering and business studies.

Success rates* in advanced vocational courses 1994-96

	1994	1995	1996
Performing arts	-	-	94
Information technology applications	-	-	75
Engineering (communications and information technology)	73	53	50
General engineering	77	41	48
Business studies	92	82	53
Leisure studies	68	81	56
Health studies	67	79	70
Caring nursery nursing	69	79	77
Art and design	100	79	88
Access to higher education	-	67	64

** the success rate is the percentage of those students enrolled on 1 November in year one of the course who subsequently achieved the qualification.*

46 According to tables issued by the DfEE, 53 per cent of students on intermediate level vocational courses who completed their courses achieved a qualification in 1996. This places the college in the middle third of colleges of further education on this performance measure. The following table shows the success rates in intermediate vocational courses, such as BTEC first diplomas and intermediate GNVQs. As the table shows, results in art and design, business studies and information technology applications have declined over the last three years; results in manufacturing improved when the GNVQ intermediate was replaced with the BTEC first diploma in 1995-96.

**Success rates* in intermediate and foundation vocational courses
1994-96**

	1994	1995	1996
Information technology applications	75	55	35
Manufacturing	58	46	86
Motor vehicle craft studies	-	50	92
Business studies	70	49	45
Leisure and tourism	-	27	34
Health and social care	-	54	36
Art and design	89	81	59
Foundation studies	-	77	67

** the success rate is the percentage of those students enrolled on 1 November in year one of the course who subsequently achieved the qualification.*

47 Achievements on courses leading to NVQs are mixed, although most students who complete a course gain a qualification. The following table gives the success rates for NVQs from 1994 to 1996. As the table shows, results in hairdressing have improved steadily whilst those in catering have declined. Achievements on full-time courses in motor vehicle engineering are poor; retention rates are very low; some students who leave to take up employment do not continue with their studies. Results in business administration at NVQ level 2 were good and 84 per cent of students achieved the full award. Retention was also good at 95 per cent.

Success rates* in NVQs 1994-96

	1994	1995	1996
Motor vehicle engineering level 2	21	24	21
Construction plant engineering level 2	69	29	58
Catering level 2	75	71	59
Hairdressing level 2	58	63	80
Hairdressing level 3	-	75	100
Childcare and education level 2	33	79	56
Childcare and education level 3	33	55	28
Business administration level 2	82	80	84
Beauty therapy level 2	64	81	68
Beauty therapy level 3	-	-	100

** the success rate is the percentage of those students enrolled on 1 November in year one of the course who subsequently achieved the qualification.*

48 There were some very good results in English as a foreign language (EFL) part-time courses and one student was awarded a gold medal for achieving the highest score in the country. The Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network, 'towards independence' qualification is used to certificate students' achievements in basic skills. The pace of achievement is slow. During the three years of their course, basic skills students are scheduled to complete only eight modules and some already have the necessary skills when they enter the course. 'Basic skills 19 plus' is intended as a progression route for students from the basic skills programme, but not all the modules are appropriate and some of the students have already taken two of the modules before. The levels of achievement on the foundation programme are adequate and some students progress to other courses and gain employment.

49 The college records the destinations of its full-time students and reports on trends annually to the academic board. Little use is made of the information to inform planning. Collection of data has improved steadily and the number of unknown destinations decreases each year. The proportion of full-time students progressing to higher education has declined from 58 per cent in 1994 to 41 per cent in 1996. In 1996, about a fifth of full-time student leavers applied for deferred entry to higher education so that they could undertake a variety of other activities for a year. The data on students' destinations for the last three years are set out in the following table.

Percentage of students' destinations 1994-96

Destination	1994	1995	1996
Progressing to higher education	58	48	41
Progressing to other further education courses	12	14	15
Employment	12	14	16
Other	7	15	21
Unknown	11	9	7
Total number of leavers	622	651	695

50 The college assesses the value added to students' achievements by comparing their actual performance at GCE A level with the performance that was predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. Value-added data indicate that, on average, students have performed marginally better than expected. The reasons cited for those who underachieved are varied, including personal problems, finding the transition from GCSE to GCE A level work difficult, and underestimating the work required at GCE A level.

51 Some students compete in sporting activities at county and national level. One student is a member of the British Olympic synchronised

swimming team, one has won a university golf scholarship following her selection for the English schools' squad and another was awarded a skiing scholarship at the British schoolgirls' championship. The college has provided teams to represent the county at indoor hockey for the last five years and other students have been members of regional teams in hockey, rugby, cricket, athletics and rowing. Performing arts students received a special commendation at the national students' drama festival. Two music students were members of the Berkshire youth choir which won a supermarket-sponsored choir of the year competition.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

52 Quality assurance arrangements are well documented. Policies and procedures regulate every significant activity. In its present form, the system was introduced in 1994-95 and it applies to the curriculum and support services alike. Every course and service area has carefully defined standards to which it works. Standards for courses are common across the curriculum, and there are additions to take account of features peculiar to each subject. Standards are held in quality files, which also include the minutes of staff team meetings, statistical data, reports such as those from external verifiers, and targets for improvement. The introduction of quality files was assisted by funding from the TEC.

53 Team meetings are intended to act as a continuous review of the service. In practice, the records of most team meetings suggest that they deal mainly with routine administration to maintain, rather than improve performance. Students are not members of these teams, although their views, and those of other customers, are supposed to be represented by the responses to questionnaires. College questionnaires are put to students regularly after induction, at the end of the first, or only, year of a course and on completing a course. Neither these questionnaires, nor the more specific ones designed by staff, adequately address issues of teaching quality and course organisation. Data from questionnaires and contributions made through the student council, the student union, and the complaints and suggestions procedures, are not adequate substitutes for student representation at team meetings.

54 Every year, staff teams carry out a summary review of their work and achievements, and set new targets. The best reviews are incisive and self-critical, but there is some unevenness in the quality of reports prepared by different staff teams. Action points are summarised and passed to the academic board and the governors. The academic board consists mainly of elected staff and students, and is regarded as a forum for discussion rather than a source of decisions or authority. The action points fall to a vice-principal to pursue. Quality assurance is therefore a management procedure, and there is no effective cross-college body to share good practice and to take corporate responsibility for achieving standards. This works against total quality management to which the college aspires.

55 In the past two years, the college has conducted 12 audits of aspects of its work, including individual curriculum areas and cross-college functions such as the tutorial system. Audit teams consist of the quality co-ordinator and one other member from a panel of six staff. Audits include lesson and task observations. They take, on average, some 40 staff days to complete. The audit reports are excellent. They analyse strengths and weaknesses rigorously, referring to Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Weaknesses that are identified coincide with those found by inspectors. For example, the weaknesses in tutorials have been identified clearly by college auditors. The auditors make recommendations for change including some which require decisions by senior managers. Audit is expensive, and the college is developing self-audit procedures to be carried out by sections themselves.

56 There are several inconsistencies between the college's aspirations in relation to quality assurance and its practice. The college charter is published on its own and in summary form in the students' handbook. It contains almost no measurable standards. However, the college has produced many measurable standards for services to students which are set out in a separate document which is not made freely available to them. Students are not informed of the results of college questionnaires. Taken individually, these are minor points, but their cumulative effect is to detract from the college's intended emphasis on customer consultation and satisfaction.

57 The college has a range of complaints procedures. The preferred means for raising concerns is directly with the member of staff concerned. Students consulted during the inspection said they found it easy to voice complaints in this way when they needed to do so. There is also a system called 'quality alert', through which complaints can be addressed directly to a senior manager, with a prompt reply guaranteed. The number of calls on 'quality alert' declined from 270 in 1995 to 55 in 1996 and the college attributes this to better accessibility of direct complaints procedures. At the most serious level, the college deals with about 10 complaints a year of which the more complex often concern students' work which has been mislaid by staff, or assessment matters. In March 1997, one month before the inspection, the governors appointed an 'ombudsman'; an independent person who will deal with the most intractable matters. This is a valuable initiative.

58 The college can identify a range of benefits that are the result of its quality assurance system. These include an extension of the weekly work placements for motor vehicle engineering students; better library services for catering students and for students with learning difficulties; and successful measures to improve students' retention on the advanced GNVQ in business studies. Observation of teaching has revealed individual weaknesses which the college has addressed, and more widespread weaknesses in teaching technique which have been tackled through training courses and the establishment of a students' achievement working

group. These are promising indications that the quality assurance procedures should secure real gains in academic performance in time.

59 Two staff-appraisal schemes are in use. They were introduced in 1992. Teaching and support staff are appraised under different schemes. In September 1997, they will be united in a new scheme which has been developed through careful consultation. The existing schemes concentrate on identifying programmes for staff development, but they have also evolved informally to include setting objectives for managers which relate to the college's strategic plan. The new scheme will work to a one-year cycle with stricter reference to college objectives. It will include observation of all staff at work, instead of teachers only, as at present.

60 The college attained the Investor in People standard in December 1996. There is a carefully-constructed programme of staff training which will cost £91,000 this year, including salaries. This represents about 1.5 per cent of the college's expenditure. It is estimated that in-house training costs an additional £25,000 to £30,000. Division and section leaders prepare the training programme and a vice-principal identifies common threads and sets college priorities. Staff say that they have little difficulty in securing the support they want. There is an induction scheme for new staff which includes an information pack, mentoring, three review meetings with managers, and checklists and questionnaires to ensure that the procedure is carried out properly. New staff speak warmly of the care with which they were introduced to the college.

61 A self-assessment report was produced specially for the inspection. It is well written, with narrative descriptions that are generally more accurate and expressive than the bullet points of strengths and weaknesses that follow. The report is too lenient in relation to weaknesses, a disappointing outcome in the light of the college's careful identification of shortcomings in its quality audit reports and other internal documents.

RESOURCES

Staffing

62 There are 96 full-time and fractional permanent teachers, and 104 part-time teachers. One-quarter of full-time and permanent teachers, and 69 per cent of managers, have 10 or more years service. Between April 1993 and April 1997, 14 full-time and fractional permanent teachers and nine managers left the college through early retirement. All staff are employed under newly-negotiated contracts and have up-to-date job descriptions. Teachers are deployed effectively and their teaching hours are monitored regularly. Twenty-seven per cent of teaching hours are taught by part-time staff, compared with a college target of 30 per cent. The proportion of teaching hours taught by part-time staff varies across the divisions. It is lowest in humanities at 18 per cent and highest in creative and performing arts at 42 per cent. The use of part-time teachers is monitored regularly.

63 Teachers are appropriately qualified for the courses they teach. Eighty-two per cent of full-time and fractional permanent teachers have a first degree. Seventy-five per cent have teaching qualifications. Fifty-three per cent of part-time teachers have a degree and 47 per cent have a teaching qualification. All new teachers are expected to achieve a teaching qualification early in their careers. Good progress has been made by staff in achieving assessor and verifier awards to enable them to work on GNVQ and NVQ programmes. Few staff have recent vocational experience. Teachers in leisure and tourism, and health and care, would benefit from it. There are arrangements to encourage staff to undertake work experience. Support staff are appropriately qualified and experienced, and they make a valuable contribution to the work of the college. There are insufficient technicians in science and beauty therapy.

64 The recently-appointed personnel manager is professionally qualified and leads a team of two senior administrative officers. There are clear, comprehensive policies and procedures for most aspects of personnel management. There are policies for discipline, grievance and redundancy in draft form. Although there is no handbook which draws together all the personnel policies and practices, staff receive a useful directory and copies of personnel policies with their contract of employment. Equality of opportunity is monitored in relation to recruitment procedures for full-time staff. The college is developing more formal recruitment and selection procedures for part-time teaching staff.

Equipment/learning resources

65 The college has an appropriate range of classroom equipment and learning resources. Most classrooms have overhead projectors and whiteboards. In physics, the range and quantity of specialist equipment is good. There is an adequate number of fume cupboards and sufficient experimental equipment in chemistry. In sports studies, there is a wide range of equipment such as rowing machines and exercise bicycles. In music, there are acoustic and digital pianos and multi-track recording facilities. There is a lack of computers which are equipped for data logging in science. Some necessary specialist equipment in beauty therapy and hairdressing is not available. In art and design, there is insufficient equipment for three-dimensional design and no lighting equipment in the dance studio. There is some outdated equipment in engineering. The college has an assets register which it reviews regularly.

66 The provision of information technology equipment is adequate. There are 230 computers for student use, 91 per cent of which are modern. Overall, the ratio of full-time equivalent students to computers is 9:1. Thirty-eight machines are available on open access. Twenty-four are at the Deanfield site and 14 at the Rotherfield site. These are sufficient for current demand. The machines are linked but there are two separate networks for teaching use. The college has a policy for information technology but no strategy for its implementation. Consultants have

recently produced a report for the college on the development of information technology and a director of information systems and technology has been appointed in accordance with their recommendation.

67 The library provides a good service for students and staff. It is located on the Deanfield site. There is a total of 128 study spaces. Ninety-six of these are for silent study. There are also 37 additional study spaces close to the student learning centre which is also located on the Deanfield site. The number of study spaces is sufficient. The library has around 23,000 books and subscribes to 100 periodicals. The book catalogue is computerised. It is available for students and staff on the Deanfield site and to staff on the Rotherfield site. The library has a range of CD-ROM databases, videos and newspapers and there is a press-cuttings service. There are particularly good collections of books in art and design, geography and psychology. The library has computers for staff and students' use and video playback facilities. There is networked access to the Internet and to the CD-ROM databases. The library reviews its stock and withdraws outdated material. It also monitors the use of the library by curriculum areas. The library budget for 1996-97 is about £21,000, which is slightly less than the sum allocated in 1995-96. The library spends approximately £11 for each full-time equivalent student a year.

Accommodation

68 The college is located on three sites close to Henley town centre: Deanfield, Rotherfield and Southfield. The sites are within easy walking distance of each other. Deanfield has an area of 1.7 hectares. There is a mixture of buildings which range in age from the early seventeenth century, to new accommodation constructed in 1987. There are some temporary buildings on this site. Rotherfield occupies 9.73 hectares and includes an extensive playing field. The main building on the site is Rotherfield Hall which dates originally from the seventeenth century but is mostly Victorian. Other buildings on the site were constructed in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. There is a large assembly hall and a sports hall. The third site, Southfield, occupies 0.6 hectares and has a mixture of buildings which include some poor temporary accommodation. The college has plans to replace all its temporary buildings as well as some of its other unsatisfactory accommodation. Building is due to start at the end of September 1997.

69 Most teaching accommodation is adequately furnished, clean and well maintained. Widespread use is made of display materials. The reception areas at Deanfield and Rotherfield are welcoming. There are two refectories, one on the Deanfield site and the other at Rotherfield. Students' social areas, which are adjacent to the refectories, are small. There are two large, pleasant staff rooms, one at Deanfield site and the other at Rotherfield. Science accommodation is generally adequate except for the biology laboratories which are in need of refurbishment. Engineering accommodation is clean and tidy. Some of the teaching rooms

in the attic spaces at Rotherfield are cramped. Catering, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and health and care are housed in poor accommodation which does not provide realistic simulated work environments. Accommodation for art and design and performing arts is split between the different sites. The acoustics in the drama area are poor, there is no three-dimensional design workshop and some art and design areas are crowded. The changing facilities for sport are poor and are located some distance away from the sports hall. Use of accommodation is monitored annually. The college has a five-year planned maintenance programme for decoration and refurbishment. There is no convenient access for wheelchair users to some parts of the college's buildings.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

70 The main strengths of the college are:

- good liaison with partner schools and parents
- well-established links with the community
- effective governance
- effective strategic planning
- well-documented quality assurance procedures, including measurable standards
- excellent quality audit reports
- good relationships between staff and students
- a well-equipped and well-managed library.

71 In order to improve further the quality of its provision, the college should address:

- the small number of foundation level courses
- the need for governors to be better informed about curriculum matters
- poor success rates on some courses
- inadequate management of tutorials
- inconsistent practice in monitoring students' attendance
- lack of an effective cross-college forum for quality issues
- the poor quality of some accommodation
- a range of anomalies stemming from an organisational structure designed primarily for GCE A level programmes.

FIGURES

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

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

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

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at April 1997)

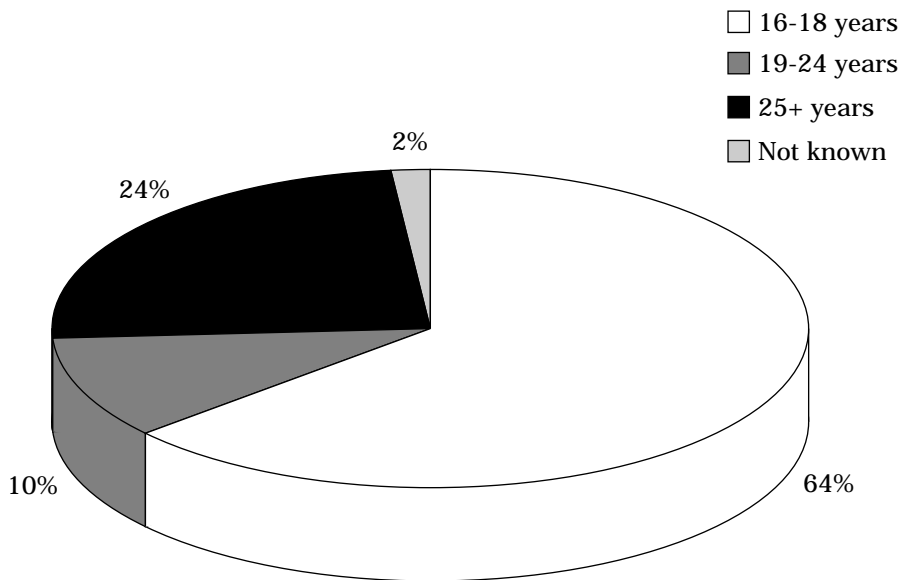
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

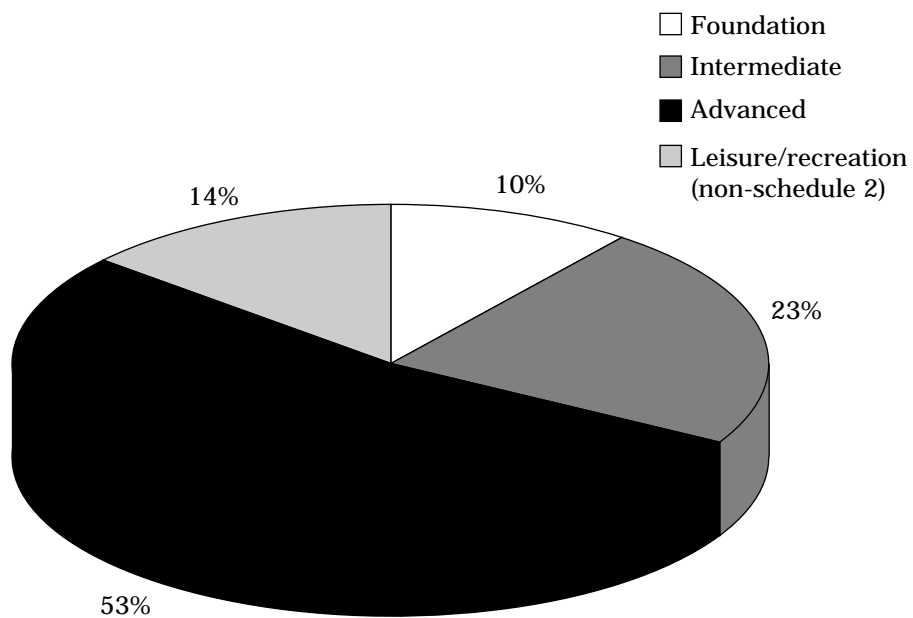
The Henley College: percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 3,310

Figure 2

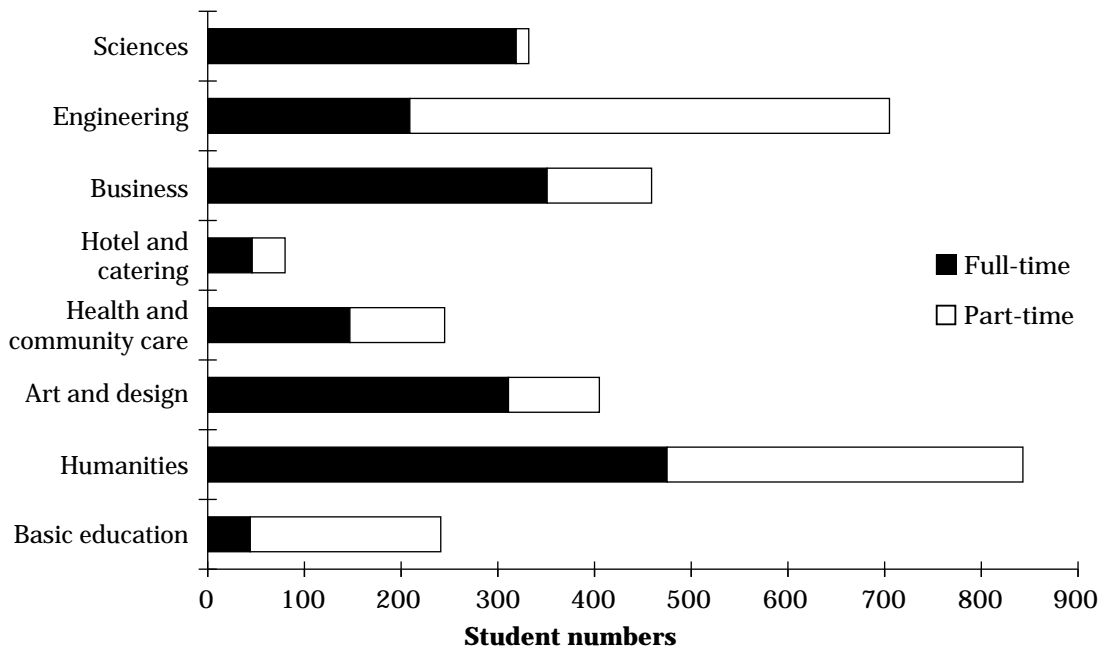
The Henley College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 3,310

Figure 3

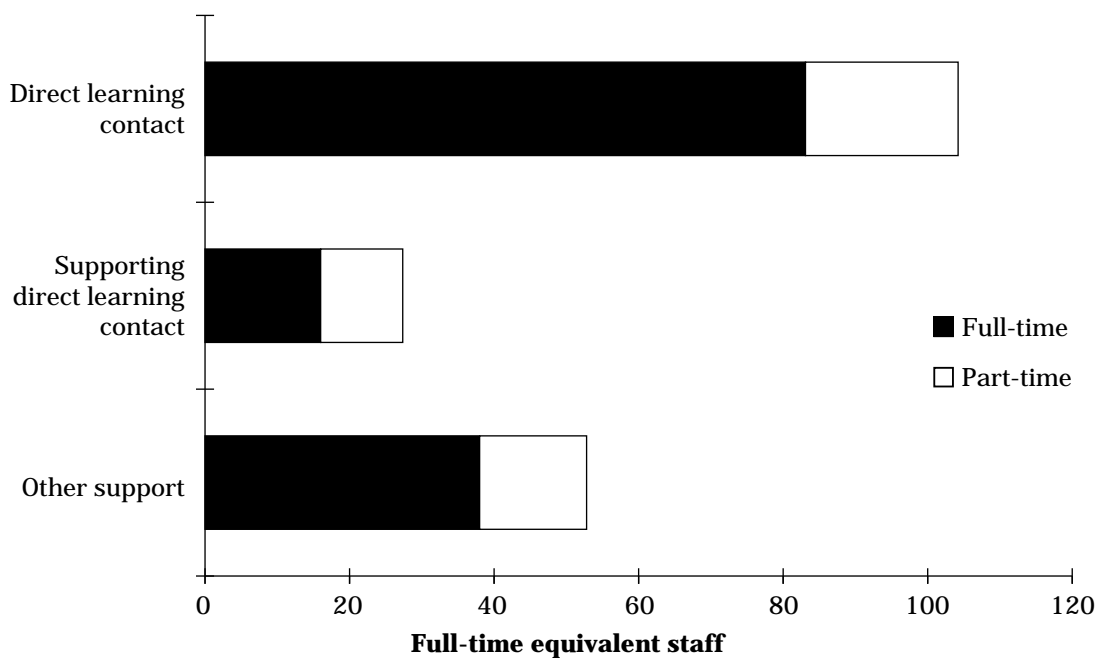
The Henley College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 3,310

Figure 4

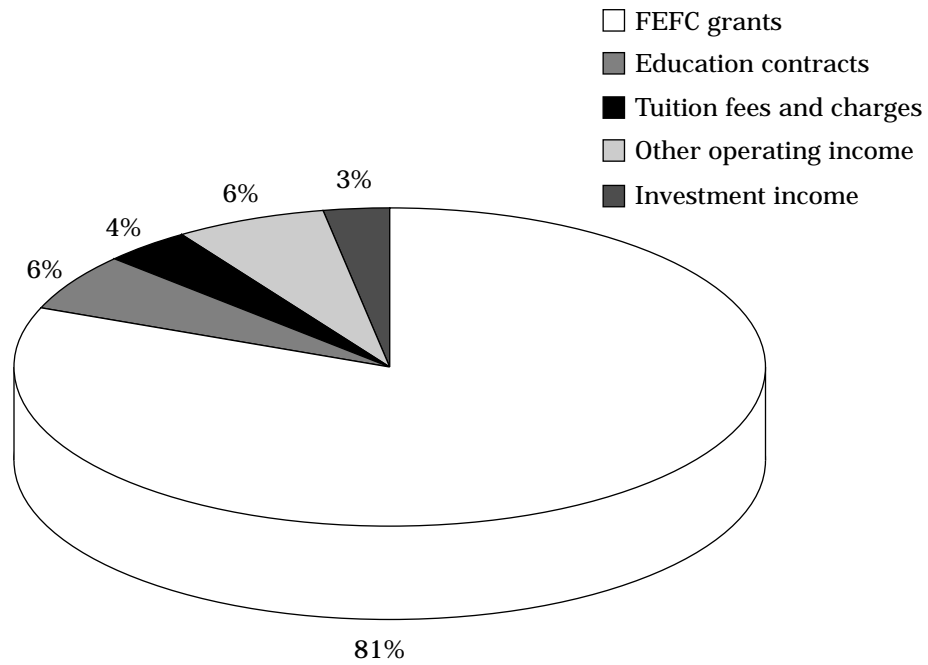
The Henley College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at April 1997)



Full-time equivalent staff: 184

Figure 5

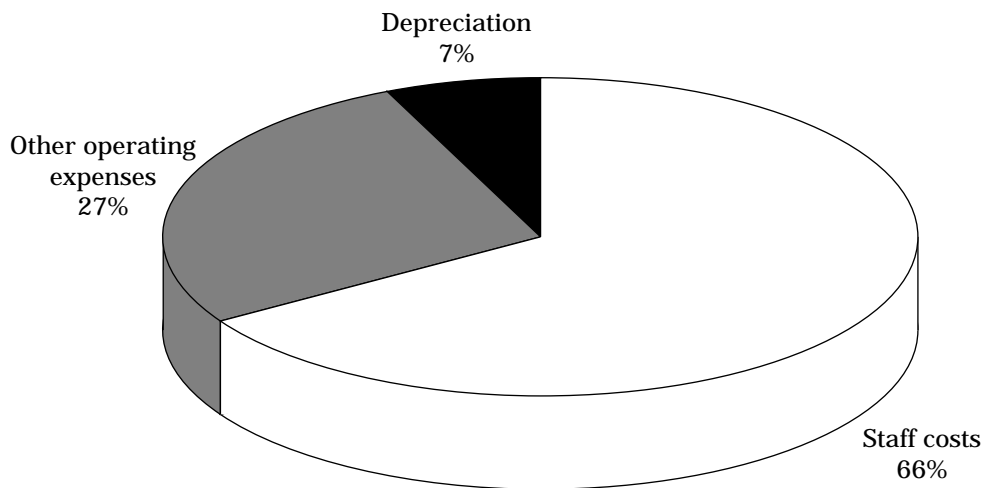
The Henley College: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £6,374,000

Figure 6

The Henley College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Expenditure: £6,169,000

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